

# Ethnic Minority Parents' Opinions on existing support measures in the Kindergarten Education Scheme

## 《少數族裔家長對「幼稚園 教育計劃」的支援措施 意見調查》

06/2019

## **Ethnic Minority Parents' Opinions on existing support measures in the Kindergarten Education Scheme**

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## **Executive Summary on the Ethnic Minority Parents' Opinions on existing support measures in the Kindergarten Education Scheme**

Hong Kong Unison (June, 2019)

### **Executive Summary**

As continuously pointed out by various research, media reporting and the recent Ombudsman Direct Investigation Report, ethnic minorities face discrimination and unfair treatment during kindergarten admissions, and the lack of support especially in Chinese learning in mainstream kindergartens. With the implementation of the Kindergarten Education Scheme in 2017/18, related guidelines and indicators were revised and new measures supporting the teaching and learning of non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students are introduced. This study aims to find out if kindergarten admission and education for NCS children have improved after the relevant support measures are in place.

A total of 232 ethnic minority parents with children either applying or currently studying in kindergartens under the Free Quality Kindergarten Education Scheme were interviewed from February to March 2019, through outreach by our volunteer teams, and with the help of NGOs and a religious group who conducted the surveys. In addition to the quantitative analysis of the data collected through a structured questionnaire, we reviewed the additional comments and responses provided by the respondents to better understand what parents have experienced.

### **Research Findings**

1. The Chinese foundation of the children built in KGs does not give ethnic minority parents confidence to send their children to a mainstream primary school.
  - 1.1. About one in four (53, 25%) interviewed parents stated that their children are learning *easier* Chinese when compared to Chinese children in the same class. **Many ethnic minority children actually do not have a chance to develop their Chinese ability as their Chinese peers.**
  - 1.2. More than half (59%) of the interviewed parents indicated that they are not confident to put their child in mainstream primary school because they perceived their child's Chinese ability was not enough to enable a smooth transition in a mainstream primary school. **While the EDB assumes that NCS parents sending their children to local KGs can facilitate an easier adaptation to mainstream primary schools, it may not always be the case.**
2. Not every schemed kindergarten (KG) provides a Chinese language environment, and de facto racial segregation is found in some KGs.
  - 2.1. 64 (29%) of the interviewed parents reported that most of the children's classmates are ethnic minority, and 81 (36%) of them reported that the main language used in teaching is English. Some parents shared with the interviewer that KGs group all NCS students in one session (AM or PM), despite EDB's advice against arranging NCS students in segregated class/session. **De facto racial segregation persists in local KGs and not all local schools**

**under the Free KG Scheme which adopt the local curriculum provide Chinese language learning environment.**

- 2.2. Almost all interviewed parents (212, 95.5%) agreed that it is important to know their child's Chinese ability; but about a quarter of the parents (49, 22.1%) do not know about the Chinese level their children learn in school and nearly one fifth (39, 16.8%) of them are not able to find out their child's Chinese ability. **It reveals that parents are facing difficulties in getting involved in the education of their children.**
3. Ethnic minorities are still facing difficulties in kindergarten admission.
  - 3.1. One third (32.8%) of the interviewed parents were not provided with bilingual KG application documents, while almost 10% of the interviewed parents were arranged to Chinese-only interviews. **Language barrier persists in kindergarten admission process for ethnic minority parents.**
  - 3.2. **Discriminatory attitudes of KG frontline staff towards ethnic minority applicants were observed** as reflected in comments like 'our kindergarten is for local Chinese students'; 'we cannot support NCS children'; 'no need to apply here as it will be difficult for your child to learn'; 'you should go to an English school as it would be easier for your kid to fit in'.
4. The current dissemination methods and channels of dispersing information by EDB are ineffective.
  - 4.1. 73% (170) parents were not aware of leaflets published by the EDB nor the Equal Opportunities Commission on KG support for NCS children, and 60% (139) of the parents surveyed did not know about the EDB Placement Service.

### Policy Suggestions

1. The **EDB should take a more active role in monitoring** kindergarten admission procedures and start data collection on NCS applications such as number of NCS applications, admissions, and enrolments, including race, age, spoken language at home, interviews granted, and interpretation service at interviews to ensure no child is rejected at admission due to his/ her race.
2. The **EDB Quality Assurance Review** team should especially review if EM students are overly concentrated in KGs, the racial composition, Chinese language learning environment, and if the level of Chinese taught to NCS children is at par with their Chinese peers. A section on 'Support to NCS students in school' in the current Quality Review Report should be added to report EDB's observations and evaluation regarding the support to NCS students in KGs.
3. With the revised and intensified NCS funding to KGs for NCS students, the **transparency and accountability of the funding** should be improved. The EDB should request kindergartens to upload the plans and evaluation reports of the NCS funding, and data collected related to NCS Chinese language learning on school websites to monitor and track NCS students' progress and to support public accountability.

4. The EDB should clarify in the **Kindergarten Performance Indicators** that although language ability refers to the Chinese development of children with Chinese as mother tongue, children from other language backgrounds should also develop similar Chinese ability.
5. The EDB should improve its **dissemination of information** to ethnic minority parents, and conduct more outreach to explain its support measures to NCS parents.
6. **Cultural competence training** should be arranged to schools for all staff, including not only the management level but also the frontline staff, on how KGs can interact with and teach effectively with people of different cultures and language backgrounds.
7. The EDB should encourage KGs to **involve NCS parents** in the education of their children. Home-school communications should be strengthened to enable parents understand the Chinese level their children learn in schools.

## 少數族裔家長對「幼稚園教育計劃」的支援措施意見調查

香港融樂會 (2019年6月)

### 研究撮要

近年各項研究、媒體及最近的申訴專員公署主動調查報告均指出，少數族裔學童於幼稚園入學時面臨歧視及不公平的對待，以及主流幼稚園中對非華語學童的中文學習支援上亦尤見匱乏。隨著2017/18年度幼稚園教育計劃（以往稱為「免費優質幼稚園教育」）之實施，教育局於幼稚園行政手冊、收生安排指引、教育課程指引、表現指標均作出了修訂，並為幼稚園提供支援非華語學生學習的教學資助。本調查旨在了解相關支援措施落實後，少數族裔兒童於幼稚園入學及在學的學習情況有否得以改善。

香港融樂會於本年2月及3月透過義工外展，以及於非政府機構及宗教團體之協助下，共訪問了232名有子女現正申請或就讀免費優質幼稚園教育計劃幼稚園之少數族裔家長，以探討他們就子女在報讀或就讀幼稚園時的經驗及意見。

### 研究結果

1. 在幼稚園建立的中文根基不足令少數族裔家長缺乏為子女選擇主流中文小學的信心。
  - 1.1. 四分一（53名，25%）的受訪家長指出，與同班華裔學童相比，其子女正在學習較容易的中文。這顯示有少數族裔兒童根本沒有機會在本地的免費幼稚園中，發展與華裔學童同等水平的中文能力。
  - 1.2. 只有少於一半（41%）的受訪家長有信心讓其子女升讀主流中文小學，主要因為他們認為子女在幼稚園習得的中文水平仍不足以應付主流小學中以中文教授的學科。雖然教育局假設非華語家長讓子女就讀本地幼稚園能促進非華語學童適應本地主流小學，但現實上這只是少數例子。
2. 並非所有本地幼稚園亦提供中文學習的語言環境，部份更有校內實質種族隔離的情況。
  - 2.1. 29%（64名）受訪家長指大部分子女的同學皆為少數族裔，及36%（81名）的家長指學校的教學語言主要為英語。即使教育局在行政指引中已有提及應盡量安排非華語學生與華語學生同班，有家長表示子女在報讀時已被告知幼稚園只會把所有非華語學生安排至相同班級或同一上課時段（例如上/下午班）上課。這表示部份本地幼稚園仍存在實質種族隔離。縱使部分本地學校屬

於免費幼稚園教育計劃及採用本地課程，但校內並未真正提供合適的中文語言環境。

- 2.2. 近乎所有受訪家長（212名，95.5%）同意了解其子女的中文程度是重要的；然而22.1%（49名）家長表示並不清楚幼稚園所教授的中文水平是否與華語學生所學的程度相若；16.8%（39名）家長更表示未能知悉子女的中文能力。這顯示家長在參與子女學習方面有困難。
3. 少數族裔在報讀幼稚園時仍面對困難。
  - 3.1. 三分之一（32.8%）之受訪父母未獲提供中英文的幼稚園入學申請文件，而同時近10%之受訪家長表示校方只安排全中文的入學面試。語言障礙仍然是少數族裔家長於幼稚園入學程序時面對之一大挑戰。
  - 3.2. 幼稚園前線職員對少數族裔申請人存有明顯之偏見，當中言論如「我們的幼稚園是為本地華裔學生而設的」；「我們不會支援非華語學生」；「你的子女不懂中文，很難在中文幼稚園學習的，所以不需要來申請我們的幼稚園了」甚或「英文的幼稚園應該會更適合你孩子的融入」。
4. 教育局目前的資訊傳播方式及信息渠道成效甚低。
  - 4.1. 73%（170名）的家長亦未有得悉教育局或平等機會委員會就非華語學生在幼稚園支援措施出版的任何單張，60%（139名）受訪家長更並未聽聞教育局的幼稚園學位安排服務同時。

## 政策建議

1. 教育局應在**監管幼稚園**的入學申請程序上採取更積極的態度，收集非華語學童報讀幼稚園時的數據（包括非華語學童的入學申請、收生及註冊數目，學童的種族、在家使用的語言、面試安排等），以檢視合資格的兒童有否因種族而在入學申請階段被拒於門外。
2. 現時的**幼稚園質素評估報告**內應加設「為非華語學童提供的支援成效」一欄，以便教育局向持份者匯報學校在支援非華語學童的監察及評估。教育局的外評隊伍應特別檢視幼稚園的少數族裔學生會否過度集中、學校有否為學生提供合適的中文語言環境、及學校有否為非華語學童與華語學童教授同等的中文水平。

3. 教育局加強對取錄非華語學生的幼稚園資助的同時，亦應改善學校運用撥款的透明度及問責性。教育局應要求幼稚園把有關額外撥款的年度計劃、報告及評估、以及與非華語學童的中文學習有關的數據**上載至學校網頁**，以便持份者監察及追蹤非華語學童的中文學習進度，並提升**公眾問責**的效能。
4. 教育局應更明確地就表現指標（幼稚園）澄清，雖然「認知發展」範圍表現指標4.2 語言能力是指「一般在幼稚園接受母語教育的學童在母語方面的語言發展程度」，但對於來自其他語言背景並以第二語言來學習中文的學童，亦**不應預設較低的中文能力**，及應被教導與華語學童相若的中文水平。
5. 教育局應**加強資訊的傳播及流通**，提供外展服務，主動向少數族裔家長解釋支援非華語學童及家長的服務和措施，令家長能接觸到更多相關資訊。
6. 教育局應為幼稚園的所有職員（除前線職員及教師外，亦應包括管理層及其他員工）安排**文化敏感度訓練**，讓幼稚園能更有效地照顧及與不同種族及語言背景的學童及家長溝通。
7. 教育局應鼓勵幼稚園加強非華語學童的家長在其子女教育中的參與，並透過**加強家校合作**讓家長了解其子女在幼稚園習得的中文程度。

## **Report on the Ethnic Minority Parents' Opinions on existing support measures in the Kindergarten Education Scheme**

Hong Kong Unison

### 1. Introduction

Established in 2001 and incorporated in 2005, Hong Kong Unison Limited (hereinafter 'Unison') is a non-governmental charitable organization with the mission to promote racial equality and to effect policy change so that all ethnic minority residents of Hong Kong have equal education opportunities. Education for ethnic minorities has long been one of Unison's strategic work priorities. "Education is both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights."<sup>1</sup> If ethnic minority children do not have adequate proficiency in Chinese, their educational achievements are likely to be hampered and their ability to take part in the Hong Kong society and exercise their fundamental rights and freedoms will be limited.

It is no doubt that early start in learning the Chinese language will facilitate non-Chinese speaking ('NCS') integration into the local community and adaptation to mainstream curriculum. The Education Bureau (EDB) also posits NCS parents sending their children to local kindergartens ('KGs') would facilitate their learning of Chinese. With the implementation of the Kindergarten Education Scheme in 2017/18 (which was termed 'Free Quality Kindergarten Education' when it was first launched), related guidelines and indicators were revised and new measures supporting the teaching and learning of NCS students are introduced. In this research, Unison collected feedback from NCS parents on the current KG admissions and learning situation of their children, and explore what can be done further to ensure an equitable and quality early education for ethnic minority children.

### 2. Background

#### 2.1. Research rationale

As continuously pointed out by various research, media reporting and the recent Ombudsman Direct Investigation Report, ethnic minorities face discrimination and unfair treatment during kindergarten admissions, and the lack of support especially in Chinese learning in mainstream KGs. To facilitate a better early education for NCS children under the Kindergarten Education Scheme, the EDB had introduced various new measures and policies in admission, provided additional grants for KGs with 8 and more NCS children, and other measures to support the teaching and learning of NCS children. The KG Administration Guide (2017/18 school year), the Guidelines on Kindergarten Admission Arrangements and the KG Education Curriculum, etc. have been updated to include arrangements to cater the needs of NCS children.

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<sup>1</sup> The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), General Comment 13, 1999 Para 1.

However, as shared by frontline service of various non-governmental organizations ('NGOs'), parents still face difficulties in getting admissions into Chinese kindergartens, and the Chinese ability of NCS children is still not adequate to ensure a smooth transition from KG to primary education. Furthermore, there is no comprehensive mechanism to evaluate the support measures to safeguard policy and funding accountability and effectiveness. Currently, KGs that receive the additional grants are required to submit a school plan and a school report at the beginning and the end of the school year respectively. KGs also have to submit a School Self-Evaluation(SSE) report under the Quality Assurance Framework. Yet, these reports only include subjective observations from schools and teachers through self-reporting, and not available to the public, thus there is no transparency and accountability. Although Quality Reviews are conducted by the EDB once every cycle (5 to 6 years), the reports do not necessarily reflect the provisions and effectiveness of the support measures for NCS children and parents. In the evaluation procedure mentioned, comments from major stakeholders like parents are neglected. Thus Hong Kong Unison would like to find out if KG admission and education for NCS children have improved after the relevant support measures are in place, by collecting the opinion from the NCS parents based on their experience and observation in this research.

## 2.2. Government's existing measures to facilitate early integration of ethnic minority children in kindergartens under the Kindergarten Education Scheme

### 2.2.1. Guidelines on Kindergarten Admission Arrangements for the 2019/20 School Year<sup>2</sup> (2019/20學年幼稚園收生安排指引)

#### a. Bilingual admission information and related documents

In point 4 of *Guidelines on Kindergarten Admission Arrangements for 2019/20 school year*, it is stated that relevant admission information and application forms must be both in Chinese and English and schools are encouraged to upload them on school webpages.

#### b. KG website

To facilitate NCS parents in obtaining admission information, KGs should create an icon or provide a simple message in English on the school webpages (e.g. "If you need English version of the information, please call xxxx xxxx to contact Ms/Mr XXX of our school"), to let parents know how to obtain the English version of the information.

#### c. The use of interpretation in KG interview

Under Interview Arrangements point 14 - it is stated that when interviewing NCS children, KGs should arrange interpretation and/or translation service for applicants where necessary, e.g. making good use of the interpretation and/or translation service provided by the Centre for Harmony and Enhancement of Ethnic Minority Residents (CHEER) funded by the Home Affairs Department. Alternatively, KGs may allow parents and

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<sup>2</sup> Guidelines on Kindergarten Admission Arrangements for the 2019/20 School Year - [https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/kindergarten-k1-admission-arrangements/2019%20Admission%20Guidelines\\_E.pdf](https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/kindergarten-k1-admission-arrangements/2019%20Admission%20Guidelines_E.pdf)

children to be accompanied by a Chinese speaking relative/friend during interview so as to facilitate communication.

d. Ensuring fair admission process in KG<sup>3</sup>

To ensure equal education opportunities for all children regardless of their race, gender and ability, the EDB has advised schools (including KGs) through different channels including school circulars and briefing sessions, that their school-based admission mechanism should be fair, just and open, and in compliance with the existing legislation (including the Race Discrimination Ordinance (RDO) and other anti-discrimination ordinances in force) as well as circulars and guidelines issued by the EDB. KGs are required to inform parents in advance of the details of their admission mechanism through effective channels (e.g. guidance notes to complete the application forms, admission guidelines/leaflets, school website, etc.).

2.2.2. Administration Guide (2017/18 school year)(Version 1.0)<sup>4</sup>

The Administration Guide was updated in September 2017. It includes guidelines on class arrangement for Chinese-speaking (CS) and NCS students, grants to support NCS students in Chinese learning, communication with NCS parents, admission arrangement and teacher training. Only Chinese version is available as of April 2019<sup>5</sup>. It is important to note that the Guide has not been translated into English since it has been updated on Sep, 2017, which is more than 1.5 years until now.

a. Grant for Support to Non-Chinese Speaking Students<sup>6</sup>

Starting from 2017/18 school year, the EDB introduced a grant for support to NCS students. KGs admitting 8 or more NCS students receive a grant which is comparable to the salary of one teacher. The amount of the full-year grant for the 2018/19 school year is \$368,610 for each eligible Scheme-KG. In school year 2017/18, 144 KGs had received the additional grant for supporting NCS students<sup>7</sup>.

In 2018 Policy address, the government announced that they will enhance the subsidy by replacing the original flat-rate subsidy for KGs admitting 8 or more NCS students with a 5-tiered subsidy for different levels of NCS student admission.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Extract from the Discussion Paper on 23 Nov, 2016, Legislative Council Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities, Education for Children of Ethnic Minorities, LC Paper No. CB(2)208/16-17(01)

<sup>4</sup> Administration Guide Link (2017/18 school year)(Version 1.0) <https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/free-quality-kg-edu/Admin%20Guide%20Chi%201718%201.0.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> As in May, 2019, EDB website stated that 'English version (of the Administration Guide) to be provided'.  
<https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/free-quality-kg-edu/index.html>

<sup>6</sup> EDUCATION BUREAU CIRCULAR MEMORANDUM NO. 12/2018. Appendix 4: Grant for Support to Non-Chinese Speaking Students - <https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/free-quality-kg-edu/EDBCM18012E.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2018-19, Reply Serial No. EDB203. Appendix 4.

<sup>8</sup> Government's leaflet on Strengthening Support for Ethnic Minorities - [https://www.policyaddress.gov.hk/2018/eng/pdf/Leaflet\\_support.pdf](https://www.policyaddress.gov.hk/2018/eng/pdf/Leaflet_support.pdf), and EDUCATION BUREAU CIRCULAR MEMORANDUM NO. 12/2019 <https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/free-quality-kg-edu/EDBCM19012E.pdf>

The amount of the grants as listed as below:

1-4 students	New cash grant of \$50,000 per year
5-7 students	New subsidy at a rate of 0.5 KG teacher
8-15 students	Subsidy at a rate of 1 KG teacher
16-30 students	Increased subsidy at a rate of 1.5 KG teachers
31 or more students	Increased subsidy at a rate of 2 KG teachers

b. Class arrangement for Chinese Speaking ('CS') and NCS students in schools<sup>9</sup>

The interaction between NCS and CS students helps NCS students in Chinese learning. In terms of class division or grouping arrangement, KGs should arrange NCS and CS students into the same class or group, to encourage NCS students to learn Chinese through interaction and create a harmonious campus. KGs should avoid grouping NCS students separately from CS students (e.g. putting all NCS students in one session) during class arrangement.

c. Support measures to facilitate kindergarten's communication with NCS parents

i. Cue cards<sup>10</sup>

Communication Cue cards for Non-Chinese Speaking Families in KGs' developed by the Education Bureau, along with the audio files, are available for KGs to express sincerity and care on daily contact with NCS parents, in order to create a more harmonious campus.

ii. Notice templates in different languages and interpretation services<sup>11</sup>

To strengthen the communication between KGs and NCS parents, the Education Bureau has issued templates of general notices in eight minority languages. Besides, KGs can also make good use of the interpretation and translation services of major minority languages provided by the Home Affairs Department funded-

<sup>9</sup> The original Chinese wording in the Kindergarten Administration Guide (2017/18 school year) - 幼稚園行政手冊 (2017/18 學年)第2章 學與教2.5 支援有不同學習需要的兒童 (4) - 非華語學生與華語學生在日常學習的互動，有助非華語學生學習中文。幼稚園在編班或分組安排上，應盡量安排非華語學生與華語學生同班或同組，鼓勵透過同儕互動幫助非華語學生學習中文，以及營造共融校園。幼稚園不應將非華語學生只安排在同一班級或同一上課時段(例如下午班)的班級上課。

<sup>10</sup> Communication Cue Cards for Non-Chinese Speaking Families in Kindergartens - <http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/kindergarten-k1-admission-arrangements/ncs-cue-card.html>

<sup>11</sup> Templates of general kindergarten circulars for parents in eight languages (for reference only) 幼稚園八種語言常用家長通告範本 (只供參考) <http://www.edb.gov.hk/tc/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/free-quality-kg-edu/index.html>

‘Centre for Harmony and Enhancement of Ethnic Minority Residents’ (CHEER), or other institutions<sup>12</sup>.

d. Placement service/ referral system

Parents of NCS children encountering genuine difficulties in seeking admission to KGs may approach EDB for referral, as appropriate, to KGs joining the KG education scheme that have vacancies. In Unison’s communication with the EDB we learnt that the referral system starts in April every year. Parents of NCS children should furnish proof (such as interview letter, rejection letter) of refused admission by at least 3 KGs.

e. Teacher training

For support to NCS students, each Scheme-KG receiving the NCS grant should have at least one teacher having attended the Basic Course as recognised by EDB by the 2018/19 school year; and this will be extended to all Scheme-KGs having admitted NCS students (regardless of the number) by the 2020/21 school year.<sup>13</sup>

In the 2017/18 school year, tertiary institutions are offering various teacher training courses on NCS students’ learning of Chinese in KGs. For instance, the Education University of Hong Kong is offering a new Certificate Professional Development Programme on the Teaching of Chinese Language for NCS Children. It will also continue to offer the University Grants Committee-funded programme “Bachelor of Education (Honors) (ECE) in Leadership and NCS children”. Besides, The University of Hong Kong is commissioned to offer a series of training courses on NCS students’ learning of Chinese in KGs.<sup>14</sup>

### 2.2.3. KG Education Curriculum Guide 2017<sup>15</sup> (‘Curriculum Guide’)

The Curriculum Guide was updated and issued in February 2017, with its last version in 2006<sup>16</sup>. It is mentioned that KGs under the Free Quality Kindergarten Scheme (‘Scheme-KGs’) should support NCS children in various dimensions, including (1) understanding community environment and facilities, (2) understanding local culture and custom, and (3) improving ability in Cantonese speaking and listening, and helping them in learning traditional Chinese. The Curriculum Guide also reminds KGs to build teacher’s understanding of NCS student’s culture and effective home-school cooperation.

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<sup>12</sup> The original Chinese wording in the Kindergarten Administration Guide (2017/18 school year) - 幼稚園行政手冊 (2017/18 學年)第2章 學與教2.6善用資源以照顧學童的多元需要— (5) 為協助幼稚園加強與非華語學童家長的溝通，教育局為幼稚園提供幼稚園八種語言常用家長通告範本。此外，幼稚園可善用由民政事務總署資助營辦的「融匯—少數族裔人士支援服務」中心(CHEER)提供的主要少數族裔語言的傳譯及/或翻譯服務，或透過其他機構，按需要安排傳譯及/或翻譯服務。

<sup>13</sup> Extracted from the Legco Discussion paper for 5 Jan, 2018. LC Paper No. CB(4)427/17-18(02)

<sup>14</sup> Ditto.

<sup>15</sup> Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide 2017 - [https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/curriculum-development/major-level-of-edu/preprimary/ENG\\_KGECG\\_2017.pdf](https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/curriculum-development/major-level-of-edu/preprimary/ENG_KGECG_2017.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> “The 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.” Extract from Legco Discussion Paper for 23 Nov, 2016. LC Paper No. CB(2)208/16-17(01).

#### 2.2.4. EDB Leaflet on “Support for Non-Chinese Speaking Children”<sup>17</sup>

EDB published the leaflet on support for NCS children in 7 ethnic minority languages to apprise parents about the KG admission support measures and measures to cater for NCS students ‘needs which will facilitate NCS children learning the Chinese language and their adaptation to mainstream curriculum and integration into the local community.

#### 2.2.5. Support to NCS students after schools

The Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) funded programme organized by non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

At the community level, with a view to motivating NCS children to learn Chinese through fun activities, such as games and creative arts, etc., SCOLAR has invited, through the use of Language Fund, NGOs to organise district-based programmes for NCS children aged 3 to 9 in localities with a greater concentration of NCS children.

#### 2.2.6. Quality Assurance Framework of Kindergartens<sup>18</sup>

All KGs under the KG education scheme are required to conduct ongoing School-Self-evaluation (SSE) and undergo Quality Review (QR), which comprises the Quality Assurance (QA) Framework. Both are conducted on the basis of Performance Indicators (PIs). The EDB sent a circular in July 2018 which sets out the details of enhanced QA.

##### a. Quality Review (QR)

All Scheme-KGs will undergo QR for validation of their self-evaluation and be assessed if they have met the prescribed standards. Taking into account the views of KGs and parents, EDB will upload Chinese and English versions of the QR reports onto their website starting from the 2018/19 school year for public information.

##### b. Refinement of Performance Indicators (Pre-primary Institution)<sup>19</sup>

EDB has refined the Performance Indicators (Kindergartens) in July, 2017 in accordance with the Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide (Provisional Final Draft) (Curriculum Guide) for the policy of Free Quality Kindergarten. PIs on catering for student diversity are said to be strengthened. On catering for the needs of non-Chinese speaking students, KGs should provide an authentic Chinese language environment for them and support their integration into school life.

The Performance Indicators n P.12 indicated that “4.2 Language Ability” under the area of “Cognitive Development” refers to the mother tongue development of children who are

<sup>17</sup> EDB Leaflet on “Support for Non-Chinese Speaking Children” - [https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/kindergarten-k1-admission-arrangements/NCS\\_Support\\_leaflet\\_Eng.pdf](https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/kindergarten-k1-admission-arrangements/NCS_Support_leaflet_Eng.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Education Bureau Circular No. 11 / 2018 Enhanced Quality Assurance Framework for Kindergarten Education - <https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/quality-assurance-framework/EDBC18011E.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Performance Indicators (Kindergartens) - <https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/quality-assurance-framework/performance-indicators-kindergartens/index.html>

mostly taught in mother tongue at KGs. and ‘Kindergartens should not use the same performance indicators to assess children’s learning in a second language.’

c. New EDB team for KG monitoring

Per meetings with the EDB, Unison understands that there is a team of 2.5 headcount exclusively for NCS children in KGs. The exact role and responsibility of this team is not very clear but they visit KGs with NCS children.

2.2.7. School information

Profile of Kindergartens and Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres 2018/19 School Year ('Kindergarten profiles')<sup>20</sup>

The EDB Committee on Home-School Co-operation (CHSC) publishes Kindergarten profiles to provide reference materials for parents enrolling children in KG. The profiles are printed in Chinese and English. From 2018 the CHSC added a new box of ‘Support for NCS students’ where KGs should mention any and all support measures provided.

2.3. Literature review on the difficulties ethnic minorities are facing in KG education

2.3.1 Survey on the Chinese Learning Challenges South Asian Ethnic Minority Kindergarten Students from Low-Income Families Face (Oxfam Hong Kong, December, 2014).

According to the findings, most parents reported that KG is the only place where their children learned Chinese and over half of the KGs did not provide additional Chinese language support to the students.

2.3.2 Research on Kindergarten Support and Attitude towards Ethnic Minority Students in Hong Kong (Hong Kong Unison, May 2015)

The research revealed discriminatory admission policies and unwelcoming attitudes in KG applications. It is found that most KGs conduct admission screening interviews in Chinese, and ethnic minority students were concentrated in a few KGs.

2.3.3 Research on the Accountability of Kindergartens to the Ethnic Minority Community (Hong Kong Unison, November 2017)

The research found that QR mechanisms are not accountable to the ethnic minority community. Almost all QR report that were surveyed provided only Chinese version. And only slightly more than half of the reports that had mentioned support for NCS students and parents revealed information regarding the learning situation of NCS students in KG.

2.3.4 Survey on Kindergarten Admission Policies and Attitudes towards non-Chinese

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<sup>20</sup> KG school profiles 2018/19 - <https://kgp2018.azurewebsites.net/edb/index.php?lang=en>

### Applicants (Equal Opportunities Commission, March 2018)

This research aimed to gauge any improvements in the fairness and openness in KG admission practices since Unison's research in 2015. It found that 1 in 4 KGs rejected and discouraged applications from NCS children; most did not have a clear answer about support measures for Chinese language learning; and most web pages of KGs were completely in Chinese.

### 2.3.5 Securing a Good Start for Students of Chinese as an Additional Language in Kindergarten (The Zubin Foundation, 2018)

The research found that ethnic minority students are still segregated in a few KGs which hampers their Chinese learning in a natural environment and there is a lack of support and resources for learning Chinese.

### 2.3.6 The Ombudsman Direct Investigation report on the Government's support for non-Chinese speaking students (February, 2019)

<sup>21</sup>The Office's direct investigation revealed that there was inadequate monitoring on KG admission and asked the EDB to actively inspect and check the KGs' implementation of the measures promulgated by them; which include the availability of English application forms and related information.

## 3. Research Objectives

- 3.1 To collect feedback of ethnic minority parents on KG admission and education for their children under the Free KG scheme, so as to evaluate if the community faces difficulties or obstacles since the implementation of various guides in September 2017 such as the new Kindergarten Admission Guidelines and Administration Guide, etc.
- 3.2 To assess whether ethnic minority children can benefit from the Chinese language environment in local KGs under the Free KG scheme, and whether the schemed KGs can facilitate a smooth transition for ethnic minority children from KG to mainstream primary school.
- 3.3 To recommend further actions to the EDB to ensure an equitable and quality early education for ethnic minority children.

## 4. Methodology

- 4.1 The research plan was discussed and formulated in July 2018; the survey form was designed and tested with a few parents in December 2018. An ethnic minority intern was recruited to assist with the research.

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<sup>21</sup> The Ombudsman (2019), Direct Investigation Report on the Government's support for non-Chinese speaking students, [https://ofomb.ombudsman.hk/abc/files/2019-2\\_FR\\_DI422\\_Governments\\_support\\_for\\_non-Chinese\\_speaking\\_students.pdf](https://ofomb.ombudsman.hk/abc/files/2019-2_FR_DI422_Governments_support_for_non-Chinese_speaking_students.pdf)

- 4.2 A review on the KG Profiles 2018/19 were conducted in November 2018 to identify those KGs with support measures for NCS students. Then phone enquiries were made to these KGs to find out about the percentage of ethnic minority students and support measures.
- 4.3 23 KGs were chosen from 8 districts for outreach, based on the number of ethnic minority students and the support measures they provided.
- 4.4 25 volunteers were recruited and briefed to conduct the surveys with our targeted parents via 25 outreach sessions with Unison staff in February and March 2019. Volunteers then input the data. An evaluation meeting was held in March 2019 and volunteers shared their observations with Unison.
- 4.5 Besides outreaching to KGs, 18 NGOs and religious groups which serve ethnic minorities helped to conduct the surveys with parents in their networks, by their staff in person and through phone calls. Unison staff were also invited by the centers to conduct focus groups to collect the data from the parents.
- 4.6 Overall, a total of 232 ethnic minority parents with children either applying or currently studying in KGs under the Kindergarten Education Scheme were interviewed.
- 4.7 Apart from analyzing the raw data we collected, crosstab analyses were also performed for more detailed findings. Additional comments and responses provided by the respondents were also reviewed to better understand what parents have experienced, and some quotes from these comments are cited.

## 5. Findings

### Overall Findings

- 5.1 According to the KG Profile 2018/19, there are 1,022 KGs in the 18 districts. Amongst these KGs, 744 joined the Free KG Scheme, while 278 did not join the Scheme.
- 5.2 342 (46%) out of 744 KGs under the Free KG Scheme filled in the 'Support to non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students' information box in the KG Profile; while 25 (9%) of the 278 KGs which did not join the Free KG Scheme also filled the information box (Table 1).

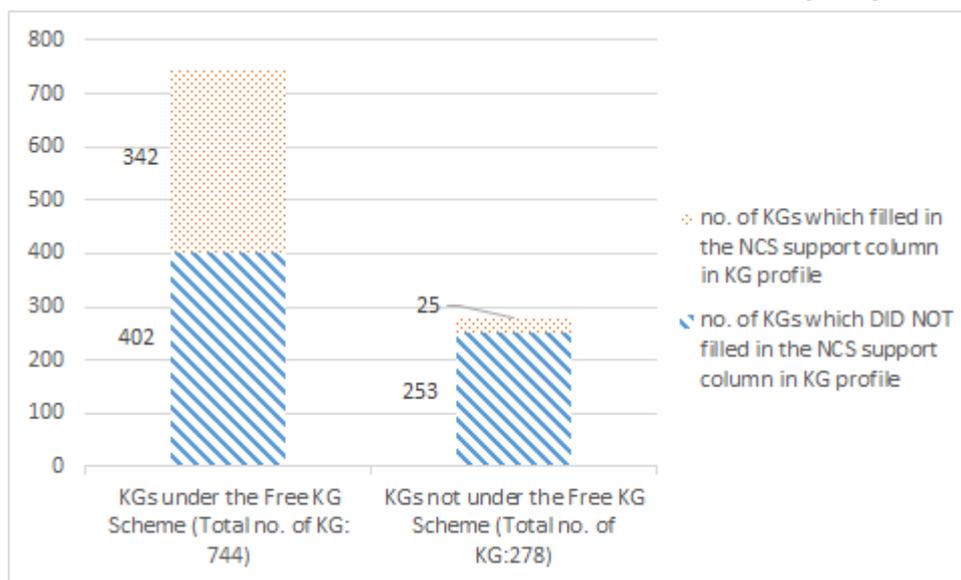


Table 1. The number and percentage of KGs which filled in the NCS support information box in the KG Profile.

### Admission Process

5.3 Among the 116 NCS parents who found KG application process difficult, almost half 57 (49%) indicated difficulty in finding school information; 39 (34%) found communication with the school difficult, 34 (29%) had difficulty in KG application procedures, and 30 (26%) found finding school application details difficult (Table 2).

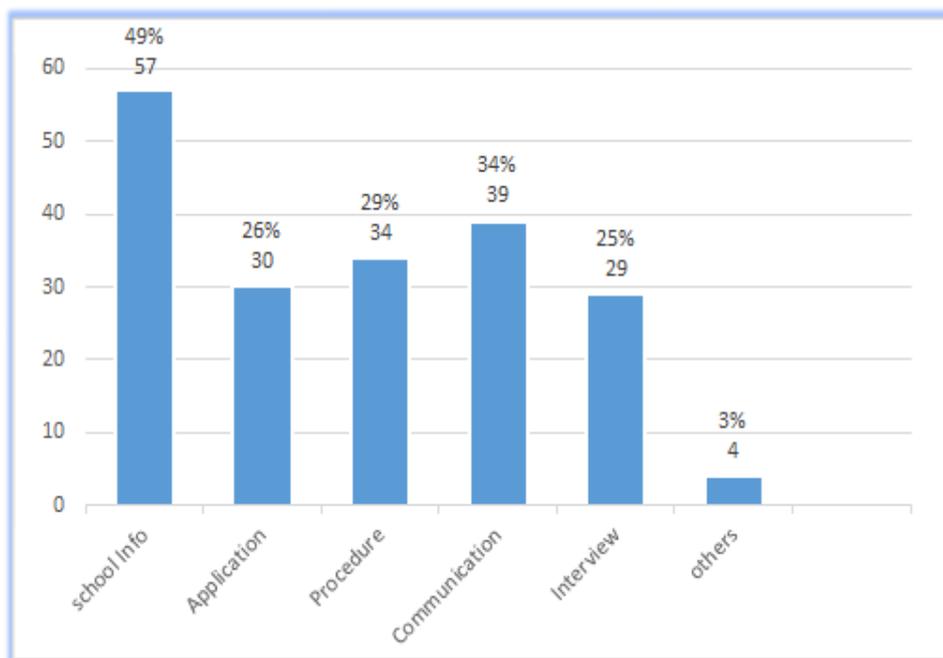


Table 2: The number and percentage of NCS parents who found it difficult to access school information, application, procedures, communication with schools and admission interview.

Among the 232 total NCS parents surveyed:

- 5.4 167 (72%) found KG information through their friends and relatives. 58 (25%) NCS parents found information by “walking-in” to KGs and 39 (16.8%) found information through KG websites. Very few 13 (5.6%) and 17 (7.3%) NCS parents found information through NGOs and KG Profile respectively.
- 5.5 76 (32.8%) parents surveyed said that they received documents in Chinese only and/or partly bilingual, whereas 154 (66.4%) indicated that they received bilingual (Chinese and English) KG admission documents.
- 5.6 171 (73.7%) applied to only one to two KGs and 49 (21.1%) applied to three to four KGs. Only 10 (4.3%) applied to five or more KGs.

### Interview Process

- 5.7 Among the 232 NCS parents surveyed, 132 (56.9%) indicated that KG admission interviews were conducted in English, 17 parents (7.3%) reported that interviews were conducted in Chinese and 50 parents (21.6%) revealed that bilingual (Chinese & English) interviews were conducted.
- 5.8 157 NCS parents (67.7% of 232 parents surveyed) did not use any interpretation service during KG admission interviews. 23 parents (14.6% out of 157 who did not use interpretation service) stated that they did not know they could ask for interpreters.
- 5.9 Out of the 32 NCS parents who opined they were treated unfairly in the KG application process, 10 parents (31%) indicated KG’s attitude was unwelcoming and 8 (25%) indicated that they were treated unfairly due to the language barrier.

### Information dissemination by the EDB

- 5.10 139 (60% of 232 parents surveyed) did not know about the EDB Placement Service (Table 3).

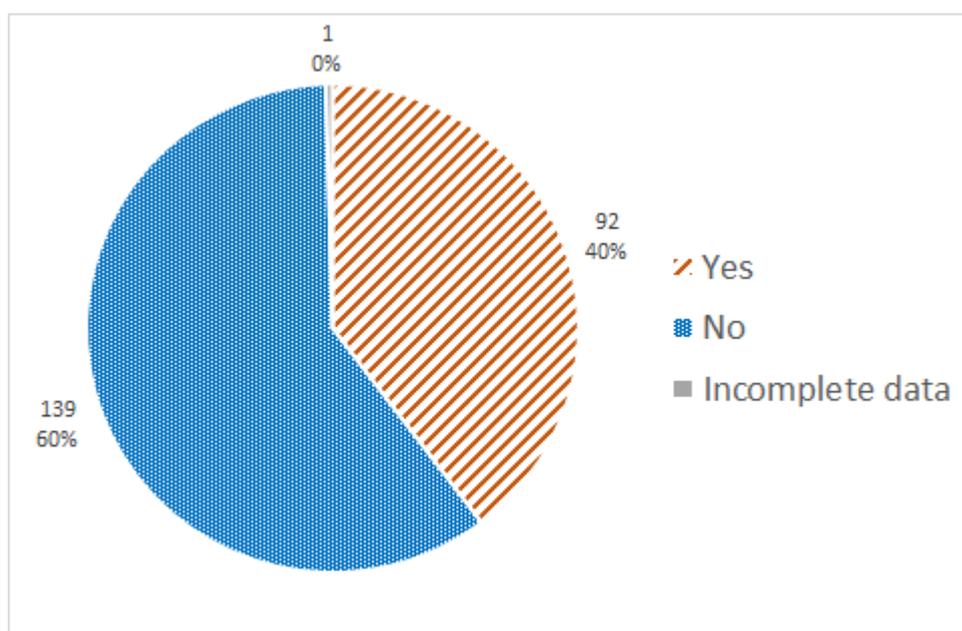


Table 3. Number and percentage of NCS parents who are aware of the EDB placement service

5.11 Among the 232 parents surveyed, 170 (73%) were not aware of the “Easy Guide on Promoting Racial Equality in School’s KG Admission” published by the EDB nor EOC (Table 4).

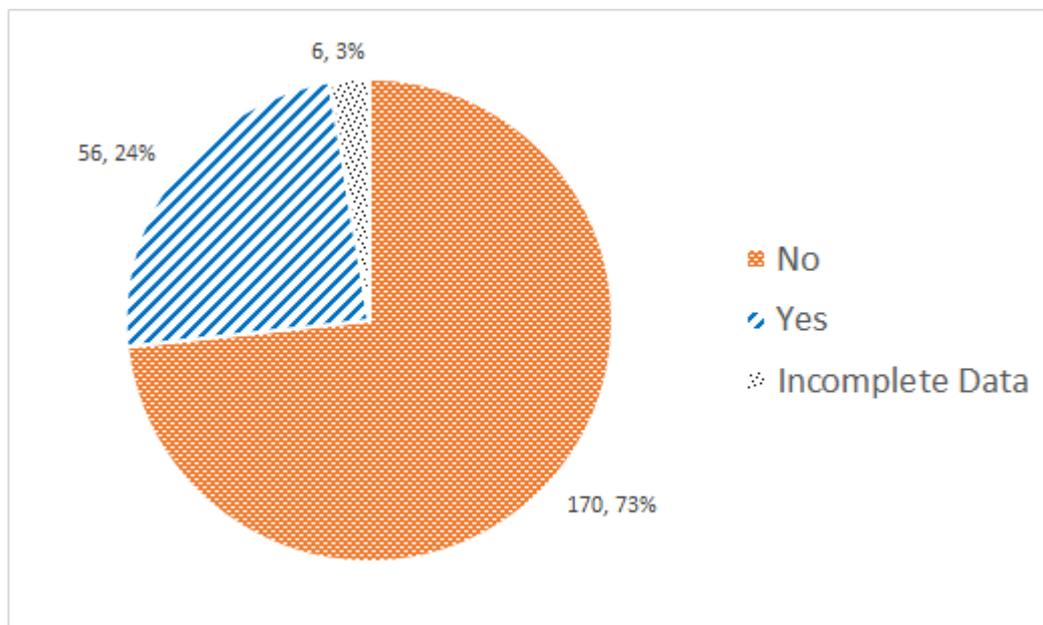


Table 4. Number and percentage of NCS parents who were aware of the “Easy Guide on promoting Racial Equality in School’s KG Admission” published by the EOC

#### Parents’ awareness in EDB’s KG support measures for NCS children

5.12 128 (57.7% of 222 NCS parents who have children studying in KG currently) indicated that they had no knowledge of the various support measures from the EDB. Among 82 parents who knew about the support measures, 58 were aware of the EDB’s additional funding on enhancing support to NCS students’ Chinese learning (Table 5 and Table 6).

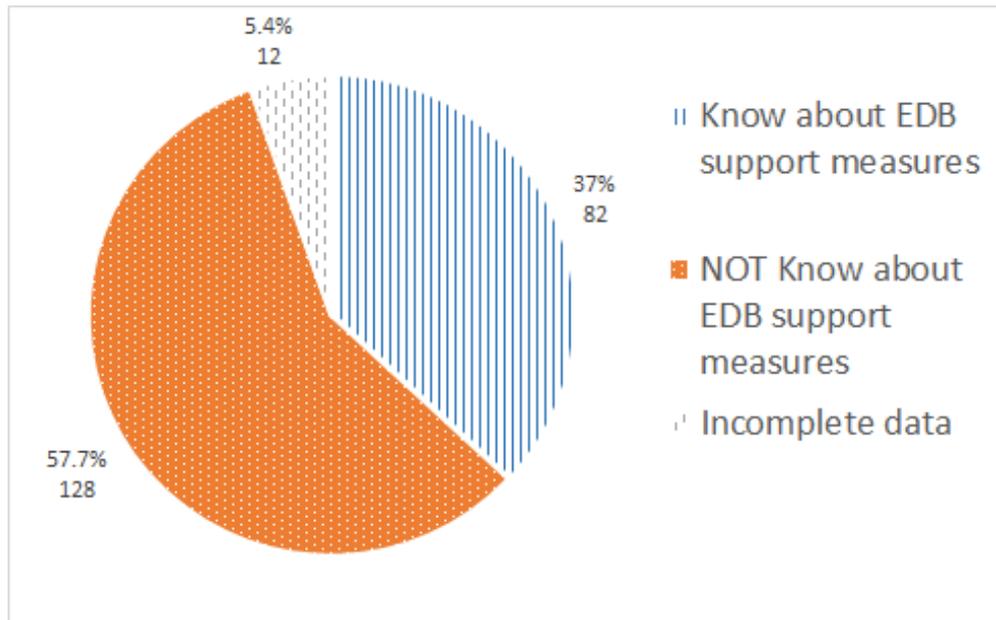


Table 5. Number and percentage of NCS parents who were aware of the various support measures by the EDB

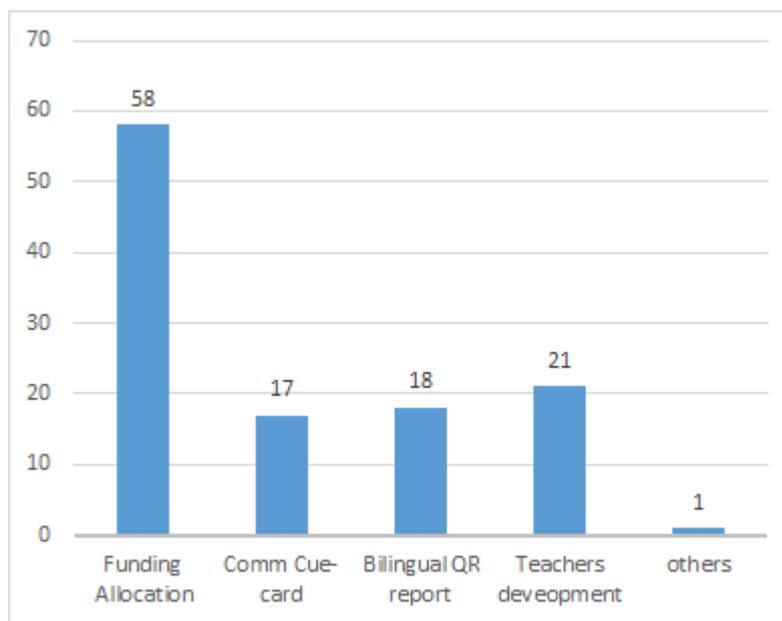


Table 6. Number and percentage of NCS parents who were aware of additional funding, communication cue-cards, bilingual QR report, and teachers' development.

### Language environment in school

Among the 222 NCS parents whose children are currently in KGs:

5.13 91 (41%) indicated that Chinese is the main teaching language used in school, while 81 (36.5%) stated that KGs mainly use English to teach. Only 40 parents (18%) said both Chinese and English are used (Table 7).

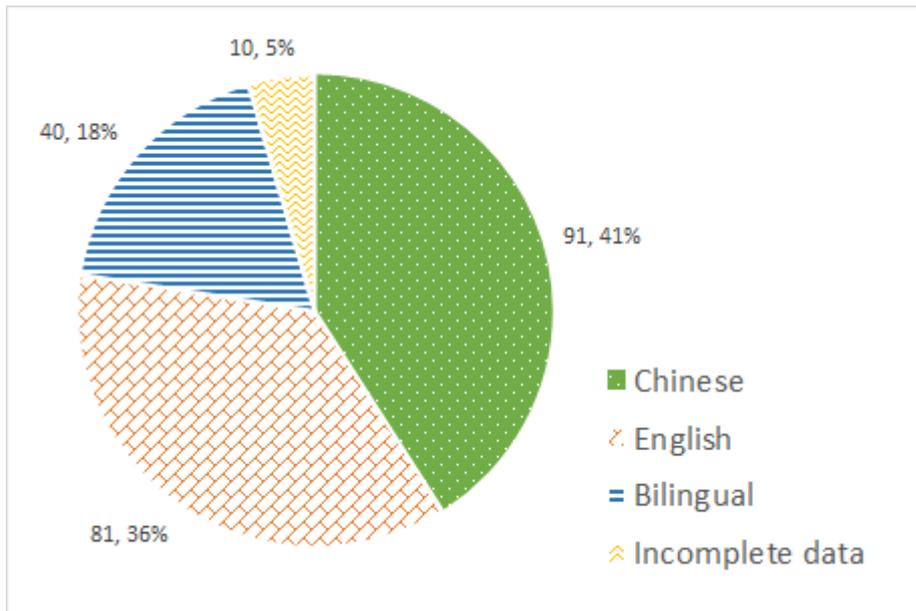


Table 7. Number and percentage of NCS parents on the main teaching language in KGs

5.14 101 (45.5%) stated that most of their child's classmates are Chinese students. 64 (28.8%) said classmates are ethnic minority students and 44 (19.8%) said the number of Chinese and ethnic minority children are equal in class. On the other hand, 9 (4%) did not know about the racial composition of their child's class (Table 8).

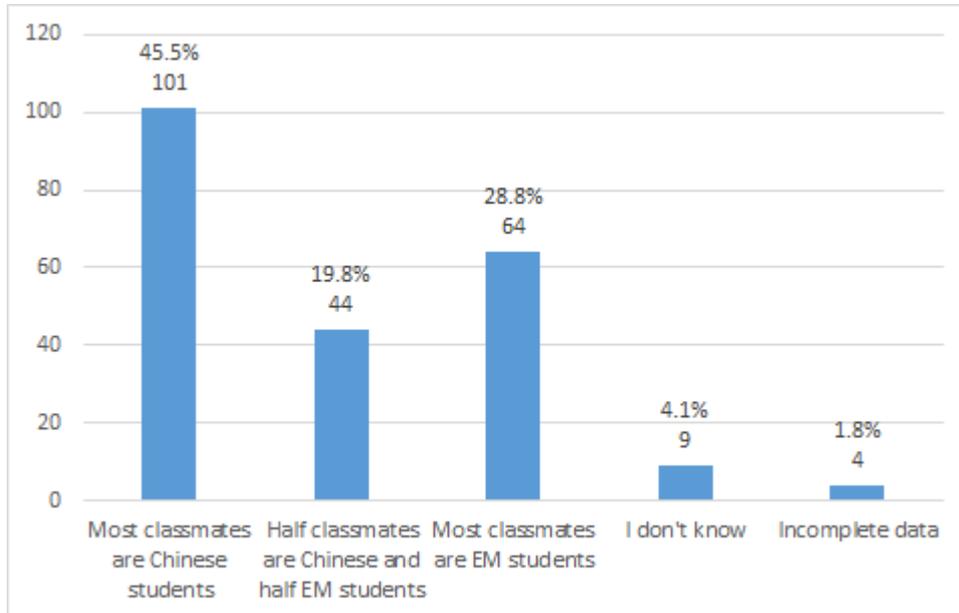


Table 8. Number and percentage of NCS parents on the racial composition of their child's class

### Chinese learning

5.15 53 (23.9%) said their children do not learn local Chinese level, while 49 parents (22.1%) did not know about their child's Chinese level compared to Chinese students (Table 9).

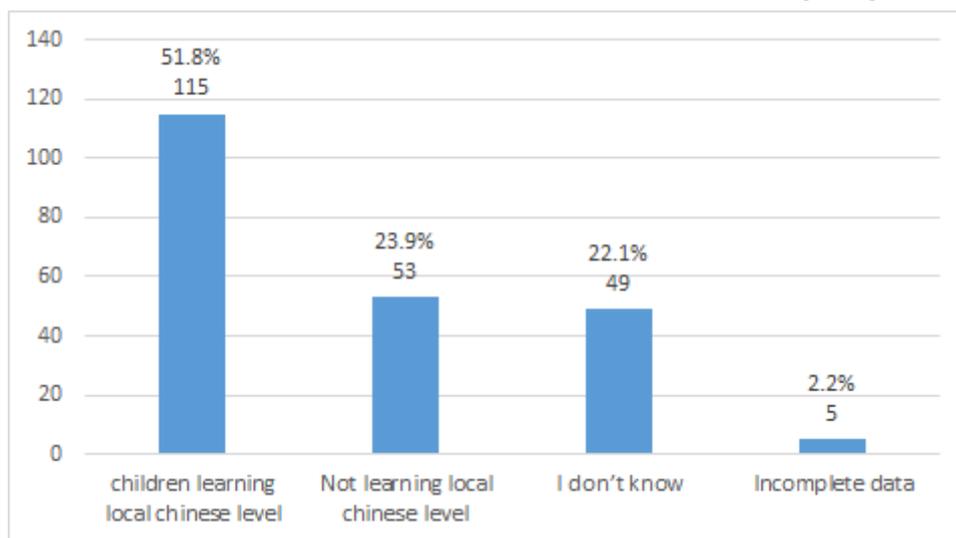


Table 9. Number and percentage of NCS parents on the level of Chinese learnt compared to Chinese peers

5.16 212 (95.5%) agreed that it is important to know their child's Chinese ability. Yet, 39 parents expressed that they are not able to find out their children's Chinese ability.

5.17 Among 173 NCS parents who indicated that they are able to find out their child's Chinese ability, 115 parents (66.5%) indicated that they knew it through teacher-parent meeting, 71 parents (41%) knew it through self-reporting by child and 66 (38.2%) knew through report cards (Table 10).

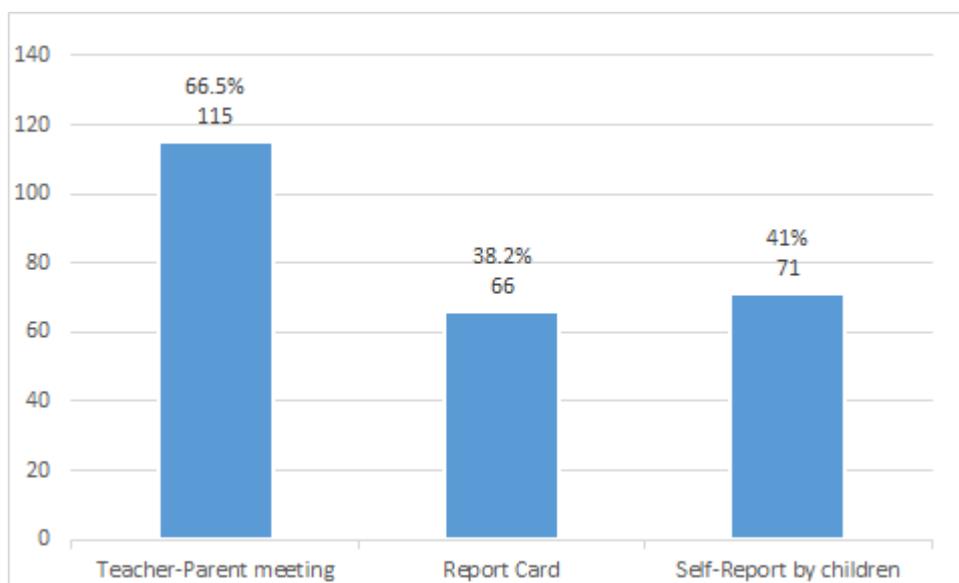


Table 10. Number and percentage of NCS parents on how they knew out about their child's Chinese ability.

### The Chinese level taught to ethnic minority students

5.18 Only around one fifth of the ethnic minority students who have mostly ethnic minority classmates likely learn local level of Chinese, which is 48.4% less than those who study with mostly Chinese classmates (Table 11).

	Total	Learning local level of Chinese	%
Mostly Chinese classmates	101	71	70.3
Mostly NCS classmates	64	14	21.9
Around 50/50 Chinese and NCS	44	24	54.5

Table 11. Distribution of the Chinese level learnt and the racial composition in class

5.19 Ethnic minority students who are in KGs which mainly teach in Chinese are twice as likely to be taught local Chinese level than those who are in KGs which teach in English only or bilingual (Table 12).

Main language used in KG	Total	Learning local level of Chinese	%
Bilingual	40	22	50%
Chinese Only	91	61	67%
English Only	80	28	35%

Table 12. Distribution of the Chinese level taught to ethnic minority students and the main teaching language used

### Education Pathway

5.20 95 (40.9%) NCS parents indicated that they are not confident to put their child in a Chinese mainstream primary school while 92 (39.7%) were confident. 30 (2%) have not thought about it yet (Table 13).

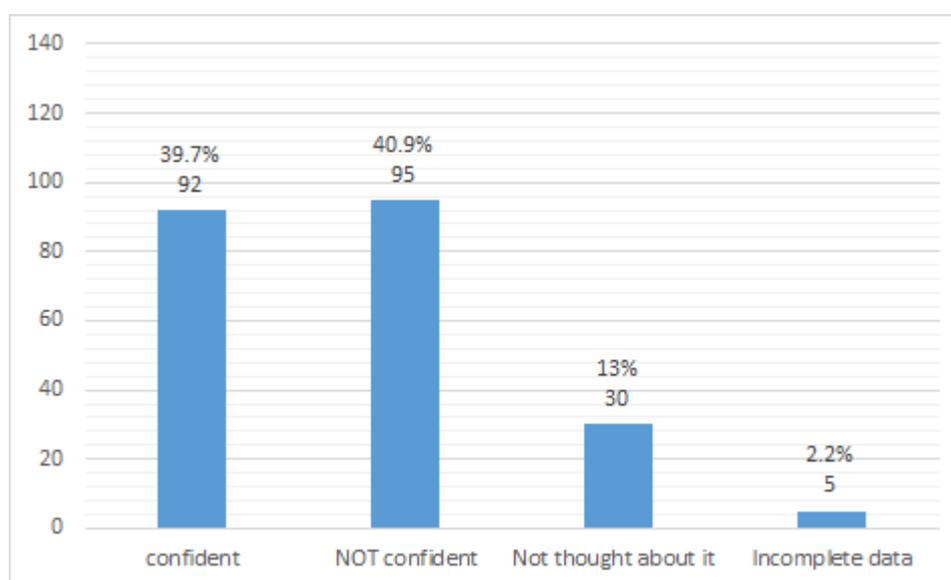


Table 13. Number and percentage of NCS parents who are confident to enroll their child in a Chinese mainstream primary school

5.21 78 (33.6%) NCS parents said they were not confident to put their child in a Chinese mainstream primary school because of low Chinese ability of their child. 49 (21.1%) said they could not support their Chinese learning and 37 (15.9%) said they did not know much about Chinese mainstream schools (Table 14).

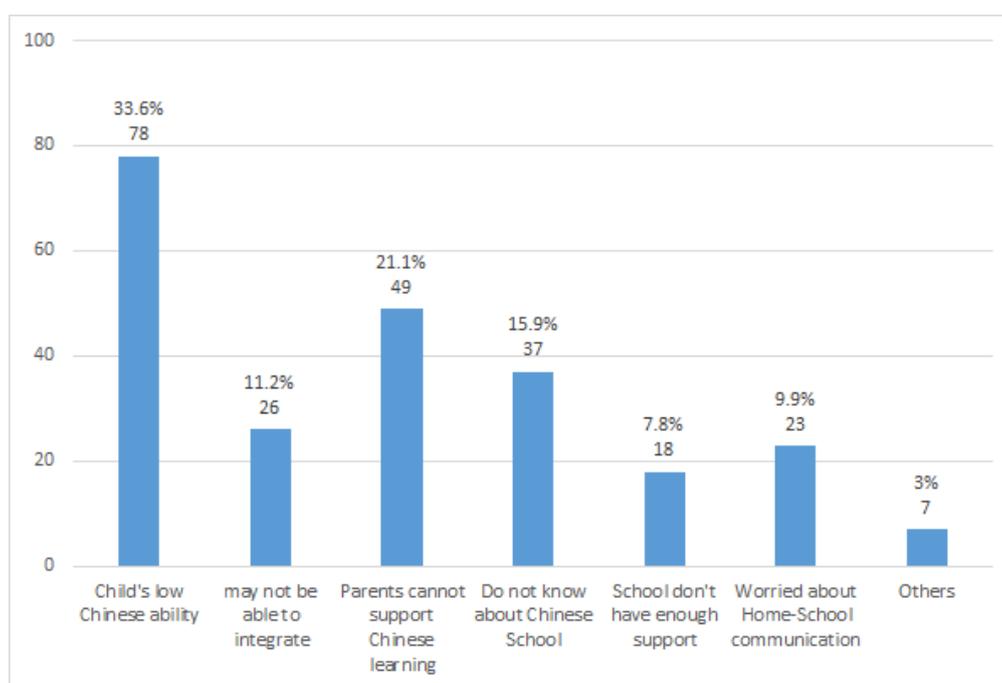


Table 14. Number and percentage of NCS parents on reasons why they were not confident to put their child in a Chinese mainstream primary school

### The confidence level of parents to put a child in Chinese mainstream primary schools

5.22 Parents with children who learn local Chinese level are 47% more confident to put their children in a Chinese mainstream primary school, compared to those whose children do not learn the local level (Table 15).

	Total	No. of parents who are confident to put children in mainstream primary school	%
Learning local level of Chinese	115	71	62%
NOT learning local level of Chinese	53	8	15%

Table 15. Correlation between confidence level of parents putting their children in Chinese mainstream primary schools and the level of Chinese learnt

5.23 Only around one fifth of ethnic minority parents whose children are studying in English KGs are confident to put their children in mainstream primary school, which is 36% less

than those whose children are in KGs which mainly use Chinese as the main teaching language (Table 16).

Main language used in KG	Total	No. of parents who are confident to put children in mainstream primary school	%
Bilingual	40	16	40%
Chinese Only	91	54	59%
English Only	81	19	23%

Table 16. Correlation between the confidence level of parents putting their children in Chinese mainstream primary schools and the main language used

5.24 More than half of the parents whose kids are studying with Chinese classmates are 31% more confident to put their children in mainstream primary schools than those who have mostly NCS classmates (Table 17).

	Total	No. of parents who are confident to put children in mainstream primary school	%
Mostly Chinese classmates	101	55	54%
Mostly NCS classmates	64	15	23%
50/50 Chinese and NCS	44	19	43%

Table 17. Distribution of the confidence level of parents putting their children in Chinese mainstream primary schools and racial composition in class

### The language environment in schools/ the main language used in school

5.25 Ethnic minority students who have mostly Chinese classmates are 3 times more likely to be taught in Chinese in KGs which mainly use Chinese as the teaching language, compared to those who have mostly ethnic minority classmates (Refer to Table 18).

	Total	KGs mainly use Chinese as teaching language	%
Mostly Chinese classmates	101	67	66.3%
Mostly NCS classmates	64	13	20.3%
50/50 Chinese and NCS classmates	44	7	15.9%

Table 18. Distribution of the medium of instruction used in KGs and the racial composition in class

## 6. Discussion

- 6.1 Even though the EDB stated in the Guidelines on KG Admission Arrangements for the 2018/19 School Year (“Admission Guidelines”) that all KGs have to announce relevant admission information and application forms in both Chinese and English, still one third of the interviewed parents were not provided with bilingual KG application documents. This deters ethnic minority parents to apply to these KGs which likely use Chinese as the main classroom language.
- 6.2 The findings showed almost 10% of the interviewed parents were arranged to Chinese-only interviews. Among the 157 parents who did not use interpretation service during interviews, 23 parents stated that they did not know they could ask for interpreters even if they do not speak the language. This was not in line with the Admission Guidelines that stated “interpretation and/or translation service may be arranged for applicants” if necessary. KGs did not inform NCS applicants of such service. Ethnic minority children who do not understand Chinese and English without interpretation may score poorly in interview performance and hence be rejected admissions.
- 6.3 Discriminatory attitudes of KG frontline staff towards ethnic minority applicants were observed. Parents shared to the interviewers that KGs were not welcoming to ethnic minority parents, obvious in comments like ‘our KG is for local Chinese students’; ‘we cannot support NCS children’; ‘no need to apply here as it will be difficult for your child to learn’; ‘you should go to an English school as it would be easier for your kid to fit in’. Some said teachers did not seem interested to talk to them during the application procedure, as compared to their attitudes towards Chinese parents, and one even said the school did not allow her to enter the KG. This shows that ethnic minority children still face barriers in KG admission despite how much the EDB stresses the importance of providing equal opportunities for admission to NCS parents and students in the Admissions Guidelines.
- 6.4 While the referral system of the EDB supports NCS students who have been rejected by 3 or more KGs with document proof, 74% of the interviewed parents applied only up to 2 KGs. This means that most NCS students’ whose applications were turned down could not seek support from this EDB placement service. In fact, more than half of the interviewed parents did not know about this service. Not only are parents not informed of the service, this referral system was not mentioned in the information leaflets from the EDB, which was supposed to include all the support measures for NCS children.
- 6.5 The majority of the interviewed parents were not aware of the information leaflets from the EDB nor the EOC, even though they are printed in different languages and hence, they did not know of the EDB support measures provided for NCS children, including the additional NCS funding. It shows that the current dissemination methods and channels of information are ineffective.
- 6.6 According to the Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide (2017), since most KGs under the Free KG Scheme adopt Chinese as the medium of instruction, they are recommended to develop children’s Chinese ability first. Yet, 81 (36%) interviewed parents reported that the main language used in teaching is English. Languages such as Putonghua and a minority language (Tamil) were also reported as the main teaching language in school. It shows that

even if the KGs are under the Free KG Scheme (i.e. those KGs adopting local curriculum), they do not necessarily have a Chinese language learning environment.

- 6.7 It is observed that the main teaching language used in KGs are influenced by the racial composition in class. If KGs have a high concentration of ethnic minority students in schools, they mostly will use English as the main classroom language. Hence although they are local schools under the Free KG Scheme and adopt the local curriculum, they do not provide a Chinese language learning environment.
- 6.8 De facto racial segregation is persistent in local KGs despite the EDB forbids arranging NCS students in segregated class or session as stated in the Administration Guideline (2.5.4)<sup>22</sup>. 64 (29%) of the interviewed parents reported that most of the children's classmates are ethnic minority. Furthermore, 10 parents shared with the interviewer that they had difficulties enrolling their children to a preferred session (am or pm) since the KGs specified all NCS students were grouped in one same session. One parent especially stated her discontent towards the KG arrangement of racially segregating the children - 'Chinese students are taught by Chinese teachers while NCS students are taught by non-Chinese teachers'; implying her child did not have an equal chance to develop the Chinese language ability.
- 6.9 Almost all interviewed parents agreed that it is important to know their child's Chinese ability; but about a quarter of the parents did not know about the Chinese level their children learn in school and nearly one fifth of them were not able to find out their child's Chinese ability. Even if parents could speak basic Cantonese, they still could not help with their children's Chinese homework as most could not read and write Chinese.
- 6.10 About one in four interviewed parents stated that their children are learning easier Chinese when compared to Chinese children in the same class. While the Performance Indicators (Kindergartens)<sup>23</sup> stated that 'Kindergartens should not use the same performance indicators to assess children's learning in a second language', it does not mean that KGs should preset a low Chinese level when teaching NCS children. Kindergarten is the golden age to learn languages. The Chinese language foundation of NCS children in KGs directly affects their transition to primary school, especially when there are many primary schools using Chinese as the medium of instruction.
- 6.11 Only 40% of the interviewed parents felt they were confident enough to put their children in mainstream primary schools mainly because they perceived their children's Chinese ability was not enough to enable a smooth transition, even though some of these children learn with their Chinese peers. While the EDB assumes that NCS parents sending their children to local KGs facilitate early integration and their learning of Chinese, hence could enable easier adaptation to mainstream primary schools, it may not always be the case because of the various reasons discussed above. Many ethnic minority children actually did not have a chance to develop Chinese ability in a free local KG as their Chinese peers.

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<sup>22</sup> Administration Guide (2017/18 school year) (Version 1.0) (Chinese version were provided only) 行政手冊 (2017/18學年)(第1.0版) - 第2章學與教中, 2.5 支援有不同學習需要的兒童, 第4點「幼稚園不應將非華語學生只安排在同一班級或同一上課時段(例如下午班)的班級上課。」

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/quality-assurance-framework/performance-indicators-pre-primary-institutions/PI\\_KG\\_EN.pdf](https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/quality-assurance-framework/performance-indicators-pre-primary-institutions/PI_KG_EN.pdf)

6.12 Ethnic minority students who are in KGs which mainly teach in Chinese and/or study with mostly Chinese classmates are more likely to be taught a local Chinese level. It is observed that ethnic minority parents whose children learn local Chinese level are much more confident in selecting a local mainstream primary school for their children.

## 7. Policy Suggestions

- 7.1 To ensure a fair and equal early childhood education for ethnic minority children, the EDB should take a more active role in monitoring the KG admission procedures. No child should be rejected on KG admission due to his/her race. The EDB should implement mandatory and transparent data collection on NCS applications, admissions, and enrolments, including race, age, spoken language at home, interviews granted, and interpretation service at interviews, etc. Only when KGs especially those with Cantonese as the medium of instruction are non-discriminatory with welcoming attitudes can ethnic minority children truly immerse in a Chinese language environment. Our data showed that ethnic minority children likely learn Chinese with Chinese peers at a similar level and more ready to enter mainstream primary if the concentration of ethnic minority students in the KGs is low.
- 7.2 The EDB review team should ensure the level of Chinese taught to NCS children is at par with their Chinese peers, by more rigorous monitoring on the teaching arrangements, integration situations, Chinese language learning progress, support measures deployed for NCS students and mandatory reporting in the Quality Review report. The EDB should especially review if the racial composition is appropriate to ensure a Chinese language learning environment.
- 7.3 The EDB should clarify in the Kindergarten Performance Indicators that although language ability refers to the Chinese development of children with Chinese as mother tongue, children from other language backgrounds should also develop similar Chinese ability since KG is the only formal education which they can acquire their language skills and Chinese is the majority language in Hong Kong. Even if the support given to different groups of students may vary, teachers should be reminded to set similar learning goals to develop their Chinese ability.
- 7.4 With the revised and intensified NCS funding to KGs for NCS students, the transparency and accountability of the funding should also be improved. In addition to the section 'Support to NCS students' in the KG Profiles, the EDB should request KGs to upload the plans and evaluation reports of the NCS funding, and data collected related to NCS Chinese language learning onto the school websites to monitor and track NCS students' progress and to support public accountability.
- 7.5 The EDB should improve its dissemination of information to ethnic minority parents apart from relying on NGOs. The EDB should conduct more outreach to explain its support measures to NCS parents, especially the placement service, by encouraging parents to apply to at least 3 KGs and keep the application documents as proof for the referral system.
- 7.6 To facilitate the understanding towards ethnic minorities, cultural competence training should be arranged to schools for all staff, including not only the management level but also the frontline staff. Modules on related skills on developing Chinese abilities for non-mother

tongue speakers and handling cultural diversity in class should be included in pre-service training of early childhood education as well as in the Certification Course for Kindergarten Principals.

- 7.7 The EDB should encourage KGs to involve NCS parents in the education of their children. Home-school communications should be strengthened to enable parents understand the Chinese level their children learn in schools, and to provide guidance to parents on assisting their children in homework, like using English in WhatsApp messages.

## 8. Research Limitations

- 8.1 Ethnic minority parents are relatively more disadvantaged in receiving information on admissions, policies or support measures from KGs because of language barrier and lack of effective dissemination in informational channels. Thus, even if KGs provide additional support to NCS children, parents may not be aware and hence responded incorrectly in the survey.
- 8.2 Discrepancy between the medium of instruction stated by KGs in the KG Profile and reported by parents is noted.
- 8.3 Although volunteer briefing was conducted and interview notes were provided to ensure volunteers understand the purpose of the survey and how the interview questions were framed, parents may comprehend the questions slightly different if volunteers translated the questions into Urdu, Nepali, Hindi and Cantonese (for some Thai, Indonesian, and mixed race children).
- 8.4 There are discrepancies between what ethnic minority parents have expressed during the survey in Q12 and other questions. Based on Unison's interaction with ethnic minority parents over the years, we observe that they generally have low expectations on "fairness" of KG admission process. Most parents did not study in Hong Kong and so they cannot comprehend the fairness in procedure and application processes. For example, when they get a Chinese only application form from the KG, they do not ask for an English form as they don't want to be perceived as "troublemakers" by the schools. So they will try to find someone who can translate the form for them.

## 9. Conclusion

- 9.1. Despite the implementation of EDB administration guidelines, the research found that ethnic minority parents are still facing barriers in KG admission. There are still KGs which did not provide bilingual application documents, arrange interpreters, or have bias attitude when handling the admission of ethnic minority children. The current research conducted surveys with ethnic minority parents whose children are applying or studying in KGs which are under the Kindergarten Education Scheme. It is noticed that parents find it difficult to get involved in the children's education, like understanding their child's Chinese ability in school. Although the EDB has allocated dedicated funding to KGs which admit ethnic minority

students, and listed out the other related support measures in leaflet, these information are not well disseminated to the community.

- 9.2. To truly facilitate adaptation of ethnic minority children to mainstream curriculum and integration into the mainstream society via early childhood education, there should be active monitoring from EDB on the compliance of KGs with the administrative guidelines. The EDB should start collecting data on admissions, seek reporting on progress of Chinese language learning of ethnic minority children and integration situation in schools, and the effectiveness of the funding deployed. EDB should revise the confusing statements regarding the Chinese learning objectives for ethnic minority children and guide the teachers through teacher training, so as to ensure ethnic minority students to be taught and reach a basic Chinese level which enables them to manage the studies of mainstream primary schools.
- 9.3. Regarding the EDB's notion of facilitating the learning of Chinese language by sending ethnic minority children to local KGs, the research discovered that not every local KGs provide an immersed Chinese language environment. Some KGs do not use Chinese as the medium of instruction nor teach ethnic minority children the local level of Chinese. Thus even if parents send their children to local KGs, most of them still do not have confidence in selecting mainstream primary schools upon KG graduation.

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### **Name of the NGOs and religious group:**

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- Baptist Oi Kwan Social Service
- Caritas Community Centre – Kowloon, Parents Concern Group
- Caritas Jockey Club Integrated Service for Young People-Wong Tai Sin
- Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong Diocesan Pastoral Centre for Workers - Kowloon
- Christian Action
- Hong Kong Christian Service Multicultural, Rehabilitation & Community Service
- Hong Kong Community Network - Link Centre
- Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Haking Wong)

- International Social Service – Hong Kong Branch HOPE Support Service Centre for Ethnic Minorities
- Khalsa Diwan Sikh Temple Wan Chai
- Methodist Epworth Village Community Centre, Social Welfare Epworth, Epworth Integrated Youth Team
- Services for Ethnic Minorities Unit, HKSKH Lady MacLehose Centre
- The Salvation Army Tuen Mun East Integrated Service for Young People
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Appendix 1 –

The findings are analyzed based on the result of the following survey questions:

**Questionnaire on existing support measures for ethnic minority children in kindergartens**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ District: \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

I. Background information

Ethnicity of the child/ children:	
Language available (Spoken)	Cantonese: <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Basic <input type="checkbox"/> Intermediate <input type="checkbox"/> Fluent English: <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Basic <input type="checkbox"/> Intermediate <input type="checkbox"/> Fluent
Language available (Read and Write)	Cantonese: <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Basic <input type="checkbox"/> Intermediate <input type="checkbox"/> Fluent English: <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Basic <input type="checkbox"/> Intermediate <input type="checkbox"/> Fluent
Years of residence of the parents	
District of residence	
Number of children applying for kindergarten for 2019/20 school year *	
Number of children already in K.1-K.3 *	
Level of the children in kindergarten	
Name of kindergarten *	
District of kindergarten *	
Number of children who graduated from KG education in HK	

## II. Kindergarten Admission

1) How do you find the overall kindergarten application process?

Very easy	Easy	Neutral	Difficult	Very difficult
1	2	3	4	5

2) Which part of the process do you find difficult? (tick all that apply)

- Finding school information
- Finding school application details
- Application procedure
- Communication with schools
- Interview process
- None of the above
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

3) Where do you find the kindergarten information? (tick all that apply)

- Friends\ relatives
- Walk in to school and enquire
- School websites
- NGOs
- EDB school profiles
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

4) Did you receive bilingual information of the kindergarten application documents?

- Yes
- Partly
- No

5) How many kindergartens did you apply to? \_\_\_\_\_

6) What languages were used in the interviews?

- All interviews are in Chinese (Cantonese)
- All interviews are in English
- All interviews are bilingual
- Some interviews in Chinese and some interviews in English
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

7) Did you use any interpretation service for the interview?

- Yes (Go to 9a)
  - (a) What kind of interpretation service did you use
    - School staff translated for me
    - School arranged interpreter/ CHEER interpretation services
    - I brought a friend/relative who understand Chinese/ English to go with me.
    - Others: \_\_\_\_\_
- No (Go to 9b)
  - (b) Why was it not necessary to arrange interpreters?
    - I can speak Chinese/ English.
    - I did not know I can ask for interpreters.

Others: \_\_\_\_\_

8) Are you aware of the placement service from EDB?

(EDB will help to allocate a school place if you do not get a kindergarten place till May).

- Yes  
 No

9) Are you aware of the “Easy Guide on Promoting Racial Equality in Schools Kindergarten Admission” published by the EDB or EOC?

- Yes: EDB/ EOC (circle if appropriate)  
 No

10) Do you think you have been treated fairly in the application process?

- Yes  
 No (Reasons: \_\_\_\_\_)

### III. Kindergarten Education

#### **(Not applicable for parents whose child is only applying but not starting their KG education yet)**

11) Which of the following support measures from the Education Bureau do you know about?

- Funding allocation to kindergartens which received ethnic minority students  
 Communication Cue Cards for Non-Chinese Speaking Families  
 Bilingual quality review reports  
 Professional development for teachers  
 Others: \_\_\_\_\_  
 None of the above

12) What is the main language used to teach in your child’s kindergarten?

- Chinese (Cantonese)  
 English  
 Others: \_\_\_\_\_

13) What is the student’s racial composition in your child’s class?

- Most of his/ her classmates are Chinese students  
 Around 50/50 Chinese and non-Chinese students/ethnic minorities  
 Most of his/ her classmates are non-chinese students/ethnic minorities  
 I don’t know

14) Does your child learn the same Chinese standard compare to the local Chinese students?

- Yes  
 No  
 I don’t know

15) Do you think it is important for you to know your child’s Chinese ability?

- Yes  
 No

16) Are you able to find out your child’s Chinese ability?

- Yes (Go to 16a)  
(a) How do you know about your children’s ability?

- Teacher-parent meeting
- Report card
- Self-report by children
- Others:
- No

17) Are you confident to put your children in a Chinese mainstream school considering their Chinese ability learnt in kindergarten?

- Yes
- No (Go to Q.17a)
- I have not thought about it yet (Go to Q.17a)

(17a) I am not/ don't know if I am confident to put my child in a Chinese mainstream Primary school because: (Tick all that apply)

- My child's Chinese ability is not high enough.
- My child may not be able to integrate.
- I cannot support my child's Chinese learning.
- I do not know much about Chinese mainstream schools.
- Primary schools do not have enough Chinese learning support for ethnic minority children.
- I worry about home-school communication.
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

18) Other comments:

