



Transparency sought in ethnic funding

Hong Kong Unison wants schools to publicize their efforts in helping ethnic minority students learn Chinese.

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Hong Kong Unison wants schools to publicize their efforts in helping ethnic minority students learn Chinese. The move would help their parents choose appropriate schools for their children, and better monitor the effectiveness of the schools' measures.

Schools with ethnic minority students have been receiving funding ranging from HK\$50,000 to HK\$1.5 million annually under the Education Bureau's Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework since 2014.

The scheme costs the government HK\$200 million per year.

The fund is targeted to help ethnic minority students learn Chinese. But how the schools spend the funds was never publicized, the group said.

Among 183 schools in Yau Tsim Mong, Yuen Long and Eastern districts, where most ethnic minorities live, 64 of them have been receiving the funds. Yet only 47 of them mentioned the endowments on their websites.

Unison project manager Mandy Cheuk Man-po said even though some schools acknowledge receiving the endowments, they don't detail what the money was used for, and how it has helped the students learn Chinese.

"We face a lack of transparency in how schools utilize the money, making it difficult for us to monitor the effectiveness of the fund," Cheuk said.

She said a funded school needs to submit an evaluation to the EDB every year, reporting how the resource was allocated, and the students' learning results.

She suggested the EDB require schools to upload such evaluations onto their websites to give parents and the public access to the information.

Cheuk also said that among the publicized materials about the funds, very few provided texts in both Chinese and English. "Providing the documents only in Chinese means non-Chinese stakeholders can never access such information," she said.

She urged schools to at least provide the information in both Chinese and English, which most ethnic minorities understand.

Khalid Khan, a Pakistani father of three, chose to send his children to Chinese schools, hoping they would be able to read and write Chinese.

However, as much as he is concerned about his children's Chinese learning, he has never heard of the school receiving any funds.

"If I know about the funds, I will go more often to the teachers and ask them about the details. I want to know what kind of learning measures are supporting my sons," he said.

Lawmaker Dennis Kwok Wing-hang said ethnic minorities should also acquire Chinese language through the mainstream education system to support their studies and employment.

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