

Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities

Education for Children of Ethnic Minorities

Submission from the Equal Opportunities Commission

Purpose of the Paper

The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) has made two previous submissions to the Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities (the “Subcommittee”) as well as one to the Panel on Education since 2016. The recommendations made in those papers are summarized in the Annex. This paper sets out to raise certain additional points based on developments since then.

Further Recommendations upon the Motion Passed by the Subcommittee on 12 December 2016

2. Regarding education of EM children, the Subcommittee passed a motion on 12 December 2016 to “*urge the Administration to **formulate a set of clear and objective value-for-money indicators for the ‘Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework’ (the “Learning Framework”)** in order to monitor its effectiveness and provide improvement plans. In respect of the Learning Framework, the Education Bureau (EDB) should also **provide teachers with more unified and suitable teaching materials and guidelines** to alleviate the unnecessary administrative burden on teachers, thereby allowing them to focus on bettering teaching and learning in class. Besides, EDB should **collect and make public the data relating to non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students** in various primary and secondary schools to facilitate follow-up studies by academics, non-governmental organizations, the Equal*

Opportunities Commission, etc., so as to ensure that the approach of integrated education as advocated by EDB can be effectively implemented for the real benefit of NCS students.”

Regular Reports and Updates by the EDB

3. The EOC has been following up with EDB on the steps urged in the motion. In response the EDB has provided us with some useful and relatively detailed information and data on the various areas we, along with some NGOs working with EMs, had requested for. The EOC appreciates this effort and highly recommends that **the EDB continue reporting on the progress in a transparent manner so as to allow all stakeholders to participate.**

Development of Progress Indicators

4. The EOC acknowledges that the EDB has started to provide information such as the number of NCS students bridged to mainstream Chinese language classes, general description on the student performance analysis conducted by a tertiary institution as well as the results of the questionnaire survey for 2015 Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) Pilot Study to measure the progress of the Learning Framework (LC Paper No. CB(4)1165/16-17(01)). These are useful baseline data for the implementation of the Learning Framework but cannot replace an evaluation framework with separate indicators and targets on different learning areas for NCS students with different backgrounds (such as those who were born in Hong Kong or immigrated from their home countries at a later age, etc.) Therefore, the EOC stresses the need for **having a comprehensive set of indicators that can be used in a systematic manner to assess the effectiveness of the Learning Framework.**

Teacher Training on Chinese Language Teaching to NCS Students

5. According to the EDB, the number of teachers who have opted for more intensive professional enhancement programs in teaching Chinese as a second language such as the five-week training course offered by the Education University of Hong Kong (50) and applied for the Professional Enhancement Grant Scheme for Chinese Teachers of NCS students (68) are relatively low. To address this, the EOC recommends that:

- **A stipulated percentage of teachers for each school with second language learners be formally trained to teach NCS students** (similar to the three-tier training system developed for teachers of students with special educational needs (SEN)) with the ultimate goal that all Chinese teachers of NCS students will have undergone relevant training.
- **A dedicated module be made part of the Post Graduate Diploma in Education** to make sure all graduating teachers are provided skills to teach NCS students; and, for Chinese language teachers, a more detailed module be incorporated which imparts the necessary skills to teach language to second language learners.

Staff Training on Cultural Sensitivity and Practical Skills

6. Through feedback during the EOC's training sessions and workshops for teachers and administrators from more than 400 schools in the last three years, it has been learnt that there is a need for offering staff training, skills and tools so they can actively help EM parents and students in their interactions with the school. **The EDB should facilitate the provision of such training to schools which would include cultural sensitivity, necessary support for students to integrate, understanding of uniform requirements, etc.**

Teaching Materials

7. The EOC welcomes the EDB's undertaking to develop a series of eight textbooks within the 2017-18 school year pegged at Levels 2 and 3 of the Learning Framework, with the first one issued in December 2017. We urge **the EDB to continue to develop and publish textbooks for the remaining levels too and not treat this as a one-off exercise**, in case the expectation that publishers and developers will continue the effort is not realised.

Concentration of NCS Students in Schools

8. It is somewhat hopeful to see that the concentration of NCS students in kindergartens is not as high as it is for primary and secondary schools. (According to the EDB data, 40% of primary and secondary NCS students are in schools with 70% or above NCS student population, while for kindergartens, the rate is 25%.) **The EDB is urged to look into the trend and ensure that the high concentrations, especially in primary and secondary schools, are reduced.**

Further Recommendations on Kindergarten Admission

9. The EOC undertook a telephone survey among 179 kindergartens (KGs) by non-Chinese mystery parents in October 2017. The purpose of this survey was to gauge the fairness and openness in kindergarten admission practices and policies for EM (particularly South Asian) applicants.

10. While analysis of the data is still underway and final results may not be confirmed till March 2018, topline observations indicate:

- A significant percentage of surveyed kindergartens gave a rejecting or discouraging response to application enquiries by EM parents though the percentages seems to have gone down as compared with a similar survey conducted by the Hong Kong Unison in 2015¹.
- It was not a common practice for kindergartens to offer bilingual/English admission interviews. Even though the enquiries were made by English speakers, many kindergartens in the survey allowed for interviews in English or provided other means of screening only when pressed.
- While more kindergartens seem to be less resistant to EM students since the Hong Kong Unison's survey in 2015, the language support provided in classrooms appears to be limited.
- Most of the kindergartens surveyed provided information on the websites and leaflets mostly or even fully in Chinese, placing EM parents at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to making a school choice.

11. Although there seems to be some improvements in kindergartens' attitudes towards EM applicants as compared to two years ago, possibly due to the continuous work of NGOs, the EDB and the EOC, more needs to be done in the following areas

- Kindergartens should **provide more in-school support to EM students** to learn Chinese and integrate with other students

¹ Hong Kong Unison Limited, *Research on Kindergarten Support and Attitude towards Ethnic Minority Students in Hong Kong*, May 2015.

- Kindergartens should **make available more information to EM parents in English** through their websites as well as school notices, etc.
- If kindergartens are able to **make arrangements to have screening interviews in English**, it should be stated upfront and not only on further questioning as many EM parents may hesitate to go that far.

Conclusion

12. The three main areas of concern with regard to EM students are fair admissions, Chinese language learning, and integration. The EOC urges the EDB and the education sector to continue to work towards improvement in all three areas as they are critical to the future growth, development and success of the city's NCS children.

Equal Opportunities Commission

February 2018

**Equal Opportunities Commission's Recommendations to the
Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities
On Education for Children of Ethnic Minorities**

The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) has made two submissions on 23 November 2016 and 12 December 2016 respectively to urge the Education Bureau (EDB) to:

A. **On Curriculum:**

- a. Make clear the performance targets of the Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework (“Learning Framework”) for evaluating its effectiveness, such as number of non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students who have successfully bridged over to mainstream classes, etc.;
- b. Spell out what additional second language learning strategies, beyond the “small-step” approach, the teachers should use to teach NCS students who linger at the beginner level. (Suggestions from some experts in Chinese education the EOC has met include teaching Cantonese pronunciation as the first step, grammar lessons on Chinese language structure, etc.); and
- c. Review whether NCS learners can cope with the Chinese literature part of the DSE Chinese Examination involving classical or ancient text given that it assumes a strong cultural context which may not be naturally accessible to non-native Chinese students, and explore alternative examination options.

B. On Teaching Support:

- a. Undertake the development and publishing of more appropriate teaching materials for NCS learners, for example textbooks, so that quality, quantity and adherence to the needs of the syllabus and curriculum can be ensured (rather than leaving to private publishers as is the current practice); and
- b. Set clear targets to ensure that schools have a certain percentage of their teachers equipped with the necessary skills through formal training to cater to NCS students' needs.

C. On Planning & Central Coordination:

- a. Collect and release data of number as well as ratio of EM student population in schools with high EM concentration and to keep track of reverse migration from mainstream to previously designated schools; and
- b. Set up a dedicated unit looking into all education issues of NCS students in a comprehensive and holistic manner. (Other concerns beyond Chinese learning include shortage of school placement for NCS students with SEN, difficulties in coping with Liberal Studies, etc.)