



For discussion on 5th March 2021

**Submission on the Educational and Boarding Services for Students
Provided by Special Schools**

1. Hong Kong Unison is a non-governmental organization that focuses on the education rights of ethnic minorities and issues pertaining to Chinese language learning. Musubi Hong Kong is a society that supports ethnic minority children with special educational needs. This joint submission concerns the educational support for non-Chinese speaking special education needs (“NCS SEN”) students.

Special educational needs assessment for non-Chinese speaking students

2. It is not uncommon for NCS students to take the special educational needs assessment in English as many NCS parents do not read or write Chinese and English is the lingua franca. However, the waiting time for an English assessment at the Hospital Authority can easily take up to 15 months. During the waiting time, many NCS children are asked to “change” schools and/or dissuaded from attending kindergarten, hence they often miss the golden opportunity to receive education. The Government should deploy more resources to English special educational needs assessments to reduce the waiting time.
3. Lack of communication between NCS parents and medical professionals seriously hinder access to information. It is observed that many NCS parents only receive the letter of assessment findings but do not receive explanation and details of the child’s diagnosis. If language is an issue, medical staff should utilize medical interpretation services to ensure smooth transfer of information. The Government should promptly establish a qualification accreditation system for ethnic minority languages medical interpretation so that NCS parents are properly communicated appropriately informed.
4. The Government should step up training on cultural competency particularly to child care workers, kindergarten teachers and medical professionals conducting assessments to avoid mis-diagnosis and over-diagnosis. We have come across cases whereby NCS children had speech problems but mis-diagnosed as language issues and did not receive intervention until primary years and some children who

do not have special educational needs but over-diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

In-school support for NCS SEN students

5. The Government should strengthen home-school communications for NCS SEN families. Possibly due to language barrier and cultural differences, school social workers and teachers rarely communicate with NCS parents making it difficult to understand their child's progress in schools. We recommend the Government to strengthen cultural sensitivity training for school workers and promote interpretation service for schools.

Support for NCS SEN students after secondary graduation

6. Many NCS SEN parents are not aware of post-secondary job or development opportunities for their children despite NGO job pairing services and job offers specially for disabled youth or youth with SEN. NCS SEN youth are not given similar options like their Chinese peers and are provided limited opportunities as suggested by the special schools. The Government should strengthen cultural sensitivity of frontline workers of special schools and enhance access to information for parents in this aspect.

“Training Subsidy Programme” for children on the waiting list of subvented pre-school rehabilitation services”

7. The aforementioned subsidy only allows SEN students who have been confirmed but still await space at special schools to have six hours of related services per month. Many ethnic minority families with SEN children are in poverty and cannot afford private rehab services

No organized NCS SEN parent groups and activities for NCS SEN children

8. The Government should allocate more resources to subvented NGOs who serve ethnic minorities to develop SEN parent focus and/or support networks and groups and facilitate mutual assistance between NCS parents. NGOs should include and accept NCS SEN children in mainstream centers to encourage early integration.



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