

# A Study of Cross Border Student in Hong Kong: The New Phenomenon of Cross Border Students which arise from Cross Border Birth

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**Abstract**—The number of cross-border student between Hong Kong and mainland China is increasing due to an increase of cross-border marriage between Hong Kong and mainland China. Since the education system is different to the mainland China, the statue Since all the children who have the right of abode in Hong Kong entitle to have free education in Hong Kong, many of the cross-border family prefer to send the children back to Hong Kong for their education.

**Keywords**—Birthright citizenship, Cross border birth, Cross border student, Hong Kong

## I. INTRODUCTION

CROSS border student issue has long been concerned as one of the important social issues in Hong Kong. Not only the safety of cross border students, the participation of cross border students in extra-curricular activities, language problems faced by cross border students are also greatly concerned by the society. Cross border students are Hong Kong permanent residents (simplified as Hong Kong residents in the following) but reside in the mainland China. Most of these students are children from cross border families. Cross border family in this paper means family made up by cross border marriage (Hong Kong resident with mainland Chinese) and their Hong Kong born or mainland China born children.

However, recently, among the cross border students, there are students who are not from cross border families; rather, they are from the family of mainland Chinese couples. Usually, children from mainland Chinese couples enroll in the local schools based on their official family registry for their compulsory education or enroll in private schools run in mainland China. Mainland Chinese who do not have Hong Kong residency could not enroll in Hong Kong's kindergarten, primary or secondary education. It is because according to the Immigration Department of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), student visa for mainland Chinese to study in Hong Kong only applicable to post-secondary programs [1]. Then, why there is an increase of mainland Chinese couples' Hong Kong born children enrolling in Hong Kong kindergarten and primary education?

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First, the number of children born by mainland Chinese couples in Hong Kong is increasing. Second, based on a trail about 'birthright citizenship' started on 26 June 1999, the Court of Final appeal reformed the 'right of Abode' in Hong Kong on 20 July 2001, saying all Chinese nations who are born in Hong Kong are entitled to have the 'Right of abode' in Hong Kong [2]. Therefore, all the children born by mainland Chinese couples through cross border birth automatically become Hong Kong residents. At the same time, they have right to enroll the local school in Hong Kong and receive compulsory education provided by Hong Kong government. Third, since compulsory education provided by the mainland Chinese government are for children who have an official family registry in mainland China, children who have Hong Kong residency and do not have an official family registry in mainland China could only enroll in private schools or going back to Hong Kong for education. Thus, the numbers of cross border student from mainland Chinese couples (simplified as 'cross border student (M)' in the following) increase in direct proportion to an increase number of cross border birth.

Absorb the fact of an increasing trend of cross border student (M) enrolling in Hong Kong local schools; some new social issues are generated. First, shortage in kindergarten and primary school places in North District in short run and secondary school places in long run as the number of cross border students (M) is increasing. However, the increase of those cross border students (M) is difficult to project as many of the mainland Chinese couples born children reside in an unreasonable commuting distance to Hong Kong's school. Therefore, it makes the Education Bureau difficult to adjust the school places and arrange the resources.

Second, cross border student (M) generates conflict between local Hong Kong residents and mainland Chinese who gave birth in Hong Kong on the topic of using Hong Kong's resources. Since all those cross border students (M) have Hong Kong residency, they have the right to enjoy Hong Kong's free education and eligible to apply any education subsidies offered by the government. However, mainland Chinese are not Hong Kong residents, they do not have obligation to pay tax in Hong Kong. Therefore, many private association and local Hong Kong residents criticize those cross border students (M) have abused local Hong Kong residents' public resources.

Third, understand by experience that students who have resided or reside in mainland China usually require extra

support or resources from the school or government to adapt the learning environment in Hong Kong. The increase of cross border student (M) may become a burden to the educational finance of Hong Kong.

This paper aims to analyze the new phenomenon of cross border students, which arise from mainland Chinese couples' cross border birth in Hong Kong. This will help to examine the future development of supporting services for cross border students and redistribution of resources. To understand more about the latest phenomenon of cross border student after the boom of mainland Chinese couples' cross border birth, this paper will organize as follow. First, review the phenomenon of cross border students before the boom of mainland Chinese couples' cross border birth. Second, examine the background of the phenomenon of cross border students (M) and the upcoming issues. Finally, this paper reviews the recent supporting services and policies towards cross border students and concludes with some possible solutions to the cross border student issue.

## II. A REVIEW OF THE PHENOMENON OF CROSS BORDER STUDENT IN HONG KONG

### A. Background of cross border students

The Hong Kong-Shenzhen border lies along the Shenzhen River. This border is used to control the travelling and migration of the population from the mainland China to Hong Kong since British colonial rule in 1898. Although Hong Kong has returned to mainland China on July 1997, strict immigration control remains exit. Valid travel document is needed for both Hong Kong residents and mainland Chinese to cross this border. However, the restriction towards Hong Kong Chinese residents is less than mainland Chinese. Hong Kong Chinese residents could apply a 'Mainland travel permit for Hong Kong and Macau Residents' (colloquial named as Home Return Permit), which allow holder travel freely to mainland china within a validation of 10 years. However, holder have to register with the local policy for an overnight staying or those who would like to reside in mainland China for a longer term basis, they are required to first obtain a special long-term residence permit from the local providence police [3]. On the other hand, mainland Chinese could apply an 'Exit-entry Permit for Travelling to and from Hong Kong and Macao' (colloquial named as Two way Permit) travel document for ordinary purpose of personal visit, family reunion, business or other non-government purpose. This travel document allows holder of family reunion grants 90days of stay, and for other purposes a limited 7 days of stay in Hong Kong before validated period [4].

The 'Open Door Policy' introduced by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 boosted a close cross border connection between Hong Kong and mainland China. The 'Open Door Policy' has greatly facilitated cross border investment and generated an industrial relocation in Hong Kong. While the interaction between Hong Kong and mainland China gets closer, cross border marriage between Hong Kong Chinese and mainland Chinese becomes more common. Especially, couples of Hong Kong man and

mainland woman share a large portion, this type of couples share over 80% of the total cross border marriage (see Table I).

TABLE I  
 THE NUMBER OF MARRIAGE REGISTERED IN HONG KONG WITH BRIDEGROOMS/ BRIDES FROM THE MAINLAND OF CHINA

YEAR	BRIDES FROM THE MAINLAND CHINA	BRIDEGROOMS FROM THE MAINLAND CHINA	TOTAL
1986	703 (89.9%)	79 (10.1%)	782 (100%)
1991	590 (86.8%)	90 (13.2%)	680 (100%)
1996	2215 (89.2%)	269 (10.8%)	2484 (100%)
2001	5169 (87.7%)	723 (12.2%)	5892 (100%)
2006	18182 (84.2%)	3406 (15.8%)	121588 (100%)
2007	N.A	N.A	N.A
2008	14206 (85.5%)	2409 (14.5%)	16615 (100%)
2009	13751 (83.1%)	2599 (15.9%)	16350 (100%)
2010	9655 (83.8%)	1864 (16.2%)	11519 (100%)

\* Data in 2007 is not available. Source: Demographic Statistics Section, Census and Statistics Department (2011)

Since some of the cross border marriage registered in mainland China, the actual number of cross border marriage is expected to be higher. Nevertheless, the above data still provides a good proxy indicator to cross border marriage statistics. According to a survey report conducted by Census and Statistics Department on April 2009, there was 45.5% of Hong Kong residents resided in mainland China because of work. Among those who have resided in mainland China, 3.3% are married persons [5]. Therefore, it can be concluded that those cross border families who have chose to reside in mainland China mainly because father's work relation. At the same survey, it also shows that Hong Kong residences are mainly resided in Guangdong providence (83.0%), especially in Shenzhen (31.3%) and Guangzhou (16.5%) [5](Fig.1).



Fig. 1 Map of Guangdong Providence

Source: Asia Times online, <  
<http://atimes.com/atimes/images/guangdong-map-2.gif>>

There are many reasons push cross border families to send their children back to Hong Kong for education. First, they have more confidence in Hong Kong education system. Hong Kong is running a bilingual education from kindergarten education, which students are taught in Cantonese and English. Besides, Hong Kong's education system receives high evaluation internationally; especially public examination (Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination, HKCEE and Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination, HKALE) results are recognized by most of the higher education facilities in Australia, Canada, United State of America, United Kingdom, etc. Therefore, it increases the opportunity for Hong Kong students to go and study abroad. Second, from 2007, Hong Kong government started a 'Pre-primary Education Voucher scheme', which provides fee subsidy for parents to meet towards school fees for pre-primary education of their children in the form of pre-primary education vouchers [6]. In Hong Kong kindergarten education does not included in compulsory education and all kindergartens in Hong Kong are privately run. Therefore, school fee vary from kindergarten's organizations. Voluntary agencies run non-profit-making kindergartens and private enterprises run private independent kindergartens. Thus, the execution of school voucher scheme attract more cross border families to send their children back to Hong Kong for kindergarten education. Third, a child who holds Hong Kong residentship find difficult to enroll in public local schools in mainland China. From 2006, Education Department of Shenzhen introduced a strict policy to control temporary Shenzhen resident's children to receive compulsory education provided by mainland Chinese government. Children of temporary Shenzhen residents could enroll their children to local only if their parents could meet all the 5 conditions. First, parents have worked in Shenzhen for more than a year. Second, parents could provide valid working visa. Third, parents could provide a certificate of being protected by social security which issued by Labor and Social Security Department. Forth, parents could provide a temporary residence certificate and family planning certificate (follow one child policy). Fifth, parents who own a property should provide a certificate of property, parents who are renter should provide the contract of rent [7]. Therefore, rather than sending the children to private schools which school fee are expensive, most of the cross border family would prefer to send their children back to Hong Kong for their compulsory education.

#### *B. The issue faced by cross border students*

Crossing the Hong Kong-Shenzhen border to go to school in Hong Kong is not easy. Students have to hold valid travel documents to cross this border as strict immigration control remains exist even after the handover. From Shenzhen to Hong Kong, a Hong Kong Resident Identity Card is needed. For students who are aged 10 or below, they have to provide a Hong Kong SAR passport together with the Hong Kong Resident Identity Card as the child version Hong Kong Resident Identity Card does not contain a photo. Otherwise, students have to

provide a 'Hong Kong Re-entry Permit'<sup>1</sup> to enter Hong Kong. On the return journey, students have to provide a 'Home Return Permit' to enter mainland China. From 16 December 2004, Hong Kong Immigration Department introduced an 'Automated Passenger Clearance System' (also known as E-Channels<sup>2</sup>) to simplify the immigration procedures for Hong Kong residents, special E-Channels for cross border student are installed at Lo Wu Control Point. On the other side, on 21 December 2005, the Shenzhen Border Control Point also set up special channels for cross border student. These simplified immigration procedures help cross border student to cross the border smoothly even during peak seasons. Although the immigration procedures have been simplified, cross border students still have to get off the school bus at both immigration control and get on school bus again after immigration procedure. The safety issue of cross border students getting off and on the school bus are being concern by schools and parents. Especially kindergarten and primary school students are still too young to acknowledge the danger of kidnap.

Besides the safety issue, transportation cost and time are greatly concerned by school and parents. Although cross border students are Hong Kong residents and are enrolled as Hong Kong full time students, they could not enjoy a student concession fare in cross border train service. Ms Eva Cheng, the Secretary for Transport and Housing said at the Legislative Council meeting on 11 May 2011: '...the objective in offering student concessionary fares in the whole MTR network in 2008 is to make it more convenient for local students to travel to and from school within Hong Kong, as well as to encourage them to use the MTR to take part in more extra-curricular activities and to become more involved in the community ...'. [8] Since the number of cross border student is increasing, there is an excess demand of school in Yuen Long district and North district. Therefore, some cross border students have to travel further, such as Tai Po district to study. The longer distance they travel, the higher transportation cost and more time is needed. This directly affects the opportunity of cross border students joining school activities or extra-curricular activities organized by school or other organization and may lower their ability in social intercourse.

Furthermore, the variation of education system between Hong Kong and China is another issue faced by cross border students. First, the official languages in Hong Kong before July 1997 were English and Cantonese. Hong Kong students started to learn English and Cantonese together from kindergarten. In primary education, most of the schools are taught in Cantonese but English is a compulsory subject for all students. In secondary education, most of the schools shift the teaching language from Cantonese to English and in territory education English became the common teaching language. Therefore, it is difficult for cross border students to adapt the education

<sup>1</sup> Hong Kong Re-entry Permit is a travel document issued to Hong Kong residents by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region for travel to the mainland China and Macau Special Administrative Region. The holder either acquired the right of abode or been granted unconditional stay in Hong Kong.

<sup>2</sup> 'E-Channels' is a border control system introduced by the Hong Kong Immigration Department. This system is using fingerprint recognition technology which will match with the fingerprint stored in Hong Kong Resident Identity Card.

environment in Hong Kong if they enroll in Hong Kong school later in their school life. Especially cross border students in the 1990s found difficult to adapt the English language education system. Although after the handover, under education reformation in 1998, Cantonese, as most Hong Kong residents' mother tongue is used to be the teaching language of primary and secondary education (only 114 schools are allowed to continue to use English as the teaching language). This changes allow cross border students to adapt Hong Kong education system easily, but Cantonese is not the official language in mainland China, and the writing style in Chinese characters are different. The Chinese characters used in Hong Kong are traditional Chinese, while simplified Chinese are used in mainland China. Thus, the later the cross border student enroll in Hong Kong education facilities, the more supports are needed from school.

### III. THE NEW CROSS BORDER STUDENT (M)

#### A. The Background

As mentioned in introduction, cross border (M) are children who are born in Hong Kong by mainland Chinese couples. There are many reasons for mainland Chinese couples to cross the border to give birth; one of the main reasons is to enjoy Hong Kong's education.

First, children who are born in Hong Kong, holding a Hong Kong residency could not enroll in local mainland school for the compulsory education provided by mainland Chinese government even their parents are Chinese citizens. Therefore, most of the mainland Chinese couples could only send their Hong Kong born children to private schools which school fees are costly. Since all children who hold right of abode in Hong Kong, have the right to enjoy free compulsory education in Hong Kong, many mainland Chinese couples though it is worth to send their Hong Kong born children back to Hong Kong for education. One of the mainland Chinese couples who came to Hong Kong to give birth in 2010 told author in an telephone interview on 6 March 2012 that sending the child to Hong Kong for education allows the child become more internationally minded and have a better future. Author believes many mainland Chinese couples have the same concept and pushes more mainland Chinese couples to give birth in Hong Kong.

The live births by mainland Chinese couples continue to increase from 1998 after the handover of Hong Kong to mainland China. And after the Final Court of Appeal of Hong Kong announced that all Chinese national who are born in Hong Kong entitled to have right of abode in Hong Kong, the number of mainland Chinese couples' born babies increase sharply and the share of this kind of baby shared 39% of the total live births in 2010 (Table II).

TABLE II  
THE SHARE OF NEW BORN BABIES BY NATIVE AND MAINLAND CHINESE MOTHERS FROM 1998 - 2010

Year	TFR	Total Number of live births	Babies born by HK residents parents	Babies born by mainland Chinese mothers			subtotal
				Husband is Hong Kong residents	Husband is mainland residents	Others*	
1998	1.017	52977	46868 (88.5)	5651 (10.7)	458 (0.9)	N.A.	6109 (11.5)
1999	0.982	51281	44101 (86.0)	6621 (12.9)	559 (1.1)	N.A.	7180 (14.0)
2000	1.035	54134	45961 (84.9)	7464 (13.8)	709 (1.3)	N.A.	8173 (16.2)
2001	0.932	48219	40409 (83.8)	7190 (14.9)	620 (1.3)	N.A.	7810 (16.2)
2002	0.939	48209	39703 (82.4)	7256 (15.1)	1250 (2.6)	N.A.	8506 (17.6)
2003	0.901	46965	36837 (78.4)	7962 (17.0)	2070 (4.4)	96 (0.2)	10128 (21.6)
2004	0.927	49796	36587 (73.5)	8896 (17.9)	4102 (8.2)	211 (0.4)	13209 (26.5)
2005	0.959	57098	37560 (65.8)	9879 (17.3)	9273 (16.2)	386 (0.7)	19538 (34.2)
2006	0.984	65626	39494 (60.2)	9438 (14.4)	16044 (24.4)	650 (1.0)	26132 (39.8)
2007	1.024	70394	42820 (60.8)	7989 (11.3)	18816 (26.7)	769 (1.1)	27574 (39.2)
2008	1.056	78752	45187 (57.4)	7228 (9.2)	25269 (32.1)	1068 (1.4)	33565 (42.6)
2009	1.042	82095	44842 (54.6)	6213 (7.6)	29766 (36.3)	1247 (1.5)	37253 (45.4)
2010	1.094	88495	47847 (54.1)	6169 (7.0)	32653 (36.9)	1826 (2.1)	40648 (45.9)

Number in ( ) are the % of that group to the total live births.

Source: Demographic Statistics Section, Census and Statistics Department (2011)

According to "Babies Born in Hong Kong to Mainland Women" a survey conducted by Census and Statistic Department and published in 2011, only 99 % of the babies born by mainland Chinese couples would not reside in Hong Kong after birth. And 36% of the mainland Chinese couples would not bring the Hong Kong born children back to Hong Kong in the future. The top 3 factors for the babies not to reside in Hong Kong are parents hope the children will grow up under the guidance of their parents (67%), good transportation and not necessary to stay in Hong Kong (48%) and no friends or relatives in Hong Kong to take care of the children[9]. In the same survey, the 3 decisive factors for mainland Chinese couples to bring their children to reside in Hong Kong in future is better education in Hong Kong (82%), comprehensive legal system of Hong Kong (29%) and better quality of living in Hong Kong (22%) [9]. These information show Hong Kong's education system is attractive to mainland Chinese couples and even those who are not going to reside in Hong Kong, they would still have intension to send their Hong Kong born children to study in Hong Kong.

#### B. The Issue

It is not difficult to predict the number of cross border student (M) will increase gradually when the number of mainland Chinese couples' born babies is increasing. Table 3 shows the number of cross border students (both from cross border families and mainland Chinese couples) from the school year 2004/05 to 2010/11. It shows that students who go to kindergarten have almost increased a double from school year 2006/07 to 2007/08. Compare to Table 2, the live births in 2003 and 2004, the number of babies who are born by mainland Chinese mother was increasing, especially the number of babies born by mainland Chinese couples has increased sharply. This increase shows the increase of mainland Chinese mothers' born babies to the number of cross border students is in direct ratio.

However, this does not mean cross border student (M) has increased as the numbers provided by Census and Statistics Department only shows the total number of cross border student. Referring back to the official survey quote above, the percentage of babies who are born by cross border families would be back to Hong Kong at their age 3-5 is 69% [9]. This shows many cross border families would intend to move back to Hong Kong when the children turn in their school age. When the cross border family going back to reside in Hong Kong, their children would not be cross border student. Besides, the number of babies born by mainland mothers who spouse is a Hong Kong resident is decreasing from 2006. At the same time, the share of mainland Chinese couples born babies increase greatly. Thus, the share of cross border student from cross border family would decrease due to a decrease in birth. However, the share of cross border student (M) would increase because there is an increase in birth. In 2007, the share of birth from cross border family was 11.3% and the share of birth from mainland Chinese couples was 26.7% (Table 2). In the school year 2010/11, the kindergarten cross border students was 3786 (Table 3). If the ratio between cross border student from cross border family and cross border student (M) is direct and is the same as their birth ratio, in the school year 2010/11, the ratio between cross border student from cross border family to cross border student (M) would be 1:4.

TABLE III  
 THE NUMBER OF CROSS BORDER STUDENTS FROM THE SCHOOL YEAR  
 2004/05 – 2010/11

School Year	Kindergarten	Primary	Secondary	Total
2004/05	733	2589	481	3083
2005/06	962	2998	538	4498
2006/07	797	2878	799	4474
2007/08	1456	3466	937	5859
2008/09	1780	3910	1078	6768
2009/10	2681	4090	1267	8038
2010/11	3786	4575	1538	9899

Source: Information Services Department (15 June 2011)

On 30 May 2011, a documentary made by Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK), a public broadcasting organization in Hong Kong reported that in 2004 when they first interviewed a kindergarten at Sheung Shui (located at the North District of Hong Kong), there were only 3 cross border student (M). However when they interviewed the same kindergarten again in 2011, there were 99 cross border student (M), shared 17% of the total students. The principle said ‘...the number of cross border student (M) is increasing after Hong Kong Government practice School Voucher Scheme in 2005...’ [10]. Another documentary made by TVB News, Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB) of Hong Kong on 28 February 2012, filming the social issue of mainland Chinese couples’ cross border birth. They reported that a kindergarten located in North District of Hong Kong has 240 students in school year 2011/2012, 80% of the students were cross border students and among those cross border students around 20% were cross border student (M). The principle of this kindergarten said, ‘... the demand is more than supply right now, and we (the school) is going to shift the school

system from full day back to half day because of too many students...’ [11].The matter reported in these two documentaries imply the share of cross border student (M) is increasing year by year and led to excessive demand of school in North District.

It is a fact that cross border student (M) is going to increase in the future and because of the convenient of commute, most of them are intended to enroll in schools near the Hong Kong Shenzhen border. This will apply a pressure on school places supply in the North District. From the early 1980s the total fertility rate (simplified as birth rate) of Hong Kong continue to decrease and in 2001 it dropped under 1.0. Affected by low fertility, many schools could not receive enough students. In 2003, there were 2360 empty primary school places in the North District and most of these schools were located in villages and rural areas [12]. School which could not receive enough students are either cut the number of classes, change the school system from half day to full day, merge schools together or shut down. Compare to school year 2005/6, 10 primary schools were shut down from school year 2003/04 [13]. However, from 2008, an increase of cross border students (M) had change the primary school places from excess in supply to undersupply. Therefore some cross border students have to enroll in the schools which locate at Fanling (part of the North District but a bit far from the border) and Tai Po District (south of North District). On the school year 2010/11, the North District was lacking 500 school seats for primary 1 children. Since there were 25269 babies born by mainland Chinese couples in 2008, and the survey done by Census and Statistic Department [9] showed 37% of mainland Chinese couples are intended to bring the children back to Hong Kong at the age 6 - 11. Many Hong Kong resident parents start to worry there might be 3459 cross border student (M) coming in the new school year 2011/12 and lead to a serious shortage of school places in North District. Therefore, Hong Kong resident parents start to request Hong Kong Government to give priority to children who are born by Hong Kong residents when allocating school places [14]. Although the survey said around 40% mainland Chinese couples intend to send their children back to Hong Kong on age 6 – 11, it does not reflect those children are coming back to Hong Kong to reside or for education. If those children are coming back to reside in Hong Kong, they would not turn into cross border student (M). On the other hand, if they are coming back for education and remain to reside in mainland Chinese, then they will become cross border student (M). Thus, the issue cross border student (M) becomes a hot topic in the society and also an unpredictable factor affecting the education system in North District. Identity problem is also an important issue related to cross border student (M). Different to normal cross border student from cross border families, cross border student (M) are born by mainland Chinese couples, the opportunity in understanding Hong Kong culture is much less than cross border students from cross border families. Although cross border student (M) holds Hong Kong residentship, when they are not going to reside in Hong Kong or reside in Hong Kong later in their life, it is more

difficult to change their access criteria and make them more difficult to be naturalized as Hong Kong residents. In the documentary made by TVB News, a university student who is born by mainland Chinese couples in Hong Kong in the 1980s was interviewed. She said “.. when I was young and was living in mainland China, I was called ‘Hong Kong man’ by other schoolmates, however, when I moved to Hong Kong, I was called ‘mainlander’ by other schoolmates...I was confused about my identity. Am I a Hong Kong man or I am a mainlander?...Now, when I have resided in Hong Kong for more than 10 years, I will identify myself as a Hong Kong man..’ [11]. Since there are cultural and concept of value differences between Hong Kong and mainland China, it is very difficult for cross border student (M) to adjust their own identity. Furthermore, the negative images (such as stealing Hong Kong’s resources, taking advantages of Hong Kong welfare system, etc) of children who are born by mainland Chinese couples produced by Hong Kong’s media may further generate discrimination issue among students themselves in school.

#### IV. SUPPORT SERVICES AND POLICIES

##### *A. Recent supporting services and policies*

Toward the issue of cross border students, supporting services are mainly provided by schools and social organizations such as School-Based Support Scheme for Cross-border and Immigrant Children in Hong Kong organized by Hong Kong Institute of Education. Basically, the supporting services can be divided into two parts. First, provide more opportunity for cross border students to join extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activities have been seen as an important part of a school education in Hong Kong. The range of extracurricular activities is very wide, starting from music, sports, art, volunteer, Scouting, etc. Most of the activities are sponsored by school or Hong Kong government. Therefore, students could enjoy various activities in a low cost and would not give an economic burden to parents. Second, extra supports in learning Cantonese and English. Many cross border students, including both from cross border family or mainland Chinese couples may have language issue in speaking Cantonese and learning English. Since Cantonese is the main language in teaching, student who could not understand or speak Cantonese well may affect their learning. Besides, the Chinese characters used in mainland China are different to those used in Hong Kong, schools usually provide extra lesson for cross border students to learn traditional Chinese characters. Furthermore, English learning is always an issue towards cross border students. Since the education system in Hong Kong starts to teach English from kindergarten, the English ability of local students are always better than cross border students who start to enroll in Hong Kong’s school from primary education or secondary education. Therefore, most of the language support services are helping cross border students to improve their English ability. In terms of policies, to address the needs and safety of cross border students, Hong Kong government have been assisting the schools concerned and the school bus

operators to examine the feasibility of introducing cross border school bus services [12]. The Immigration Department also provides a special channel for cross border students to commute to school.

##### *B. The future challenges*

Most of the cross border student (M) shares the same issue faced by cross border students from cross border families. However, cross border student (M) faces more serious self identification problem and generate a shortage of school places in North District. To solve these two issues, cooperation between parents, school and government are needed.

Although it is easy to understand that mainland Chinese couples send their Hong Kong born children back to Hong Kong for education because they believe Hong Kong has a better education system than mainland China. However, for the safety of cross border student (M), their parents are always encouraged to enroll their children especially those of tender age in schools near the place of their residence. Affected by the low fertility, many schools in North District have shift their running method from big classes (usually over 40 students, but less than 50 students in a class) to small class (15 - 25 students), and so the school places provided in North District are fewer than the past. However, facing the issue of increasing cross border student (M), schools in North District should have a more elastic system to adjust the size of the classes. It is well know that schools have to apply for a permission from Education Bureau to change the size of classes running in the school, the government or the Education Bureau should have a more openness program for the school to adjust the size of a class. To reduce the tension of school places in North District or to reduce the discrimination generated under competition, more communication between schools in North District and government is believed to be needed.

And to solve the issue of shortage of school places in North District, as suggested by Bauhinia Foundation research Center in a research on “education cooperation between Hong Kong and Shenzhen”, building a Hong Kong education style school in mainland, especially Shenzhen, may help to lower the danger of cross border student (M) during commute time and to save their commute time to school [15]. At the same time, building a Hong Kong style school in mainland can help to ease up the pressure of competition among those seeking admission to schools in North District. However, building a Hong Kong style school in mainland may face several difficulties. First, the differences in Education Act between Hong Kong and mainland may affect policy coordination and operation. Second, teaching license is different between Hong Kong and mainland. Therefore, extra training is needed for mainland Chinese license teachers to teach a Hong Kong style education program. Third, many mainland Chinese couples believe sending their Hong Kong born children back to Hong Kong for education is to naturalize them as a Hong Kong man (Hong Kong people). However, commuting the Hong Kong style school in mainland could not reach this aim [15].

For the self identity issue, most of the cross border student (M) could not stay in school after classes as they need more time to travel back home. To let cross border student (M) understand more about Hong Kong society, parents and schools can cooperate with each other and to promote active social participation during school holidays. For example, schools can promote more academic exchange between schools in North District and other Districts in Hong Kong. As self identity is the unique numerical identity of persons through time. When cross border student (M) have more opportunity to communicate and to contact with local Hong Kong residents and society, they could build up a stronger sense of belongs. In order to deepen cross border student (M)'s sense of belongs towards Hong Kong, the government should have a better research on the topic for future measures and policies. It is true that if cross border student (M) continue not to reside in Hong Kong in the future, the sense of belonging towards Hong Kong may be weaker than those who have resided in Hong Kong.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The increase of mainland Chinese couples' cross border birth generates a new issue on cross border student. Cross border students (M) are students who are born in Hong Kong by mainland Chinese couples. Since their parents do not have right to reside in Hong Kong, these students have to cross the border to commute to school. Usually parents are encouraged to enroll their children to the nearest school for convenience and safety. However, most of the mainland Chinese couples believe the education system in Hong Kong is much better than mainland China, so even the commute distance is a bit long, they still enroll their Hong Kong born children back to the schools in Hong Kong. Following the decrease of fertility, many schools in North District have to close or shift the operating system from big classes to small classes. However the sudden increase of cross border student (M) turns the excessive supply to undersupply. Many local Hong Kong resident parents who reside in the North District start to worry the opportunity of their children in entering schools. Therefore, the issue of cross border student (M) becomes a hot topic in the society. Although cross border student (M) have to commute a long distance from home, many schools have provide special extracurricular activities for them to join. By joining extracurricular activities, cross border student (M) could understand more about the Hong Kong culture and by having more opportunities to communicate with other Hong Kong students or people, it helps them to naturalize in the Hong Kong society. Furthermore, many schools provide extra language learning services for cross border student (M) to improve English and Cantonese skills. Although joining schools activities could help to build up a sense of belongings, many cross border student (M) still face the issue of self identification as they are not going to reside in Hong Kong in the near future. Therefore, cross border student (M) usually find more difficulties to build their sense of belongings. For the future challenges of this issue, schools in the North District and the government should have more communication and should

practice a more elastic system in managing the size of classes and provide more support to cross border student (M).

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