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Panel on Education

Meeting on 14 April 2014

Background brief on issues related to enhancing Chinese learning and teaching for non-Chinese speaking students

Purpose

This paper summarizes the Panel's major views and concerns on issues related to enhancing Chinese learning and teaching for non-Chinese speaking ("NCS") students.

Background

Mode of support to schools

2. According to the Education Bureau ("EDB"), it is committed to assisting all NCS students to adapt to the local education system and to integrate into the community as early as possible. Parents of NCS children can apply to schools direct or through EDB. Newly-arrived children may choose to enroll into a full-time six-month Initiation Programme prior to their entry to mainstream schools. Those who choose to enter mainstream schools direct will be provided with a part-time 60-hour Induction Programme operated by non-governmental organizations. NCS students, like their local counterparts, may choose to enrol in any public sector primary and secondary school through the school places allocation systems.

3. Before the 2013-2014 school year, the Administration had been providing an additional recurrent grant to some schools which traditionally admitted a higher proportion of NCS students to facilitate the

implementation of specific school-based support measures to cater for their NCS students. These schools were generally referred to as the so-called "designated schools".

4. After conducting a review and consulting stakeholders, the Administration decided to revise its mode of support to schools starting from the 2013-2014 school year. Under the revised arrangements, the Administration would provide an additional grant ranging from \$300,000 to \$600,000 a year to schools admitting 10 or more NCS students. It was estimated that about 70 schools in addition to the existing so-called "designated schools" amounting to about 100 schools would benefit. 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. According to EDB, the revised mode of support would provide more school choices to NCS parents, enhance NCS students' learning effectiveness of Chinese and minimize the labelling effect arising from the so-called "designated schools" system.

Learning and teaching of Chinese Language

5. There is currently one Chinese Language curriculum for all students, irrespective of whether or not they are native speakers. In 2008, EDB issued the Supplementary Guide to the Chinese Language Curriculum for Non-Chinese Speaking Students ("Supplementary Guide") which provides, amongst others, guidance to teachers in tackling the difficulties of second-language learners in learning Chinese. Two full sets of learning and teaching 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.

6. 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. The Panel noted in July 2013 that EDB was considering the development of a more systematic Chinese Language curriculum framework with learning objectives alongside the packaged learning and teaching materials pegged to the Supplementary Guide. It was further announced in the 2014 Policy Address that starting from the 2014-2015 school year, the Government will implement a Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework ("Learning Framework") with supporting

learning and teaching materials as well as assessment tools for NCS students in primary and secondary schools.

Deliberations on major issues of concern

7. The subject of education support for NCS students has received ongoing attention by the Panel. After commencement of the Fifth Legislative Council, the Panel has discussed issues related to enhancing the education support for NCS students at its meetings held on 12 November 2012, 9 July 2013 and 27 January 2014.

Chinese Language curriculum and assessment

8. One of the major concerns over the provision of education support to NCS students was the development of an alternative Chinese curriculum and related assessment for these students. The Panel noted that according to the report published in July 2011 by the Working Group on Education for Ethnic Minorities set up under the Equal Opportunities Commission, there were common concerns of which learning Chinese language was seen to be the most daunting. As reflected by deputations which had given views to the Panel, NCS students could communicate fluently in Chinese verbally, but had considerable difficulties in reading and writing Chinese.

9. After commencement of the Fifth Legislative Council, some Panel members urged EDB to take early action to honour the incumbent Chief Executive ("CE")'s pledge in his Election Manifesto to develop a "Chinese as a Second Language" curriculum and assessment. Some members considered a "Chinese as a second Language" curriculum with suitable adaptation of assessment necessary for NCS students, especially those who did not have an early start in learning Chinese. EDB was also asked to make reference to the Chinese curriculum and teaching materials used by local international schools.

10. As advised by the Administration, the strategy of providing multiple curriculum modes under a common curriculum framework was based on local pedagogical practices and overseas experience. According to EDB, research findings suggested that given support and empowerment, NCS students could learn and achieve results on par with their local counterparts. The EDB considered that an alternative Chinese Language curriculum with pre-set simpler contents and lower standards would limit the range of learning opportunities for NCS

students with different needs and aspirations. Besides, due to the relatively small number of NCS students, the credibility and acceptance of the qualification attained under an alternative curriculum might be questionable.

11. Some members expressed grave concern that NCS students would be placed in a disadvantaged position when taking the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education ("HKDSE") Examination together with their local counterparts. In this regard, the Administration explained that NCS students could sit for internationally recognized Chinese Language examinations, such as the General Certificate of Secondary Education, the International General Certificate of Secondary Education, the General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary-Level and Advanced-Level Examinations. With the approval of the Finance Committee, the ambit of the Examination Fee Remission Scheme was extended to cover these non-local Chinese Language examinations and to raise the subsidies for examination fees for NCS students¹.

12. At its meeting held on 9 July 2013, the Panel passed a motion urging the authorities to face up to the difficulties encountered by NCS students in learning Chinese and actively consider formulating as soon as possible a "Chinese as a Second Language" curriculum and assessment criteria for implementation in primary and secondary schools.

13. The Administration indicated that it saw 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. The Panel further noted from the 2014 Policy Address that starting from the 2014-2015 school year, the Administration will provide primary and secondary schools with the Learning Framework which was developed from the perspective of second language learners, setting out the progressive learning targets and outcomes at different stages, coupled with learning and teaching exemplars, supporting learning and teaching materials as well as assessment tools tailor-made to help NCS students overcome the difficulties in learning Chinese as a second language with a view to enabling them to bridge over to mainstream Chinese Language classes and sit for the HKDSE Examination. EDB will also provide, in stages, an Applied Learning (Chinese Language) subject for NCS students at senior secondary levels.

¹ See FCR(2012-13)55 for the meeting of the Finance Committee on 7 December 2012.

Other language-related support measures

14. Members stressed the importance for the Administration to formulate a long-term plan to facilitate the learning of Chinese by NCS students, as proficiency in Chinese had a great impact on the students' academic attainment. Their low attainment in Chinese might also be a major impediment to their academic or vocational pursuit. Some members were of the view that the Administration should focus its effort on assisting NCS students to acquire basic Chinese Language skills to enhance their employability. In this regard, the Administration referred to the pilot scheme on Workplace Chinese Language Programme for NCS students launched since the 2011-2012 school year, which was pegged at Levels 1 to 3 of the Qualifications Framework.

15. Members highlighted the need to equip existing Chinese Language teachers, who were used to teaching native Chinese speakers, with skills in teaching NCS students. In response, the Administration confirmed that it would step up school-based professional support services and on-the-job training for teachers to assist schools in the development of school-based curriculum and learning and teaching materials. Besides, the Professional Enhancement Grant Scheme would be launched under the Language Fund in the first quarter of 2014 to enhance teachers' professional capability in teaching Chinese as a second language.

16. In response to members' concerns about the language environment in schools, the importance of parents' participation and NCS students' early exposure to an immersed Chinese language environment, EDB informed members that starting from the summer of 2013, the Summer Bridging Programme for NCS students had been refined. Henceforth, NCS students entering Primary 1, as well as those progressing to Primary 2, 3 and 4 could take part in the Programme and their parents could accompany their children. It was hoped that through parent-school collaboration, NCS students would be better supported in learning the Chinese language. NCS parents and their children were also encouraged to take part in diversified activities at the community level to enhance their exposure to and use of Chinese.

Latest developments

17. At the Council meeting held on 19 March 2014, Hon Claudia MO raised a written question to seek further details of the Learning Framework, and whether it could serve as a "Chinese as a second

language" curriculum. In connection with the examination of the Estimates of Expenditure 2014-15, some Members also sought information on the provision of education support to NCS students.

18. The Administration will brief the Panel on the implementation details of the enhanced Chinese learning and teaching for NCS students as featured in the 2014 Policy Address at the meeting to be held on 14 April 2014.

Relevant papers

19. A list of relevant papers is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
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Relevant papers

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Education	12.12.2011 (Item VII)	CB(2)486/11-12(07) CB(2)486/11-12(08) CB(2)552/11-12(01) Minutes CB(2)590/11-12(01) CB(2)773/11-12(01) Report on the Equal Opportunities Commission's Working Group on Education for Ethnic Minorities
Legislative Council	8.2.2012	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 235 – 247 and 261 – 302 Progress Report on Members' motion on "Reviewing the education policy for ethnic minority students" provided by the Administration
Panel on Education	12.11.2012 (Item IV)	CB(4)111/12-13(03) Minutes
Finance Committee	7.12.2012 (Item No.3)	FCR(2012-13)55 Minutes
Panel on Education	9.7.2013 (Item IV)	CB(4)852/12-13(05) Minutes
Panel on Education	27.1.2014 (Item I)	CB(4)323/13-14(01)
Legislative Council	19.3.2014	Administration's answer to a written question raised by Hon Claudia MO (Question 20)