



For discussion on 4<sup>th</sup> July, 2015

**Submission to the Subcommittee to Study the Implementation of Free Kindergarten  
Education of the Legislative Council on the Support for  
Non-Chinese Speaking Students in Kindergartens**

1. In the ‘Research on Kindergarten Support and Attitude towards Ethnic Minority Students in Hong Kong’<sup>1</sup> (‘the Research’), Hong Kong Unison found that ethnic minority students and parents faced discrimination in kindergarten admissions. The unwelcoming and discriminatory attitudes in mainstream kindergartens leave ethnic minority parents no choice but to send their children to kindergartens which are already concentrated with ethnic minority students, leading to *de facto* racial segregation in kindergartens. Hong Kong Unison also noted the lack of support in kindergartens for ethnic minority students after admission fails to help non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students acquire the Chinese language proficiency to transition smoothly to mainstream primary schools, and ensure effective communications between kindergartens and ethnic minority parents.

**Current *de facto* racial segregation across kindergartens**

2. The Committee on Free Kindergarten Education (‘the Committee’) acknowledged the fact that ‘about 4% of PEVS KGs have admitted NCS students amounting to 50% or above of their total enrolment’ is not ‘desirable from the education perspective, especially when the learning of Chinese language is at stake’<sup>2</sup>. In fact, such *de facto* racial segregation also violates the Race Discrimination Ordinance; but the Committee has not made any effective recommendation to rectify the current situation. The Committee continues to allow kindergartens to admit students at their own discretion based on school-based admission mechanisms.
3. The Education Bureau (EDB) should continuously monitor whether there is *de facto* racial segregation across kindergartens.

**Discriminatory practice in kindergarten admission**

4. The EDB should provide clear guiding principles on kindergarten admission mechanisms including **procedures, criteria, and language of interviews** to ensure non-discriminatory, open and just mechanisms when kindergartens draw up comprehensive administrative guidelines and operation manual<sup>3</sup> for compliance.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unison.org.hk/researches.php> (under education)

<sup>2</sup> P.81, Section 8.2.5 ‘Children First Right Start for All’, Report of the Committee of Free Kindergarten Education (May 2015)

<sup>3</sup> P.92, Section 9.1.11 ‘Children First Right Start for All’, Report of the Committee of Free Kindergarten Education (May, 2015)



5. Hong Kong Unison recommends the EDB and the Equal Opportunities Commission to organize seminar/workshops for kindergarten staff (both teaching and administrative) and ethnic minority parents on the Race Discrimination Ordinance. Parents should be encouraged to lodge complaints of unequal treatment or opportunity in kindergartens.

#### **Funding for kindergartens to cater needs of NCS students**

6. Hong Kong Unison welcomes the Committee's suggestion to provide grants to kindergartens admitting NCS students. Kindergartens opined that they do not have the extra administrative resources to apply for current funding such as Language Fund and Quality Education Fund to address needs of NCS students.
7. The suggested supplementary grant and school-based support should not be limited to kindergartens admitting a cluster of eight or more NCS students<sup>4</sup>. All kindergartens that accept NCS students may need extra resources to provide translation support, hire ethnic minority teaching assistants, and teach NCS students Chinese.
8. Clear guidelines should be established by the EDB on the use of grants with effective monitoring mechanism to ensure transparency and accountability to the public.

#### **Training and role of teaching assistants (TAs) in kindergartens**

9. To bring out the effectiveness of TAs, guidelines on their roles and responsibilities in kindergartens should be established by the EDB. Pre-employment and on-the-job training /qualification should be made compulsory to ensure the quality of TAs.

#### **Professionalism of teachers and principals**

10. Hong Kong is a multicultural city; a module on aspects of integration, cultural sensitivity, and teaching Chinese to non-mother tongue speakers should be made compulsory in kindergarten teacher training programmes and certification courses for kindergarten principals so they understand how cultures affect a child's learning and development.

#### **Governance of kindergartens**

11. Hong Kong Unison welcomes the Committee's recommendation to involve parents in school management committee in kindergartens<sup>5</sup>. Kindergartens with NCS students should include and support parents from different ethnic diversities to join the management committee.
12. The Committee considers it appropriate to continue to publish Quality Review reports online as quality assurance<sup>6</sup> of kindergartens. Hong Kong Unison urges the EDB to upload reports

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<sup>4</sup> P.82, Section 8.2.11 'Children First Right Start for All', Report of the Committee of Free Kindergarten Education (May, 2015)

<sup>5</sup> P.101, Section 10.1.9 'Children First Right Start for All', Report of the Committee of Free Kindergarten Education (May, 2015)

<sup>6</sup> P.17, Section 2.2.13 'Children First Right Start for All', Report of the Committee of Free Kindergarten Education (May, 2015)



in languages other than Chinese only<sup>7</sup> to ensure **equal access of information** to NCS speaking parents.

### **Parent's involvement and education**

13. As the Committee recommends, parents of different cultural backgrounds should be reached, The EDB should NOT provide information in Chinese only. Note there are 27 parent seminars/talks on kindergartens held in Chinese but only 1 in English for the 2015/16 academic year<sup>8</sup>. The Curriculum Resources/Reference Materials<sup>9</sup> listed in the EDB website, e.g. Exemplars on Learning and Teaching Activities, Quality Children Books Recommended by Kindergartens etc, are only available in Chinese.
14. The Committee sees the importance of the Profile of Kindergartens and Kindergarten -cum-Child Care Centres ('the Profile') in enhancing the transparency of operation of kindergartens. However, much of the crucial information such as Curriculum Details and School Characteristics are in Chinese only. Hong Kong Unison urges the EDB to ensure equal access of information provided in the Profile for NCS families.

### **Kindergarten support programmes under government funding**

15. Hong Kong Unison recommends expanding intensive on-site support for kindergartens with NCS students through the "University-School Support Programme".
16. District-based programmes for NCS children aged 3 to 9 organized in collaboration with NGOs funded by the Language Fund should be promoted more widely by the EDB and NGOs as they are commonly not known amongst the NCS community. The EDB should include NGOs in professional development programmes as they also help to facilitate the learning and development of NCS children through their programmes.
17. To enhance transparency and accountability of government supported programmes for kindergartens, public reporting on the funds spent and effectiveness of the programmes should be made available.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/quality-assurance-framework/qr/qr-report/index.html>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.edb.gov.hk/tc/student-parents/events-services/parents-talks/index.html>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/major-level-of-edu/preprimary/curriculum-resources.html>