

For discussion on
9 July 2013

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Progress on Enhancing the Education Support for Non-Chinese Speaking Students

Purpose

This paper informs Members of the revised mode of support to schools to be implemented in the 2013/14 school year, other enhanced support measures and the direction of the Chinese Language curriculum development with a view to facilitating non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students' adaptation to the local education system, mastery of the Chinese Language and integration into the community.

Mode of Support to Schools

2. Upon review of the support measures implemented since the 2006/07 school year and having taken into consideration stakeholders' views, we identify two major concerns over the education support for NCS students, viz. the current mode of support to schools¹ and the Chinese Language curriculum and assessment. Currently, we have been providing an additional recurrent grant to some schools admitting NCS students to facilitate schools' arranging specific school-based support measures to cater for the needs of their NCS students. These schools have gradually developed into schools "specialised" in supporting NCS students. They are in general referred to as the so-called "designated schools", which are perceived by some stakeholders as schools that NCS students are confined to. In fact, NCS students, like their local counterparts, may choose any public sector school through the school places allocation systems. This mode of support to schools has its own merits and disadvantages. In brief, the higher proportion of NCS students in some schools has the merits of pooling resources by the schools

¹ At present, schools admitting a critical mass of NCS students, having experience in taking care of NCS students, ready to partner with the Education Bureau to develop school-based support measures and share experiences with other schools are provided with an annual grant ranging from \$300,000 to \$600,000 per annum depending on the number of NCS students admitted, and professional support services for these schools to develop specific school-based support programmes and Chinese Language learning and teaching materials, and share with other schools admitting NCS students through the school support network that we formed, so that all NCS students will benefit. These schools are in general simply referred to as the so-called "designated schools".

concerned to support NCS students. In tandem, peer support and caring for particularly children of tender age are more effective. The so-called “designated schools” have, to a certain extent, addressed the needs of some NCS parents and benefitted NCS students. On learning and teaching (L&T), the so-called “designated schools” have also played a pivotal role in the development of school-based Chinese Language teaching resources and sharing of experience and good practices, thereby supporting NCS students.

3. However, most of these so-called “designated schools” having a relatively high proportion of NCS students tend to adopt a Chinese Language curriculum with a pre-set simpler content in light of NCS students’ general difficulties in learning the Chinese Language. In fact, the schools concerned would also like to ensure the quality of their adapted school-based Chinese Language curriculum. Separately, the lack of an immersed Chinese environment in these schools is not conducive to NCS students’ learning of the Chinese Language.

4. Although we have not set any ceiling on the number of the so-called “designated schools”, many other schools admitting NCS students have concern over the labelling effect and hence have refrained from accepting the offer of the Education Bureau (EDB) of the additional recurrent grant for providing specific school-based support programmes for their NCS students. Notwithstanding the common flexible redeployment of resources (including participation in the “Project of After-school Extended Chinese Learning” funded by the Language Fund)² by these schools to support their NCS students, the diverse needs and aspirations of NCS students in these schools may not be met due to the lack of specific teaching strategies and support especially in setting appropriate learning targets and teaching strategies in the L&T of the Chinese Language.

5. In light of the above, we have decided to revise the mode of support to schools first in the 2013/14 school year with a view to providing more school choices to NCS parents, enhancing NCS students’ learning effectiveness of Chinese Language and minimising the labelling effect arising from the so-called “designated schools” system. In the 2013/14 school year, we will, based on the existing funding arrangements,

² The “Project of After-school Extended Chinese Learning” for NCS students aims at providing eligible schools with additional funding to arrange diverse after-school Chinese learning activities to reinforce what the students have learnt during lessons. In parallel with the implementation of the revised mode of support in the 2013/14 school year (with details in paragraph 5), we will expand the coverage of the Project to the so-called “designated schools” that are eligible (i.e. which have not served as “Chinese Language Learning Support Centre” to provide after-school support to their NCS students).

provide an additional grant ranging from \$300,000 to \$600,000 to schools admitting 10 or more NCS students. It is estimated that about 70 schools in addition to the existing so-called “designated schools” amounting to a total of about 100 will benefit. Unlike the prevailing arrangements for the so-called “designated schools”, under the revised mode of support to schools, schools in receipt of the additional recurrent grant are required to adopt the “Chinese Language Assessment Tools” tailor-made for NCS students to set learning targets and develop teaching strategies for their NCS students with a view to helping the students master the Chinese Language in a progressive manner and enhancing their communication with the NCS parents on setting appropriate expectation regarding their children’s academic advancement, which will facilitate NCS students’ articulation through multiple pathways.

6. With the revised mode of support to schools as mentioned above, we will fine-tune the professional support services to schools in the 2013/14 school year as well. It is recognised that schools admitting NCS students in general need extra support to cater for their NCS students as second language learners whose language environment in family and social settings may be different from local Chinese speaking students. We will step up the professional support services to schools admitting NCS students with reference to the different curriculum modes recommended by the Supplementary Guide to the Chinese Language Curriculum for NCS students (the Supplementary Guide). In so doing, different modalities of school-based professional support services have been adopted. Such services include helping teachers develop the school-based Chinese Language curriculum and the related L&T and assessment materials using textbooks of mainstream classes; conducting lesson demonstration and lesson observation; reviewing the implementation of the school-based curriculum; and developing a platform for teachers in the support network to share their experiences and resources, etc. In brief, we will continue to provide school-based professional support especially for those schools with little or no experience in supporting NCS students. We will capitalise on the practices of the more experienced schools and teachers to promote peer support through diversified modes of support such as teacher secondment and the Professional Development Schools Scheme. Territory-wide workshops/seminars will continue to be conducted to support professional sharing and wider dissemination of good practices.

7. Furthermore, it is considered necessary to equip our Chinese Language teachers, who are used to teaching native Chinese speakers, with skills of teaching NCS students. In collaboration with the Standing

Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR)³, we are planning to launch an incentive grant scheme which aims to enhance the professional capability of Chinese Language teachers in teaching NCS students. Subject to further deliberation by SCOLAR, all tertiary institutions offering teacher education will be invited to enhance their existing programmes or design new programmes to meet the specific purpose of enhancing teachers' qualifications in teaching Chinese Language to NCS students.

Enhancing Parents' Participation

8. We will organise more briefing sessions dedicated for NCS parents on school choice to encourage them to widen their school choice in light of the needs of their children. In the longer run, with the increase of schools providing specific school-based support programmes for NCS students, and the subsequent progressive changes in NCS parents' pattern of school choice, it is expected that there would be a more desirable mix of local and NCS students within individual schools. This could in turn help NCS students adapt to the local education system and integrate into the community.

9. Parents' support would help NCS students learn the Chinese Language. We have, starting from the summer of 2013, refined the Summer Bridging Programme (the Programme) for NCS students progressing to Primary 1 to Primary 4 by allowing their parents to join the Programme as well. It is hoped that through parent-school collaboration, NCS students would be better motivated in learning Chinese Language. Besides, we will, in collaboration with ethnic minority communities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), provide more opportunities for NCS parents and children⁴ to participate in diversified Chinese activities with a view to enhancing their exposure to, and use of, Chinese. This support measure would synergise with other support measures to benefit NCS students.

Direction in Chinese Language Curriculum Development

10. The mode of support to schools and development of the Chinese Language curriculum are intertwined. We will continue to collect feedbacks on the revised mode of support to refine the implementation details, including the funding level, funding tiers and usage of the funding, and will tie in with the development of the Chinese

³ SCOLAR advises the Government on language education issues and on the use of the Language Fund.

⁴ Details of the present progress of the relevant measures are at paragraph 18.

Language curriculum to enhance the effectiveness of NCS students' learning of the Chinese Language.

11. Our curriculum policy is in support of equal opportunity, social and economic integration for all students in Hong Kong. For those NCS students who do not have an early start in learning Chinese Language, the EDB issued the Supplementary Guide in November 2008 to help teachers tackle, in particular, the difficulties of second-language learners in learning Chinese graphemes, tones, vocabulary, classifiers, word order, etc., as affected by their respective mother languages. To address their practical needs further, two full sets of L&T materials in the form of textbooks, covering primary to secondary levels, were developed and distributed to schools and NCS students in 2009 and 2010 respectively.

12. The Supplementary Guide recommends four curriculum modes of “immersion in Chinese Language lessons”, “bridging/transition”, “specific learning purposes” and “integration” to cater for the diverse needs and aspirations of NCS students and to support their learning of the Chinese Language at different stages of development. Research findings have revealed that given support and duly empowered, NCS students can learn at a pace and achieve results on par with those of local students⁵.

13. For those NCS students who have the opportunity of studying the mainstream curriculum and whose Chinese proficiency is comparable to that of local counterparts, we encourage them to sit for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Chinese Language Examination. Students who have met the specified circumstances⁶ may choose to sit for relevant Chinese Language

⁵ In 2012, for instance, out of 571 Secondary 6 NCS students attending public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools offering the local curriculum, 510 took the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSEE). 25% of them (i.e. 125, and 105 of them used alternative Chinese qualifications) met the general entrance requirements of the University Grant Committee-funded undergraduate programmes. Around 40% of those who met the entrance requirements or 10% of the total number of NCS candidates (i.e. 50, and 40 of them used alternative Chinese qualifications) received offers under the Joint University Programmes Admissions System (JUPAS). For the same year, there were a total of 72 620 day-school candidates sitting for HKDSEE. About 37% (i.e. 26 636) met the general entrance requirements of the UGC-funded undergraduate programmes. Around 51% of those who met the entrance requirements, or 19% of the total number of day-school candidates (i.e. 13 596) received offers under the JUPAS.

⁶ The specified circumstances are:

- (i) students who have learned Chinese Language for less than 6 years while receiving primary and secondary education; or
- (ii) students who have learned Chinese Language for 6 years or more in schools, but have been taught an adapted and simpler Chinese Language curriculum not normally applicable to the majority of students in local schools.

examinations such as the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) or the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Subsidiary Level and Advanced Level examinations to obtain alternative Chinese qualifications when applying for admission to undergraduate programmes of the University Grant Committee-funded institutions. This will ensure that NCS students are not deprived of the opportunity to enter universities because of their not being able to acquire the pre-requisite level in the HKDSE (Chinese Language).

14. While schools are adapting the Chinese Language curriculum with reference to the Supplementary Guide, stakeholders are concerned that NCS students' standards and abilities in Chinese Language vary significantly due to their individual migration status, family background and support, etc. We also see the need to facilitate NCS students' learning of Chinese Language in a more systematic manner with a view to achieving articulation to multiple pathways for academic and career advancement. In this connection, the EDB is collecting evidence and considering the development of a more systematic Chinese Language curriculum framework with learning objectives alongside the packaged L&T materials pegged to the Supplementary Guide for NCS students in primary and secondary schools. It is expected that these resources could be more readily used by teachers for further adaptation to suit the specific needs and aspirations of their NCS students. Among them, students who can reach proficiencies on par with their local counterparts could migrate to the mainstream Chinese Language curriculum.

15. In response to the concerns that the standards/competencies in the GCSE, the IGCSE or the GCE Chinese Language examinations may not match with those required in workplaces in Hong Kong, we are exploring ways to enhance the employability of and chances for continuing education by NCS students. Indeed, we have received positive feedback from schools on the pilot scheme on Workplace Chinese Language Programme for NCS students in the 2011/12 school year, with the second batch of courses to be rolled out in the summer of 2013.

Promotion on Early Integration

16. There is a consensus between the stakeholders and us on further encouragement to NCS parents to send their children to local kindergartens⁷ for promotion of an early exposure to an immersed

⁷ Kindergartens refer to kindergartens, kindergartens-cum-child care centres and schools with kindergarten classes.

Chinese Language environment for NCS children to smooth their bridging over to mainstream primary schools. To facilitate NCS children's development of Chinese language skills and social communication skills, our local kindergartens will continue to adopt an authentic and holistic approach to language learning with a view to creating a stimulating and language-rich environment to provide children with authentic, meaningful and developmentally appropriate language learning experiences through try-outs, exploration and interpersonal interactions.

17. We have enhanced the professional support services to local kindergartens to render assistance to teachers in designing activities to facilitate NCS children's learning in a harmonious and culturally respectful environment. We have also solicited expertise from the tertiary sector through the "University-School Support Programmes" to provide intensive on-site support to kindergartens. A series of instructional exemplars will be developed for sharing and adaptation by all kindergartens admitting NCS children. Professional development programmes, seminars and workshops will also be organised to enhance teachers' capability of addressing the learning needs of NCS students and dissemination of experience and L&T materials.

18. Besides, we have, in collaboration with NGOs, organised district-based programmes for NCS children aged 3 to 9 with funding from the Language Fund in districts with a greater concentration of NCS students with a view to motivating NCS students to learn Chinese through fun activities such as games, creative art, etc. Capitalising on the experience, we will continue to organise these programmes and collect relevant data to conduct studies with a view to identifying the effective measures to help NCS students' smooth transition to local primary schools.

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