



Total number of document(s): 1

1 .The Standard | 2015-08-11
Newspaper | P06 | Local | By Jane Cheung

Ethnic pupils go nowhere with interviews

Admission interviews conducted in Cantonese restrict the access of ethnic minority students to post-secondary education, according to a study.

Hong Kong **Unison** yesterday released a report on how language barriers have limited ethnic minority students' access to post-secondary education. It coincided with the release of the results of the Joint University Programmes Admissions System.

Bibek Limbu, a 19-year-old Vietnamese who came to Hong Kong as a child in 2000, said he obtained 5 in English, 4 in maths and 4 in electives at the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education exam in 2013.

Limbu, who has a Chinese qualification in the General Certificate of Education Examinations, applied for an education program through JUPAS and soon received an interview invitation.

However, he was later notified that the interview would be conducted in Cantonese.

He told the university he is from an ethnic minority group and asked for an English interview, but received no reply. "It seemed I had no hope," Limbu said.

He switched to an associate degree program at the Hong Kong Community College of Polytechnic University.

Unison also surveyed more than 550 post-secondary programs in June and July this year, ranging from associate degrees to Yi Jin diplomas.

Of 257 programs, 44 percent mainly use Cantonese as medium of instruction.

Of the 51 percent that adopt English teaching completely, more than 71 percent include compulsory Chinese courses in the syllabus.

Unison said there were fewer choices for non-Chinese speaking students and even narrower choices for students with weak academic results. They were also unable to choose according to interest and aspirations, and alternative Chinese qualifications were unrecognized.

Unison research officer Yip Ho-ling said the best solution to resolve the difficulties facing ethnic minorities is to upgrade their Chinese language ability.

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