

For information

Bills Committee on the Race Discrimination Bill

**Follow-up Action on Outstanding Issues Concerning
Education for Ethnic Minorities**

Purpose

At the meeting held on 21 November 2007, the Administration was requested to –

in respect of admission to Secondary 6

- (a) provide the number of non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students who had failed to be admitted to the matriculation stream merely on the ground of their failing to pass the Chinese Language subject in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE);
- (b) address the concern that, before the implementation of the new academic structure comprising three-year junior secondary, three-year senior secondary and four-year undergraduate education, many NCS students would still be unable to be admitted to the matriculation stream solely due to their failing to pass the Chinese Language requirement in HKCEE;

in respect of flexible application of the general Chinese Language requirement for admission to undergraduate programmes

- (c) provide the number of students who had been exempted from meeting the Chinese Language requirement for admission under the Joint University Programmes Admission System (JUPAS) and the non-JUPAS route respectively;
- (d) explain the meaning of equivalent requirement referred to in

paragraph 4 of the paper LC Paper No. CB(2)377/07-08(01);

- (e) request the University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions to adopt similar minimum requisite grading under the alternative Chinese Language qualifications to be accepted;
- (f) request the UGC-funded institutions to fully implement the proposed new arrangements for university admission in 2008 and to consider whether the four NCS students mentioned in paragraph 4 of the Administration's paper LC Paper No. CB(2)377/07-08(01) could be favourably considered for admission to universities in accordance with the proposed new arrangements; and

in respect of the Chinese Language curriculum

- (g) consider the suggestion of providing a standard alternative Chinese Language curriculum for NCS students.

2. Further to the above, the Administration was requested at the meeting held on 13 December 2007 to provide information on the consultation conducted by the Education Bureau (EDB) with stakeholders including school sponsoring bodies on Clause 13 in connection with the employment of Native-speaking English Teachers (NETs) and any implementation difficulties envisaged.

3. This paper follows up the above items.

Secondary Six Admission

4. The Secondary Six Admission Procedure (the Procedure) is operated in government, aided and caput schools to assist eligible students to secure sixth form education. The procedure is composed of five stages, of which Stages I to IV are conducted by individual schools and Stage V is for central allocation of the remaining Secondary Six (S6) places, if any. Admission to S6 under the Procedure is based on a point system. Levels 1 to 5* for Chinese Language and English Language

will be converted into Points 0 to 5 accordingly. Grades A to E will be given the numerical values of 5 to 1 for the other subjects respectively for the purpose of calculating the points. In considering an application for admission to S6 in Stages I to IV, schools may take into account other factors in addition to the HKCEE results, such as the Chinese Language and English Language requirements for entry to the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE), specific grading achieved in the Chinese Language and/or English Language, etc.

5. Since a pass in the Chinese Language subject under the HKCEE is not a general requirement for admission to S6 under the Procedure, we are not able to provide the information as requested by Members.

6. To facilitate those NCS students who may prefer to attain alternative qualification(s) in Chinese Language, necessary arrangements have been made for interested NCS students to participate in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) (Chinese) examination in Hong Kong starting from 2007. In general, a Grade D or above attained in the Chinese Language paper in respect of GCSE / International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) / General Certificate in Education (GCE) O-Level is considered by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority as satisfying the corresponding subject requirements at Grade E / Level 2 in the HKCEE for the purpose of meeting the HKALE entry qualification.

7. As the release of results by relevant examination boards of these non-local public examinations may not tie in with our Secondary 6 Admission schedule, those applying for S6 admission may not be able to provide these alternative Chinese Language qualifications for consideration by schools, unless the schools concerned give special consideration and make provisional offers. In respect of NCS students who had applied for admission to S6 in 2007 and who had taken the GCSE examination, we made special arrangements with relevant schools in 2007 to make provisional offers to those NCS students who had fulfilled all other requirements for S6 admission as their local counterparts except the Chinese Language qualification, pending availability of the GCSE (Chinese) results in late August 2007. With the above arrangements, it has not come to our attention that any of those

NCS students have failed to gain admission to S6 merely on the ground of their alternative Chinese Language results.

8. Starting from 2008, we will invite schools to consider applying the following arrangements under the Procedure, and to inform students and the EDB of any specific criteria in respect of the alternative Chinese Language qualifications for admission to S6 –

- Pending the release of GCSE/IGCSE/GCE O-level results in late August, schools concerned can make conditional offers to the applicants at each stage of the Procedure, provided that the applicants have, except for Chinese Language, fulfilled all the admission requirements pertaining to the respective stage and have attained equal or higher points compared with their counterparts.
- If a student who has been given a conditional offer is later found to have failed in meeting the alternative Chinese Language proficiency required by the school, e.g. not able to attain a Grade D or above in GCSE / IGCSE / GCE O-Level (Chinese), the school may withdraw the offer.

Flexible application of the general Chinese Language requirement for admission to undergraduate programmes

9. Regarding the request for the number of students who were exempted from meeting the Chinese Language requirement for admission to the UGC-funded institutions under the JUPAS and the non-JUPAS route, information collected from institutions indicates that a total of 15 local students¹ (covering both NCS and Chinese speaking students) were admitted to Year 1 of undergraduate programmes in the 2007/08 academic year without meeting the Chinese Language requirement or

¹ For the purpose of classifying “local” and “non-local” students, “non-local students” refer to persons entering Hong Kong for the purpose of education with a student visa/entry permit issued by the Director of Immigration. Persons other than the above are regarded as “local students” for the purpose of admission to institutions. Children aged below 18, who come to Hong Kong as dependants of persons admitted to work, study, reside or invest in Hong Kong and are treated as local students for the purpose of admission to institutions and schools in Hong Kong without immigration restriction.

equivalent. For applications under JUPAS, “equivalent requirement” here and in paragraph 4 of the paper LC Paper No. CB(2)377/07-08(01) generally refer to the substitution of the Chinese Language requirement by the HKCEE result in another language other than English. However, since institutions are autonomous in deciding their admission policies, institutions may adopt different interpretations of “equivalent requirement”, particularly for admission under the non-JUPAS route. Out of the 15 students, one is identified to be admitted via JUPAS route and the rest via non-JUPAS route.

10. Members have requested the UGC-funded institutions to accept alternative Chinese Language qualifications for university admission in 2008, to adopt similar minimum requisite grading in this regard and to make provision for those students who have failed in previous JUPAS applications due to their not fulfilling the general Chinese Language requirement but who could benefit from the new flexibility to be introduced. We have taken into account Members’ suggestions in our further discussions with the institutions and are pleased to inform Members that the suggestions have generally been taken on board. Details are set out in our separate paper issued to the Legislative Council Panel on Education, and also circulated to this Committee, on progress of support measures for NCS students in the area of education. In this regard, members may wish to refer to paragraphs 2 to 6 of that paper.

Proposal of providing alternative Chinese Language curriculum for NCS students

11. On the Chinese Language curriculum, we would like to reiterate that the curriculum embraces a broad framework applicable to all students irrespective of whether they are native Chinese speakers (i.e. it provides over-arching guidelines rather than prescribes contents and standards which must be achieved by all), and it is a common practice for schools to make appropriate adaptation to suit the needs of their students. We do not prefer setting a specific, simpler syllabus for ethnic minorities as this will limit the achievement of NCS students with higher language abilities. However, we appreciate the need for a central steer and common standards in the learning and teaching of Chinese while individual

schools develop their own-school-based curricula. Against this background, we have now developed a draft supplementary curriculum guide for teaching Chinese Language to NCS students to supplement principles, strategies and recommendations in addressing the varied needs and aspirations of NCS students. Consultation with stakeholders on the draft guide is being conducted from January to March 2008. Details have been set out in paragraphs 9 to 12 of the separate paper issued to the Legislative Council Panel on Education and circulated to this Committee.

Employment of NETs and Clause 13

12. At the meeting on 13 December 2007, Members enquired about the consultation conducted by this Bureau with stakeholders including school sponsoring bodies on Clause 13 in connection with the employment of NETs and any implementation difficulties envisaged. On this, Members are invited to note that most schools entrust the EDB to recruit NETs on their behalf. For the few schools that recruit their NETs direct, they follow the requirements set out under the NET Scheme as promulgated through EDB circulars. Besides, a consultative paper entitled “Legislating Against Racial Discrimination” was issued by the former Home Affairs Bureau for public comments from September 2004 to February 2005. In general, we do not envisage any difficulties with the current wording of Clause 13, which is applicable to all concerned including those employees in the private sector.

Presentation

13. This paper has been prepared in response to Members’ request as recorded at paragraphs 3(a) to (g) of the minutes of the Bills Committee meeting held on 21 November 2007 and paragraph 6 of the minutes of the meeting on 13 December 2007.

Education Bureau
February 2008