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***Minority* pupils to get more help**

Policy address set to announce plans for a new framework for teaching Chinese as a second language to better integrate ***ethnic minority*** children

The upcoming policy address is expected to set out plans to boost resources for learning Chinese as a second language in mainstream schools – a crucial step towards better integrating ***ethnic minority*** children into society.

The language barrier has long been cited as a key factor that has kept Southeast Asian and South Asian ***ethnic*** minorities on the periphery of Hong Kong society, living for generations in poverty.

This would be the first time the government has promised to put in place resources and a curriculum framework to help children struggling to become fluent in the local language. Those struggles inhibit many pupils from getting into top schools and push tertiary education opportunities further out of their reach.

“Having a ‘Chinese as a second language’ curriculum is non-negotiable,” Margaret Ng Ngoi-yee, executive committee chairwoman of ***ethnic minority*** advocacy NGO, Unison, said. “It is the key – we will not settle for less.

“The government must pledge to take the responsibility to set up a true ‘Chinese as a second language’ curriculum – including allocating resources, setting up an overseeing committee, and designing a curriculum.”

According to a source with close knowledge of the government’s education plans, Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying’s policy speech this month will announce plans to establish a pre-primary language-assessment system and a curriculum framework for the primary level. It will also announce plans to free up resources for training teachers of Chinese as a second language.

“There has to be a course goal, teaching methodology, teaching materials and assessment tools in a basic curriculum,” Chung Lai-ming, a Chinese teacher who has worked with ***ethnic minority*** students for a decade, said.

“I understand that this cannot be achieved in a day, but it has to start somewhere.”

Applied Chinese learning – such as teaching enough Chinese to perform a specific role – was not an acceptable alternative, Ng said.

It was necessary for the government to provide a curriculum taught in mainstream schools from kindergarten to the end of secondary school that would enable young **ethnic minority** people to become fluent in both written and spoken Chinese, she said.

If this was not “written in black and white” in the policy address, Unison would be ready to take action, she added.

“We would push the Equal Opportunities Commission to conduct an investigation to see if the government is in contravention of the [Race Discrimination Ordinance],” she warned.

The group would also consider a judicial review, she added.

There are approximately 15,000 **ethnic minority** pupils in the education system, with most attending 31 out of 852 government schools.

EDUCATION

MINORITY PUPILS TO GET MORE HELP

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MARGARET NG, UNISON

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