

Press Releases

LCQ6: Non-Chinese speaking students learning Chinese

Following is a question by the Hon James To and a reply by the Secretary for Education and Manpower, Professor Arthur K C Li, in the Legislative Council today (July 12):

Question:

As there is currently only one curriculum for Chinese Language in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), both ethnic minority students in Hong Kong and Chinese-speaking local students have to study the same curriculum if they want to take this subject in the HKCEE. Some groups have pointed out that this arrangement is unfair as the curriculum is too difficult for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) ethnic minority students. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether it will suggest to local universities, post-secondary colleges or continuing education institutions that subject to the requirements of the courses, applicants be allowed to apply with their examination results of other Chinese subjects, such as the General Certificate of Secondary Education (Chinese) Examination which may be administered in 2007, in lieu of those of the current Chinese Language subject in the HKCEE, when assessing the enrolment applications from local students; and

(b) of the measures in place to help the ethnic minority students to overcome the language barrier in pursuing further studies in Hong Kong?

Reply:

Madam President,

(a) First of all, we wish to clarify that our Chinese curriculum for primary and secondary schools is not designed just for native Chinese speakers. The current curriculum, with its language competency and cultural contents, is designed for all learners (irrespective of whether they are native Chinese speakers) who are learning the language for integration into the local Chinese society.

Our curriculum framework for Chinese Language for both primary and secondary schools, divided into key stages, is robust, open and flexible. It accommodates different extent of adaptations to the teaching contents and materials by schools in catering for a wide range of learner abilities and interests. The modified curriculum for senior secondary education under the new academic structure will be broader still to provide even greater flexibility for adaptations. Even if there is only one Chinese Language curriculum, there can be diversity in the related teaching contents and materials to cater for the needs of different students. In fact, the promotion of school-based curricula is a fundamental approach applicable to every academic subject.

In order to assist schools that have admitted NCS students in developing the relevant school-based curricula, we will strengthen our provision of on-site support. In other words, the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) will work together with the Chinese subject teachers of these schools to continue the development of different school-based curricula and teaching resources (including teaching strategies, contents and assessment designs, etc.) for NCS students, capitalising on the practical experience of these teachers in teaching this group of students. Seen from the

professional perspective of curriculum design, the curriculum supplement developed with the assistance of EMB is essentially a curriculum blueprint for NCS students.

Regarding the admission standards, in order to ensure that our university students studying in publicly-funded programmes would meet the basic requirement with respect to their language proficiency, local students applying for programmes funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC) must obtain a pass in Advanced Supplementary Level Use of English and Chinese Language and Culture in the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE) before the institutions would consider their applications. That said, the UGC-funded institutions also accept alternatives to the "pass in Chinese Language" requirement. Under the Joint University Programmes Admissions System (JUPAS), students, including NCS students, may use the HKCEE result in another language other than English in place of the Chinese Language result in order to apply for admission to undergraduate programmes. Institutions may also consider the students' applications according to their outstanding performance in other academic subjects. Besides, students may apply for admission with the UGC-funded institutions direct by using results other than those in HKALE under the non-JUPAS route.

In this regard, we understand that some institutions will consider applicants' performance in other Chinese Language examinations, such as the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) (Chinese) examination, under the non-JUPAS route.

We understand that individual NCS students would like to be provided with the avenue to attain alternative qualifications in Chinese in Hong Kong. In this regard, we are considering making necessary arrangements for interested NCS students to participate in the GCSE (Chinese) examination in Hong Kong beginning in 2007.

As for other non-publicly funded post-secondary colleges or continuing education institutions, we understand that they will also consider the applicants' language proficiency level and admit NCS students taking into account individual circumstances, course contents and the medium of instruction of the course. In addition, the Vocational Training Council (VTC), the Construction Industry Training Authority (CITA) and the Clothing Industry Training Authority (CLITA) are prepared to provide suitable flexibility in considering NCS students' applications.

In summary, the institutions, within the framework of existing public examinations, are already able to suitably allow flexibility for NCS students when applying the Chinese language requirement.

We will convey the requests of the NCS students to the institutions so that they could take the circumstances of these students into account when exercising flexibility.

(b) Apart from assisting schools to develop their school-based Chinese curriculum by making suitable adaptations to the central Chinese Language Curriculum Guide, we are exploring the feasibility of running Chinese Language Learning Support Centre(s) with the assistance of post-secondary institutions, for the purpose of providing further support for NCS students in the learning of Chinese. Tutorial classes may be arranged after school and/or during school holidays in the Chinese Language Learning Support Centre(s).

Besides, we have been identifying schools to be designated for focused support by this bureau in serving NCS students. We intend to enhance our support for these schools from the 2006/07 school year onwards by -

(i) providing funding for the schools to extend the summer Bridging Programme currently confined to incoming ethnic minority Primary (P) One entrants, to cover also ethnic minority students proceeding to P2, P3 and P4 in order to help them consolidate what

they have learnt at Key Learning Stage One and to prepare for the transition to Key Learning Stage 2;

(ii) providing funding for the schools to lengthen the duration of the six-month Initiation Programmes for newly arrived children (including newly arrived ethnic minority children) to one year in order to enhance the readiness of these children to receive formal schooling; and

(iii) commissioning post-secondary institutions to run professional development programmes on teaching of Chinese Language to NCS students for teachers of the designated schools.

Apart from assisting NCS students in learning Chinese, we will enhance the access of these students to the Career-oriented Curriculum piloting in secondary schools and the future Career-oriented Studies under the new senior secondary curriculum, by offering some courses in English subject to demand.

Besides, the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (IVE) of VTC uses English as the medium of instruction for its post-secondary courses and NCS students who meet the basic entrance requirements may apply for admission to the IVE programmes on a competitive basis. To provide more vocational education and training opportunities to NCS students, the VTC will offer additional craft and foundation level courses specifically targeted at NCS students in the 2006/07 school year at both IVE and the VTC's industry-specific Training Centres. As regards CITA, it also offers some vocational training courses in English, particularly the occupational safety courses.

For courses which are only conducted in Chinese for practical reasons (e.g. only Chinese will be used in the actual workplace concerned), the relevant training institutions will try to, as far as possible, supplement the courses with English reading materials/assessment for NCS students who can communicate in Chinese orally but are not fully literate. Besides, VTC, CITA and CLITA are happy to meet and discuss with the non-Government organisations and ethnic minority concern groups in order to understand and meet the training needs of the ethnic minorities.

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