

Good afternoon everyone,
I am Rabia Aslam, a year two, Biomedical Engineering student at the City University of Hong Kong.

Today I want to discuss why Race Discrimination Ordinance (RDO) should be amended to cover government powers and functions and this cannot be replaced by the administrative guidelines because administrative guidelines are non-statutory.

The Government issued the “Administrative Guidelines on Promotion of Racial Equality” in 2010 aiming to ensure minorities of different races have equal access to public services, and their needs are considered during the formulation, implementation and review of relevant policies and measures. However, the Administrative Guidelines does not cover all government departments and is not legally binding; it does not even have a system for complaint or accountability.

Moreover, I would like to address a few problems with policies recently made by the Education Bureau.

In November 2018 EDB reviewed and redefined its definition of non-local applicants for Joint University Programmes Admission Scheme (JUPAS) saying that students holding dependant visa or entry permit who were 18 years old or above when they were issued with such visa or entry permit will be considered as non-local applicants and have to pay higher tuition fees than local applicants.

However, I believe that EDB has neglected important points while making this policy as it requires case by case study. Some new arrival students may be issued the dependent visa at the age of 18 or above but what if they hold the local HK qualifications and given the fact that if their parents cannot afford the high tuition fees of their university, then in this way aren't government is indirectly taking away the opportunity of getting higher education from those newly arrived students who might just be depending on their parents and thus taking away the right of upward mobility for ethnic minorities especially when the community is consistently falling under the poverty line.

In addition to this, HK Government has introduced many support services for non-Chinese speaking students in recent years to help them adapt to the local education system and integrate into the community but my question is does government has any evidence to show how helpful these programmes are? How many new arrivals got support from these programmes or centers for Ethnic minorities and can you prove the authenticity of the data collected?

To conclude, these and many other current issues in the society reflects the government's lack of commitment to promote racial equality. And that's why amending the law to cover government powers and functions is important because without the amendment, racial equality is less protected compared to other characteristics. The government should amend the law to set a legal bottom line to hold itself accountable and should carefully consider the needs of different stakeholders in the society.

Thank you.