



For discussion on 12 December 2016

**Hong Kong Unison's Submissions to Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minority
Education for Children of Ethnic Minorities**

Purpose

1. Hong Kong Unison, a non-governmental organization which advocates on equal and equitable education for ethnic minority children, has been closely following up with concerned stakeholders on the implementation of the Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework (“Learning Framework”) and support measures to non-Chinese speaking (“NCS”) students in learning Chinese. This paper is supplementary to Unison’s submissions on 23rd November, 2016 following the administration’s response and discussions at the 23rd November Subcommittee meeting (“the Meeting”).

Learning Framework

2. While teachers may set learning targets and expected learning outcomes using the Learning Framework, they feel that **benchmarking** on what students should know and able to do at certain stages of their school cycle is necessary. Moreover, there should be guidelines on developing a **curriculum** that organizes teaching methods and outlines the contents/syllabus to be taught.

3. The Education Bureau mentioned at the Meeting that they are providing teaching materials to schools, i.e. textbooks. However, teachers share with Unison that there is a lack of **teaching materials and professional resources and guidance** on teaching students whose mother tongue is not Chinese. Developing teaching materials and textbook should not be the responsibility of teachers.

4. As mentioned by the Education Bureau at the Meeting, assessment tools developed by the HKU to assess the Chinese level of NCS students are used by schools which receive the enhanced funding support. Unison urges the Education Bureau to **compile assessment data** obtained at beginning and end of school terms from school years 2014/15 to 2016/17 and report on the number of NCS students in each level corresponding to the Learning Framework by year. This is crucial in determining the effectiveness of the Learning Framework.

5. Once again, Unison urges the Education Bureau to share with the public, the research framework in evaluating the effectiveness of various support measures for NCS students.



6. One cannot assume Chinese learning is easier to NCS students in schools with 1 to 9 NCS students. In fact, scholars have stated that submersion in mainstream classrooms without prior intense language instruction and continuous support system is not conducive to second language learning. Schools with less than 10 NCS students often find it difficult to allocate additional manpower and resources to develop effective support measures for their students. We recommend both **professional and student support** be made available to these schools and Government should actively promote such **free services**, instead of only asking schools to apply for the limited funding of \$50,000.

7. Unison insists the Government formulate a **comprehensive and adequate ‘Chinese as a second language’ policy** with a concrete policy goal, an implementation plan, output indicators, and a transparent monitoring and evaluation mechanism as soon as possible.

Support to NCS students and parents in a mainstream schools

8. The Government should consider allowing schools to use the enhanced funding support (for schools admitting 10 or more NCS students) on education support to **facilitate effective learning in other academic subjects other than Chinese language** particularly if these students are in mainstream schools that mainly use Chinese as the language of instruction. Chinese is not the only subject which students have to master in school life; the support in subjects other than Chinese language is as important.

9. Biliteracy and trilingualism has always been promoted by the Government in the education system, and it is always beneficial for one to learn more languages. However, many NCS students in mainstream Chinese schools where Putonghua is the Medium of Instruction in Chinese subject (‘PMIC’) learn Chinese language at the expense of the performance of other subjects which are taught in Cantonese. Unison urges the Education Bureau to provide **extra support on Cantonese learning** for these students and **review its PMIC policy** to ensure effective learning of ethnic minority students.

10. The Education Bureau responded that ‘schools could make evidence-based recommendations as to whether individual NCS students could bridge over to the mainstream Chinese Language classes’. However, parents mention they are rarely informed of the progress and the learning gaps of their children to migrate to mainstream Chinese classes. Schools are encouraged to **discuss with students and share with parents** the progress and level of Chinese



their children are at so they can assist and motivate their children to achieve the goal to bridge over to mainstream.

Kindergarten Education

11. Although the ‘Guidelines to kindergartens on admission arrangement’ stated the need to provide bilingual admission documents and interview arrangements, ethnic minority parents still seek help from Unison regarding the rejections they faced at admissions due to language barrier. It is not enough to only encourage parents to report to the Education Bureau; but active **monitoring** should be in place to facilitate early integration of ethnic minority children into the mainstream system.

12. We are surprised that the Education Bureau still needs more time to decide if **English QR reports** can be uploaded since this issue was brought to the Under Secretary for Education in September 2015. We urge the Education Bureau fulfill its accountability to ‘improve transparency’ to parents including non-Chinese speaking parents.

Placement of ethnic minority students and admission to schools

13. The Education Bureau stated in the Meeting that ‘Chinese parents may leave if their children are sent to schools where NCS students are highly concentrated’. This is an alarming discriminatory move by Chinese parents. If the reported phenomenon is true, more public education like Announcements in the Public Interests (APIs) should be made by the Government to promote racial harmony and advantages of a racially integrated learning environment.

14. With regards to Appendix 3 in the Primary One Admission (POA) System, previously if parents chose ‘box 7’, they were referred to all former “designated schools” because those schools received specific funding to implement school-based support programmes for NCS students. Since 2014/15 school year with the change of funding mode, the list (Appendix 3) only included 8 schools with a remark that those ‘schools adopt English as the medium of instruction for all/some other subjects or in all/some levels/classes to facilitate NCS children’. This in fact, is encouraging further segregation in these particular schools because there are more than 8 schools with such measure. Many NCS parents reflect to Unison that the Education Bureau staff emphasizes on Appendix 3 during Parents Briefings on POA System and when they seek assistance from the School Places Allocation Section of the Bureau. Contrary to the Bureau’s Notes, they are actually discouraging parents to send their children to schools with a



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Chinese language environment. Parents mentioned that they are concerned about the support for their children, and not selecting schools that traditionally admit more NCS students. Unison suggests the Education Bureau makes a remark on all schools that provide **support programmes for NCS students** so parents can make more informed choices.

Conclusion

15. Although the Learning Framework has only been launched for two years, the ethnic minority community has waited more than a decade for better education support. Unison maintains that only a comprehensive policy with clear guidelines and procedures can enable ethnic minority students attain equity in education. The mastery of Chinese will open up new possibilities for intellectual and social development, educational attainment, career advancement, personal fulfilment, and cultural understanding.