

Closing the Gap:

Report of the Working Group on Education for Ethnic Minorities

Press Conference, 25 September 2019



平等機會委員會
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMISSION

Working Group on Education for Ethnic Minorities (Working Group)

2010

- Set up the Working Group

2011

- Released “Education for All” Report, recommending to
 - Start Chinese language learning for Non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students early in the pre-primary stage
 - Provide an alternative Chinese-as-a-second-language curriculum

2014

- The Government introduced the “Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework” (Learning Framework) and Applied Learning Chinese (for NCS students) (ApL(C))

2016

- The Government extended support measures to kindergartens through the Kindergarten Education Scheme

Working Group on Education for Ethnic Minorities

2018

- Reconvened the Working Group because ethnic minority (EM) education continues to be a concern:
 - Concluding observations by UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination
 - The Learning Framework has been in place for more than 3 years
- Look into EM education issues by addressing:
 - Equal opportunities for EM students in acquiring Chinese language proficiency as second language learners
 - Chinese language acquisition and qualifications for EM students
 - Racial Integration in schools

2019

- Release of the “Closing the Gap” Report, making 22 recommendations to the Government and tertiary institutions

Feedback collection methods

- Qualitative in nature
- Feedback collected from the following major stakeholders through group discussions, interviews and questionnaires:
 - Teachers
 - Principals
 - Language and teaching experts
 - Non-governmental organisations
 - EM parents
 - EM students
 - Employers

Disadvantages Faced by EM students

○ **Necessity to learn/handle multiple languages**

- Huge challenge for NCS students of South Asian or South East Asian ethnicity to cope with learning Cantonese, Putonghua and traditional Chinese characters simultaneously

○ **Diversity among EM students**

- Challenge for teachers to cater to learning diversity as EMs in HK are made up of various racial groups with different cultural and language backgrounds

○ **Culture of performance ranking**

- Disadvantage for EM students, especially from low-income families, because their performance in Chinese language and subjects taught in Chinese mostly lags behind that of their Chinese peers

Major Concerns of the Working Group

○ Gaps in the Learning Framework

- Learning Framework is not equal to a curriculum

“There are no clear instructions on the use of the Learning Framework for teachers to follow.” – A teacher

“The concept behind is ambiguous. I wonder what level the Education Bureau expects NCS students to achieve.” – Another teacher

“Problem is the textbook. We need to write (in English) and pronounce by ourselves.” – An EM student

Major Concerns of the Working Group

- Unclear indicators to measure the progress of the Learning Framework
 - Baseline indicators vs. Performance indicators
 - “We just submit the information without any specific analysis.” – A teacher*
 - “We think the school has no effective evaluation tools to measure the Chinese learning of our kids.” - An EM parent*
- Insufficient teacher training and support
 - No requirement for Chinese subject teachers of NCS students to have undergone any sustained training
 - “Inadequate training. Teachers generally have no experience in teaching NCS students. They are not trained to do so.” – A teacher*

Major Concerns of the Working Group

- Available Chinese examinations either too hard for second-language learners or too low in standard
 - GCSE/IGCSE: **Simple and popular**, but may not be adequate for HK workplace
 - GCE AS/A-Level, ApL(C): **Not popular** due to various reasons
 - HKDSE: Parts of the curriculum require a high level of knowledge of Chinese culture which is **too difficult** for many EM students to achieve

“HKDSE (Chinese language) is designed for locals. Asking NCS students to take the examination would be a blow to their confidence.” – A teacher

“We don't expect NCS students to reach the “high level” of local standard. ” – Another teacher

Major Concerns of the Working Group

- Limited knowledge and access to information for EM parents on school choice and examination options for their children
 - Provide English information to EM parents
- Need for more integration in schools. Some commonly seen phenomena that are contrary to the principles of integration are:
 - Separated classes for NCS students
 - Lack of communication with EM parents
 - Lower participation rate of NCS students in school activities/extra-curricular activities
 - Limited effort at introducing learning of other cultures
 - Stereotyping of NCS students

Major Concerns of the Working Group

- Lack of continuing Chinese learning opportunities beyond secondary school

“EM students simply stop learning Chinese after going to university and their Chinese level drops drastically.” – A language expert

“There is no suitable and available course to upgrade my Chinese language level after leaving school. I can’t pursue higher job position with my limited Chinese level even I have the requisite skills and qualifications.” – An EM employee

- Inadequate parental support and community support

“Provide free/subsidised classes for Putonghua and Cantonese aligned with school curriculum.” – An EM parent

“Schools with limited EM students get very little support.” – Another EM parent

Recommendations of the Working Group



Equal Opportunities for EM students as second-language-learners in acquiring Chinese Language Proficiency

1. Equal Opportunities for EM students as second-language learners

- Develop a **full-fledged** Chinese-as-a-second-language **curriculum**
- Provide learning materials and **textbooks** tied to the curriculum
- Explore **teaching aids**
- Strengthen teaching **training**

Curriculum
Design

Teaching
Support

Transition &
Learning
Adjustment

Community &
School
Support

Accountability

1. Equal Opportunities for EM students as second-language learners

- Address the likely disadvantage for NCS students of using same **assessment tools** as for Chinese students at **P4 - P6**, which could impact their **secondary school place allocation**
- Encourage **bridging programmes** to facilitate kindergarten-primary and primary-secondary transition
- Look into the impact on NCS students of learning Chinese language in **Putonghua**

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1. Equal Opportunities for EM students as second-language learners

- Step up **community support** for NCS students and language support for parents
- Review **funding mechanism** and increase school subsidies
- Formulate **clear and objective indicators** to evaluate effectiveness of Learning Framework

Curriculum
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Recommendations of the Working Group



Need for Multiple Exits in the Examination System particularly for NCS Students

2. Multiple exits in the examination system

- Review whether NCS learners can cope with the **Chinese literature part of the HKDSE Chinese examination**
- Develop a **qualification ladder** of Chinese language examinations at progressive levels
- Encourage more universities accepting alternative Chinese language qualifications to give **weightage to higher level examinations** such as GCE-A Level and GCE(AS) as compared to GCSE/IGCSE
- Provide **continuing Chinese language classes** for NCS students at universities



2. Multiple exits in the examination system

- Remind schools to provide **information to EM parents and students** of Chinese learning pathways and different examination choices
- Track and share **annual data on NCS students' progress** in learning the Chinese language



Recommendations of the Working Group

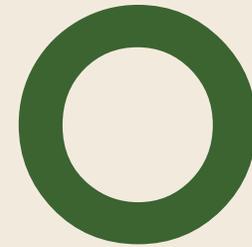


Racial Integration in Schools

3. Racial integration in schools

- **Collect and share data** monitoring EM concentration in schools
- Ensure provision of **bilingual information** by schools
- Make teaching about **cultural diversity and inclusion** an essential part of the curriculum
- Monitor schools offering English medium of instruction classes to NCS students to **avoid separation of NCS students**

Recommendations of the Working Group



Other Recommendations

4. Other recommendations

- Provide funding support for the teaching and learning of **non-Chinese subjects taught in Chinese / Cantonese**
- Establish a **dedicated unit** under the Education Bureau that is responsible for overseeing all aspects of NCS education



Sharing by an ethnic minority parent

Conclusion:

Top three priority areas for immediate action

- Plug the gaps in the current Chinese-as-a-second-language learning system
- Strengthen teacher training to fully equip them in teaching second language learners
- Revisit the Chinese language examination options for second language learners



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