

Good morning.

My name is Danilo Reyes, a Filipino, and working as teaching assistant at the City University of Hong Kong.

My children, Icy and Kiel, studies in Chinese Schools since they were kindergarten. My 11-year-old daughter, Icy, is now Primary 5. Her 8-year-old brother, Kiel, is Primary 3.

When our family decided to settle in Hong Kong in 2007, it was very clear to me: they need to learn to speak, read and write Chinese to have a future here.

Now, they are fluent in spoken Cantonese, but still struggles with Chinese language at school.

After 8 years, I am still convinced my decision to send them to mainstream Chinese School was correct. I knew this is the only way they could integrate in the society and to have opportunities in the future.

Few days ago, Icy told me: "You know Daddy, I have many Chinese friends now. I play with them. In Primary 1, it was very different. They don't talk to me". Icy now feels a sense of belonging with her friends.

Her brother, Kiel, could read a Chinese children story, simultaneously from Chinese to English to me. I was very impressed how his learning of the Chinese language has improved.

These improvement comes with a huge emotional, mental and financial cost to us, their parents.

Our experience tells that Ethnic Minority children can learn to speak, read and write Chinese. They can have future if they are given opportunities. They can acquire skills, develop their talents, master their potential, and begin to dream what they want to become in Hong Kong. Indeed, they can have contribution in Hong Kong society.

In 2014, the Chinese as Second Language (CSL) Framework was a policy in the right direction. However, since its adoption and millions of money have already been allocated yearly, I have yet to see the substantial improvements on curriculum-based support that would have direct benefit to them. We, parents are left to tackle this on our own, like spending money on Chinese tutorials. The government should develop a CSL curriculum, provide text books to the schools designed for ethnic minorities.

In my view, the CSL policy is yet to be embraced with clear understanding of its purpose: that they are meant to help the children's development and social integration. These policy should be embraced fully by the government, the civil servants and the society if they are to work effectively.

Today, I still get curious questions: Why did we send our children to Chinese Schools? Why are we making it hard for ourselves?

However, we are more hopeful now than before. You see, my child and I, are here speaking to you. Before, we felt alone.

Thank you.