



For discussion on 9 July 2018

**Joint submission of Voices of Diversity and Hong Kong Unison
to Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities
on the work of the Ethnic Minorities Steering Committee**

Preamble

Voices of Diversity, a diverse group of ethnic minorities concerned about government policies that affect our community, and Hong Kong Unison ('Unison'), a local non-governmental organization advocating racial integration through policy changes, jointly prepare this submission regarding the Ethnic Minorities Steering Committee newly established under the Chief Secretary for enhancing collaboration within the Government on support for ethnic minorities, and regarding the \$500 million set aside for this purpose.

Recommendations

1. There is an abundance of research already published regarding the situation of ethnic minorities and the challenges facing them; the Chief Secretary has also previously met with and consulted ethnic minorities in-person including members of Voices of Diversity as well as service users of Hong Kong Unison. Instead of assessing anew problems facing ethnic minorities, the Steering Committee should consolidate these existing information and recommendations, create a list of priorities and start working on these issues.
2. We call on the government to address the root causes of the problems facing the ethnic minority communities; the short-term and stop-gap measures currently in place have been largely ineffective. The Steering Committee should lead the government to find new and genuine solutions to eradicate these long-standing problems. For example, currently non-Chinese speaking students are allowed to take alternative Chinese examinations in place of DSE Chinese to apply for university; while this measure allows the government to circumvent the problem of ethnic minorities' Chinese learning in the short run and promotes ethnic minority students' representation in university programs, it limits ethnic minorities' further education and employment opportunities as well as affects their social integration.



3. Regarding long-standing problems facing the ethnic minority community, the Steering Committee may take reference from overseas best practices to develop solutions. Issues which overseas experience may shed light on include the phenomenon of *de facto* racial segregation in public schools, helping newly-arrived children learn Chinese from a second language perspective before integrating them into the mainstream school system, etc.
4. To ensure progress is made in a timely manner and the desired outcomes are achieved, the Steering Committee should formulate short-term and long-term plans with concrete objectives, milestones, timetable and key performance indicators (KPIs).
5. The Steering Committee must be committed to gathering views from a wide base of ethnic minorities covering different racial, ethnic, religious, socio-economic, age, professional, education backgrounds in order to maximize the representation of ethnic minority views in the Steering Committee. As far as research shows, Steering Committees formed under the government usually have a list of non-official members who are stakeholders of the particular issue in concern. The Chief Secretary has announced that the Ethnic Minority Steering Committee will not have non-official members; at the same time, ethnic minorities are not widely and evenly represented in the government. It is therefore of utmost importance that the Steering Committee establishes channels to solicit the views of ethnic minorities. The Steering Committee should actively reach out to the ethnic minority community and concerned groups, and arrange regular consultation to maximize community participation and to make best use of existing networks in order to create policies that truly reflect the needs of the community.
6. The work of the Steering Committee and the \$500 million allocated to the purpose should be made accountable and transparent to the community. Meeting documents and minutes should be available in English at the least and uploaded to a designated website for the public to monitor the progress of the Steering Committee and to evaluate its effectiveness.
7. We are concerned about suggestions made regarding holding more cultural activities or fairs. We hope that the Steering Committee will focus on achieving genuine social integration in Hong Kong, instead of holding one-off events that consume ethnic minorities'



culture and put them on display without addressing fundamental issues such as the equal rights of ethnic minorities, negative stereotypes of ethnic minorities, etc.

8. We think that the work of the Steering Committee should be framed as not only relevant and beneficial to the ethnic minority community but also to the wider Hong Kong society. Ethnic minorities are an integral part of Hong Kong society. By fundamentally addressing the issues faced by the ethnic minority community, the Steering Committee will promote the general well-being of the entire Hong Kong society. The Steering Committee should communicate this vision to the general public.
9. The Steering Committee should coordinate and communicate among government departments in order for various bureaux and departments to attain a uniform understanding of the situation of ethnic minorities and challenges facing them, and devise workable and effective measures accordingly. This will help eliminate policy mismatch as demonstrated by the Civil Service Bureau's recent effort to lower the Chinese Language Proficiency Requirements of various civil service positions to Level 1 in the Use of Chinese (UC) paper, Secondary 3 level, and Primary 6 level respectively, while currently the majority of ethnic minority students graduate from twelve years of public education holding GCSE Chinese qualification which is equivalent to mainstream Primary two level. Effectively the only adjustment that ethnic minorities can "take advantage of" is the language adjustment of the Chainman which is reduced from Primary 6 level to written proficiency in simple Chinese.
10. To conclude, we have high hopes for the Ethnic Minority Steering Committee. We hope the Steering Committee will be a visionary initiative to jump-start the government's effort to fundamentally address the problems facing the ethnic minority community with its ears to the ground, and at the same time with high transparency and accountability to the public regarding its progress and funding.



Appendix

List of issue-based recommendations for the Steering Committee's consideration:

1. The major flaws in the Race Discrimination Ordinance (RDO) should be amended within the next two years. The RDO is the weakest discrimination ordinance in Hong Kong and affords little protection against race discrimination especially in terms of the performance of government powers and functions, discrimination against a person's nationality and medium of instruction in education and vocational training bodies (i.e. institutions can opt to only offer courses in Chinese; ethnic minorities with a lower level of Chinese abilities are automatically barred from these options). The Government needs rectify the gaps in the RDO as soon as possible and include the high priority recommendations made by the Equal Opportunities Commission after the Discrimination Law Review exercise, and come up with an amendment bill. Part of the \$5 million allocated for this Steering Committee should be used to provide internal racial equality training for civil servants.
2. **Pilot project** to develop a Chinese language curriculum for NCS students from Primary One to Six with stage learning objectives coupled with teaching and learning materials for Primary One to Primary Six ethnic minority students. Primary education is a key stage for NCS students to build up their Chinese language fluency, yet often they are taught low level of Chinese at school. With appropriate curriculum and teaching materials, ethnic minority children who are born and raised in Hong Kong can bridge-over to mainstream Chinese language class by Form One.
3. Support for NCS students in **other subjects taught in Chinese**. Under the Mother Tongue Policy, students use Chinese to learn subjects apart from Chinese Language; what NCS students are learning in Chinese lessons may not be adequate for them to learn other subjects well. A dedicated team in the EDB should be set up to develop teaching resources and organize workshops for teachers to support NCS students who have difficulties learning other subjects taught in Chinese; including but not limited to subjects such as General Studies, Arithmetic, Mathematics, Chinese History and Liberal Studies, etc.
4. Support **Cantonese language learning** for NCS students in schools which adopt PMIC (Using Putonghua as the Medium of Instruction in Chinese Lesson). Chinese lessons are one of the few avenues for NCS students to acquire Cantonese abilities, crucial for their learning of other subjects taught in Cantonese as well as daily communications. The EDB should commission academic institutions to provide Cantonese support programmes/ additional Cantonese remedial classes for NCS students in schools which adopt PMIC.



5. Step up **accountability and transparency for free kindergartens**. Translate the Quality Review Reports¹ into English for improved accountability and transparency for the non-Chinese speaking community.
6. **Systematic teacher training** to cater the learning needs of NCS students. Ethnic minority students in mainstream schools will become a norm, therefore teachers should be given systematic professional development to cater the learning needs of ethnic minority students. Training courses and ratio of trained teachers should be structured with reference to BAT courses² for SEN students.
7. **2-point increment** in salary and professional ladder for teachers who are professionally trained in teaching Chinese as a Second Language. Mrs. Carrie Lam in her Election Manifesto mentioned “establishing a professional ladder for primary and secondary school teachers, recognizing teachers with expertise in certain subjects, and encouraging teachers to acquire specialized skills in teaching Chinese as a second language.” Teachers who completed training upon the Professional Enhancement Grant Scheme for Chinese Teachers (Teaching Chinese as a Second Language) receive a two-point salary increment in recognition of their expertise.
8. **4-year longitudinal study** to track the adaptation and development of non-Chinese speaking children in pre-school stage. Kindergarten is often where NCS children are first exposed to the Chinese language; whether and how the learning needs of ethnic minority children are being met should be better understood. The EDB should commission a longitudinal study to track the adaptation and development of NCS children from K1 to P1 in existing support programmes to understand NCS students’ learning needs and capture good practices of schools to ensure early integration of NCS students in the mainstream education system.
9. **The EDB should establish a clear and forward-looking Chinese as a second language policy**, provide schools and teachers with guidelines and benchmarks, teaching methods and assessments, as well as staged learning objectives and appropriate teaching materials to enable ethnic minority students gradually transition to mainstream Chinese language curriculum. Having Chinese abilities comparable to their native Chinese speaking peers will ensure ethnic minority youth’s competitiveness in the job market as well as their social integration.
10. Before a systematic and effective CSL education policy is implemented, as a short-term measure for ethnic minority students who have received local education since

¹ <http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/quality-assurance-framework/gr/gr-report/index.html>

² <http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/special/sen-training/index.html>



kindergarten and early primary, the EDB should consider relaxing the eligibility for subsidy on “alternative Chinese language qualifications” currently only available to Form 4 to 6 students, to encourage lower-form students who have already attained the necessary proficiency to sit for these exams, encourage students and teachers to set a higher Chinese learning goal, and allow students to have adequate Chinese language ability to face academic assessments in the upper forms.

11. **The EDB should update and revise the "Supplementary Guidelines for Chinese Language Courses (Non-Chinese Speaking Students)" (2008)** to include and promote effective CSL teaching strategies and support measures to mainstream schools that accept NCS students. The EDB should also further scrutinise the effectiveness of such methods based on the feedback of front-lined educators and to make necessary amendments.
12. **The EDB should take an active role in the systematic consolidation of CSL research results** so that the formulation of future policies be based on empirical data and indicators can be developed for monitoring. The Bureau should take lead to conduct a longitudinal research on the learning and teaching of NCS students, so stakeholders can better understand CSL teaching strategies, the effectiveness and the application of which currently remains unclear.
13. **The EDB should provide adequate and systematic pre-service and in-service training**, including CSL training for Chinese subject teacher and cultural sensitivity training for teachers’ teaching other subjects. Incentive should be provided for schools to arrange their teachers to participate in these trainings.
14. **The EDB should strengthen its monitoring of kindergartens, primary and secondary schools.** NCS parents and students are being discouraged when applying for school admission, and little to no assistance have been provided. Proactive measures should be adopted to monitor the ethnic minority ratio in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools to prevent the phenomenon of *de facto* racial segregation and promote social integration.
15. **The EDB should improve the existing “Initiation Programme” and “Induction Programme”**, in order to allow new-arrival ethnic minority students. Currently, NCS students arriving in Hong Kong speaking only English or neither Chinese nor English struggle to adapt to local Chinese education, and the burden of dealing with learning differences falls entirely on teachers. The EDB should provide intensive language and bridging programmes, and intensify the promotion of these programmes; it should provide school-based intensified programme to these students after they have enrolled in school, until they can effectively learn using Chinese.



16. **The Government should collect data on ethnic minorities in a systematic manner.**
To set Chinese language policy that can help ethnic minorities learn the language well, it is crucial to know what proportion of the ethnic minority population are locally born and raised or otherwise.
17. The EDB should **improve its monitoring mechanism to ensure schools receiving funding under the Learning Framework** are effectively utilising the funding allocated for the purposes of adequately helping and supporting ethnic minority students' Chinese learning. The EDB should also evaluate the effectiveness and review the use of the funding to each school for Chinese learning every year. The EDB should also provide guidelines on how the funding can be best use to provide Chinese learning support to non-Chinese speaking students. Schools receiving funding under the Learning Framework should upload their reports in English.
18. The EDB should implement admission and segregation-related guidelines with an aim to eliminate all language-based discrimination in the admission process and segregation in schools. Penalties should be set up for schools that did not take reasonable steps to eliminating these phenomena.