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Panel on Education

Meeting on 3 September 2021

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 of the Panel on Education ("the Panel") on issues related to supporting Chinese learning and teaching for non-Chinese speaking ("NCS") students.

Background

2. As at 2019-2020, there are some 33 000 NCS students attending local kindergartens and primary/secondary schools in Hong Kong. To assist NCS students in acquiring Chinese as a second language, the Education Bureau ("EDB") has implemented a series of measures to step up the support for NCS students in learning the Chinese language starting from the 2014-2015 school year. The support measures include the implementation of the "Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework" ("Learning Framework") in primary and secondary schools in alignment with the mainstream Chinese Language curriculum to help NCS students overcome the difficulties of learning Chinese as a second language, and the introduction of Applied Learning Chinese (for NCS students) courses ("ApL(C)") at the senior secondary levels as a subject for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education ("HKDSE") Examination to provide an additional channel for NCS students to obtain a recognized alternative qualification in Chinese Language.

3. In the Chief Executive's Policy Address 2020, it was announced that the Government would continue to provide NCS students with the support for Chinese language learning, including the provision of teacher professional development programmes, school-based professional support services and learning and teaching resources, with a view to facilitating the implementation of the Learning Framework; and providing different language learning opportunities for NCS students to boost their confidence in learning Chinese. EDB would also explore how to gauge their progress

in learning Chinese language through longitudinal studies, and provide feedbacks to schools to further enhance support services.

Major views and concerns

4. The Panel was briefed on the progress on supporting Chinese learning and teaching for NCS students at its meeting on 26 June 2017. The major concerns raised by members are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

The Learning Framework and related support measures

5. Some members expressed concern about the effectiveness of EDB's support measures, including the Learning Framework, to help NCS students learn Chinese as a second language. They also enquired whether NCS students' performance in the Chinese Language subject of the Territory-wide System Assessment ("TSA") could reflect the effectiveness of the Learning Framework.

6. The Administration advised that the Learning Framework, which had been implemented since the 2014-2015 school year, provided a systematic set of learning targets, learning objectives and expected learning outcomes with supportive teaching reference materials as well as assessment tools. Additional funding was provided to schools to facilitate the implementation of the Learning Framework. EDB would continue to monitor schools' deployment of the additional funding and maintain communication with stakeholders with a view to facilitating NCS students in their learning of the Chinese language. In 2015, EDB had commissioned a tertiary institution to conduct a pilot study on how non-academic factors would affect students' learning and performance in TSA, including the impact of support measures on NCS students' performance in the Chinese Language subject. EDB would continue to follow up and analyze the performance of NCS students in the subject to gather more information about their learning and to render support.

7. Noting that many NCS students could communicate fluently in Chinese verbally, but had considerable difficulties in reading and writing Chinese, some members considered provision of an alternative Chinese Language curriculum necessary for NCS students, especially those who did not have an early start in learning Chinese. Some other members urged the Administration to adopt the recommendations of the Equal Opportunities Commission specifically the development of a "Chinese as a second language" curriculum to help NCS students learn the Chinese language.

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. 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.

9. 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 kindergartens ("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.

10. The need to strengthen the capability and readiness of teachers in implementing the Learning Framework was another concern of members. The Administration advised that EDB would continue to organize diversified and progressively advanced professional development programmes to help teachers cater for different needs of NCS students. 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.

11. Some members considered it more cost-effective and beneficial for NCS children to learn Chinese with local children. As some non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") would conduct tuition classes and extra-curricular activities for local as well as NCS students, there was a suggestion that the Administration should consider providing these NGOs with vacant school premises and resources so that they could conduct more similar classes and activities. The Administration advised that relevant bureau/departments would give due consideration to requests for support from NGOs including additional resources and deployment of vacant school premises.

Admission to local kindergartens and primary schools

12. Some members pointed out that NCS children encountered difficulties in applying for admission to local KGs because some KGs had adopted Chinese proficiency as the admission criterion. There was a suggestion that the Administration should consider providing incentives to encourage KGs to admit NCS students. The Administration advised that KGs had been reminded to devise their admission

arrangements in a fair and transparent manner. EDB would follow up with individual KGs if complaints were received. In addition, an additional grant comparable to the recommended salary of one KG teacher would be provided to KGs admitting eight or more NCS students under the free quality KG education policy to be implemented from the 2017-2018 school year.

13. Some members considered it necessary for individual schools to list out the support measures undertaken to help NCS students in the Primary School Profiles to facilitate parents to choose suitable primary schools. The Administration advised that while comprehensive support measures of individual schools might not be available in the Primary School Profiles, schools provided with the additional funding to support NCS students' learning of the Chinese language should implement diversified modes of intensive learning and teaching to cater for their needs.

Recognition of Chinese language proficiency

14. Concerns were raised over the disadvantaged position of NCS students when taking HKDSE Examination alongside their local counterparts and the recognition of the attainment in ApL(C) subject as an alternative Chinese Language qualification for the admission of NCS students to local universities.

15. The Administration advised that University Grants Committee-funded institutions and most post-secondary institutions had accepted ApL(C) as an alternative qualification in Chinese Language for the admission of NCS students with "Attained" as the minimum grade required. In addition, NCS students might also consider taking other international Chinese Language examinations under the General Certificate of Secondary Education Examination, the International General Certificate of Secondary Education Examination and the General Certificate of Education Examination (Advanced Subsidiary Level/Advanced Level) to attain the recognized alternative Chinese Language qualifications.

Special schools admitting non-Chinese speaking students

16. Certain members expressed grave concern 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.

Latest position

17. The Administration will brief the Panel on the support measures on Chinese learning and teaching for NCS students at the meeting on 3 September 2021.

Relevant papers

18. A list of relevant papers on the website of the Legislative Council is in **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
27 August 2021

List of relevant papers

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
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)
Panel on Education	26.6.2017	Agenda Minutes
Legislative Council	17.1.2018	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 104 – 109 (Question 14)
Legislative Council	31.10.2018	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 94 – 101 (Question 15)
Legislative Council	21.11.2018	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 98 – 101 (Question 16)

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