

## **EDB criticized over minority group failures**

By ANDREA DENG

China Daily

A 12-year-old Indian prodigy and his mother criticized the Education Bureau (EDB) on Tuesday for failing to provide any assistance to the boy, seeking placement in a gifted development study program or school.

The boy and his mother contended he was left out of school for more than two years.

Arjun Singh, who was born in **Hong Kong**, had had difficulty commencing with Grade 1 at a local Chinese school.

He said he was constantly being ordered by teachers to stand outside the classroom, as punishment for asking too many questions.

His later primary school studies were suspended when he was in Grade 5, while attending an international school.

He was told that the school could not upgrade him, and that he should instead go to a gifted school.

Scoring 128 in intelligence quotient, Singh did not find it easy to enrol in secondary schools either. He approached the Sir Ellis Kadoorie Secondary School and took a form-three examination as recommended by the EDB, only to be told that he could not just jump to Form 3, without showing the results he scored.

But within three months after that, Singh took the IGCSE, or International General Certificate of Secondary Education, and got almost straight A's, demonstrating his capability to be educated at the university level.

Nevertheless, Singh has been out of school since January 2009 when he was only 10. In between, his mother asked for help from the EDB, but the EDB never found a school that offered gifted programs in English.

"For so many years, they (the EDB) never cared that there could be gifted children in the minority groups who have special needs to be satisfied," said Anita Singh, the boy's mother.

The EDB actually did offer choices for Singh, but those were either ordinary ethnic minority schools, or local schools demanding a capability with Chinese, which Singh could not meet.

"They don't understand our needs. Even when we told them that the school was not appropriate for me, they were still insisting on that school," Singh said.

The family was shocked to learn there was a list of schools offering gifted development programs for primary or secondary students, including some English-as-a-medium-

of-instruction schools, which the EDB has never broached.

However, Singh is pursuing a university program at present, and preparing for A-Level examinations and the Scholastic Aptitude Test, and will apply to some Ivy League universities in the US, and the University of **Hong Kong**.

Fermi Wong Wai-fan, executive director of the **Hong Kong Unison**, who has been assisting Singh, said that once an EDB officer told her that he did not believe that Singh was a gifted child, and that “only his mother thought so”.

Wong criticized the EDB for its “lack of care and concern”, and its “insensitive attitude that harms the children of ethnic minority”.

“They (minority groups) have lesser accessibility of information because they don’t speak Cantonese, and so all they can do is to trust the EDB,” Wong said.

The EDB said it is offering services and resources to the schools that educate gifted children, and provides suggestions to individual gifted students.

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