

LETTERS

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System to blame for marginalised ethnic minority students

I refer to the letter, “City’s ethnic minorities must embrace Chinese” (June 18).

Children are the biggest asset and resource of any society and essential for securing its socio-economic sustainability. Thus, it falls upon the rest of us to provide and promote an education environment that is nurturing and inclusive.

Thus, equal opportunity in language learning must be provided to all children, from their formative years, irrespective of their ethnicity and cultural background. This is the most logical solution to achieve social integration and cultural immersion.

The Hong Kong government’s efforts to prioritise education and the Education Bureau’s continuing commitment to promote Chinese language learning – in terms of the handsome funding and resources

given to schools that serve non-Chinese-speaking children – deserve applause. Equally worthy of appreciation and respect are the tireless efforts of the students themselves, in continuing to try daily to learn and use the Chinese language.

Ethnic minority parents know their children need to embrace the Chinese language. Unfortunately, the harsh reality is the environment is less than nurturing and supportive of the children’s efforts.

In March 2021, an Audit Commission report on education support measures for non-Chinese-speaking pupils listed many areas for improvement. In December last year, the Education Bureau found in its annual review of schools that many had failed to provide sufficient support for teaching Chinese to ethnic minority students.

What we need is systemic reform. It is our responsibility to facilitate quality education, especially in language learning, for all of Hong Kong’s sons and daughters, irrespective of ethnicity.

Further, we should support our children’s aspirations to maximise their potential to become proud, taxpaying residents of Hong Kong, as opposed to marginalised social welfare recipients.

Education is the only way to root out poverty, is it not? With the 2020 Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report reporting a poverty rate of 27 per cent among Hong Kong children, there is no better time than now to take ownership of the problem and act swiftly to solve it.

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