



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部教育局
Education Bureau
Government Secretariat, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

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20 May 2008

Miss Odelia Leung
Clerk to Education Panel
Legislative Council
Jackson Road, Central, Hong Kong

Dear Miss Leung,

Supplementary Guide to the Chinese Language Curriculum for Non-Chinese Speaking Students

Thank you for your letter of 27 March 2008 referring to us the submission from Hong Kong Unison Limited (Unison) on the Consultation Paper on Developing a Supplementary Guide to the Chinese Language for Non-Chinese Speaking Students. We welcome feedback provided by Unison. The feedback will be considered alongside comments and suggestions received from various other parties and organisations during the consultation before the Bureau finalises the Supplementary Guide and examines the need for related support measures. Meanwhile, this letter provides our responses to some of Unison's requests.

Chinese Language curriculum

2. Referring to Unison's view on teaching Chinese as a second language for the non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students, we wish to reiterate that the Chinese Language curriculum designed by the Curriculum Development Council of Hong Kong provides a flexible and robust curriculum framework based on which schools have been making appropriate adaptation to cater for diverse learning needs of the students. Providing an independent tailor-made Chinese Language curriculum for NCS students would not be viable as no one-size-fits-all approach could solve all

the problems encountered by NCS students given their varied backgrounds, aspirations and needs. Hence the Education Bureau is developing, as an additional support, the Supplementary Guide, to supplement principles, strategies and recommendations for implementing the Chinese Language curriculum framework in the learning context of the NCS students. This Supplementary Guide aims to serve the needs of the NCS students, but without confining them to a “simpler” Chinese Language curriculum with pre-set lower benchmarks.

Development of assessment tool

3. On the request for assessment tools and benchmarks for NCS students in learning the Chinese Language, we are currently launching a collaborative study on Chinese language standards of NCS students with the assistance of tertiary institutions. Upon the completion of the study towards the end of this year, we shall proceed with the development of internal assessment tools that would help provide feedback on Chinese Language learning by NCS students and would in turn facilitate the teaching process.

Chinese Language textbooks

4. We have to emphasize that textbooks printed by publishers are but one of the many resources for language learning and teaching. Given the varied backgrounds and needs of NCS students, it is more effective to make use of a variety of resources embracing both print and non-print materials. Since 2003, the Education Bureau (EDB) has been sponsoring production projects on Chinese Language teaching resources for NCS students through the Quality Education Fund. In response to the need for abundant and diversified teaching resources for the NCS students, the Bureau has been collecting school-developed teaching resources that are tailor-made for different groups of NCS students. Revision is being undertaken on these resources so as to enhance their transferability among schools. We are exploring further utilisation of Quality Education Fund to pool together and disseminate such resources, and the format of dissemination. We aim to have the first set of such resources disseminated in a year’s time.

Support to schools admitted with NCS students (other than those designated for focused support)

5. Our support to schools to improve the learning and teaching of NCS students, particularly in the teaching and learning of Chinese Language, takes the form of focused support to designated schools which may then serve as the anchor point for sharing experience with other schools admitting NCS students through a support network formed. Relevant learning and teaching materials developed by EDB in collaboration with schools have been uploaded to the EDB webpage with printed copies available in the EDB Central Resources Centre for teachers' reference and adaptation.

6. We have also put in place other support measures such as training courses for primary school Chinese Language teachers, development of related teaching resources and organisation of workshops for professional development of teachers supporting NCS students, etc. through which other schools admitting NCS students will benefit directly. In terms of cash grants, we understand that non-designated schools admitting a relatively small number of NCS students generally have the capacity to deploy resources to support the teaching and learning of NCS students where necessary.

Recognition of alternative Chinese qualifications on implementation of the New Senior Secondary Curriculum

7. With effect from the current Joint University Programmes Admission System (JUPAS) Cycle, i.e. for admission in 2008, the University Grants Committee-funded institutions have offered further flexibility in the application of the general Chinese requirement to the NCS students who have pursued the local curriculum and who wish to apply for undergraduate programmes under the JUPAS. Specifically, the institutions will consider alternative qualification(s) in Chinese Language, in lieu of the general Chinese Language requirement based on the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination, for JUPAS applicants (irrespective of their race or mother tongue) under the specified circumstances verified by the schools. This is a significant step taken by the institutions to address the aspirations for higher education of those NCS students who study in our local schools and are prepared to learn the Chinese Language. The offer of flexibility will continue under the new academic structure.

Subsidising overseas public examinations in Chinese Language

8. We wish to clarify the misunderstanding that the Government is subsidising the examination fee for International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) (French). Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) has provided the French examination since the 1960s with the examination papers developed initially by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA). Subsequently, the HKEAA ceased to develop the French examination paper and has adopted the IGCSE paper of the University of Cambridge International Examinations Board instead. This has something to do with how the examination paper for French is set; it does not alter the fact that French, like Chinese Language, Putonghua and English language, is one of the language subjects examined under the HKCEE and is therefore charging the same examination fee, without any subsidy from the Government.

9. The General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) (Chinese) Examination is not the Chinese Language examination subject of the HKCEE, hence with a context different from that of the French examination under the HKCEE. Starting from 2007, we have, through the HKEAA, administered in Hong Kong the GCSE (Chinese) offered by the UK-based Edexcel International Examination Board as we understand that some NCS students, in particular those who have a late start in learning Chinese or have not been given ample opportunity to study the local Chinese curriculum, may prefer to attain alternative Chinese Language qualifications. As this is an overseas public examination, the HKEAA when determining the level of examination fee has to take into consideration the charges of relevant overseas examination board and other related operating expenses.

10. The HKEAA has in fact exercised its discretion in keeping down the examination fee for GCSE (Chinese). GCSE (Chinese) consisting of four 4 papers, i.e. listening, oral, reading and writing, is charged at the same level as the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level Examination which comprises only one paper. HKEAA will review the examination fees of these non-local examinations annually and downward adjustment would be likely if more candidates will sit for the examination.

Unified examination report with results of other alternative Chinese qualification(s)

11. As GCSE (Chinese) is a separate examination under the authority of an overseas examination authority and is outside the ambit of the HKCEE, HKEAA cannot dictate when the examination results are to be released. Nor is it appropriate to include the results in the HKCEE certificate.

12. Notwithstanding this, applicants participating in the JUPAS using alternative Chinese Language qualifications including the GCSE (Chinese) will not be affected. Under the current JUPAS procedure, applicants holding additional qualifications including the GCSE (Chinese) are required to submit the certified true copy of the relevant examination certificates to JUPAS office for processing. In practice most GCSE(Chinese) candidates have taken the examination at Secondary 5 or before and would therefore have no problems complying with the JUPAS admission procedures by the time they have completed Secondary 7 (or Senior Secondary 3 under the new academic structure for senior secondary education in future).

13. We are aware of the need to put in place transitional arrangements for the last three cohorts of Secondary Five students in 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10 seeking application to Secondary Six under the existing academic structure. Starting from 2008, we have invited schools to accept other alternative Chinese Language qualification(s) and to make conditional offers to those applicants under the specified circumstances at each stage of the Secondary 6 Admission Procedure pending the release of the GCSE (Chinese) results, provided that the applicants have, except for the Chinese Language, fulfilled all the admission requirements and have attained equal or higher points compared with their counterparts. Meanwhile, we will continue to pursue with the overseas authority for GCSE(Chinese) special arrangements for earlier announcement of the examination results during the transition period.

Incentives for Chinese Language teachers to participate in relevant training courses

14. With the encouragement by the Government, a culture of continuing professional development has been thriving among our teachers in recent years and it is not uncommon for teachers to pursue a target of not less than 150 hours of

continuing professional development activities in a three-year cycle. In this connection, participation in the training courses for Chinese Language primary school teachers and other professional development activities organised by the Chinese Language Learning Support Centre to support the learning and teaching of the NCS students is fully recognized under the above continuing professional development target.

15. I hope this letter has addressed some of the questions raised. For enquiries, please contact Ms L B IP, Principal Assistant Secretary (Education Commission & Planning) at 2892 6621.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bernadette Linn". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'B'.

(Ms Bernadette Linn)
for Secretary for Education

c.c. Unison (Attn: Miss Fermi Wong)