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Education Bureau

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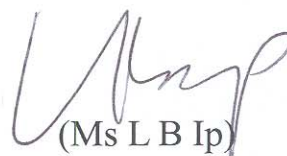
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Clerk to Education Panel
Room 203E, 2/F, Legislative Council Complex
No. 1, Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Panel on Education
Follow-up to the Meeting on 12 December 2011

At the meeting of the Panel on Education held on 12 December 2011, the Administration, under the agenda item of the “Education Support for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students”, was requested to provide relevant information in writing. Performance and progress of learning the Chinese language of NCS students, support for NCS students with special education needs and the Administration’s response to views expressed by Members at the meeting and the written submissions from concerned parties are enclosed at Annexes I, II and III respectively for Members’ reference.

Yours sincerely,



(Ms L B Ip)

for Secretary for Education

Performance and Progress of Learning the Chinese Language of Non-Chinese Speaking Students

To facilitate non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students' integration into the local education system, the Education Bureau (EDB) revamped the Primary One Admission system in 2004 for NCS parents and students to choose public-sector schools in the manner similar to their local counterparts. Alongside the above, we have, starting from 2006, collected information about students' spoken language at home through the Student Enrolment Survey as reference when formulating a series of support measures, particularly the provision of school-based support services to schools. Besides, under the School Development and Accountability Framework, we have collected relevant information about schools admitting NCS students including statistics on the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) and public examinations, students' progression to further studies (including admission to the Vocational Training Council and tertiary institutions) and through the implementation of Supporting Secondary Schools in the Teaching and Learning of Chinese for Non-native Learners commissioned to the University of Hong Kong (HKU) under the University-School Support Programme in which we have collected baseline data of NCS students before the provision of support and findings of students' performance across the years during the period of support. We also studied the relevant data and analyses on students' performance as collected by the HKU in the development of the assessment tools for NCS students' learning of the Chinese language. The above data enable us to examine the support measures which are developmental in nature and subject to refinement as appropriate, particularly in revamping the modalities of the school-based support so as to enhance the learning effectiveness of NCS students.

2. While schools admitting NCS students have their unique background and different directions in school development, NCS students generally have different starting points in the learning of the Chinese language when compared with their local counterparts. It is not appropriate to make direct correlation between their performances. Under

the overarching principle of collecting data and information to provide feedback to teachers and students to enhance learning (i.e. assessment for learning, not assessment of learning), we have collected the data and information as mentioned above and conducted the analysis particularly in comparing the performances at Primary (P) 3 of different cohorts of NCS students and the P3 cohort of NCS students upon provision of support services in 2006 and their performance when progressing from P3 to P4 and P5. It is revealed that NCS students at P3 and P6 could generally have a better grasp of the basic competencies pertaining to speaking and listening. For reading and writing, there are wide differences among individual schools and students. In fact, there are confounding factors affecting learning performance and learner diversity is common in local students, while learner diversity among NCS students in local schools has been relatively apparent in recent years with the increase of NCS students in local schools and spreading among schools and districts. That said, under the joint efforts of individual designated schools supporting NCS students and the school-based support team, significant progress in reading is observed in 2011, taking for instance applied writing (like letters, greeting cards, and invitation cards), in some P3 NCS students' basic competencies of grasping the key messages and relevant information as well as understanding different writing formats. For narrative text, the average rate of correct answers relating to questions about understanding simple text, key messages of each paragraph and the relation between paragraphs has also increased. As regards writing, taking for instance applied writing again, the proportion of students of the school meeting the requirements in purpose of writing, providing sufficient information and using the correct formats is also on the rise. An improvement trend has also been revealed in the proportion of students' performance in terms of writing concerning the use of inappropriate vocabularies and their limited knowledge of vocabularies. Since not all NCS students have participated in the TSA (Chinese Language), we are not able to provide the overall statistics. We will encourage schools including schools admitting NCS students to advise their students to participate in relevant assessments with a view to strengthening the feedback loop.

3. Seen in this light, given the support and empowerment, the learning pace of NCS students in Chinese language can be on a par with

that of local students. In fact, in 2010, about 20% (94 students) of the Secondary (S) 5 NCS students took the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) (Chinese Language) and 62 of them attained Level 2 or above. As compared to 2007 when 30 NCS students took HKCEE (Chinese Language) with 14 of them attaining a pass or above, the result afore-mentioned would be encouraging to NCS students though there is still room for improvement. For S5 NCS students taking the General Certificate of Secondary Education (Chinese) Examination, the number increased from 10 in 2007 to 190 in 2011. Among these 190 NCS candidates, the results attained by about 170 of them are recognised as meeting the requirement of Level 2 in HKCEE (Chinese Language).

4. Our progressive understanding of NCS students' performance in learning the Chinese language with the analyses mentioned above has brought to the fore the imperative of adopting a more holistic and coordinated approach in rendering support for schools admitting NCS students such that the support services are more school- and student-centred. We would enlarge the school network with due considerations to the needs of other schools admitting NCS students and would explore if the application of the assessment tools developed by the HKU for NCS students' learning of Chinese would be more structured to support schools to formulate more measurable learning targets and outcomes for their NCS students so as to meet their diverse aspirations, needs and learning paces with a view to facilitating their articulation to multiple pathways in future.

**Support for non-Chinese speaking students
with special educational needs**

The Education Bureau (EDB) provides schools with additional resources, professional support and teachers' training to help schools cater for the needs of students through a Whole School Approach. For non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students with special educational needs (SEN), while they can benefit from the support and resources pertaining to students with SEN, the support measures put in place for NCS students are also applicable to them.

2. Additional resources provided by the EDB to support students with SEN (including NCS students with SEN) include Learning Support Grant, additional teachers and teaching assistants under the Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme for Primary Schools and Integrated Education Programme, Enhanced Speech Therapy Grant, etc. Schools can deploy these additional resources flexibly to support students according to their needs.

3. At present, schools provide a variety of support for students with SEN, including small group teaching, co-teaching, individual education plan, learning support by teaching assistants, speech therapy service, language learning support programmes for Chinese and English, after-school homework tutorial classes, peer tutoring, individual or group guidance, and accommodations in assignments, assessments and examinations, etc. For schools with a larger cluster of NCS students with SEN, some adapt the Chinese curriculum for NCS students or provide alternative language subjects. Some schools also use the Learning Support Grant to employ teaching assistants who can speak the mother tongue of the NCS students to provide direct in-class support and help bridge the communication gap between schools and NCS parents.

4. As regards professional support, the EDB provides schools with educational psychology service as well as speech therapy and audiological services. Inspectors and Special Education Support Officers of the EDB

pay regular visits to schools to render professional advice on schools' policy of special education support, measures, teaching strategies, resources deployment, home-school co-operation, etc. to cater for students with SEN. We have been enhancing the School-based Educational Psychology (EP) Service by phases since the 2008/09 school year so that all public sector schools would receive such an integrated EP service comprehensively supporting schools at the three levels, i.e. school system, teacher and student levels. We have also, in collaboration with tertiary institutions, developed various assessment tools and diverse teaching resource packages for use by teachers.

5. In the aspect of teacher training, the 5-year teacher professional development framework on integrated education (the Framework) launched by the EDB in the 2007/08 school year has been implemented and reviewed as scheduled. Tailor-made courses for school heads and teaching assistants are also organised to enhance their capacity to support students with SEN. In addition, to enhance teachers' understanding about NCS students with SEN, the EDB requested the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) in August 2011 to include the elements of catering for cultural diversity as appropriate in the special education training programmes during the review of its programmes of the 2010/11 school year. In the 2011/12 school year, responding to this Bureau's advice, the HKIEd has added these elements to the Basic and Advanced Courses as well as the training programme for teaching assistants under the Framework. To facilitate teachers' understanding of the needs of NCS students with SEN so as to provide appropriate support for them as early as possible, the EDB will continue to request tertiary institutions to include elements of catering for cultural diversity in the structured training programmes under the Framework. It is expected that by the 2011/12 school year, a mass of teachers having special education training would be formed in each ordinary school. Looking ahead, the EDB will continue to provide schools with structured training programmes on special education to enhance teachers' professional capabilities in catering for the needs of students (including NCS students) with SEN.

6. Besides, we have established an inter-school support network to facilitate sharing of good practices and experiences through the Special

Schools cum Resource Centres and Resource Schools on Whole School Approach. We have also compiled the Operation Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education, in both Chinese and English, to serve as reference for schools in formulating an inclusive culture and strategies for supporting students with SEN according to their own situations. The Guide also contains recommendations and guidelines on the use of resources and establishment of an effective communication mechanism between schools and parents. We will enrich the information on support for NCS students with SEN, as appropriate, in the future updating of the Guide.

7. Early identification and early intervention are the basic strategies of the Government in catering for children with SEN. The Department of Health and Hospital Authority provide identification and assessment services for pre-school children, including NCS children, under the Developmental Surveillance Scheme.

8. Research studies¹ showed that school-age students generally need five to seven years to fully master the use of a non-mother tongue (i.e. the second language). Hence, there is a need to allow NCS students be immersed in the local language environment for a considerable period of time and be provided with appropriate support in language and learning before assessments could be conducted for suspected cases of learning difficulties. This practice, which is based on research findings, helps rule out the cases of learning difficulties caused by cultural and language differences.

9. At present, NCS students are also included in the mechanism of Early Identification and Intervention of Learning Difficulties Programme for Primary One (P1) Pupils. In the first term of P1, teachers will complete the Observation Checklist for Teachers which was developed with local norms. By observing NCS students' performance on subject learning, use of languages, social skills and self-care abilities systematically and drawing reference to the local norms, teachers identify NCS students with relatively greater difficulties in learning. To ensure

¹ The concerned research is "Milton Keynes Council (2004) Guidance on the Assessment of EAL (English as an Additional Language) Pupils who may have Special Educational Needs"

early intervention for the cases, professionals from the EDB will advise schools on the appropriate guidance for these students, such as timely adoption of stratified support in teaching, additional support in learning, and continuous review of the students' progress to adjust the intensity of the support measures. For NCS students with little progress after two years' comprehensive and holistic support, the EDB will arrange educational psychologists to conduct comprehensive assessments at Primary 3 to assess whether they have SEN and arrange additional intensive follow up services. In 2011, leaflets on the Early Identification and Intervention of Learning Difficulties Programme for P1 Pupils are translated into seven ethnic minorities languages, in addition to the original Chinese and English versions, for distribution to NCS parents, encouraging them to observe the learning of their children and cooperate with schools for early identification and intervention for their children with learning difficulties.

10. When assessing the NCS students, educational psychologists, audiologists and speech therapists will take into account their cultural and education background, life experiences and language ability in selecting suitable assessment tools and making appropriate adjustment to them. When interpreting assessment results, they will consider NCS students' learning history and other relevant qualitative information to ensure their reliability. For example, in assessing these students' intellectual ability, specific learning difficulties and attention span, educational psychologists will consider using non-verbal tests of intelligence, collecting evidences on their classroom performance, observing their social adaptive behaviour and taking into account teachers' views, etc. They will also seek to understand the parents' child rearing practices, behavioural norms of their ethnic cultures as well as family expectations and dynamics of the NCS students with the help of the culturally and linguistically competent interpreters in making professional judgment. When assessing their language ability, speech therapists will conduct the assessment in Chinese or English or assess their ability in using their mother tongue with the help of the students' parents, relatives or interpreters who are proficient in the students' mother tongue. We also advise teachers, through training, on how to identify students' language impairment, so that they can identify the language impairment of their NCS students more accurately.

Administration's response to views expressed by Members at Meeting of the Panel on Education held on 12 December 2011 and written submissions from concerned parties

(i) Support for pre-primary and newly-arrived Non-Chinese speaking (NCS) children

To enhance the quality of pre-primary education, the Education Bureau (EDB) invites kindergartens (KGs) (including those admitting NCS students) annually to apply for school-based professional support services with a view to helping teachers design teaching and learning (T&L) activities to tie in with the integrated approach adopted to facilitate children to learn languages in an authentic environment. In addition, the EDB organises frequent professional development programmes for KG teachers on how to address learner diversity to empower them to design appropriate learning activities to build up a foundation in the Chinese language among NCS children so as to facilitate their integration into the local education system and wider community.

Regarding newly-arrived children (including NCS children), we have drawn reference from other advanced regions and these children may choose to attend the six-month full-time Induction Programme or the three-month Initiation Programme to meet their different needs before enrolling in a school.

Schools admitting newly-arrived children (including NCS children) are provided with a School-based Support Scheme Grant to implement school-based measures to facilitate these children's early adaptation to school life and learning.

(ii) Setting up “resource schools” in each school net

The objective of setting up “designated schools” is to facilitate these schools to develop strategies and accumulate experiences in supporting the teaching and learning of NCS students and to share their experiences with other schools which have also admitted NCS students through an established network organised by the EDB, thereby benefitting all NCS students in local schools.

Besides, we have commissioned the University of Hong Kong (HKU) to operate Chinese Language Learning Support Centres for NCS students in various districts. The HKU has been sharing its experiences and practices as well as T&L materials developed in this regard with schools.

Premised on students’ different needs in T&L, we have made reference to their spoken language at home in planning the curriculum design, various T&L modes, teachers’ development programmes, sharing of experiences and practices through workshops, etc., with a view to focusing more on Chinese language learning activities so as to help NCS students build up a foundation in the Chinese language for integration into the local community. Starting from 2006, we have collected information about students’ spoken language at home through the Student Enrolment Survey to provide reference for enhancing the T&L effectiveness.

In addition, we have commissioned the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2008 and 2010 to conduct studies on the adaptation of NCS students in mainstream schools after revamping the Primary One Admission arrangements for NCS students in 2004 and on the practices of schools in facilitating the integration of NCS students into the local education system respectively for dissemination to other schools admitting NCS students. We will consider conducting further studies relevant to NCS students with a view to enhancing their learning effectiveness.

(iii) Early identification of ethnic minorities children with special education needs

Under the current mechanism, educational psychologists will take into account students' cultural and education background, life experience and language ability, etc. in assessing their education needs, and make adjustments where appropriate in order to enhance the reliability of the assessment results. We have also developed a checklist to identify NCS students with learning difficulties. This checklist can help schools observe students' learning so as to arrange assessments for students as early as possible.

(iv) Alternative Chinese curriculum and testing system

To support NCS students in learning the Chinese language, we have developed a Supplementary Guide to the Chinese Language Curriculum for NCS Students (Supplementary Guide) under the Chinese language curriculum framework. The Supplementary Guide, including four curriculum modes of “immersion in Chinese Language lessons”, “bridging/transition”, “specific learning purposes” and “integration”, is pitched at different learning objectives to cater for the diverse needs and aspirations of NCS students and support their learning of the Chinese language at different stages of development. These multiple curriculum modes may lead to different exits such as Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education, General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and International General Certificate of Secondary Education.

We encourage NCS students to learn the Chinese language together with their local counterparts. An alternative Chinese Language curriculum with pre-set simpler contents and lower standards will limit the learning opportunities of NCS students with different needs. Besides, the credibility of such qualifications remains to be ascertained among employers. Research findings also suggest that given the support and empowerment, NCS students can learn at a pace on par with those of local students.

NCS students who have started late in learning the Chinese language or have not been given the full opportunities to learn the local Chinese Language curriculum may choose to sit for the GCSE (Chinese) Examination. The result of the examination is recognised as an alternative Chinese language qualification for consideration for admission to institutions through the Joint University Programmes Admissions System. Moreover, to enhance NCS students' competitiveness in the workplace, a pilot scheme on Workplace Chinese Language with programmes pegged to the Qualifications Framework will be implemented this academic year. We also look forward to the synergy in this regard when the Vocational Training Council sets up one more youth college to provide specialised support for NCS students.

(v) Collecting information about ethnic minorities

The EDB has been conducting the Student Enrolment Survey to collect information about NCS students with breakdowns by school, level and district. In the 2011/12 school year, there are about 14,000 NCS students (7,700 at primary level and 6,300 at secondary level) attending public-sector schools and Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools. Among these NCS students in public-sector and DSS schools, about 8,400 are attending designated schools and 5,600 attending non-designated schools. The percentage of students attending non-designated schools has increased from about 30% in the 2006/07 school year to about 40% in the 2011/12 school year.

(vi) Conducting longitudinal study

We intend to launch a study of the possible modalities of school-based professional support that could be more efficacious in handling learning issues related to NCS and SEN students and, based on the findings of the proposed study, to pilot the various modalities so as to handle learner diversity more effectively.

(vii) Further study and career guidance for NCS students

Relevant information on post-secondary study pursuits has been included in the annual Careers Guidance Handbook published with a dedicated information counter set up at the Education Expo every year to cater for the needs of individual NCS students. Similar information in this regard has been uploaded onto the EDB's website for reference.

(viii) Building an inclusive school environment

The EDB has reminded all educational establishments including schools, through issue of circular, to make their best endeavours in supporting the T&L of all their students irrespective of race, accommodating ethnic diversity in schools, respecting cultural and religious differences and maintaining communication with parents. The EDB will continue to collaborate with relevant departments/organisations (including the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC)) to conduct experience sharing sessions for schools to further promote the inclusive culture.

(ix) Abiding by the Race Discrimination Ordinance (RDO)

The EDB has abided by the RDO to ensure that NCS students have equal opportunities in school admission, learning and further studies. Support measures have been put in place with due regard to their situations and needs. While the EDB recognises the concern of the EOC Working Group over the number of NCS students in designated schools, the enrolment of NCS students in designated schools is not by design. The provision of designated schools is so considered in the light of parental choice and well-being of some NCS students. Moreover, the role of designated schools in supporting NCS students through the development of school-based T&L materials and sharing of experiences with other schools should be recognised. We will conduct a comprehensive assessment of the existing support for designated schools, taking into consideration the needs of other schools admitting NCS students, with a view to expanding the school

network with measurable targets and outcomes for the schools which support NCS students. In tandem, we would explore the development of more T&L resources and enhance the sharing of experiences among schools.