



## **Submission by Unison to the Education Panel of the Legislative Council**

### **(also submitted to the Commission on Poverty)**

1. Below are some of the EDB's policies and viewpoints on Chinese language education for ethnic minority students. Based on Hong Kong Unison's experience, observation and consultation with other stakeholders, we offer our viewpoints below:

### **EDB viewpoints, and Feedbacks from stakeholders, educators and NGOs**

2. *The EDB posits that “designated schools” and the racial segregation effect of these schools are a result of parental choice. The EDB argues that ethnic minority parents simply prefer to enroll their children into designated schools.*
3. However, we argue that the severe racial segregation observed in many designated schools is a result of a lack of choices for ethnic minority parents and students. Mainstream schools do not receive adequate support in teaching ethnic minority students, and as a result ethnic minority students often suffer from the lack of support and even unwelcoming environments in mainstream schools. There are cases where students had to transfer from a mainstream school to a designated school because the mainstream school they attended expressed that they did not have the knowledge and resources to provide adequate support to ethnic minority students. Many parents elected to place their children in designated schools because they lack real viable options in mainstream schools.
4. Moreover, article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) provides that in all actions concerning children taken by administrative authorities, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. Any argument that parental choice overrides students' interests and the government therefore does not have an obligation to intervene is inconsistent with the CRC.



5. ***The EDB posits that the extra funding to designated schools is adequate in helping schools develop Chinese curriculum for ethnic minority students.***
6. However, in reality the EDB does not monitor or provide guidelines on how designated schools should spend the extra funding. For example, designated schools can use the funding to hire extra ethnic minority teaching assistants (ethnic minority TAs are often important bridges between the school and ethnic minority parents) instead of putting it towards developing the Chinese curriculum or providing extra academic support to ethnic minority students. In isolation, extra funding to schools is not sufficient.
7. ***The EDB posits that individual schools have the ability develop alternative Chinese curriculum for ethnic minority students. The EDB curriculum development team provides support to Chinese teachers and facilitates sharing sessions and workshops among designated schools.***
8. However, many experienced Chinese teachers at designated schools argue that it is unreasonable to expect individual schools to develop or adapt their own Chinese language curriculum for their ethnic minority students. Experienced Chinese teachers say that trying to develop their own alternative Chinese curriculum and teaching materials is a very difficult, taxing, inefficient and lonely endeavor. They cite the following reasons:
9. First, curriculum development and second-language teaching are two very specific fields in education, and most Chinese teachers did not receive specific training for these skills. Few teachers pursue further education for these skills, because there is no incentive to do so, and they often have to do so with their own time and money.
10. Second, teachers do not have time to do curriculum development on top of their teaching and administrative duties. Even though the EDB provide expert support, teachers still have to do most of the work. Such tasks should be done centrally by a team of curriculum development experts.
11. Third, since each school develops their own Chinese curriculum for ethnic minority students, there is no consistent curriculum benchmark



across schools. This makes it especially difficult for secondary school Chinese teachers, because their ethnic minority students graduated from different primary schools and thus vary greatly in their Chinese language backgrounds and abilities.

12. Fourth, different schools and different teachers develop their materials based on different second-language teaching theories. This makes it difficult for teachers to reference or use teaching materials developed by another school.

13. Last, because of the aforementioned difficulties, the turnover rate of Chinese teachers is very high. There is no incentive to encourage teachers to gain experience in teaching Chinese to ethnic minorities. This severely hinders schools' abilities to develop appropriate Chinese curriculum.

***14. The EDB posits that the Supplementary Guide to the Chinese Language Curriculum for Non-Chinese Speaking Students ("Supplementary Guide" 《補充指引》) forms the basis of an alternative Chinese language curriculum.***

15. Many Chinese teachers say that the Supplementary Guide is not useful in helping them develop curriculum and teaching materials. The Supplementary Guide is a short handbook that outlines some theories, curriculum modes and general suggestions for teachers.

***16. The EDB worries that a Chinese as a Second Language (CSL) curriculum will pre-set a low level of achievement among ethnic minority students.***

17. A CSL curriculum does not necessarily pre-set lower standards for students. The term "Chinese as a second language" does not mean that Chinese becomes of secondary importance; it means that the CSL curriculum will acknowledge the fact that Chinese is not ethnic minority students' first language (mother tongue), and therefore teaches Chinese to them according to their needs as second-language-learners of Chinese.

### **Opinions on other suggestions**



18. Ethnic minority Chinese language education is a complex issue and various solutions have been suggested. Below are some suggestions that, we opine, do not effectively address the core issues:

***19. “We should provide more EMI (English as the medium of instruction) classes to ethnic minorities and exempt them from Chinese language exams and requirements.”***

20. The above suggestion is not effective because it will make it difficult for ethnic minority students to gain substantial Chinese language skills. It is essential for all students, including ethnic minority students, to acquire good spoken Cantonese and written Chinese skills in order to survive and thrive in Hong Kong.

21. Chinese is a significant language in the Hong Kong society, and only a small and niche segment of the job market employs workers without Chinese language skills. If our public education system neglects to train ethnic minority students in their Chinese language skills, they will have very limited employment options and less access to information and services. In fact, an ethnic minority youth who attained grade A in GCSE Chinese was asked to resign as delivery assistant because he could not read the list of goods in Chinese. Another ethnic minority youth who has a First Class Honours LLB degree and has won awards in international mooted competitions finds her employment opportunities very limited due to her inadequate Chinese writing skill. She did not have the opportunity to study Chinese at all throughout her primary and secondary school education. She is now deferring her professional practice to study Chinese full-time at university.

***22. “We should partner with NGOs to provide more after-school Chinese classes and tutorial classes to improve ethnic minority students’ Chinese abilities. NGOs can also provide Chinese language training to out-of-school ethnic minority adults.”***

23. Many NGOs (such as members of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service’s ethnic minority network) have repeatedly expressed that NGO workers do not possess the professional knowledge to effectively help



ethnic minority students raise their Chinese proficiencies. Teaching a second language is a very specialized field in education and is best handled by education professionals. While extra classes may help ethnic minority students in other ways, in isolation they are not effective solutions for improving the students' Chinese proficiencies.

24. We must stress that after-school and adult Chinese classes cannot replace a Chinese as a Second Language policy within the formal education structure. Existing adult Chinese classes run by NGOs also encounter many difficulties. For example, only certain education institutions are accredited to administer GCSE and GCE Chinese courses, making it difficult for NGOs to offer such courses. Moreover, it is difficult to recruit adult learners. Currently, only one NGO center offers GCSE Chinese courses, but not many ethnic minorities applied for the course. While the Community Care Fund subsidizes out-of-school ethnic minorities to sit for the GCSE Chinese exam, it does not subsidize the cost of Chinese language classes.

***25. “We should teach ethnic minority students Chinese using Putonghua and simplified characters so that they can develop their careers in mainland China after graduation.”***

26. Ethnic minority students are not a transient population. Many consider Hong Kong their home and will live in Hong Kong after graduation, and therefore should prepare for the language environment of Hong Kong the same way ethnic Chinese students do. If their Chinese counterparts learn Chinese in Cantonese and traditional characters, ethnic minority students should receive the same trainings too.

### **Policy Suggestions**

27. In light of the above, we posit that effective measures to improve ethnic minority Chinese education should include the following components.

- a. A “Chinese as a Second Language” policy:  
The EDB needs to design a Chinese language curriculum for all the



students who are learning Chinese as a second language. This curriculum should include:

- i. benchmarks that clearly outline the learning objectives for each stage;
  - ii. assessment mechanisms that keep track of student progress and assess students' learning needs;
  - iii. clear and standardized guidelines on curricula and lesson plans and;
  - iv. quality teaching materials.
- b. Set up a Chinese as a Second Language Policy center to centralize efforts
- i. The past policies for ethnic minority Chinese language learning have not been effective because they have been scattered and piecemeal. Schools and frontline teachers should act as collaborators to the development of the CSL curriculum and teaching materials, and not the major curriculum writers, as they currently are under the school-based approach.
  - ii. There should be dedicated central efforts and resources to bring together the resources, expertise and experiences of the EDB, academics and frontline teachers.
  - iii. Such a center can work on conducting research and establishing evidence-based policies, and develop the benchmark, assessment mechanism, curriculum guidelines and teaching materials mentioned above.
- c. Teacher training and incentives for training
- d. Mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of these measures

28. Details and more suggestions are listed in the attached documents.



Attachments:

1. Education Policy Suggestions (November 2012)
2. Presentation by Dr. Celeste Yuen on CSL policies, presented at the Conference on Teaching Chinese as a Second Language to Ethnic Minority Students on 23 March 2013

Hong Kong Unison

April 2013



## **Education Policy Suggestions**

(November 2012)

- 1) In January 2012, the Education Bureau (EDB) submitted a paper to the Legislative Council in response to the Education Panel meeting in December 2011 on “Education Support for Non-Chinese Speaking Students.” After reviewing the EDB’s policies for ethnic minority students, Hong Kong Unison opines that the current policies are fragmentary and remedial, and show little commitment in genuinely addressing the inequality in education opportunities for ethnic minorities.
- 2) Hong Kong Unison hopes that the EDB will devise a comprehensive education policy for ethnic minority students that will achieve the following objectives:
  - a. Help ethnic minorities integrate into the mainstream Hong Kong society;
  - b. Help students gain the credentials and recognition for future advancement in education and employment; and
  - c. Give ethnic minorities the necessary skills (including sufficient Chinese language skills) so that they can have equal opportunities in becoming competitive contributing members of the Hong Kong society.
- 3) Based on Hong Kong Unison’s experience and research, we have compiled below a list of policy suggestions on education for ethnic minorities. Hong Kong Unison is not an authority in education policies, thus we hope that the EDB would take up ownership of the issue and make dedicated initiatives to achieve the aforementioned objectives and improve education for ethnic minorities.

### **Introduction/ Background**

- 4) According to the latest census, South Asians and Southeast Asians are still the major ethnic minority groups in Hong Kong. Furthermore, the population of these groups is growing. For example, the number of Pakistanis has increased by 62%





from 11,111 in 2006 to 18,042 in 2011. The number of Africans in Hong Kong is also increasing.

- 5) However, these ethnic groups are not proportionately represented in the education system as the students move up the education ladder. According to the 2006 census, ethnic minority students (excluding Whites) make up 3.2% of the student body in pre-primary years, commensurate with their population in Hong Kong. Yet as these students move up the education ladder, this percentage drops to 1.1% in senior secondary school, and a mere 0.59% in tertiary education, revealing systematic barriers in the education system for ethnic minority students.

### **Overall Policy**

- 6) The EDB should give concrete responses to the recommendations made by the Equal Opportunities Commission Working Group on Education for Ethnic Minorities and create a concrete action timeline. Currently, the EDB encourages ethnic minority students to integrate into the mainstream Hong Kong society, but, as stated in the EOC report, fails to provide adequate and comprehensive support to students, teachers and schools.

### **Chinese Language Education: Objectives**

- 7) In order to realize the EDB's goal of early integration and give ethnic minorities an equal opportunity to compete with their Chinese peers, the Chinese language education policy for ethnic minorities should:
  - a. be comprehensive and continuous from kindergarten to senior secondary school;
  - b. accommodate the needs of new immigrants whose mother tongue is not Chinese, as well as students who have grown up in Hong Kong but do not speak Chinese as their mother tongue; and
  - c. recognize the fact that ethnic minorities have very different Chinese language learning needs from students who speak Chinese as a first



language, as they often do not have a Chinese home environment and are learning Chinese as a second language.

### **Kindergarten and Pre-Primary**

- 8) The EDB should provide comprehensive Chinese teaching support to kindergartens with ethnic minority students. Such support should include providing Chinese teaching materials to kindergartens, supporting schools to hire extra Chinese language teachers, and funding and supporting organizations that provide extra Chinese language training for ethnic minority students.
- 9) The EDB should provide special funding for kindergartens to employ ethnic minority teachers and teaching assistants who can assist in classroom teaching and facilitate communication with parents.
- 10) To support kindergartens that only admit a small number of ethnic minority students, the EDB can set up a support team in each school district. Each district will have Chinese teaching materials and a team of Chinese language teachers who can push in to schools and coach ethnic minority students in Chinese on a weekly basis.

### **Primary and Secondary Schools**

#### 11) **Develop a “Chinese as a Second Language Policy”**

The current mainstream Chinese curriculum is designed for students who learn Chinese as a first language, and poses barriers to ethnic minorities students who are learning Chinese as a second language. In the long run, the EDB needs to design a Chinese language curriculum for all the students who are learning Chinese as a second language. This curriculum should include:

- a. benchmarks that clearly outline the learning objectives for each stage;
- b. assessment mechanisms that keep track of student progress and assess students’ learning needs;
- c. clear and standardized guidelines on curricula and lesson plans and;
- d. quality teaching materials.



In designing the assessment mechanism, reference can be made to “Assessment for Learning”, a learning assessment tool developed by Professor Tse Shek Kam of the Faculty of Education at the University of Hong Kong. Reference can also be made to the globally recognised “International English Language Testing System” or “Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi:” (漢語水平考試).

A “Chinese as a Second Language” curriculum will be of even greater importance in 2018, when the GSCE Chinese examination is cancelled. At present, the Chinese language standards of the majority of ethnic minority secondary students are inadequate to cope with the HKDSE Chinese examination. GCSE Chinese is an examination recognized by tertiary institutions and the Civil Service Bureau, and many ethnic minority students choose to sit for GCSE Chinese with subsidies from the Government. We cannot rely on the foreign GSCE Chinese examination in the long run. The development of a “Chinese as a Second Language” curriculum will be a better measure to address the difficulty in learning Chinese faced by ethnic minorities.

12) **Develop Chinese Curricula and Teaching Materials**

The EDB should take the lead in developing Chinese curricula and teaching materials for ethnic minority students, including taking more active measures in cumulating experiences and materials from designated schools. At present, the Chinese teaching materials used by designated schools vary in content and quality, making students’ transition from primary school to secondary school especially difficult. Given the keen competition among schools, it is unrealistic to expect designated schools to “[accumulate] teaching experiences for dissemination to other schools admitting NCS students” (EDB, LC Paper No. CB(2)1213/10-11(01)).

13) **Immersion Classes in Mainstream Schools**

To aid ethnic minority students at mainstream local schools, the EDB should provide resources for these schools to develop Chinese immersion classes. The aim of Chinese immersion classes is to enhance ethnic minority students’ Chinese proficiency using the Chinese-as-a-second-language approach, and assist students in coping with the primarily Chinese classroom environment. The participation of ethnic minority students in immersion classes can be phased out when they have attained a certain level of competency in the Chinese language.



The EDB can make Chinese immersion classes available in several mainstream schools in each school net, and make the list of schools operating immersion classes available to parents and the rest of the public.

14) **Support to School Networks**

The EDB should assign a team of Chinese-as-a-second-language specialists to every school network to assist schools that only have a few ethnic minority students. This team of specialists can visit the schools periodically to work with ethnic minority students.

**Designated Schools**

15) We urge the EDB to clarify the criteria for obtaining the status of designated school, and disclose the guidelines used to calculate the amount of special allowance granted to designated schools. The calculation should factor in the number of ethnic minority students in the applying school.

16) We urge the EDB to review the long-term policy on designated schools, and add in strategies to overcome the problem of racial segregation in these schools. The EDB should also gradually decrease the number of designated schools as one of these strategies. At present, once a school becomes a designated school, it often becomes increasingly racially segregated, thus harming the students' integration into the mainstream society and damaging social harmony in Hong Kong.

**Teacher Training**

17) "Education for ethnic minorities" and "teaching Chinese as a second language" should become electives in teacher training. Teachers should also be able to pursue further studies and become a specialist in education for ethnic minorities.

18) The EDB should provide incentives for current teachers to seek professional training in teaching ethnic minority students and non-native Chinese speakers. Such incentives could include programme fee subsidies, promotion prospects and salary increments, etc.

19) HKIEd and VTC early childhood education programmes should recruit ethnic minorities as professional kindergarten teachers and teaching assistants. For the



ethnic minorities who are currently working in the field without professional qualifications, these training institutions should also provide certificated field-specific vocation training.

20)The EDB should launch on-the-job professional training programmes (currently administered by HKIEd and HKU) on cultural sensitivity and teaching non-Chinese-speaking students to kindergarten teachers, and provide the same sponsorship as that for primary school teachers. Alternatively, the EDB can open similar programs specifically for kindergarten teachers.

21)The EDB should offer adequate professional training to teachers. These trainings should:

- a. raise teachers' sensitivity towards the racial and cultural background of ethnic minority students and the challenges faced by ethnic minority students;
- b. enhance their knowledge and skills in teaching ethnic minority students Chinese as a second language;
- c. provide incentives to teachers through programme fee subsidies, promotion prospects and salary increments, and encourage tertiary education institutions to nurture professionals teaching Chinese as a second language.

### **Cultivating Inclusive Learning Environment**

22)The EDB and teacher-training organizations should develop training programmes and a resource packet for teachers on racial and cultural diversity. The packet should include resources for teachers to learn more about minority ethnic groups and their situations in Hong Kong, as well as lesson plans and teaching materials for teachers to use in their classrooms.

23)The EDB should work with the EOC to compile a Code of Practice for Education under the Racial Discrimination Ordinance (RDO). The EOC compiled a code of practice for education under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO) to



provide guidance to educators, students and parents on how to stay compliant with the DDO, and should do the same under the RDO.

- 24) The EDB could assign a special funding for mainstream schools with ethnic minority students to hire an equal opportunities officer. This position could be taken up by a teacher or staff in the school, whose duties are to coordinate school policies for ethnic minority students and act as the contact person to engage ethnic minority parents.
  
- 25) The EDB should insert units on racial harmony and cultural sensitivity into the primary school General Studies and secondary school Liberal Studies curricula. This can help alleviate prejudice and discrimination in youngsters, and will make good use of the unique racial diversity in Hong Kong as a tool to enhance the students' multi-cultural and international perspective.
  
- 26) The EDB should also implement a systematic Civic Education Scheme that nurtures racial equality and acceptance, promotes the importance of pre-school education and Chinese language learning to ethnic minority parents, and creates an inclusive and racially harmonious learning environment.
  
- 27) Currently, some schools designated for ethnic minority students have a poor learning atmosphere, and students are often out of touch with the mainstream society. This adversely affects the students' career planning and future work attitude. The EDB should develop a Career Counselling Scheme for ethnic minority youngsters to instil aspiration and learning motivation.

# 少數族裔中文教育和 「中文作為第二語言」的政策配合

香港教育學院  
教育政策與領導學系

袁月梅

23 - 3 - 2013

# 2011年人口普查

- + 就讀學前(8,517);與小學全日制(17,467) 課程的少數族裔學生約佔全港學生5%
- + 就讀初中的少數族裔學生約佔3.5% (8,059)
- + 就讀高中的少數族裔學生約佔2.2%(5,531)
- + 專上教育程度的少數族裔學生約佔1.3%(2,505)
  
- + 什麼原因導致上述傾斜現象?



# 制訂教育政策的重要

- + 2008年，香港課程發展議會制訂《中國語文課程補充指引(非華語學生)》
  - 補充原有的《中國語文課程補充指引》
  - 並非一個全新的、有針對性的課程指引
  
- + 校本性課程
  - 由課程、教材到評核
  - 是否達到社會要求及期望?

# 南亞裔學生學習中文的情況

- + 70%南亞裔學生明白中文對他們在下列各方面的重要性：
  - 升讀大專/持續進修
  - 就業、入息
  - 社會參與
- + 但一般花在中文學習的時間卻很少(Shum等2013)
- + 為何南亞裔學生有這種落差呢？

# 非本地中文試成績互換機制

- + 在欠缺中文作為第二語言的機制下，大專院校對學生海外中文試成績的要求含糊不一，缺乏共識
  - HKDSE，GCE，IGCSE，GCSE
  - GCSE的C等於HKDSE的level 3
  
- + 這要求是否對非華語學生公平，對本港社會的未來發展最好？



# 「中文作為第二語言」的理據(1)

非華語學生多數被分配到低語言程度的班別，最後他們因為學術的語言能力不足，難以提升社經地位

- + 公營(強迫)教育使命 –
  - 每一個同學都能夠在社會上成功
  - 每一個學生能為香港貢獻
  - 每一個學生在學業上得到肯定

對非華語生的中國語文能力作劃一的要求是助力還是阻力？

# 「中文作為第二語言」的理據(2)

- + 確立第二語言的評核機制後：
  - 獲發認可資歷、增加社會的認受性
  - 誘發學習動機、縮小與本地生的成績差距
  - 增加接受本港大專教育的機會
  - 擴闊就業機會和職業類別
  - 提升社經地位、改善家境貧窮
  
- + 雙贏的局面
  - 發揮學生多元潛能 (多點正能量、少點挫敗感)
  - 實踐世界兒童公約精神
  - 強化公民身份和社會參加
  - 共建香港社會的未來

# 政策的配合

- + 確立『中文作為第二語言』為重要的教育政策
- + 成立課程發展中心 (由教育局、大專院校及前線教師組成)
- + 提供標準化學與教的成效指標 (取代校本課程)
- + 校本支援服務及資助措施
- + 設立獎學金
- + 教師專業培訓及校本經驗分享平台
- + 家長教育
- + 社會教育



# 政策的配合

- + 成立中文作為第二(額外)語言教育研究基金
  - 投放更多資源去研究和拓展課程、教學及評估的多元性，探討語文能力和學校及社會參與的關係
  - 針對不同非華語族裔的相應策略
  - 開發不同的相關課題研究
  - 家校合作
  - 跨校合作伙伴計劃
  - 跨地域比較研究
- + 有效的監管機制