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Panel on Education

Meeting on 12 June 2017

Updated background brief on issues related to supporting Chinese learning and teaching for non-Chinese speaking students

Purpose

This paper summarizes the major views and concerns expressed by the Panel on Education ("the Panel") on issues related to supporting Chinese learning and teaching for non-Chinese speaking ("NCS") students.

Overview of education support for non-Chinese speaking students

Kindergarten education

2. With the implementation of the Free Quality Kindergarten Education Policy in the 2017-2018 school year, the Education Bureau ("EDB") will enhance its school-based professional support services to help kindergartens ("KGs") strengthen their professional capability in teaching NCS students Chinese for a smooth transition to primary education. All KGs can apply for the support services regardless of the number of NCS students admitted. Besides, a grant in comparable to the recommended salary of one KG teacher will be provided to KGs admitting eight or more NCS students.

3. In tandem, the Curriculum Development Council is reviewing and revising the Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum (2006). The revised curriculum guide will set out the principles and direction for facilitating integration of NCS children into the school settings, and introduce specific strategies and relevant resources on how teachers can help NCS children learn Chinese.

Primary and secondary education

4. Since the 2014-2015 school year, EDB has implemented the "Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework" ("the Learning Framework") with supporting learning and teaching materials as well as assessment tools for NCS students in primary and secondary schools. Developed from the perspective of second language learners, the Learning Framework provides a systemic 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. The number of NCS students studying at different levels in primary and secondary schools from the 2006-2007 to 2015-2016 school years is in **Appendix I**.

5. To facilitate schools' implementation of the Learning Framework, EDB has, in the 2014-2015 school year, improved the additional recurrent funding provided to all schools admitting 10 or more NCS students since the 2013-2014 school year. The funding model is as follows:

<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

Special education

6. In the 2014-2015 school year, EDB has extended the coverage of the additional funding to special schools admitting NCS students¹. The consultation version of the "Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Adapted Learning Framework" (for NCS Students with Intellectual Disabilities) ("the Adapted Framework") was released in December 2015 for trial for special schools not offering the ordinary school curriculum. EDB will collect feedback from stakeholders in the 2016-2017 school year for refinement of the Adapted Framework.

¹ The funding mode for special schools offering an ordinary school curriculum and admitting 10 or more NCS students is the same as that for ordinary schools (i.e. paragraph 5). Special schools offering an ordinary school curriculum or adapted Chinese curriculum and admitting six to nine NCS students are provided with an additional funding of \$650,000.

School-based professional support services have been provided to special schools admitting NCS students with intellectual disabilities through the School Support Partners (Seconded Teacher) Scheme.

Public examination

7. Under the current arrangement, eligible NCS students can receive subsidy to attain the internationally recognized alternative Chinese Language qualifications² for admission to the University Grants Committee ("UGC")-funded institutions and post-secondary institutions (including Vocational Training Council). Besides, for eligible NCS students taking the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education ("HKDSE") Examination in Chinese Language but not reaching Level 3 or above, UGC-funded institutions may consider their applications for admission on a case-by-case basis.

8. Starting from the 2014-2015 school year, EDB has introduced in phases the Applied Learning Chinese (for NCS Students) ("ApL(C)") pegged at the Qualifications Framework ("QF") Level 1 to 3 for NCS students at senior secondary levels. Since the results of ApL(C) will be recorded in the HKDSE examination, NCS students thus have an additional channel to acquire an alternative Chinese qualification, which will be useful for their further studies and career pursuits.

Major views and concerns

9. During the Fifth Legislative Council, education support for NCS students received ongoing attention by members and had been discussed by the Panel at its various meetings. The major views and concerns expressed by members are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

Admission to local kindergartens

10. Some members expressed concern about the difficulties encountered by NCS children applying for admission to local KGs and urged the Administration to ensure the provision of equal education opportunity to NCS children. As informed by the Administration, EDB had advised KGs through different channels, including school circulars and briefing sessions, reminding them of providing information in English to facilitate NCS parents choosing suitable KGs for their children.

² These internationally recognized alternative Chinese Language qualifications include the General Certificate of Secondary Education, International General Certificate of Secondary Education and General Certificate in Education.

KGs were also required to put in place a fair admission mechanism for all children. EDB would collect information from KGs under the Free Quality Kindergarten Education Scheme on vacancy situation and provide assistance to NCS children who encountered difficulty in securing a KG place.

Chinese Language as a second language curriculum

11. 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. There were suggestions that EDB should make reference to local international schools' Chinese curriculum, teaching materials and the practices under which Chinese and Putonghua were taken by students as compulsory subjects.

12. 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. 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 schools was a learning "Chinese as a second language" curriculum.

The Learning Framework

13. Some members were concerned how the Learning Framework could enhance the language proficiency of NCS students as second language learners effectively. The Administration explained that the Learning Framework aimed at facilitating NCS students to bridge over to mainstream Chinese Language classes and sit for the 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.

14. 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. According to EDB, it was considered more effective for KGs to create a language-rich environment and adopt an integrated approach in learning language. In addition, the Quality Education Fund had funded the University of Hong Kong to conduct the project entitled "Development of Chinese Language Learning Progression Framework for Non-Chinese Speaking Children in Kindergartens in Hong Kong". Upon completion of the project in mid-2017, EDB would consider the follow up actions as appropriate in light of the findings.

15. The need to strengthen the capability and readiness of teachers in implementing the Learning Framework was another major area of concern of members. Members were advised that EDB would continue to organize diversified and progressively advanced professional development programmes for teachers. In March 2014, EDB launched 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.

Additional recurrent funding for schools admitting NCS students

16. Noting that an additional annual funding of \$50,000 was provided for schools admitting less than 10 NCS students for organizing after-school Chinese Language support programmes so that these students could consolidate what they had learnt in classes, certain members opined that the provision of \$50,000 per annum was hardly sufficient for enhancing the effectiveness of learning and teaching Chinese for NCS students.

Recognition of Chinese language proficiency

17. 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 examinations¹. On the 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.

18. Regarding the recognition of attainment in the ApL(C) subject, 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. 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.

Special schools admitting NCS students

19. Certain 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 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.

Relevant Council questions

20. Since the commencement of the Sixth Legislative Council, Members raised questions related to the Chinese Language education of NCS students and provision of education-related information to NCS students and parents at the Council meetings of 30 November 2016 and 29 March 2017.

Latest position

21. The Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities discussed issues related to education for children of ethnic minorities at its meeting on 23 November 2016 and received public views on this subject matter on 12 December 2016.

22. At the meeting on 12 June 2017, the Administration will update the Panel on the progress of supporting the learning and teaching of Chinese for NCS students.

Relevant papers

23. A list of relevant papers is in **Appendix II**.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
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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:

1. 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.
2. Figures refer to the position as at September of the respective school years.
3. The above data cover those students whose ethnicity is Chinese but who are non-Chinese speaking based on the spoken language at home.
4. 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.
5. The same colour denotes the same cohort of students.

List of relevant papers

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Education	12.11.2012 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Education	9.7.2013 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Education	27.1.2014 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Education	14.4.2014 (Item VI)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Education	16.7.2014 (Item VI)	Agenda Minutes CB(4)804/14-15(01)
Panel on Education	8.6.2015 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Education	14.11.2016 (Item VI)	Agenda Minutes
Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities	23.11.2016	Agenda Minutes
Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities	12.12.2016	Agenda Minutes
Legislative Council	30.11.2016	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 90 – 95 (Question 13)
Legislative Council	29.3.2017	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 143 – 152 (Question 21)