

January 03, 2006

To Education Panel of Legislative Council

Dear Sirs/ Madams,

Re: Ethnic Minorities' Main Concerns on Hong Kong Education

In order to promote racial harmony and mutual understanding between people of different ethnic or national origins, DAB had set up an Ethnic Minorities Committee for providing counseling and support services for ethnic minorities in July of 2005. Up to now, we already have 200 Ethnic Minorities members who are of different ethnic origins or nationalities such as Pakistani, Nepalese, Indian, Filipino, Sri Lankan, Indonesian..etc. Below are the main concerns on Hong Kong education from our DAB Ethnic Minorities Committee.

Concern (1)

Before 1998 the majority of secondary schools in Hong Kong used English as the medium of instruction. However, in the school year beginning in 1998, the Hong Kong government introduced a major policy that has inadvertently impacted ethnic minority students in Hong Kong disproportionately. This policy emphasizes the educational benefits of teaching in the mother-tongue and required 307 government and aided secondary schools to switch from the English medium of instruction (EMI) to the Chinese medium of instruction (CMI), while the remaining 114 secondary schools were allowed to continue teaching in English. This situation brings up a concern from our committee on insufficient number of EMI schools and difficulties encountered by ethnic minorities students to follow CMI teaching.

Suggestion to Concern (1)

In order to make ethnic minorities pick up Chinese language easily and achieve the objective of integrating them into the main stream, it is suggested that the education system should provide sufficient or appropriate Chinese and English language classes for ethnic minorities students in school, especially in Primary one to Primary three.



Concern (2)

Our Ethnic Minorities members concern about the location of schools as many of their children have to travel long distance of more than one hour from home to school.

Suggestion to Concern (2)

Primary one applicants taking part in the central allocation system are asked to indicate whether or not they speak Chinese on the application form. When ethnic minority students indicate that they do not speak Chinese, they will be assigned places only in the schools traditionally accepting ethnic minority pupils. Thus, students may be assigned schools which are very far from their homes. It is therefore recommended that the location of schools should also be treated as a factor in the central allocation system. A review should also be conducted on the adequacy and location of existing schools and to consider if certain schools should be relocated or add new schools.

Concern (3)

There are approximately 350,000 non-Chinese in Hong Kong. Around one third of the ethnic minorities are residents of Hong Kong and comprise people from Southeast and South Asian countries such as Nepal, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. Most of them work in elementary occupations such as construction workers, security guards, furniture removers and cleaners. The basic requirement for these occupations is always a fair command of spoken Cantonese. Thus many of these ethnic minorities frequently encounter problems in employment due to relatively lower educational attainment or their inability to master the Cantonese dialect.

Suggestion to Concern (3)

It is suggested that the government should promote a vocational Chinese Learning Campaign in order to help these ethnic minorities meet the basic requirement of their occupations. It should provide more locations and more allowances to encourage these ethnic minorities to take part in this campaign, which is similar to the vocational English Learning campaign.

It would be much appreciated if the Education Panel members would take our suggestions into consideration in depth.

Your Sincerely,

Lam Kwong Yu, Albert

Chairman, DAB Ethnic Minorities Committee