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## The Standard

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### Reform call as students stumble at language bar

Concern groups are calling for education policy reform to allow children from *ethnic* minorities to learn Chinese as a second language.

The call comes from Hong Kong Unison, an organization advocating policy reform geared toward *ethnic minority* residents, and lawmaker Fernando Cheung Chiu-hung. They say the current policy fails to offer equal opportunities.

Unison executive director Fermi Wong Wai-fun said there is a lack of a Chinese-speaking environment in the 31 designated schools for *ethnic* minorities.

“In eight of those schools, more than 90 percent of students are from *ethnic* minorities, thereby causing racial segregation,” she told City Forum.

Wong said the curriculum of these schools is designed for the General Certificate of Secondary Education (Chinese) examination where grade A\* is roughly equal to Primary 2 level, which is not helpful while seeking jobs.

Cheung, also a social worker, pointed to discrimination in the education system, where the well-off can send their children to international schools that require students to master either Chinese or English plus another language.

“It is like a glass ceiling the *ethnic* minorities can never surmount,” he said. Delia Memorial School principal Chan Kui-pui said mainstream schools should deal with the Chinese-language discrepancy and foster *ethnic* integration.

One parent, Tahir Khan, said the Chinese curriculum of a mainstream secondary school proved “mission impossible” for his 15-year-old daughter.

“I invested a lot on tutors but we failed, and the struggle to catch up seriously affected her other studies,” he said. “She switched to a special Chinese curriculum, yet the school has no idea what to do next.”

Wong said the bureau should implement a “Chinese as a second language” policy to provide another exam

paper for non-native speakers.

Meanwhile, a Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong survey found more than 50 percent of *ethnic minority* secondary students feel they are treated differently because of their race.

Also, of 390 students polled from December to March, more than 40 percent said they had little or no confidence in dealing with racial discrimination in workplaces and schools.

The Chinese YMCA urged employers to actively create a diversified workplace.  
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