



English Translation

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
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本局檔號 Our Ref. : EDB(EC) 4/2041/07

電話 Telephone : 2810 3802

來函檔號 Your Ref. : CB2/HS/2/16

傳真 Fax Line : 2110 1076

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Ms Joanne MAK
Clerk to Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Ms MAK,

**Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities
Submission from Hong Kong Unison Limited**

Thank you for your letter of 18 November 2016. Regarding the views of Hong Kong Unison on the enhanced support measures for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students'¹ learning of the Chinese language (including the implementation of the “Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework” (“Learning Framework”)), the Education Bureau (EDB) has summed up our response in the ensuing paragraphs.

“Learning Framework”

Starting from the 2014/15 school year, EDB has implemented the “Learning Framework” in primary and secondary schools. The “Learning Framework” aims to help NCS students overcome the difficulties of learning Chinese as a second language with a view to facilitating their effective learning of Chinese and enabling them to bridge over to mainstream Chinese Language classes. Developed from the perspective of second language learners, the

¹ For the planning of educational support measures, students whose spoken language at home is not Chinese are broadly categorised as NCS students.

“Learning Framework” provides a systematic set of expected learning outcomes at different learning stages. As the starting points for NCS students differ and their learning processes may vary, teachers may set progressive learning targets, learning progress and expected learning outcomes with the “Learning Framework” and use a “small-step” learning approach to enhance the learning effectiveness of different NCS students. Schools could also make evidence-based recommendations as to whether individual NCS students could bridge over to the mainstream Chinese Language classes and help them make an informed choice for obtaining different recognised Chinese language qualifications under multiple pathways.

Applied Learning Chinese (for Non-Chinese Speaking Students)

Starting from the 2014/15 school year, Applied Learning Chinese (for Non-Chinese Speaking Students) (ApL(C)) is introduced in the senior secondary curriculum to provide an additional channel exclusively for NCS students to obtain an alternative Chinese language qualification to prepare them for further studies and work. In addition to the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education qualification, ApL(C) is also pegged at the Qualifications Framework Levels 1-3. ApL(C) is designed from the perspective of second language learners and provides a simulated applied learning context for students to learn Chinese through different modes of activities. Currently, “Services” is used as context for language learning because the work context of the "Services" area generally covers the language competencies required for different workplace contexts, including daily communication, handling simple practical tasks and developing students' language competencies which could be easily transferable to meet other work context requirements and be used in daily life.

A team of professional members is involved in the course delivery of ApL(C), including personnel with expertise in Chinese Language, experience in teaching NCS students and related professional experience. ApL(C) is still a new initiative, different measures on refining the learning and teaching of ApL(C) are being explored and developed. The attendance rate and performance of first cohort of graduates will be available upon course completion in 2017.

Teachers' Professional Development

EDB continues to organise diversified and progressively advanced professional development programmes to ensure that all teachers teaching NCS students are provided with adequate training opportunities. Contents related to cross-cultural understanding have been included into the programmes to raise the cultural sensitivity of teachers. In addition, EDB has launched the

“Professional Enhancement Grant Scheme for Chinese Teachers (Teaching Chinese as a Second Language)” under the Language Fund in 2014 to encourage professional development of serving Chinese Language teachers and enhance their professional capability in teaching the Chinese language to NCS students. EDB will report to the Legislative Council the attendance and evaluation of these programmes as appropriate.

Implementation of the “Learning Framework”

To facilitate schools’ implementation of the “Learning Framework” and creation of an inclusive learning environment, starting from the 2014/15 school year, schools are provided with an enhanced additional funding based on the number of NCS students admitted. On the use of the enhanced funding, the schools concerned are required to submit an annual school plan at the beginning of a school year and an annual report at the end of the school year. The school plan and report should include information about the learning performance of NCS students in Chinese language using the Assessment Tools in conjunction with the “Learning Framework”. The schools should also elaborate on the coordination and planning for facilitating effective Chinese learning and steady progression of NCS students which include, among others, arranging a teacher at the management level (e.g. Vice Principal, Panel Head, etc.) to coordinate the overall support for NCS students’ learning of the Chinese language, to discuss with the Chinese teachers concerned on deployment of the enhanced funding, and to adopt diversified intensive learning and teaching mode(s) as appropriate with a view to facilitating NCS students’ bridging over to the mainstream Chinese Language classes. EDB in turn verifies the annual school reports through supervisory visits to schools and commissioning The University of Hong Kong to analyse the overall Chinese learning performance of NCS students using the Assessment Tools. EDB also collects feedback from major stakeholders. In brief, in the 2014/15 school year, based on the verified school reports² and overall analyses of The University of Hong Kong, NCS students (specifically NCS students at junior primary levels) can generally learn Chinese language more effectively and should be able to bridge over to mainstream Chinese Language classes in due course.

All students, including NCS students, may experience ups and downs in their learning journey in primary and secondary schools. Individual NCS students’ learning progress in Chinese language may vary due to various factors. Teachers need to continue to monitor NCS students’ learning progress even though they have been identified as suitable for studying in mainstream Chinese

² For the 2015/16 school year, schools concerned are required to submit the annual school reports by the end of November 2016 and the information would be compiled.

Language classes. Necessary support and counselling should be given in a timely manner to cater for their diversified learning needs and changes in learning progress, if any. Assistance should also be provided to facilitate NCS students' articulation to multiple pathways in light of their interests and ability. Mastery of the Chinese language is critical to NCS students' integration into the community and academic as well as career pursuits. Chinese proficiency will also benefit students in learning other subjects. Stakeholders are generally of the view that in the meantime priority should be accorded to the learning of the Chinese language and it would not be desirable to divert teachers' efforts and resources to other areas.

Alternative Chinese Language Qualifications

Recognition of alternative Chinese Language qualifications³ and provision of flexibility for consideration of admission to university undergraduate programmes for eligible NCS students who have not met the general entrance requirement of the Chinese Language in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (Chinese Language) aim at facilitating NCS students' further studies and career pursuits. As a matter of fact, NCS students vary among themselves, and may have different needs and aspirations in learning Chinese language. On the other hand, it takes time for the "Learning Framework" to take root and create a sustainable impact on the NCS students. In the long run, whether there is still a need to allow alternative Chinese Language qualifications for eligible NCS students is subject to further examination.

Evaluation

According to the advice of research and language experts, EDB has drawn up the research framework to evaluate the effectiveness of various support measures for NCS students to ensure the quality of the support measures and refine individual measures where appropriate. With reference to the advice from the experts, the support measures concerned will be reviewed based on both quantitative (such as data on the overall learning performance of NCS students including results of the Territory-wide System Assessment) and qualitative (such as questionnaire surveys and group interviews, etc.) information.

³ Recognised alternative Chinese qualifications include those under the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and General Certificate of Education (GCE), as well as the implementation of the Applied Learning Chinese (for NCS Students) at senior secondary levels.

Admission to schools

Under the prevailing Primary One Admission (POA) System, parents are provided with the option to indicate in the application form that “the applicant child cannot use Chinese as the learning medium” and in turn the choice for eight public sector (i.e. government or aided) primary schools traditionally admitting more NCS students, that may not be situated in their residing school net, under Central Allocation. Hong Kong Unison is concerned that such arrangement may lead to the relatively high concentration of NCS students in these schools which is not conducive to their learning of Chinese language. EDB revised the arrangements for part B of the Central Allocation of POA 2004 (i.e. for admission to primary one in the 2004/05 school year) to enable NCS students, like their Chinese-speaking counterparts, to choose schools in their residing school net so as to benefit from the immersed Chinese language environment of the “mainstream” schools and hence facilitate their early adaptation to the local education system and integration into the community. Subsequently, to strike a balance of views of different stakeholders with due consideration to the worries and needs of some NCS students, EDB has adopted the flexible arrangements since POA 2005 (i.e. for admission to primary one in the 2005/06 school year), under which NCS applicant children who have indicated that “they cannot use Chinese as the learning medium” in the application form may choose primary schools traditionally admitting NCS students in other school nets in addition to schools in their residing school net. In tandem, EDB has revised the Notes to Parents to appeal to parents of NCS students to take into account the aspirations and needs of their children when making school choices and send their children to schools with an immersed Chinese language environment to facilitate their learning of the Chinese language. The Notes have been translated into major ethnic minority languages for reference by parents of NCS students.

Dedicated briefing sessions (including POA) with simultaneous interpretation services will continue to be organised for parents of NCS students. Besides, EDB will continue to encourage schools to arrange school-based or district-based school visits for parents (including parents of NCS students) to help them learn more about the schools to make informed school choices. EDB has, starting from the 2015/16 school year, distributed the English version of the School Profiles to each NCS student to help parents of NCS students grasp the basic information of all public sector schools. EDB will encourage schools to keep on enriching the contents of their English School Profiles and school websites. It is believed that with more collaboration with major stakeholders especially the non-governmental organisations, parents of NCS students would be more at ease in making school choices.

Concluding remarks

Mastery of the Chinese language is crucial to NCS students' integration into the community as well as further studies and career pursuits. Language proficiency especially proficiency in learning other languages cannot be attained overnight. With the implementation of the enhanced support for NCS students, we believe these students (specifically those who have started learning the Chinese language at kindergarten level) can improve their Chinese progressively. We will continue to review the support required for NCS students in learning Chinese language and refine the support measures as appropriate in collaboration with different stakeholders so as to facilitate NCS students' mastery of the Chinese language.

Yours sincerely,
Kevin Yeung
for Secretary for Education