

# 立法會 *Legislative Council*

LC Paper No. CB(2)1180/07-08(06)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

## **Panel on Education**

**Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat  
for the meeting on 29 February 2008**

### **Learning of the Chinese Language by non-Chinese speaking students**

#### **Purpose**

This paper provides updated information on the discussions of the Panel on Education (the Panel) on issues relating to the learning of the Chinese Language by non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students.

#### **Government policy**

2. According to the Education Bureau (EDB), all eligible local children, including NCS children of ethnic minorities, are entitled to nine-year free education. As far as EDB is concerned, children of ethnic minorities generally refer to South Asian (mainly Indian/Pakistani/Nepalese) children who are residing in Hong Kong.

3. The established Government policy is to facilitate early integration of students of ethnic minorities into the local education system. Parents of children of ethnic minorities can apply to schools direct, or through EDB which has pledged to arrange places for these children within 21 working days. From the 2004 allocation cycle for admission to Primary One and Secondary One onwards, students of ethnic minorities may opt for mainstream schools, or schools that traditionally admit a large number of students of ethnic minorities.

#### **Deliberations of the Panel**

4. The Panel has followed up on the subject of the provision of education for ethnic minorities since 2001. The provision of an alternative Chinese Language curriculum and opportunities for post-secondary education and

employment for NCS students are major concerns raised by members. The Panel's discussions on these issues are summarized in the following paragraphs.

#### Need for an alternative Chinese Language curriculum

5. At present, there is one Chinese Language curriculum for all learners, irrespective of whether or not they are native Chinese speakers. Many organizations which had presented views to the Panel highlighted the difficulties encountered by NCS students in following the Chinese Language curriculum. According to these organizations, EDB left it to schools to adapt the Chinese Language curriculum for different students. Different schools used different reference materials for teaching. Some schools adopted the textbooks used by local schools, while others used the teaching materials designed and developed by front-line teachers. As NCS students usually communicated among themselves in English or in their mother tongue, the vast majority of NCS students could not follow the mainstream Chinese Language curriculum during their primary studies. Their lack of proficiency in Chinese had limited their choices for quality secondary schools, and many NCS students eventually ended up with poor performance in public examinations. The ethnic minority groups stressed that proficiency in Chinese was a prerequisite for pursuing further education, getting a decent job, and improving their socio-economic status in Hong Kong. They asked for the provision of an alternative Chinese Language curriculum for selection by NCS students.

6. While acknowledging the concerns of the ethnic minority groups, members had considered the implications of providing an alternative Chinese Language curriculum for NCS students. In response to the invitation of the Panel, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) advised that while the provision of an alternative Chinese Language curriculum would not constitute discrimination against children of ethnic minorities, such provision would mean a lower requirement, and ethnic minority students studying the alternative curriculum would be regarded as less proficient than their Chinese peers in the subject. This might affect the progress and extent of integration of the ethnic minorities into the community. However, as it was difficult for ethnic minority students to learn the Chinese Language in schools at the same pace as their Chinese counterparts, EOC considered it appropriate for the Administration to explore the need for the provision of an alternative Chinese Language curriculum for ethnic minority students.

7. According to the Administration, the central curriculum framework for the Chinese Language was divided into key stages and was flexible enough to accommodate different adaptations in catering for a wide range of learner abilities and interests. Similar curriculum frameworks and adaptation approach were adopted in the Mainland, Singapore and Taiwan for NCS students. From the professional perspective of curriculum design, an adapted school-based version of the Chinese Language curriculum which was

competency-based and suitable for NCS students was essentially an "alternative" curriculum for second Chinese language learners to cater for their needs and diversity in learning without creating a labelling effect.

#### Supplementary guide on teaching of the Chinese Language

8. Nevertheless, to address the concern of some schools about the lack of a central steer and common standards in the teaching of Chinese for NCS students, the Administration agreed to develop, under the umbrella of the central Chinese Language curriculum framework, a supplementary guide (the Guide) on the teaching of Chinese for NCS students. The Guide would advise on the selection of key learning targets and objectives related to different strands, and principles of selecting relevant materials and contexts for the different needs of students, including the choice of Putonghua and Cantonese and of simplified and traditional characters. The Administration stressed that the Guide should not be taken as the provision of a simpler Chinese Language curriculum or the setting of lower expectations for NCS students. The Guide would also not be tied to a particular Chinese language examination. NCS students who were capable of following the central Chinese Language curriculum should be encouraged to learn the subject as their local counterparts and sit for the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) or the future Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE). NCS students who would prefer to attain alternative qualification(s) in Chinese would have access to the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) (Chinese) examination, which was simpler than the Chinese paper in HKCEE or HKDSE by design. The results of students in the (GCSE) (Chinese) examination would be recorded in HKDSE as for other subjects. The Administration aimed to publish a draft Guide for consultation by the end of 2007, and to finalize the Guide in 2008.

#### Access to tertiary education

9. Members considered that in the long run, it was necessary to develop another examination of the Chinese Language, other than HKCEE or HKDSE, which would be recognized by the local universities for admission purpose. They noted that EDB would arrange for the GCSE (Chinese) examination in Hong Kong in 2007 for NCS students in public sector schools. Members were concerned whether the GCSE (Chinese) qualification would be recognized as an alternative qualification for sitting the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE) and by the University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions for admission to their undergraduate programmes. Members considered it necessary for the UGC-funded institutions to specify their required standards in the Chinese Language for admission of NCS students to their undergraduate programmes.

10. The Administration responded that the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority would accept an award of Grade D or above in GCSE(Chinese) as equivalent to a pass in the Chinese Language in HKCEE for the purpose of fulfilling the entry requirement for HKALE. Currently, the UGC-funded institutions had built in flexibility in the admission process by providing a number of alternative avenues to admit students without the requisite Chinese Language proficiency. The Administration had initiated discussions with the UGC-funded institutions on the possibility of providing further flexibility in the application of the Chinese Language requirement for the admission of NCS students. In the Administration's discussion with the institutions, representatives of institutions pointed out that there should not be any discrimination on the ground of whether or not a student was Chinese-speaking as far as admission of students was concerned. Any special consideration and arrangements should target at specified circumstances which should apply to both NCS and Chinese-speaking students.

11. After discussion with the UGC-funded institutions, the Administration informed the Panel in July 2007 that it had reached understanding with them. In addition to the existing flexibility, institutions might favourably consider further flexibility in the form of accepting alternative qualifications in Chinese for students pursuing the local curriculum who had been verified by the schools concerned as fulfilling one of the following specified circumstances -

- (a) the student had learned Chinese Language for less than six years while receiving primary and secondary education; or
- (b) the student had learned Chinese Language for six years or more in schools, but had been taught an adapted and simpler curriculum not normally applicable to the majority of students in local schools.

12. Members noted that the Administration would continue to discuss with the institutions the related issues including the confirmed specified circumstances for acceptance of alternative qualifications in Chinese Language, the minimum grading for admission to specific faculties/programmes, and the mechanism for identifying the relevant students.

#### Employment opportunities

13. Members were of the view that the Administration should take the lead in the acceptance of a lower Chinese language proficiency requirement for appointment to certain civil service posts. This would enhance the opportunity for ethnic minorities for joining the civil service. Members requested the Administration to consider accepting the GCSE (Chinese) qualification for appointment to certain civil service posts.

14. The Administration explained that EDB had informed the Civil Service Bureau of its plan to run the GCSE(Chinese) examination in Hong Kong for NCS students from 2007 onwards. Department heads were delegated with the authority to exercise discretion on staff recruitment matters. It would be for the department heads to examine the Chinese Language requirement of individual posts under their purview and decide whether the GCSE(Chinese) qualification could be accepted for recruitment purpose.

### **Relevant papers**

15. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
25 February 2008

**Relevant papers on  
the learning of the Chinese Language by non-Chinese speaking students**

Meeting	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Education	23.4.2001 (Item IV)	<a href="#">Minutes</a> <a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">CB(2)46/01-02(01)</a>
Panel on Education	21.6.2004 (Item V)	<a href="#">Minutes</a> <a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">CB(2)3156/03-04(01)</a>
Panel on Education	20.1.2005	<a href="#">Minutes</a> <a href="#">CB(2)2305/04-05(01)</a>
Legislative Council	23.11.2005	<a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings</a> <a href="#">Pages 135 - 136 (Question)</a>
Panel on Education	9.1.2006 (Item IV)	<a href="#">Minutes</a> <a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">CB(2)1536/05-06(01)</a>
Legislative Council	24.5.2006	<a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings</a> <a href="#">Pages 92 - 95 (Question)</a>
Panel on Education	10.7.2006 (Item V)	<a href="#">Minutes</a> <a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">CB(2)2792/05-06(01)</a>
Panel on Education	8.1.2007 (Item V)	<a href="#">Minutes</a> <a href="#">Agenda</a>
Legislative Council	11.7.2007	<a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings</a> <a href="#">Pages 230 - 279 (Motion)</a>
Legislative Council	9.1.2008	<a href="#">Press release on LegCo</a> <a href="#">Question on "Education and</a> <a href="#">vocational training for the</a> <a href="#">ethnic minorities"</a>

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Paper</b>
Legislative Council	20.2.2008	<a href="#"><u>Press release on LegCo Question on "Surveys and studies on local residents of different races undertaken by Government"</u></a>
Legislative Council	20.2.2008	<a href="#"><u>Press release on LegCo Question on "Provision of education to non-Chinese speaking students"</u></a>

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
25 February 2008