

## **Support for Non-Chinese Speaking Students in Learning the Chinese Language and Making School Choices**

### **Purpose**

Further to the discussion at the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Education on 26 June 2017 regarding the progress on supporting Chinese learning and teaching for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students, this paper aims to respond to the concerns raised after the meeting about the “Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework” (“Learning Framework”) and support for NCS students (notably ethnic minority (EM) students) in making school choices.

### **“Learning Framework”**

2. Regarding the progress on supporting Chinese learning and teaching for NCS students, the Education Bureau (EDB) reported in the Paper (CB(4)1165/16-17(01)) to the Panel on Education in two aspects: (1) collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, based on the research framework drawn up on the advice of research and language experts, since the 2014/15 school year for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of support measures (including the “Learning Framework”) for NCS students (detailed in paragraphs 2 to 20 of the said Paper); and (2) the overall deployment of funding by schools provided with the additional funding (“the schools concerned”) ranging from \$0.8 to \$1.5 million to facilitate their implementation of the “Learning Framework” and creation of an inclusive learning environment in schools (detailed in paragraphs 21 to 33 of the said Paper).

3. It is mentioned in paragraph 29 of the said Paper that some changes in attitudes of NCS students and their parents were observed, including an increase in the number of parents of NCS students who sent their children to study in local kindergartens (i.e. learning the Chinese language from kindergarten levels). According to the findings of the stakeholder survey in the 2016/17 school year, we noted that, in comparison with the relevant findings of the 2014/15 and 2015/16 school years, more NCS students in primary schools indicated that they had studied in local kindergartens and learnt Chinese at kindergarten levels. Alongside the implementation of the “Learning

Framework”, we hope that their overall Chinese learning performance would be in line with the findings of the pilot study conducted by a tertiary institution commissioned by EDB in 2015 (see paragraph 11 of the said Paper). The findings revealed that “the earlier the NCS students began schooling or received support in learning, the more effective their learning would be. For example, NCS students who had completed the three-year kindergarten education in Hong Kong performed significantly better in the Chinese Language subject compared to NCS students who had never attended kindergarten or had attended kindergarten for a shorter period of time” (see paragraph 14 of the said Paper). While the above information was quoted as a useful source of reference, it was not cited to prove the effectiveness of the “Learning Framework”.

4. As regards the evaluation of the effectiveness of the “Learning Framework”, according to the research framework developed by EDB based on the advice from research and language experts, EDB will evaluate the effectiveness of the support measures for NCS students to ensure the quality of these measures and refine individual measures as appropriate. For evaluation purpose, EDB will continue to collect a series of relevant data including the overall learning performance of NCS students in the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) and findings of questionnaire surveys on the TSA, as well as evaluation results of the effectiveness of school-based professional support services by means of questionnaire surveys and focus group interviews. At the curriculum level, we will review the “Learning Framework” and develop supporting materials on an on-going basis, and refine them in due course having due regard to views and experience of different schools. We will also review the “Learning Framework” as appropriate at an interval of three years upon completion of each Key Stage (e.g. Primary 1 to 3, Primary 4 to 6, Secondary 1 to 3). EDB will report the progress to the Legislative Council in due course after completing the aforementioned work.

### *Chinese Language Curriculum / Learning and Teaching Materials*

5. NCS students have different needs and aspirations for Chinese learning. Prescribing a “Chinese as a second language” curriculum with pre-set simpler contents for NCS students will confine their opportunities in learning and employment. Starting from the 2014/15 school year, EDB has implemented the “Learning Framework” in primary and secondary schools to help NCS

students overcome the difficulties of learning Chinese as a second language with a view to facilitating their effective learning of Chinese and enabling them to bridge over to mainstream Chinese Language classes. Developed from the perspective of second language learners, the “Learning Framework” enables Chinese Language teachers to set progressive learning targets and help NCS students learn in a “small-step” approach to enhance their learning effectiveness. Depending on their learning progress, NCS students may bridge over to mainstream Chinese Language classes as appropriate and learn Chinese effectively.

6. On learning and teaching materials, prior to the implementation of the “Learning Framework” in the 2014/15 school year, EDB has provided schools with practical tools and information on the steps to be taken to implement the “Learning Framework” by phases. Reference materials for the learning and teaching of 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. Other resources such as the “Chinese Language Assessment Tools for Non-Chinese Speaking Students” (“Assessment Tools”) and teaching reference materials, including the series on picture book reading, writing, Chinese festivals, etc., have been uploaded onto EDB’s webpage and will be constantly updated.

7. Besides, in light of the findings of the analysis of sample scripts under the “Assessment Tools” and views of Chinese Language teachers teaching NCS students, we have commissioned a tertiary institution to develop, in collaboration with primary schools, a series of textbooks pegged at Levels 2 and 3 of the “Learning Framework” with the objective of issuing the first textbook to schools and NCS students within this year. As pointed out at the Panel on Education meeting, we also hope that this would motivate publishers in the market to develop and publish more Chinese Language textbooks for NCS students.

### *Teachers’ Professional Development*

8. Regarding the support for Chinese Language teachers to teach NCS students, generally speaking, teacher education institutions will make reference

to relevant policies and documents such as the curriculum guides issued by the Curriculum Development Council when designing and developing the initial teacher education (ITE) programmes for prospective teachers. The ITE programmes shall meet the future career needs of prospective teachers by equipping them with professional knowledge, pedagogy and attributes in teaching students of different backgrounds (including cultural and regional backgrounds) and learning needs. For example, the Hong Kong Education University has been offering elective courses on Teaching Chinese as a Second Language in its Bachelor of Education (Honours) (Chinese Language) Programme for training prospective teachers to teach NCS students Chinese. In the 2016/17 school year, the elective courses offered include Instructional Design and Development of Chinese Language for NCS students, Curriculum and Teaching Material Design for International Chinese, Teaching and Assessment for International Chinese, Discourse Analysis for Teaching of International Chinese, etc.

### **Supporting NCS (notably EM) Students in Making School Choices**

#### *List of Primary Schools Traditionally Admitting More NCS Students (“School List”)*

9. Under the prevailing Primary One Admission (POA), school choices made in Part B of the Central Allocation are subject to restriction on school nets. Parents should select public sector primary schools of the residing school net of the applicant children and fill in the “Choice of Schools Form” in order of their preference. With due consideration to the needs of NCS students (notably EM students), parents of these students may indicate in the POA application form that “the applicant child cannot use Chinese as the learning medium”. This will enable them to choose, in Part B of the Central Allocation, primary schools traditionally admitting more NCS students in other school nets from the “School List” in addition to schools in their residing school net.

10. EDB revised the above arrangements for POA 2004 (i.e. for admission to primary one in the 2004/05 school year) to allow all NCS students, like their Chinese-speaking counterparts, to choose only the schools in their residing school net under Part B of the Central Allocation so that all of them would benefit from an immersed Chinese language environment of the “mainstream”

schools to facilitate their early adaptation to the local education system and integration into the community. Subsequently, to balance the views of different stakeholders with due consideration to the worries of some NCS students, EDB has adopted the prevailing arrangements (see paragraph 9 above) since POA 2005 (i.e. for admission to primary one in the 2005/06 school year). EDB has explained clearly in Note 3 of the “Notes on How to Complete the Application Form for Admission to Primary One” the purpose of the “School List”, and appealed to parents of NCS students to send their children to primary schools with an immersed Chinese language environment as early as possible to facilitate their learning of the Chinese language. In the Central Allocation stage of POA 2017 (i.e. for admission to primary one in the 2017/18 school year), EDB has further revised the leaflet on making school choice distributed to parents of NCS students. The leaflet emphasises that EDB has provided additional funding to schools to step up their support for NCS students in learning the Chinese language. EDB also, through the leaflet, encourages parents of NCS students to send their children to primary schools in their residing school nets (i.e. schools not on the “School List”) to facilitate their children’s learning of the Chinese language in an immersed Chinese language environment. The leaflet also clearly states that the “School List” is solely for the reference of parents who still have concerns so as to avoid any unnecessary misconception.

### *List of Schools Provided with Additional Funding*

11. EDB has abolished the practice of providing additional funding support to a certain number of schools admitting NCS students<sup>1</sup> (i.e. the so-called “designated schools”) since the 2013/14 school year. Currently, all schools admitting 10 or more NCS students are provided with additional funding according to the number of NCS students admitted to enhance the support for them to learn the Chinese language. The revised mode of funding support aims to remove the misconception arising from the “designated school” label

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<sup>1</sup> From the 2006/07 to 2012/13 school years, schools admitting a critical mass of NCS students, having experience in taking care of NCS students, ready to partner with EDB to develop school-based support measures and share experiences with other schools were provided with an annual additional funding ranging from \$300,000 to \$600,000 depending on the number of NCS students admitted, and professional support services for these schools to develop specific school-based support programmes and Chinese Language learning and teaching materials, and share with other schools admitting NCS students through the school support network that EDB had formed, so that all NCS students would benefit. These schools were generally referred to as the so-called “designated schools”.

which is in fact a misnomer and to raise schools' awareness to support NCS students' learning of the Chinese language.

12. In recent years, some stakeholders have requested EDB to disseminate consolidated information of schools admitting 10 or more NCS students and provided with additional funding to facilitate the parents of NCS students to make school choices. In light of this and premised on facilitating NCS students' mastery of the Chinese language and integration into the community, we have explored with the sector ways to facilitate parents of NCS students in making school choices. Schools in general are of the view that distributing a list of schools provided with additional funding (with breakdown by district and number of NCS students admitted by individual schools) would go against the principle and policy intent underpinning the abolition of the so-called "designated schools". The existing enhanced support for NCS students' effective learning of the Chinese language, specifically the provision of additional funding to all schools admitting 10 or more NCS students, aims to provide more choices to parents and avoid over concentration of NCS students in certain schools so that NCS students can benefit from an immersed Chinese language environment. In fact, under the prevailing school places allocation arrangements for public sector schools, all primary and secondary schools have equal opportunities in admitting NCS students. The nature and purpose of a separate list of schools admitting a certain number of NCS students would inevitably be similar to that of the so-called "designated schools" in the past eventually leading to unnecessary misconception. While acknowledging the needs of parents for additional 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 in the schools concerned. This is to avoid any misconception and unnecessary labeling effects on schools. 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 be indicated in the same manner in the "Student Support" column of the "School Profiles" to specify that additional support is provided for their NCS students in learning the Chinese Language, and parents are advised to contact individual schools for details.

13. Dedicated briefing sessions on POA with simultaneous interpretation services will continue be organised for parents of NCS students. Besides, parents of NCS students, like other parents, are encouraged to join the on-site school visits organised by individual schools and Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations on a district basis to learn more about the schools so as to make informed choices.

*Information of Schools Using Putonghua to Teach the Chinese Language Subject in the “School Profiles”*

14. Currently, the information in the “School Profiles” is provided by schools. Individual schools may also provide information on using Putonghua to teach the Chinese Language subject or various learning support for NCS in the “School Profiles”. As regards the suggestion of adding information on the use of Putonghua to teach the Chinese Language subject in the “School Profiles”, we will convey the suggestion to the Committee on Home-School Co-operation for their consideration during the annual review of the layout of the “School Profiles”.

**Other Issue**

15. The numbers of primary and secondary schools (government, aided and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools) by percentage of NCS students and NCS EM students among all students of these schools from the 2013/14 to 2016/17 school years are tabulated at Annex.

Education Bureau  
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**Number of schools with non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students  
in the 2013/14, 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17 school years  
(by percentage of NCS students among all students of individual schools)**

Percentage of NCS students among all students of individual schools	Number of primary schools				Number of secondary schools			
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
0%	154	152	146	150	191	189	175	180
>0% - 10%	281	278	289	284	243	240	251	245
>10% - 20%	12	12	8	8	5	5	3	3
>20% - 30%	3	8	9	11	7	7	7	6
>30% - 40%	3	2	2	4	2	2	3	4
>40% - 50%	3	3	3	2	1	3	3	2
>50% - 60%	3	2	4	3	2	1	3	4
>60% - 70%	2	3	2	2	1	3	3	3
>70% - 80%	2	3	3	2	4	2	2	3
>80% - 90%	2	3	3	4	0	2	2	2
>90%	9	7	6	5	2	2	2	2

## Notes:

1. Figures refer to the position as at September of the respective school years.
2. Figures cover public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools, but do not include special schools.
3. NCS students cover those students whose ethnicity is Chinese but who are non-Chinese speaking based on the spoken language at home.

**Number of schools with non-Chinese speaking ethnic minority (NCS EM) students  
in the 2013/14, 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17 school years  
(by percentage of NCS EM students among all students of individual schools)**

Percentage of NCS EM students among all students of individual schools	Number of primary schools				Number of secondary schools			
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
0%	182	172	164	164	225	216	196	199
>0% - 10%	254	261	271	271	211	214	230	226
>10% - 20%	12	13	12	11	3	5	3	5
>20% - 30%	2	4	7	8	7	6	7	4
>30% - 40%	5	3	1	4	3	2	3	4
>40% - 50%	1	4	3	2	0	3	3	2
>50% - 60%	3	0	3	2	1	2	3	3
>60% - 70%	2	4	2	2	2	2	3	4
>70% - 80%	3	3	3	2	3	2	1	3
>80% - 90%	1	3	3	4	0	1	2	1
>90%	9	6	6	5	2	2	2	2

## Notes:

1. Figures refer to the position as at September of the respective school years.
2. Figures cover public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools (among which 1 DSS school offering non-local curriculum is excluded for not having provided information on students' ethnicity), but do not include special schools.
3. For the planning of education support measures, students whose spoken language at home is not Chinese are broadly categorised as non-Chinese speaking students. Figures have excluded those students whose ethnicity is not Chinese but with Chinese as the spoken language at home.