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Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities

Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 23 November 2016

Education for children of ethnic minorities

Purpose

This paper summarizes the major views and concerns expressed by Members on the subject of education for children of ethnic minorities at meetings of relevant committees of the Legislative Council ("LegCo") in the Fifth LegCo.

Background

2. Under the current arrangements, non-Chinese speaking ("NCS") students¹ (notably ethnic minority students), like their local counterparts, may choose to enrol in any public sector primary and secondary school through the school places allocation systems. Starting from the 2013-2014 school year, the Administration abolished the so-called "designated schools" system² as it might have given rise to certain labelling effect. Instead, all schools admitting 10 or more NCS students were provided with an additional recurrent funding ranging from \$300,000 to \$600,000 per annum. Schools could flexibly deploy the resources to support their NCS students. With effect from the 2014-2015 school year, the funding has been improved as follows:

¹ According to the Administration, for the planning of educational support measures, students whose spoken language at home is not Chinese are broadly categorized as NCS students.

² Before the 2013-2014 school year, the Administration provided an additional recurrent grant to some schools which traditionally admitted a higher proportion of NCS students to facilitate their implementation of school-based support measures to cater for their NCS students. These schools were generally referred to as "designated schools".

<u>Number of NCS students admitted by the school</u>	<u>Additional recurrent funding (\$million)</u>
10 – 25	0.80
26 – 50	0.95
51 – 75	1.10
76 – 90	1.25
91 or more	1.50

3. The actual/estimated expenditure for providing this funding support was \$197.8 million, \$223.9 million and \$244.8 million for the 2014-2015, 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school year respectively³. According to the Administration, the Project of After-school Extended Chinese Learning for NCS Students funded by the Language Fund has also been regularized and subsumed in the additional recurrent funding for eligible schools from the 2014-2015 school year onwards.

4. In his 2014 Policy Address, the Chief Executive announced that starting from the 2014-2015 school year, the Education Bureau ("EDB") would implement a Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework ("Learning Framework") with supporting learning and teaching materials as well as assessment tools for ethnic minority students in primary and secondary schools. Developed from the perspective of second language learners, the Learning Framework provides a systematic set of objectives and expected learning outcomes that describes the learning progress of NCS students at different learning stages. Teachers may set progressive learning targets, learning progress and expected learning outcomes using a "small-step" learning approach to enhance the learning effectiveness of NCS students.

5. In May 2014, the Working Group on Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework ("the Working Group") was set up under the Curriculum Development Council Committee on Chinese Language Education. The Working Group is tasked to advise EDB on the development of the Learning Framework and the supporting materials that aim to help NCS students learn the Chinese Language more effectively.

Past discussions by Members

6. Members have expressed concerns on the subject at meetings of the Panel on Education and the Subcommittee on Poverty. Their major views and concerns are summarised below.

³ See Controlling Officer's Reply Serial No. EDB008 in the Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2016-2017.

Chinese language as a second language curriculum

7. Some Members observed that many NCS students could communicate fluently in Chinese verbally, but had considerable difficulties in reading and writing Chinese. They considered provision of an alternative Chinese Language curriculum necessary for NCS students, especially those who did not have an early start in learning Chinese. They urged EDB to make reference to the Chinese curriculum and teaching materials used by local international schools.

8. According to EDB, research findings had suggested that with support and empowerment, NCS students could learn and achieve results on par with their local counterparts. It was 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. Due to the relatively small number of NCS students, the recognition and acceptance of the qualification attained under an alternative Chinese curriculum might also be questionable. EDB also referred to the Learning Framework, which had been implemented since the 2014-2015 school year, as a means to step up support for NCS students' learning of Chinese as a second language. Premised on having no alternative Chinese Language curriculum and public examination with pre-set simpler contents and lower standards, EDB considered that the Learning Framework applicable in the learning and teaching of Chinese at school was a learning "Chinese as a second language" curriculum.

The Learning Framework

9. Some Members were also concerned how the Learning Framework could enhance the language proficiency of NCS students as second language learners effectively. According to EDB, the Learning Framework aimed at facilitating NCS students to bridge over to mainstream Chinese Language classes and sit for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education ("HKDSE") Examination. EDB would continue to refine the assessment tools in conjunction with the Learning Framework and learning materials as appropriate to facilitate teachers' support for NCS students in learning Chinese. According to the feedback from major stakeholders of participating schools, NCS students (in particular, those currently studying at junior primary levels) were generally able to learn Chinese effectively and bridge over to mainstream Chinese Language classes.

10. Noting that EDB had provided all schools admitting 10 or more NCS students with additional funding ranging from \$800,000 to \$1,500,000 for each school year to facilitate their implementation of the Learning Framework, some Members sought information on the support available to those schools admitting

less than 10 NCS students. According to EDB, these students could benefit from an immersed Chinese Language environment, but an additional annual funding of \$50,000 was provided to these schools for organizing after-school support programmes for their NCS students. There was also a suggestion that in considering ways to support Chinese learning and teaching for NCS students, EDB should make reference to the practice adopted by many international schools in Hong Kong under which Chinese and Putonghua were taken by students as compulsory subjects.

11. Another major area of concern of Members was the need to strengthen the capability and readiness of teachers in implementing the Learning Framework. Members were advised that EDB would continue to organize diversified and progressively advanced professional development programmes for teachers. Besides, EDB launched in March 2014 the Professional Enhancement Grant Scheme for Chinese Teachers (Teaching Chinese as a Second Language) under the Language Fund to encourage the continual professional development of serving Chinese Language teachers in teaching the Chinese Language to NCS students.

Special schools admitting NCS students

12. Some Members were gravely concerned about the support provided to special schools admitting NCS students. The Administration advised that in the 2014-2015 school year, 23 special schools were provided with additional funding for enhancing the support for their NCS students' learning of Chinese. In addition, EDB was developing the Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Adapted Learning Framework (for NCS Students with Intellectual Disabilities) ("Adapted Framework") for special schools which were not offering the ordinary school curriculum. The development of the Adapted Framework was expected to be completed by the end of 2016.

Attainment in public examinations and alternative qualifications

13. Some Members expressed grave concern that NCS students would be placed in a disadvantaged position when taking the HKDSE Examination alongside 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 and the International General Certificate of Secondary Education. Responding to Members' suggestion of introducing an alternative syllabus to examine students according to their language abilities, the Administration advised that according to the past experience of the English Language examination of the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination, the qualification of an alternative curriculum and assessment did not receive wide recognition.

14. Members also sought further information on the recognition of the attainment in the Applied Learning Chinese (for NCS Students) ("ApL(C)") subject which was introduced by EDB in phases at senior secondary levels starting from the 2014-2015 school year. The Administration advised that the introduction of the ApL(C) subject would enable NCS students to obtain an alternative qualification in Chinese for further studies and/or employment. According to the Administration, in addition to the HKDSE qualification, ApL(C) courses were also pegged at Levels 1 to 3 of the Qualifications Framework. Post-secondary institutions had accepted "Attained" in ApL(C) as an alternative Chinese qualification for NCS students in meeting the basic admission requirements. For employment purpose, the Civil Service Bureau accepted "Attained" and "Attained with Distinction" in ApL(C) as meeting the Chinese language proficiency requirements of relevant civil service ranks.

Early adaptation to mainstream curriculum

15. Considering that NCS students would benefit from early exposure to, and learning of, Chinese in daily life and at school, some Members suggested that the Learning Framework should be extended to pre-primary education to facilitate NCS students to start learning Chinese early.

16. According to EDB, it was considered more effective for kindergartens to create a language-rich environment and adopt an integrated approach in learning language. EDB had commissioned the University of Hong Kong to provide teacher professional development programmes and on-site support through the "University-School Support Programme: Supporting Kindergartens in the Teaching and Learning of Chinese for NCS Children" (2012-2013 to 2014-2015 school years) with a view to enhancing teachers' professional capabilities in teaching NCS children and enhancing the effectiveness of NCS students' learning of Chinese. In the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years, EDB would launch a new University-School Support Programme aiming at enhancing teachers' professional capabilities in teaching Chinese to NCS children and supporting NCS students' smooth transition from kindergartens to primary schools. EDB would draw reference from the relevant projects in supporting NCS children's learning of Chinese in kindergartens to further explore the way forward. The Committee on Free Kindergarten Education had also recommended, among others, measures to step up the support to NCS children in kindergartens.

Equal opportunities in education

17. When discussing poverty problems of ethnic minorities, some Members urged the Administration to formulate policies to ensure that ethnic minority

students could have equal opportunities vis-à-vis local people in receiving education. They suggested that the Administration should urge all schools in the territory to admit ethnic minority students or impose such conditions when approving applications for school registration to facilitate admission of ethnic minority students to schools. Some Members were concerned about the difficulties encountered by parents of ethnic minority students in choosing suitable schools for their children as a result of the lack of support (for example, admission information in ethnic minority languages) provided by schools.

18. The Administration advised that under the Primary One Admission and Secondary School Places Allocation systems, all public sector schools had the chance of being allocated with any students, including NCS students. The numbers of NCS students at various levels of primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong from 2006-2007 to 2015-2016 school years are in **Appendix I**. For admission of students to fill vacant school places, EDB had issued guidelines to schools reminding them that their admission criteria should be in compliance with relevant laws of Hong Kong, including the Race Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 602). Schools should also inform potential applicant parents/students of their criteria and ensure that the vacant school places were filled in a fair and just manner. These guidelines were also applicable to kindergartens. In tandem, starting from the 2015-2016 school year, EDB had distributed the English version of the School Profiles to each NCS student to help NCS parents grasp the basic information of all public schools to facilitate their understanding of the types of student support, learning and teaching plans, etc.

19. Members urged EDB to keep in view the admission of ethnic minority students by schools and ensure that ethnic minority students could receive appropriate learning support and integrate into school life. Members also urged the Administration to allocate more funding to schools which had admitted ethnic minority students for the purpose of enhancing the communication between teachers and parents, for example, providing circulars in bilingual languages.

20. The Administration advised that EDB had repeatedly reminded schools to communicate with NCS parents in a proactive manner, including making available schools circulars in English. The commonly-used circulars had been translated into English and were available online for schools' reference. Besides, schools might deploy the additional funding provided for supporting NCS students and other resources available for employing ethnic minority assistants or procuring translation services as necessary.

Latest development

21. The Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities will discuss various issues relating to education for children of ethnic minorities at the next meeting on 23 November 2016.

Relevant papers

22. A list of the relevant papers on the LegCo website is in the **Appendix II**.

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**Number of non-Chinese speaking students studying at different levels
in primary and secondary schools from the 2006/07 to 2015/16 school years**

School year		2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Level											
Primary	P1	913	1 011	1 034	1 116	1 229	1 291	1 394	1 445	1 574	1 583
	P2	911	1 065	1 024	1 066	1 252	1 310	1 359	1 459	1 533	1 609
	P3	839	1 006	1 122	1 052	1 259	1 297	1 304	1 376	1 467	1 574
	P4	757	954	1 035	1 163	1 173	1 321	1 357	1 322	1 399	1 461
	P5	606	825	991	1 066	1 254	1 222	1 339	1 368	1 353	1 414
	P6	477	722	828	1 017	1 070	1 262	1 192	1 320	1 371	1 317
Secondary	S1	691	804	970	1 099	1 304	1 373	1 448	1 437	1 613	1 730
	S2	609	706	820	976	1 145	1 339	1 363	1 468	1 424	1 547
	S3	547	642	715	802	995	1 114	1 308	1 366	1 493	1 457
	S4	341	556	583	692	815	999	1 118	1 312	1 376	1 505
	S5	225	325	483	519	645	734	957	1 101	1 307	1 324
	S6	120	136	166	179	189	648	725	892	1 011	1 219
	S7	100	103	105	139	143	166	-	-	-	-

Notes:

- Reference is commonly drawn to the 2006/07 school year starting from which student particulars specifically the spoken language at home were collected through the annual Student Enrolment Survey and support measures for NCS students were implemented.
- Figures refer to the position as at September of the respective school years.
- The above data cover those students whose ethnicity is Chinese but who are non-Chinese speaking based on the spoken language at home.
- Figures cover students studying in public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) primary and secondary schools. Figures do not include special schools. There are no figures for S7 upon full implementation of the New Senior Secondary Academic Structure in the 2012/13 school year.
- The same colour denotes the same cohort of students.

**Relevant papers on
Education for children of ethnic minorities**

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Education	12.11.2012 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
Legislative Council	14.11.2012	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 98 –103 (Written question)
Panel on Education	9.7.2013 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
Legislative Council	19.3.2014	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 118 –125 (Written question)
Panel on Education	14.4.2014 (Item VI)	Agenda Minutes
Legislative Council	30.4.2014	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 13 –19 (Written question)
	9.7.2014	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 182 –191 (Written question)
Panel on Education	16.7.2014 (Item VI)	Agenda Minutes
Legislative Council	26.11.2014	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 84 –91 (Written question)
	28.1.2015	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 79 –86 (Written question)
Panel on Education	8.6.2015 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes
Legislative Council	24.6.2015	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 124 –131 (Written question)

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Subcommittee on Poverty	17.11.2015 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
Legislative Council	2.12.2015	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 107 –115 (Written question)
	9.12.2015	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 81 – 82 (Written question)
	16.12.2015	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 141 –145 (Written question)
Subcommittee on Poverty	15.3.2016 (Item II)	Agenda Minutes
Finance Committee	8.4.2016	Administration's replies to members' written questions in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2016-2017 (Reply serial numbers: EDB007 and EDB008)
Legislative Council	18.5.2016	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 170 –173 (Written question)
	13.7.2016	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 138 –140 (Written question)

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