

Submission to the Legislative Council Subcommittee on Children's Rights

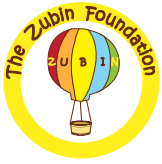
Saturday 25th March 2017

The Zubin Foundation is a local registered charity focusing on social issues that do not get enough attention in Hong Kong, particularly relating to ethnic minorities. We are currently conducting a landscape study on primary education for Non-Chinese Speaking children with Special Educational Needs in Hong Kong, and our findings will be released in October 2017.

In February 2017, Policy 21 released their '*Study on the Provision of International School Places in Hong Kong*', commissioned by the Education Bureau. Three of their five recommendations related to special educational needs and called for further research in this area. We hope that when published, the research by the Zubin Foundation will help to fill the current void of information.

We wanted to share some of our initial findings from parents and schools so far that affect a child's right to appropriate education.

1. Parents have consistently commented that they have had difficulties in finding appropriate education for their children with special educational needs.
2. There are no English-speaking public special schools, or English-speaking classes within Chinese-speaking public special schools.
3. There are not enough private school places for children with special educational needs.
4. Finding information about schools is very difficult. Many schools offering alternative curriculums do not appear on lists of private schools and therefore parents only hear about these schools from other parents.
5. Early identification and intervention is essential, however not all kindergarten and primary school teachers have had sufficient training to distinguish between children who may have a special educational need compared to children who are struggling to learn due to language or cultural differences.



6. When children are assessed for possible special educational needs through government services, they have their assessments in Chinese or English. However, for a number of children, neither of these languages is their first language. Their results end up being based on performance in assessments carried out in either their second, third or even fourth language.

We would like to see the Government provide:

1. Clearer information about all schools in Hong Kong and more detailed information about support services provided in each school.
2. Greater training provided to kindergarten and primary school teachers to help them in identifying, understanding and supporting children from different language and cultural backgrounds. This should be a part of the initial teacher training as well as part of the continuing professional development for all teachers.
3. Assessment and services that cater to the needs of these children, whether through the use of alternative language assessments or through extra consideration of the impact of a child's background on the assessment results.

These are just some of the many issues that have already become clear from our research. We look forward to being able to continue to contribute to further discussions on these issues and will cover them all in full detail in our final report.