


'Govt policy fails minority students of Chinese'

2018-05-28 HKT 16:11

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Sinlam

An advocacy group on Monday accused the government of neglecting ethnic minority students when it comes to the teaching of Chinese.

Unison said educators seem to be at a loss as to how to help non-Chinese speakers because they lack clear teaching and learning goals, and adequate teaching materials.

The government's been providing funding to support ethnic minority students learn Chinese since 2000, and in 2014 it implemented a "Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework".

But after reviewing how Chinese was taught to ethnic minority students between 2006 and 2016, Unison has concluded that the government has both failed to fully respond to the children's learning needs and to provide proper support to teachers.

Huma – an ethnic minority student – says her secondary school Chinese classes were easier than her primary school classes. She thinks she would've performed better in exams and become a more confident speaker if the lessons had been a bit more challenging.

"When I move to secondary school, my Chinese was decreasing. And I found out that my Chinese pronunciation has changed as well," she said.

Sinlam Li, a research officer with Unison, said the current "learning framework" could amount to

just throwing money at the problem.

"What is lacking is not money or resources but a proper way to support teachers and students and also a more long-term vision of what a Chinese as a second language curriculum should be," she said.

Li said the lack of Chinese-language proficiency has long-term consequences and perpetuates intergenerational poverty.

Unison said the government should take up a more proactive role, promoting Chinese as a second language teaching strategies and support measures, funding education research, and providing adequate and systematic training for teachers.

The group said there is a good opportunity for discussion now as the government is currently in the process of establishing a steering committee, to be headed by Chief Secretary Matthew Cheung, to enhance collaboration within the administration on support for ethnic minorities.