

Good afternoon everybody. My name is Siddhartha. I have lived in HK with my family for 19 years, and studied at an ethnic minority designated kindergarten and primary school. Then I had the great fortune to study at La Salle College for 6 years, where I studied and worked amongst HK's best Chinese students. Today I am a second-year undergraduate student studying Global Business at HKUST.

Today I would like to talk about how entire industries are being closed off completely to ethnic minorities (EMs), and it begins with the government's remedial measures for Chinese learning. When I was going through primary and secondary school in HK, I was taught an easier level of Chinese. When the time came to start a career, Chinese became a problem. I wanted a future in HK as a doctor, but to be a doctor, you need to fulfil the Chinese requirement. My right to choose my life's path was taken away from me when the system chose not to teach me proper Chinese. One of the current remedial measures is letting ethnic minority students take GCSE to go to university. When you have an easier exam, suitable only for Primary 4 students, schools will teach to the test. And you cannot be a doctor with Primary 4 Chinese proficiency. Based on today's Chinese education system for EMs, why don't we go to kindergartens and tell the little EM children they can never become a doctor? I went to a good high school, studied hard and did well on my exams, and received so much support from my teachers – yet my right to choose was taken away from me because of the system.

Since the Handover, Chinese language ability has become a must across Hong Kong society and even the Government. But the education system has not caught up these 20 years. It raises the question: did the government do enough to ease the transition, especially in terms of CSL education? Are all these remedial measures and "setting a good example" policies simply "passive demonstration of good intentions"?

To help ethnic minorities in HK, the government can start with restructuring its education policies. The EDB should set a proper curriculum for EMs in HK to attain instead of relying on Chinese GCSE to remedy. Teachers should be given proper training to teach Chinese to CSL students.

Second, the government should reconsider how the employment sector works around EMs. If 1% of the HK population is EM, then we should allow at least a proportionate 1% of EMs into all industries, both as a matter of equality and efficiency. Why set a Chinese language requirement if Chinese is not required for you to do your job? For doctors, not all their patients will be ethnically Chinese, not all medical specializations require language (anesthetics), and not all Chinese doctors know how to deal with EM patients. The government itself has no clue how to deal with EMs seriously. Just as it is hard for EMs to understand Chinese, it is equally hard for Chinese to understand EMs. That is why I propose reevaluating and regulating Chinese language requirements in the employment sector.