

For discussion on 8 January 2007

Legislative Council Panel on Education
Providing Non-Chinese Speaking Students with
an Appropriate Chinese Language curriculum

Purpose

This paper sets out measures being taken by the Education and Manpower Bureau to provide an appropriate Chinese Language curriculum for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students.

Design of the Chinese Language curriculum framework

2. The Chinese Language curriculum developed by EMB for primary and secondary schools takes the form of a recommended curriculum *framework* which gives general guidelines rather than prescribes detailed requirements. A curriculum refers to a set of learning intentions that are considered worthwhile learning. The learning of a curriculum could take the form of structured learning and learning experiences. The Chinese Language curriculum framework prepared by the Curriculum Development Council is a description of curriculum intentions which include a set of clear curriculum aims, learning targets and objectives for the four Key Stages (KS) 1 to 4 (KS1 corresponds generally to Primary 1-3; KS2 corresponds to Primary 4-6; KS3 corresponds to Secondary 1-3; KS4 corresponds to Secondary 4-6.) It covers a range of strands such as reading, writing, speaking, listening, culture and literature, moral values and attitudes, and independent learning capabilities.

3. As a framework, the curriculum is general enough to be applicable to all learners (irrespective of whether they are native Chinese speakers) who are learning the language for integration into the local Chinese society. It is flexible enough to allow for appropriate adaptation at the school level by a selection of teaching contents and materials relevant to the students' experiences of the language, daily lives, interest and abilities. For instance, the learning materials could be pitched at KS1 for a group of students who are

entirely new to the language, but the choice of life and social contexts may vary with the age of the students (young children, adolescents). Our general philosophy in curriculum development is that the design of teaching contents and selection of teaching materials can be different in different schools and in different classes even for the same subject and level.

4. The development of school-based Chinese curricula is also a common practice among international schools which teach Chinese to a student body whose proficiency in the language may be very diverse. For instance, an international school would aim at preparing the more able students at secondary level for getting a pass in relevant examinations such as International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) or General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) whereas another international school would aim at preparing most of their students for some general knowledge and skills in reading Chinese and speaking Putonghua in daily conversation.

Support for school-based adaptations

5. Against this background, we have been providing on-site support, since the 2004/05 school year, to individual local schools to help them adapt the general curriculum framework for teaching Chinese to NCS students. With effect from the 2006/07 school year, the number of schools receiving our intensive support in curriculum adaptation has increased to 17 schools, compared with seven schools in the 2004/05 school year.

6. Specifically, we have been providing intensive support through regular collaborative lesson planning with teachers, co-teaching/lesson demonstration, developing school-based learning and teaching resources and conducting assessment to track the progress of students. A range of 10-20 visits will be made to each school per year, depending on the needs and readiness of the school. So far, there has been a general acceptance and increase in the confidence of the teachers in coping with the learning needs of the NCS students. The capacity of the Chinese teachers in developing a school-based Chinese curriculum, at Key Stage 1 in particular, has been enhanced. As a result of a better understanding of the learning needs and characteristics of the NCS students, many teachers have become more adept at using a wider range of teaching strategies to increase learning motivation and

to promote integration of these NCS student into their school.

7. Anchoring on the experience of schools receiving intensive support, we have established an experience-sharing network involving other schools admitting NCS students. So far, about 50 schools have joined this network, and the experiences of different schools and examples of the learning and teaching resources developed have been shared in more than 10 sharing sessions over the years. These have also been documented in “The Teaching Album: A Collection of School Practices (2004-2005) and (2005-2006)” and the CD-Rom entitled “Caring for the children, Promoting Cultural Integration”, and uploaded on the EMB Homepage. We will continue to coordinate and consolidate the best practices from different schools with a view to enriching and modifying the teaching resources developed. We anticipate that the initial compilation of Chinese teaching resources for Primary 1 to 3 and Secondary 1 to 5 will largely be completed by the end of the 2006/07 school year, while the compilation and review of teaching resources for the entire Primary 1 to Secondary 5 will largely be completed by the end of 2007/08.

The development of a supplementary guide

8. We note that some schools and ethnic minority groups are concerned about the lacking of a central steer and common standards in the teaching and learning of Chinese as individual schools develop their own school-based curricula. As explained in paragraphs 2 and 3 above, it has never been the intention of this bureau to prescribe curriculum details to be adopted strictly by all schools in a particular Key Stage of study for each subject. That said, we appreciate that the teaching of Chinese to NCS students is a relatively new challenge for the school sector. We will, therefore, under the umbrella of the central Chinese Language curriculum framework, develop a supplementary guide on the teaching of Chinese to NCS students. This supplementary guide will 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, simplified and traditional characters. It will also be supported by examples based on the experiences of learning and teaching of Chinese language to NCS students in local schools. In drawing up the guide, we will take into account the school-based curricula being developed and the input of

relevant parties including tertiary institutions¹ and international schools. Our aim is to provide a draft guide by the end of 2007 for consultation, and to finalise the guide in 2008.

9. Notwithstanding this supplementary guide, schools should still be prepared to make school-based adaptations on a need basis, as there may indeed be great variations in Chinese language proficiency even *among* the NCS students (given the different family background, different expectations, length of stay in Hong Kong, etc.) and it is not feasible to develop a common guide which can address all variations.

Making available an alternative examination

10. The Chinese Language *curriculum*, like the curriculum for other subjects in primary and secondary schools, is not the same as specification of *examination requirements*. Usually examination requirements refer to assessment objectives, contents to be assessed, expected outcomes or levels of attainment and assessment methods; they do not embrace all topics and skills to be taught and learned at schools.

11. In other words, the supplementary guide to be developed for Chinese will not be tied to a particular Chinese language examination. It would nonetheless give advice on school-based curriculum adaptations that would make reference to the different examinations to be taken by students with different background and experiences. In this regard, the Hong Kong Examination and Assessment Authority's (HKEAA's) examination requirements of Chinese Language are aligned with most of the intentions of the curriculum framework. For NCS students who are able to attain Chinese language proficiency comparable to their local counterparts, we encourage them to take the Chinese Language paper in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), or in the future Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination under the new secondary academic structure. For those who would prefer to attain alternative qualification(s) in Chinese, we are making arrangements to administer the

¹ We are making arrangements to commission tertiary institution(s) to run a Chinese Learning Support Centre. The Centre will complement the efforts of schools and support NCS students who need extra support in Chinese, generally due to a later start in learning the language by offering remedial programmes outside school hours. It will also contribute to the development of related teaching materials and provide professional advice to EMB on curriculum development.

UK-based GCSE(Chinese) examination in Hong Kong in 2007 for NCS students in the public school sector. By design, the GCSE(Chinese) paper is simpler than the Chinese paper in HKCEE or HKDSE. The results of students in this examination would be recorded in the HKDSE as for other subjects.

12. As far as further education is concerned, our institutions, within the framework of the existing public examinations, are already able to suitably allow flexibility for NCS students when applying the Chinese language requirement. Without undermining the autonomy of these institutions in admitting students, we will continue to encourage institutions to promulgate the circumstances under which alternative qualification(s) in Chinese, such as GCSE(Chinese), will be accepted.

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