

立法會 CB(2)1069/17-18(01)號文件
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Dear chairman, members of the Legco and the government,

kya haal chaal hain sab ke? Sab kheriyat se hain? That's how confused many citizens of Hong Kong are when they apply for a job, when they communicate with a waiter, or when they cry out for help. Many ethnic minority students who grow up in non-Chinese speaking households have little access to effective Chinese learning programs. A Child born to a lower class ethnic minority family is doomed to lead the same quality of life generation after generation if they cannot communicate effectively within Hong Kong local society.

Personally, I went through relatively mainstream education system here in Hong Kong, starting from Kindergarten, and I just finished my PhD last year at HKU. I consider myself amongst the lucky few ethnic minorities to have completed my education more or less smoothly through the local system. I was one of the first few ethnic minorities to enter university through public exams and SCMP decided to publish my story as a student among the winner's circle.

However, many of my peers from school were not able to take up university courses of their choice, because of Cantonese as a second language requirement and some English medium tertiary courses are often taught using Chinese. The current alternative for Chinese proficiency is set at GCSE levels, however this is not enough to prepare them for tertiary education or even life. GCSE level Cantonese is not even at the same complexity or fluency as local Primary 2. I know people who gained an A* in the GCSE Chinese exams after studying for only a year, which again shows how low the bar is set for an alternative. And it is not fair to teach a language for 15 years only to achieve the level which can be achieved in one year.

This is all that current legislation deems appropriate that Ethnic Minority students in Hong Kong receive.

The recent allocation of funds for improving the education of Ethnic Minorities has been majorly left to the discretion of recipient schools. These institutions do not have much experience or guidelines as to how their education is to be improved, with few outlining any courses in Chinese Language Education. Many schools catering to the ethnic minorities call NGOs to ask for suggestions on how to use the funding for enhancing Chinese as second language programs. The responsibility of educating this disadvantaged group of locals should not be left up to institutional bodies, but to the Education bureau, and with transparency on usage of the funds.

Chinese courses should be tailored and implemented by Education Bureau, starting at kindergarten. With your leadership, improving Chinese education by introducing a locally tailored Chinese as second language program and providing additional support for learning to the younger generation will bridge the language gap and allow these minorities to be fully integrated into mainstream society as local residents.

Mr Syed Shakeel AHMED