

For discussion
on 27 February 2018

**Legislative Council Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities
Further Discussion on Education for Children of Ethnic Minorities**

Purpose

This paper aims to follow up on the motion passed at the meeting on 12 December 2016 regarding the evaluation of the “Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework” (“Learning Framework”), provision of related teaching resources and guidelines, as well as release of information of schools admitting non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students¹. Besides, in response to the concerns raised in the letter dated 26 January 2018 from the Clerk to Subcommittee to the Secretary for Education, the paper will also provide relevant information on instructions on the apparel of ethnic minority (EM) students by schools and special arrangements on school meals for EM students.

Background

2. The Government is committed to encouraging and supporting the early integration of NCS students (notably EM students) into the community, including facilitating their adaptation to the local education system and mastery of the Chinese language. The Education Bureau (EDB) reported to the Subcommittee on 23 November and 12 December 2016 on our support measures for schools and NCS students to learn the Chinese language systematically and the admission of NCS students in schools. In response to the issues raised at the meeting on 23 November 2016, we gave a written reply on 8 December 2016. In addition, on 26 June 2017, EDB reported to the Panel on Education the progress of the implementation of these support measures, including collection of data and related work based on the research framework as well as the overall deployment of funding by schools provided with additional funding.

Evaluation of the “Learning Framework”

3. EDB has, starting from the 2014/15 school year, implemented the “Learning Framework” in primary and secondary schools. The “Learning Framework” aims to help NCS students lay a solid foundation in order to overcome

¹ For the planning of educational support measures, students whose spoken language at home is not Chinese are broadly categorised as NCS students.

the difficulties in learning Chinese as a second language with a view to helping them bridge over to mainstream Chinese Language classes. The “Learning Framework” implemented in primary and secondary schools, which is developed from the perspective of second language learners, covers the listening, speaking, reading and writing domains, and sets out clearly the expected learning outcomes of NCS students at different learning stages. With reference to the “Learning Framework”, teachers can set specific learning targets, learning progress and expected learning outcomes, as well as adapt and develop teaching materials for their NCS students with reference to their diversified learning needs to help them learn Chinese progressively in a “small-step” approach.

4. To ensure the quality of the support measures, EDB has drawn up the research framework based on the advice of research and language experts to evaluate the effectiveness of various support measures for the Chinese learning of NCS students (including the “Learning Framework”) and to refine individual measures where appropriate. EDB will conduct objective and thorough evaluation of the support measures through continuously collecting a range of data including NCS students’ performance in the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) and results of the questionnaire surveys on TSA, as well as feedback on the effectiveness of school-based professional support services collated by means of questionnaire surveys and focus group interviews.

5. EDB has been reviewing the implementation of the “Learning Framework” and further enhances the related teaching strategies, assessment tools and supporting resources for schools as appropriate in a timely manner in the light of the views of various stakeholders and school practices on learning and teaching. At the curriculum level, we will review the entire “Learning Framework” and fine-tune the learning objectives and details of each Key Stage (i.e. Primary 1-3, Primary 4-6 and Secondary 1-3) having due regard to the overall performance of students where appropriate at an interval of three years. Since the 2014/15 school year, we have been collating and analysing data from school-based professional support services, teacher professional development programmes and focus group interviews to inform the implementation of the “Learning Framework” in schools, and the enhancement of the “Learning Framework”, the “Chinese Language Assessment Tools for NCS Students” (“Assessment Tools”) and the supporting resources accordingly. The initial findings will be reported to the Legislative Council after completion of the collation and analysis of the data and information collected.

Teaching Resources and Guidelines

6. EDB has provided practical tools and steps by phases prior to the 2014/15

school year to facilitate schools' implementation of the "Learning Framework". Reference materials for the learning and teaching of a second language, which include Chinese as a Second Language Learning Packages covering the curricula at the primary and secondary levels, have been distributed to schools and students in the territory in the form of "textbooks". EDB continues to develop diversified learning and teaching resources such as the "Assessment Tools" and teaching reference materials, including the series on picture book reading, writing, Chinese festivals, etc., which provide teachers with guidance on curriculum planning, learning and teaching, and assessment. These resources have been uploaded onto the EDB webpage and will be constantly updated. Among these materials, EDB has commissioned a tertiary institution to develop a series of teaching materials, including student textbooks, workbooks and teaching reference materials, for NCS students at lower primary levels (i.e. Primary 1 to 3) in the light of the experiences from supporting schools to implement the "Learning Framework" since the 2014/15 school year and the relevant research findings. These teaching materials for Primary 1 have been uploaded onto the EDB webpage by phases. The full set of teaching materials for the lower primary levels will be available by August 2019 for teachers' reference and use. EDB will refine the teaching materials as appropriate on the basis of teachers' feedback and further explore the feasibility of developing teaching materials for upper primary levels (i.e. Primary 4 to 6) in collaboration with tertiary institutions.

7. In addition to the aforementioned learning and teaching materials, based on schools' experience in the implementation of the "Learning Framework", it is found that NCS students of Levels 2 and 3 (i.e. Primary 3 and 4 in general) are at the most critical stage in their learning of the Chinese language. In view of this, EDB has also commissioned a tertiary institution to develop, in collaboration with primary schools, eight sets of "textbooks" pegged at Levels 2 and 3 of the "Learning Framework" that are suitable for NCS students of Primary 3 and Primary 4 in general. The first set of "textbooks" for Primary 3 has been published and distributed to NCS students and their schools since mid-December 2017. It has also been uploaded onto the EDB webpage for teachers' trial and comment. The rest of them will also be distributed upon completion.

8. In view of the diversified linguistic and cultural backgrounds and duration of learning Chinese, there are distinct differences in the starting points of learning Chinese and learning progress among NCS students. If standardised teaching materials with uniform learning targets by stages are provided for all NCS students in Hong Kong, it will not only fail to address the actual learning circumstances of NCS students, but also be unable to cater for their learning diversity. In view of this, EDB provides teachers with diversified learning and teaching materials as well as teaching reference materials which can be used and adapted as appropriate in the

light of the learning situations of students and the actual context of schools. Developed from the perspective of second language learners and covering the listening, speaking, reading and writing domains, these learning and teaching materials are specially designed for NCS students in learning of the Chinese language. Teachers may use them as major learning and teaching materials for pull-out learning or group learning, or adapt them for after-school support or supplementary teaching materials.

Information of Schools Admitting NCS Students

9. NCS students' early start in learning Chinese is critical to their adaptation to local curriculum and integration into the community. Hence, EDB encourages parents of NCS students to arrange their children to study in schools with an immersed Chinese language environment as early as possible to facilitate their mastery of the Chinese language. To help parents of NCS students understand the local education system including the relevant support services, EDB has translated a series of key information (such as the Parent Information Package and leaflets on kindergarten education, school places allocation systems and support for NCS students, etc.) into major EM languages. Dedicated briefing sessions on admission to kindergartens (including kindergarten education policy and financial assistance for pre-primary students), and allocation systems of Primary One and Secondary One school places, etc., have been organised for parents of NCS students. Besides, NCS students and their parents may visit the dedicated website (<http://www.edb.gov.hk/ncs>) or call the hotline (with interpretation services as necessary) for further information about local schools.

10. To help parents grasp the basic information of all public sector schools, EDB has, starting from the 2015/16 school year, distributed the English printed version of the Primary School Profiles and Secondary School Profiles (School Profiles) to each NCS student. The information, covering support measures for students, in the School Profiles is provided by schools. Individual schools also list out school-based support measures to help NCS students learn the Chinese language in the School Profiles. To facilitate NCS students' mastery of the Chinese language and integration into the local education system, we have explored with the sector ways to facilitate parents of NCS students in making school choices. While recognising the needs of parents for reference information, the sector is of the view that such information should not be provided on a piecemeal basis or simplified to cover only the school names and the number of NCS students admitted. This is to avoid any misconception and unnecessary labelling effects on schools.

11. Premised on enhancing transparency, EDB and schools are actively

exploring relevant arrangements to facilitate parents' school choice. For instance, schools that have been provided with additional funding to facilitate NCS students' learning of the Chinese language should specify that additional support is provided for their NCS students in the learning of the Chinese language in the same manner in the "Student Support" column of the School Profiles and advise parents to contact the schools for details. The Committee on Home-School Co-operation (CHSC) reviews the content of the School Profiles every year by taking into account the views of the School Councils and the Associations of School Heads. The above suggestion has been relayed to CHSC for consideration. If the School Councils, the Associations of School Heads and CHSC do not have any objection, such information will be provided in the School Profiles to be distributed in the 2018/19 school year at the earliest.

Instructions on the Apparel of EM Students by Schools

12. EDB has been encouraging the promotion of a harmonious and inclusive environment in schools. When formulating school rules, schools should take into account various cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds of students to promote racial harmony. The EDB Circular No. 25/2008 on Race Discrimination Ordinance was issued in November 2008 to remind all educational establishments of their responsibilities to make their best endeavours in supporting the teaching and learning of all their students irrespective of race, in accommodating ethnic diversity in schools, in respecting cultural and religious differences and in communicating with parents.

13. The School Administration Guide provided by EDB has reminded schools to make reference to the Guide on Racial Equality and School Uniform issued by the Equal Opportunities Commission in formulating rules on school uniforms. The Guide sets out clearly that schools should adopt an inclusive and transparent process in formulating their school uniform policies and related rules. Schools should involve different groups of students and parents to consider how the rules or restrictions concerned might affect their needs. Schools should respect different cultural, religious and racial customs. They should also carefully consider reasonable requests for flexibility to accommodate ethnicity, religion or other special circumstances.

Special Arrangements on School Meals for EM Students

14. As regards school meal arrangements, EDB has all along been working closely with the Department of Health (DH) and the Environmental Protection Department on advising schools through circulars and guidelines to formulate policies and measures on healthy and green meals. Schools are also requested to

involve parents in the process of selecting lunch suppliers which includes setting lunch requirements, selection criteria and marking scheme, etc. Generally speaking, parents may take the initiative to reflect to the school their children's needs for special dietary arrangements, including those in relation to religious requirements.

15. Schools may set school-based lunch requirements and criteria for selecting lunch suppliers having regard to their own circumstances with a view to providing meals that meet the personal health and other needs of their students, including the provision of school meals fulfilling religious dietary requirements. Schools are advised, through the EDB Circular No. 17/2009 on Meal Arrangements in School and other relevant guidelines, to formulate their meal policies and measures, and to make reference to the "Handbook of Selection of Lunch Suppliers" (Handbook) prepared by DH when selecting lunch suppliers. According to the Handbook, schools may require the lunch suppliers to commit themselves to providing special food arrangements for EM students, and to include the submission of proposals on special food arrangements for EM students in the tender documents as one of the assessment criteria. Besides, DH has uploaded the "Database of Lunch Suppliers – Details about Services" onto its webpage, "EatSmart@school.hk", detailing the provision of special meals by the lunch suppliers for EM students for schools' reference.

Conclusion

16. Many NCS students regard Hong Kong as their home. The mastery of Chinese is essential for them to integrate into the society and give full play to their abilities. In this connection, EDB has implemented a series of measures announced in the 2014 Policy Address to step up the support for NCS students to facilitate their effective learning of the Chinese language, which includes the implementation of the "Learning Framework" providing clear learning stages to help students lay a solid foundation in Chinese learning and prepare them for further studies and career pursuits, as well as the creation of an inclusive learning environment in schools. EDB will continue to monitor the implementation of the "Learning Framework" and other support measures for NCS students in learning the Chinese language, and remind schools to create an inclusive learning environment. We will also maintain communication with stakeholders to facilitate NCS students' effective learning of Chinese language and their integration into the community.

Education Bureau
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