

Research on the Accountability of Kindergartens to the Ethnic Minority Community

幼稚園質素評核報告 對少數族裔社群 問責性的調查研究

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Kindergartens to the Ethnic Minority Community**

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Executive Summary

As part of the Quality Assurance Framework under the previous Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme and now the Free Quality Kindergarten Education Scheme with effect from 2017/18 school year, review teams from the Education Bureau (EDB) conduct quality reviews (QR) at individual kindergartens and make professional judgment on overall school performance. The objective of this survey research is to investigate whether the Quality Review Mechanism provides accountability to the ethnic minority community, including non-Chinese speaking (NCS) parents.

A total of 151 QR reports of kindergartens (target KGs) from 3 districts (Yau Tsim Mong, Yuen Long and Eastern districts) were retrieved from the EDB website in July 2017. Relevant information was extracted and sorted according to different categories, including student composition, the medium of classroom instruction, curriculum, language learning strategy, students' language learning performance, home-school cooperation and teachers' training. Information concerning NCS students and parents were listed separately under each category. Frequency analyses were conducted to obtain the results.

Research Findings

1. 99.3% (150 KGs) of reports of the target KGs provided only Chinese version. **NCS parents, majority of whom do not read Chinese face immense difficulties in accessing the information in the QR reports and evaluating the performance of kindergartens.**
2. Only 31 reports (20.5%; hereinafter "NCS KGs") included information related to NCS students or parents; yet, a previous research conducted by Hong Kong Unison in 2015 showed that at least 60 KGs in Yau Tsim Mong and Yuen Long districts admitted ethnic minority children. **Not all QR reports reflected the provision and effectiveness of support measures for NCS students and parents in kindergartens with NCS students.**
3. At least 5 KGs (16.1% of NCS KGs) had up to or more than half NCS students in its student composition, and one kindergarten separated NCS students from Chinese students; yet EDB had not made recommendations for these kindergartens to take measures to remedy such segregation practices. **Practices and measures implemented by some KGs are not in line with the principle of early integration for NCS children as set out by the EDB.**

4. Almost one third (46 KGs, or 30.5%) of the target KGs did not have an updated QR report in the past 5 years or more, reflecting a monitoring procedure that is non-compliant and may hamper the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance Framework. **Some quality review reports could not reflect the current (the recent 5-year review cycle from 2012 to 2017) situation of kindergartens.**
5. At least 6 kindergartens (4% of target KGs) used either English or Putonghua as the main language to conduct learning and other classroom activities. **This implied that not all KGs adopting the local curriculum use Cantonese as the medium of instruction. NCS students if admitted in these kindergartens would be deprived of the opportunity to acquire Cantonese and this would impede their Chinese language learning in the later stage of education.**
6. 19 reports (61.3% of NCS KGs) mentioned Chinese language learning strategy specifically for NCS students. 16 reports (51.6% of NCS KGs) mentioned Chinese language learning performance of NCS students. 17 reports (54.8% of NCS KGs) mentioned support to NCS parents. **This indicates that not all NCS KGs reports included information about Chinese language learning strategy, learning performance of NCS students, support to NCS parents and teacher professionalism – which are important to assess whether or not the kindergartens concerned are adopting effective support to NCS students and parents.**

Policy Suggestions

1. EDB should provide English version of QR reports to ensure equal access of information and accountability to NCS parents.
2. Parameters in the new Performance Indicators (PIs) should include kindergartens' performance in catering to the needs of NCS parents and children. The EDB review team should take reference of such parameters, monitor and reflect in the QR reports the effectiveness of the support for teaching and learning in all kindergartens admitting NCS children.
3. EDB review team should make recommendations to kindergarten once they observed malpractice in kindergartens and/or breach to the Curriculum and Administration Guides;

such as those unfavorable to integration and over-concentration of NCS students in each kindergarten.

4. The school report of the NCS grants under the Free Quality Kindergarten Education Scheme should be uploaded to the school website every year to allow public access and monitoring, and hence to ensure its accountability.
5. The government should be more careful in using the term ‘local’ to refer to BOTH Chinese and ethnic minority residents, and not only Chinese.

研究撮要

香港融樂會是項調查的目的，是為評估現行幼稚園質素保證架構下的質素評核機制是否有效向少數族裔社群（包括非華語家長）問責。在學前教育學券計劃下（由2017/18年改為免費優質幼稚園教育計劃），教育局的評核隊伍會就每一間幼稚園的整體表現作專業的評鑑，以評估學校是否達到既定標準，符合參加免費優質幼稚園教育計劃的資格，並把質素評核報告上載於局方網頁。

是次總共分析了三區幼稚園（包括油尖旺，元朗及東區）共 151 份的質素評核報告（以下簡稱「報告」）。所有報告於 2017 年 7 月從教育局網站下載並進行分析。我們從報告中抽取了相關的內容並進行分類，類別包括：不同族裔學生的比例、課堂主要語言、課程內容、語言學習策略、學生的語言學習表現、家校合作及教師培訓內容，再把當中有關非華語學生及家長的內容獨立列出以進行分析。

研究結果顯示

1. 99.3%（150 份）的報告只有中文版本。幾乎所有質素評核報告亦只有中文版本，不諳中文的非華語家長難以了解內容和評估幼稚園的表現。
2. 只有 31 份報告（20.5%；以下簡稱「非華語報告」）提及與非華語學童及家長相關的資訊。然而，根據融樂會在 2015 年進行的研究，顯示當時在油尖旺和元朗區最少有 60 間幼稚園錄取少數族裔學生。部份質素評核報告並未反映幼稚園對非華語學生及家長所提供的協助措施及其成效。
3. 至少五份報告（佔非華語報告的 16.1%）指出幼稚園內有一半或以上的學生屬非華語學生。其中一份報告更列出「學校把個別班級的華語和非華語兒童分成兩組進行主題教學」作為一種支援學習措施，唯教育局並未有在報告內就這些措施提出改善建議。有些幼稚園的措施與教育局「鼓勵非華語學童盡早融入」的原則及指引相違背。
4. 差不多三分之一（46 份報告，佔所有報告的 30.5%）受調查的幼稚園在過去五年並未有更新的質素評核報告，這反映了評核機制的質素參差及影響「質素保證架構」的問責性。並非所有質素評核報告能反映現時（最近五年 2012-2017）幼稚園的情況。
5. 至少六間幼稚園的評核報告（佔所有報告的 4%）指出學校以英語或普通話為學習及課堂活動的主要語言。這顯示並非所有採用本地課程的本地幼稚園以廣東話為主要教學語言。這或會窒礙有機會入讀這些幼稚園的非華語學生的廣東話學習，以及期後的中文學習。

6. 19 份報告（佔非華語報告的 61.3%）有提及為非華語學生提供的中文學習策略；有提非華語學生的語言學習表現的報告有 16 份（佔非華語報告的 51.6%）；而有提及幼對非華語家長的家校合作及支援的報告則有 17 份報告（佔非華語報告的 54.8%）。以上結果顯示並非所有提及過非華語學生的評核報告中亦包括中文學習策略、語言學習表現及對非華語家長的支援，而這些因素是評估幼稚園支援少數族裔學生和家長的成效時的重要考慮。

政策建議

1. 教育局應上載英文版的評核質素報告，以確保對非華語公眾平等獲得資訊的機會。
2. 優化後的《表現指標（幼稚園）》應能反映幼稚園於照顧非華語學童及家長需要措施及表現。
3. 教育局的評核隊伍應監察有取錄非華語學生的幼稚園中對有關學生的教與學及支援措施（包括中文學習策略、語言學習表現及對非華語家長的支援），並於質素評核報告中反映。當教育局的評核隊伍留意到幼稚園有影響非華語學生盡早融合、甚至違反課程指引的措施時（包括非華語學生的數目過分集中，或把學童以種族分班），應提出改善建議並進行跟進。
4. 在免費優質幼稚園計劃下，收取「支援非華語學童的資助」的幼稚園在學年終結提交的學校報告應每年上載至教育局網頁，以確保公帑的問責性，讓公眾監察資助是否用得其所。
5. 政府在使用「本地」等字眼時應更加準確，確保其意思包含少數族裔及華裔居民，而不是狹窄地只以為所有本地居民亦只有指華裔。

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 advocate for change so that all ethnic minority residents of Hong Kong have equal opportunity and equal access to public services and information. 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.”¹ 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 is likely to be limited.

Experts agree that the best time to acquire language ability is during the early formative years. If ethnic minority children from the outset can benefit from an environment conducive to integration and learning Chinese, their competitiveness in education could be enhanced. Better Chinese proficiency will improve their social mobility and work prospects.

The Education Bureau (‘EDB’) encourages non-Chinese speaking (‘NCS’) children to attend local kindergartens which use Chinese as the medium of instruction to facilitate early immersion in the Chinese environment.² In this research, Unison explores if the current kindergarten evaluation mechanism provides accountability to the ethnic minority community, including NCS parents.

¹ CESCR Committee, General Comment 13, 1999, Para.1.

² LC Paper No. CB(2) 1465/07-08(02)).

2. Background

2.1. Research rationale

The Quality Assurance Framework is developed by the EDB with the aim to achieve quality kindergarten education through school improvement and accountability. The Quality Assurance Framework comprises of School Self-Evaluation and Quality Review (QR) to assess and monitor the performance of kindergartens (KGs). Under the Quality Review mechanism, review teams of the EDB conduct quality review (QR) at individual KGs to make professional judgment on the overall school performance. The review teams submit QR reports to the EDB with observations and comments on respective KGs.

The EDB states that ‘The Quality Assurance Framework aims at promoting sustainable development in schools and making it accountable to parents and the community. Uploading QR reports onto the Bureau’s website can improve transparency.’³

However, the current QR reports uploaded to the EDB website are only available in Chinese,⁴ which fails to provide accountability to NCS parents. Thus Hong Kong Unison would like to find out what crucial information NCS parents missed in the QR reports, e.g. how KGs cater the learning needs of NCS children, handle diversity in schools, and perform with regards to NCS children and how the EDB can step up accountability efforts to the ethnic minority community.

2.2. Previous responses from EDB on QR report

In the Examination of Estimates of Expenditure in 2015-16 and 2016-17, EDB has been asked to provide a list of information disseminated or publications published by the EDB which are only available in Chinese but not English (including documents which reflects schools’ qualities), and EDB stated that “All information related to school choices is available in both Chinese and English on the Bureau’s website.” Only until another question raised by a Legislative Council member⁵ pointed out that ‘in fact some important relevant information is available only in Chinese’ (including the Quality Review reports of

³ EDB website on Quality Review Mechanism (FAQ - Question 1)- <http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/preprimarykindergarten/quality-assurance-framework/qr/index.html>

⁴ EDB website on Quality Review Mechanism (Chinese version only) - <http://www.edb.gov.hk/tc/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/quality-assurance-framework/qr/qr-report/index.html>

⁵ Council meeting on 29.03.2017, Written Questions Q.21 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr16-17/english/counmtg/agenda/cm20170329.htm#q_21

kindergartens on EDB's website), then EDB explained that "Since the Reports mainly target to serve as reference for KGs which generally use Chinese as the medium of communication, the Reports are generally provided in Chinese only. The Reports are uploaded onto the EDB's website to enhance transparency and accountability to the community."

In fact, during the meeting with Mr. Kevin Yeung (the then Under Secretary for Education and current Secretary of Education) in 2015, Hong Kong Unison has brought up the issue of lack of accountability to NCS parents with the Chinese-only QR reports, and reiterated this issue in different platforms that involved EDB. However, every time EDB only replied that they are aware of the issue without committing to publish English QR reports. Currently, EDB is still at the stage of "collecting views of stakeholders and studying the feasibility of reporting the QR findings in English." as mentioned in the written response in a question raised by the Legislative Council member.⁶

2.3. Measures to support the teaching and learning of ethnic minority students in kindergartens under Free Quality Kindergarten Education Scheme

2.3.1. Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide (2017) 《幼稚園教育課程指引》 (2017)

The Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide (2017) 《幼稚園教育課程指引》 ('Curriculum Guide') was reviewed in 2016 with its last version in 2006. 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.

⁶ Council meeting on 29.03.2017, Written Questions Q.21 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr16-17/english/counmtg/agenda/cm20170329.htm#q_21

2.3.2. *Kindergarten Administration Guide (2017/18 school year) (幼稚園行政手冊 (2017/18 學年)(第 1.0 版))*

Free Quality Kindergarten Education is implemented with effect from the 2017/18 school year, and the Kindergarten Administration Guide⁷ 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 October 2017.

2.3.2.1. Class arrangement for Chinese and NCS students in schools⁸

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.

2.3.2.2. Grants for supporting NCS students (支援非華語學童的資助)

To enable Scheme-KGs to enhance support for NCS students, a grant ('NCS Grant') comparable to mid-point of the recommended salary range of one teacher would be provided for Scheme-KGs admitting eight or more NCS students. The amount of the full-year grant for the 2017/18 school year is \$363,510 for each eligible Scheme-KG.⁹

KGs are required to use the grant solely to enhance support for NCS students. The grant can be used for appointing additional staff or acquiring services to provide more manpower support and for teachers' professional training to develop effective strategies

⁷ Kindergarten Administration Guide (2017/18 school year)(Version 1.0) - <http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/free-quality-kg-edu/Admin%20Guide%20Chi%201718%201.0.pdf>

⁸ 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。

⁹ Appendix 4 – Grant for Support to Non-Chinese Speaking Students, <http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/free-quality-kg-edu/EDBCM170015E.pdf>

to help NCS students learn Chinese, raise teachers' cultural and religious sensitivity in handling NCS students and enhance communication with parents of NCS students.

These Scheme-KGs are required to submit a school plan on the utilization of the grant and planned support measures at the beginning of the school year, as well as a school report at the end of the school year summarizing the implementation and evaluation of these measures, which would serve as reference for planning support measures the following year.

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

Cue cards¹⁰

'Communication Cue Cards for Non-Chinese Speaking Families in Kindergartens' developed by the Education Bureau, along with the sound files, are available for kindergartens to express sincerity and care on daily contact with NCS parents, in order to create a more harmonious campus.¹¹

Notice template in different languages and interpretation services¹²

To strengthen the communication between KGs and NCS parents, the Education Bureau has issued templates of general kindergarten parents notice in eight minority languages. Besides, kindergartens can also make good use of the interpretation and translation services of major minority languages provided by the Home Affairs Department funded-'Centre for Harmony and Enhancement of Ethnic Minority Residents' (CHEER), or other institutions.¹³

¹⁰ 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>

¹¹ 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—

(6) 教育局製作的幼稚園非華語家庭溝通提示卡，連聲音檔案，可供幼稚園在日常接觸非華語家長時，表達愛護和關懷，從而營造一個更共融的校園。

¹² 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>

¹³ 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。

2.3.2.4. Teachers training

To provide support for students with diverse needs (especially NCS students, students with special education needs and students with developmental disorder), the Education Bureau encourages teachers to attend related trainings.

The more ideal arrangement would be having an officer who has received related trainings in supporting NCS students, students with special education needs or students with developmental disorder in every Scheme-KG including training programs provided by EDB every once in a while, or programmes such as Bachelor of Education (Honours) (Early Childhood Education) in Leadership and Non-Chinese Speaking Children and Bachelor of Education (Honours) (Early Childhood Education) in Leadership and Special Needs, which are offered by The Education University of Hong Kong and funded by the University Grants Committee.¹⁴

2.3.3. Refinement of Performance Indicators (Pre-primary Institutions) 《表現指標(學前機構)》

EDB has formulated a set of performance indicators (PIs) for the assessment on the performance of pre-primary institutions, and it is the basis for the review teams to make professional judgment on overall school performance, so as to assess if the KG has met the prescribed standards. It provides the basis for ascertaining the KG's eligibility for the Free Quality Kindergarten Education Scheme.¹⁵

EDB has refined the Performance Indicators (Kindergartens) in July, 2017¹⁶ in accordance with the Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide (Provisional Final Draft) (Curriculum Guide) for the Free Quality Kindergarten Policy.

¹⁴ 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 5 章 人事管理, 5.3.2 照顧兒童多元需要的培訓—

(1) 為有多元需要的學童(尤其是非華語學童、有特殊需要及有發展遲緩危機的學童)提供專業支援，教育局鼓勵教師接受相關的專業培訓。

(2) 較為理想的安排是，每所參加幼稚園計劃的幼稚園有一名主任在支援非華語學童、有特殊需要或有發展遲緩危機的學童方面，曾接受相關專業培訓(例如教育局不時舉行的培訓課程、香港教育大學開辦由大學教育資助委員會資助的幼兒教育榮譽學士(領導與非華語幼兒)，以及幼兒教育榮譽學士(領導與特殊需要)課程)。

¹⁵ EDB website, Quality Review Mechanism(Frequently Asked Questions and Answers concerning Quality Review (QR) Mechanism, Question 2) - <http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/quality-assurance-framework/qr/index.html>

¹⁶ Performance Indicators (Kindergartens)

Draft (Only Chinese version of the revised PIs is available as in Oct, 2017. It is stated in the EDB website that ‘The English version of Performance Indicators (Kindergartens) will be made available upon finalisation of the Chinese version’.)- [http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/quality-assurance-framework/PIs\(KGs\)_draft_EN_1.pdf](http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/quality-assurance-framework/PIs(KGs)_draft_EN_1.pdf)

3. Research Objectives

- 3.1. To evaluate if the Quality Review mechanisms of the Education Bureau fulfills accountability to the ethnic minority community, including NCS parents.
- 3.2. To analyze how much crucial information NCS parents missed due to Chinese only QR report.
- 3.3. To assess if the information provided in the Quality Review reports reveal performance of KGs and learning situation and support for ethnic minority children and parents.

4. Methodology

- 4.1. A total of 151 QR reports of kindergartens from Yau Tsim Mong, Yuen Long and Eastern districts (target KGs) were retrieved from the EDB website in July 2017, each report presented information of one kindergarten.¹⁷
- 4.2. These 3 districts were chosen based on the residential districts of Unison's ethnic minority clients whose children are going to or already studying in KGs.
- 4.3. Volunteers of Unison were given instructions to search from all retrieved reports information on the (1) year of reporting, (2) student composition, (3) language of classroom instruction, (4) curriculum, (5) language learning strategy, (6) students' language learning performance, (7) home-school cooperation, and (8) teachers training. Relevant information was extracted and sorted according to the aforementioned categories, and those concerning NCS students and parents were listed separately under each category for frequency analysis.
- 4.4. To further analyze trends in curriculum and school practices, within the extracted information, frequencies of words such as "learning differences" (學習差異), "individual differences" (個別差異), "differences in ability" (能力差異), "local" (本地) and "second language" (第二語言) were recorded.

¹⁷ <http://www.edb.gov.hk/tc/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/quality-assurance-framework/qr/qr-report/index.html>

5. Findings

5.1. Overall findings

Out of the 151 reports reviewed, 150 (99.3%) were available only in Chinese.

31 (20.5%) QR reports included information related to NCS students and parents (hereinafter ‘NCS KGs’) (refer to Figure 1), with 7 (25% out of 28 KGs) in Yau Tsim Mong district, 14 (21.2% out of 66 KGs) in Yuen Long district, and 10 (17.5% out of 57 KGs) in Eastern district (refer to Figure 2).

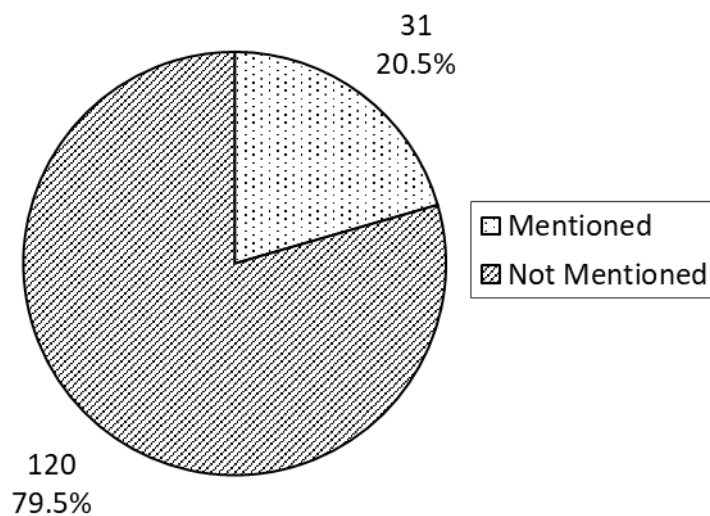


Figure 1. *The number and percentage of Quality Review reports that mentioned information related to NCS students and parents*

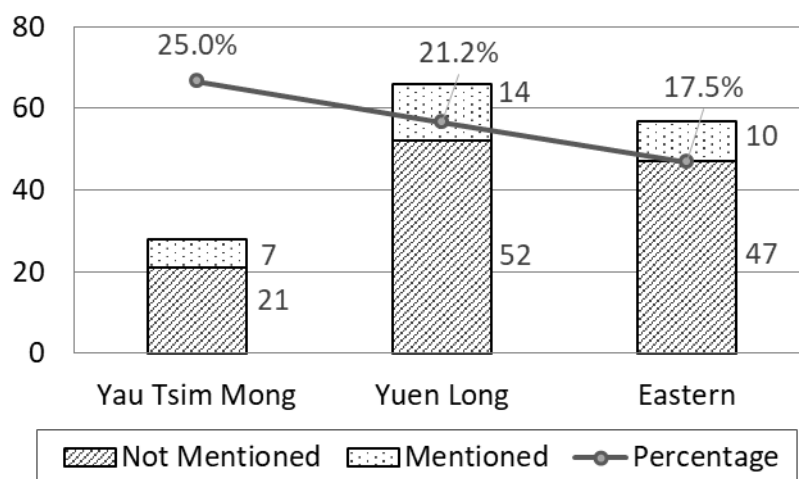


Figure 2. *The number and percentage of quality review reports that mentioned information related to NCS students and parents in Yau Tsim Mong, Yuen Long and Eastern districts*

Among the 31 NCS KGs QR reports, 11 (35.5%) mentioned NCS students in relation to student composition. The proportion of NCS students varied from a few to majority; at least five (16.1%) had concentration of up to or more than half of students being NCS students.

The year of publication of QR reports ranged from 2010 to 2017 (refer to Figure 3). KGs are supposed to be reviewed once every 5-year cycle. The last cycle was 2007 to 2012; the current cycle is 2013 to 2018. The highest number of reports published was in 2014 (30 KGs or 19.9%) and 2016 (28 KGs, or 18.5%). Up to 46 (30.5%) QR reports were published during the last cycle between 2010 and 2012.

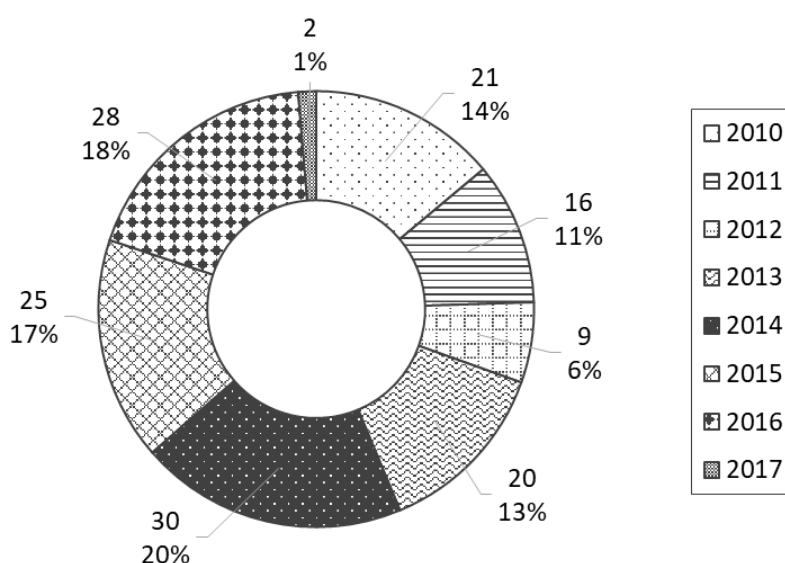


Figure 3. The number and percentage of year of publication of QR reports

5.2. Language learning

Out of the 151 reports, only 9 (6%) indicated the medium of classroom instruction directly or indirectly, amongst which 4 mainly used English, 2 used both Cantonese and English, 1 mainly used Cantonese, 1 used Putonghua, and 1 used either English or Putonghua. 23 reports (15.2% of all target KGs) mentioned that Putonghua was taught or used to conduct learning activities in the respective kindergartens. 3 reports (2% of all target KGs) indicated the importance of second language acquisition, yet without specifying the language.

Out of the 31 NCS KGs, 7 (22.6%) indicated the medium of classroom instruction, within which 3 mainly used English, 2 used both Cantonese and English, 1 used Cantonese, and 1 was either English or Putonghua.

19 reports (61.3% of NCS KGs, or 12.6% of all target KGs) (refer to Figure 4) mentioned Chinese language learning strategy adopted by KGs specifically for NCS students. Special measures included grouping of NCS students separately from Chinese students, adaptation of curriculum and learning materials,¹⁸ adaptation of teaching methods,¹⁹ interactive learning,²⁰ creation of a multicultural learning environment, deployment of teachers or teaching assistants who can speak English or having the knowledge of ethnic minority culture or from ethnic minority background, and others²¹. KGs also sought resources from external teaching support programmes.

16 reports (51.6% of NCS KGs, or 10.6% of all target KGs) (refer to Figure 4) mentioned Chinese language learning performance of NCS students. Students' language learning performance ranged from largely behind curriculum requirements to successful acquisition of Chinese communication skills; this implies KG students varied greatly in their capability to understand teaching, figure out Chinese orthography, communicate and express themselves in Chinese, engage in classroom activities and interact with Chinese classmates, as well as in their cognitive ability and interest in Chinese language learning.

5.3. Support to parents

Among the 31 reports of NCS KGs, 17 reports (54.8%) (refer to Figure 4) mentioned support to NCS parents, vis-à-vis 13 reports (41.9%) that mentioned only home-school cooperation measures for all parents. Support measures specific to NCS parents included English translation and romanisation of Chinese learning materials to assist home learning; use of bilingual (Chinese and English) learning assessment reports, school notices or newsletters; organizing school visits and parent-child cultural activities; maintaining sufficient communication with parents; arranging teachers who speak English or ethnic minority languages to communicate with parents; making use of interpretation services; establishing NCS parents groups, etc.

Other home-school cooperation measures for all parents included establishment of parent-teacher association, talks, interest groups, parental education, classroom observation,

¹⁸ Such as English translation, romanisation of vocabularies, incorporation of stroke order instructions and topics that are relevant to NCS students' daily lives, and use of pictures and objects.

¹⁹ Such as adjustment of learning progress, simple and slower speed of teaching instructions, use of body language, substantial use of Cantonese, substantial use of Chinese language materials in classrooms, and permitting use of mother tongue by NCS students.

²⁰ Such as collaborative learning, games, songs, role plays, storybooks or storytelling.

²¹ Including nurturing interest and habit of reading, facilitating and enhancing communication with Chinese classmate, tutoring and counselling.

promotion of parent-child reading, sharing of parenting experience to other parents, support to family of SEN students, volunteering in school activities, etc.

5.4. Teacher professionalism

4 reports (12.9% of NCS KGs, or 2.6% of all target KGs) (refer to Figure 4) mentioned enhancing teacher professionalism to effectively address the learning needs of NCS students. This included developing teachers' knowledge and skills through school-based training, classroom observation and professional exchange activities.

5.5. Other results

Regarding the use of the words “learning differences” (學習差異), “individual differences” (個別差異) or “differences in ability” (能力差異), 9 reports (6% of all target KGs) and 7 reports (4.6% of all target KGs) mentioned at least one of these words in relation to language learning and teachers training respectively. Among these reports, only one mentioned learning differences in a context that is related to NCS students.

The word “local” (本地) was used in 7 reports (4.6% of all target KGs) to describe Chinese students.

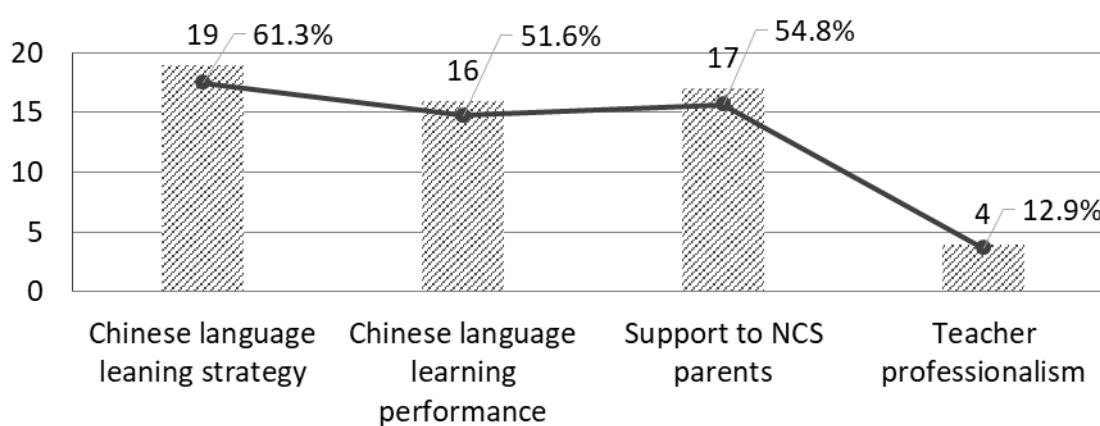


Figure 4. *The number and percentage of QR reports of NCS KGs that had mentioned support for NCS students and parents*

6. Discussion

6.1. Overall discussion

With almost all reports of the target KGs published only in Chinese, NCS parents, of whom many do not read Chinese, would face immense difficulty in accessing the information in the QR reports and in evaluating the performance of kindergartens.

While only 31 reports included information related to NCS students, a previous research conducted by Unison showed that at least 27 KGs (71.1% out of 38 KGs) in Yau Tsim Mong district and 33 KGs (46.5% out of 71 KGs) in Yuen Long district had admitted ethnic minority children back in 2015.²² It is speculated that some QR reports had not reflected the provision and effectiveness of support measures for NCS students and parents in kindergartens.

Among the QR reports of NCS KGs, only about one third stated the proportion of NCS students in student composition. Such information was not included in the remaining QR reports of NCS KGs. The results showed that some KGs have a high concentration of NCS students, which is not in line with the principle of integration set out by EDB.²³ Despite the claim as a strategy to enhance learning of NCS children, the teaching practice of segregating NCS students from their Chinese counterparts violates the Kindergarten Administrative Guideline²⁴ and Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide.²⁵ Over concentration and segregation poses difficulty to facilitate and assess the integration of non-Chinese students into mainstream education. Nonetheless, EDB had not recommended the kindergartens concerned to take measures to reduce the proportion of NCS students within the whole school, or to abandon the practice of grouping by race. Not only are such practices contradictory to the education policy, de facto segregation contravenes Article 3 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which might cause potential harm to ethnic minority students on personal, social and economic fronts and affect their chances to integrate into mainstream society and their upward mobility.

²² Hong Kong Unison (2015). *Research on kindergarten support and attitude on ethnic minority students in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong, China: Hong Kong Unison.

²³ Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (14 May, 2015). Written response to the submission from Hong Kong Unison Limited, LC Paper No. CB(4)154/15-16(02).

²⁴ Education Bureau. (n.d.). *Kindergarten Administration Guide (2017/18 school year) (Version 1.0)*. Retrieved from <http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/free-quality-kg-edu/Admin%20Guide%20Chi%201718%201.0.pdf>

²⁵ Curriculum Development Council. (2017). *Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide (Draft)*. Retrieved from <http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/curriculum-development/major-level-of-edu/preprimary/KGECEG-En-Draft-2017.pdf>

Almost one third of the target KGs did not have an updated QR report in the past 5 years or more, implying that some QR reports could not reflect the current situation of kindergartens.²⁶ This reflects a monitoring procedure that is non-compliant which hampers the accountability of PEVS kindergartens.

6.2. Language learning

Even though EDB stated that the medium of instruction for kindergarten education should be Cantonese²⁷, at least 6 kindergartens was found to have used either English or Putonghua as the main language to conduct learning and other classroom activities; in which case NCS students who were admitted in these kindergartens would be deprived of the opportunity to acquire Cantonese and it would impede their Chinese language learning in the later stage of education. It is also not clear whether kindergartens are providing sufficient support for multiple language acquisition.

Not all 31 NCS KGs reports included information about Chinese language learning strategy and performance of NCS students. It poses difficulty for parents to assess whether or not the kindergartens concerned are providing sufficient and effective learning support, given that this group of students face particular learning conditions such as a lack of Chinese learning environment outside of classroom, originating from a cultural and language background that is different from the mainstream society, and having to acquire multiple languages at the same time, etc.

6.3. Support to parents

Only slightly over 50% of NCS KGs reports mentioned support measures for NCS parents which are applicable and useful for NCS parents that NCS parents may not fully benefit from general home-school measures due to language barrier or other difficulties.

²⁶ The current cycle of quality review lasts from 2012 to 2017. Source: <http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/tc/edu-system/preprimary-kindergarten/quality-assurance-framework/qr/qr-report/5YrReport07-12.pdf>

²⁷ Choosing Kindergarten FAQ - 10. What is your comment on kindergartens offering "bi-literate and trilingual" learning? Answer: "Bi-literate" means written Chinese and English, while "trilingual" means spoken Chinese (Cantonese), English and Putonghua. Since the mother tongue of most children in Hong Kong is Cantonese, the medium of instruction for kindergarten education should be Cantonese as well, so as to facilitate communication and enhance learning effectiveness. <http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/student-parents/parents-related/parent-info/faq.html>

6.4. Teacher professionalism

Only very few reports reflected teachers' professional development for supporting learning and teaching of NCS students. It is not possible to assess whether or not teachers are equipped with the necessary awareness and knowledge to cater for the specific learning needs of NCS students. In order to facilitate mainstreaming of NCS students, all KGs should prepare their teachers to support the learning of NCS students, and provide teachers with sufficient opportunities and resources to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills.

6.5. Other discussion

While adapting curriculum and teaching practices to cater for learning differences is becoming more common in recent years, it is not uncommon that policy makers and educators tend to lump together the learning needs of NCS students and those of other groups of students such as students with special learning needs. Yet, these various groups of students face very different difficulties. Their learning needs should be addressed individually, and teachers should be given dedicated training to provide effective support.

The use of the word "local" to describe Chinese students ignores the fact that many NCS students are locally born and permanently resides in Hong Kong. It reflects the "local vs. non-local", and to a certain extent the "us" vs. "them" mentality. Such practice may undermine the recognition and inclusion of non-Chinese children by the mainstream community, as well as the motivation to integrate by the ethnic minority population.

7. Policy Suggestions

- 7.1 The EDB once explained that the QR Reports are generally provided in Chinese only because “*the Reports (are) mainly target to serve as reference for KGs which generally use Chinese as the medium of communication.*”²⁸ However, since it also stated that “*The Reports are uploaded onto the EDB’s website to enhance transparency and accountability to the community.*” It failed to fulfill the accountability to non-Chinese speaking residents in Hong Kong, notably the ethnic minority parents, which are also part of the community. **EDB should upload the QR reports in English to ensure equal access of information to NCS parents.**
- 7.2 EDB should closely monitor and ensure local kindergartens follow the Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide (2017)(《幼稚園教育課程指引》(2017)) to support the learning of NCS children in schools. The **new Performance Indicators (PIs) parameters**, which are under review now, **should reflect KG’s performance in catering the needs of NCS parents and children.**
- 7.3 **The EDB review team should monitor and reflect in the QR reports the support measures on the learning and teaching of NCS students in all KGs that are admitting NCS children** (including teaching Chinese to NCS students, the promotion of integration in school, the effectiveness of home-school communication, teacher professionalism, etc.).
- 7.4 EDB review team should **make recommendations to kindergarten once they observed practices in KGs that are not promoting integration or even breaching the Curriculum Guide**, for example the high concentration of NCS children in schools that might lead to de facto racial segregation in KGs, the practice of separating NCS and CS children in different classes and sections, and also using English or even Putonghua as the main language in classroom.
- 7.5 The availability of “NCS grants” implies that more KGs will be having dedicated support for NCS students and parents. **The school report of the NSC grants** (which summarises the implementation and evaluation of support measures) **should be**

²⁸ LEGCO QUESTION No. 21 (Written Reply) Asked by: Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG, Date of Meeting: 29 March 2017, and Replied by: Secretary for Education

uploaded to the website to ensure the accountability of the funding to the public, so that the public could monitor the effectiveness of support measures.

7.6 The EDB once stated in their website that one of the benefits of uploading QR reports onto the Bureau's website was to facilitate parents in their choice of KGs (May, 2017). However, recently the EDB revised the website and cross out the sentence "*facilitate parents in their choice of KGs*" and stated that "*For parents choosing KGs for their children, they may make reference to the Profile of Kindergartens and Kindergarten-Child Care Centres (KG Profile), school-based information provided by the individual KGs, etc.*"²⁹ In fact, since the KG profile does not include the information of the support measures to NCS parents and children provided by KGs, parents have no way to understand Chinese learning of NCS children and how KGs facilitate communication with NCS parents; hence, they need to rely on the QR reports to access such information and evaluate KGs performance in relevant areas. **To truly facilitate informed choice of KGs by NCS parents, EDB should add a section on "Dedicated Support to Non-Chinese speaking students and parents" in the KG Profiles for KGs to provide information such as the percentage of NCS students, support measures to students and parents, etc.**

7.7 The EDB has been using the term "local students" to refer to Chinese students as shown in the QR reports and other official documents. However, there are also local residents in Hong Kong who are non-Chinese by ethnicity. In other words, NCS students should also be considered as local students if they are born or brought up in Hong Kong. **The government should be more sensitive in using terms for different population. For example, the EDB should use the term "local" to refer to BOTH Chinese and ethnic minority students.** By this, it can promote awareness and inclusion of ethnic minority students in these "local kindergartens" and "local curriculum".

²⁹ LEGCO QUESTION No. 21 (Written Reply) Asked by: Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG, Date of Meeting: 29 March 2017, and Replied by: Secretary for Education

8. Research Limitations

8.7. The EDB website uploads updated version of QR reports from time to time. The QR reports reviewed in the current research were collected in July 2017, hence, might not be able to reflect the most up-to-date information. As of 18 October, 2017, 8 updated versions of QR reports have been uploaded, all of which replaced older versions published in 2010. Nonetheless, there were still 13 reports from as early as 2010 not updated. According to the Profile of Kindergartens and Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres published in July 2017, five target KGs have not joined the Free Quality Kindergarten Education Scheme in 2017/18 school year, whereas five KGs not covered in the present research have joined the Scheme.

8.8. Due to the lack of statistical data of the number of kindergartens admitting NCS students,³⁰ analyses of the present research may not fully reflect the provision and effectiveness of supports by kindergartens to NCS students and parents.

9. Conclusion

Under the Quality Assurance Framework of the previous Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme (currently the Free Quality Kindergarten Education Scheme), the Education Bureau conducts quality reviews at kindergartens to assess their performance. Quality Review reports are made accessible to the public on the website of the Education Bureau in order to enhance transparency and accountability of the evaluation mechanism. The current research examined the Quality Review reports in three districts (Yau Tsim Mong, Yuen Long and Eastern district) and analyzed the extent to which the Quality Review reports reflect the provision and effectiveness of support for non-Chinese (NCS) speaking students and their parents, and the amount of information which parents missed.

Such evaluations conducted by the Education Bureau are meant to keep schools accountable to the members of the public and for parents to learn about the performance of kindergartens. The Quality Review reports set objective standards and benchmarks against which actual service provision, practice and outcomes can be assessed. This independent source of evaluative criteria and overview are a critical component of

³⁰ Hong Kong Unison contacted Regional Offices of EDB in Yau Tsim Mong, Yuen Long and Eastern districts to request for the number of kindergartens under the Free Quality Kindergarten Scheme admitting NCS students in 2017/18 school year, but was told by two Regional Offices that such statistics was not available. Another Regional Office had not reverted as of the publication of this report. These figures were not published in any of the government documents previously.

information for parents to monitor the schools where their children are in or where they would like to enroll their children. However, the fact that almost all reports are published only in Chinese makes it difficult for ethnic minority parents to access. Ethnic minority parents often have to rely on informal sources of information about school performance and are often kept in the dark on the actual situation of kindergartens.

Among the reports that had mentioned support for NCS students and parents, only slightly more than half revealed information regarding Chinese language learning strategy for NCS students, their Chinese language performance, and support for NCS parents respectively. Almost one third of the reports have not been updated in the past 5 years or more, reflecting a monitoring procedure that is below the quinquennial review standard set out by the Education Bureau.

The Education Bureau should invest more effort to ensure the accountability of kindergartens to ethnic minority parents by providing English Quality Review reports and rigorously monitor the provision and effectiveness of support for ethnic minority students and parents so early integration of ethnic minority children can really take place.

