

Unison Hong Kong – For Ethnic Equality

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Position towards the Change of School Place Allocation Policy for Non Chinese Speaking Students (NCS)¹

(A) In the coming academic year, there will be changes made by the Education and Manpower Bureau (hereafter EMB) that will affect the education of ethnic minority students in Hong Kong. Unison Hong Kong (hereafter “Unison”) now states its position on the proposed changes.

(B) If no extra resources and support are allocated to schools which have not previously accepted Non Chinese Speaking Students (NCS), difficulties in adjustment may prevail for school administration & management; teachers (without relevant knowledge & experience); students (adaptation) and parents (supporting role in children’s school work).

i. In Chinese Medium Instruction schools:

- i.i. For NCS students who have difficulties in listening and speaking Chinese, they may experience difficulties in the Chinese language subject. They may also have difficulties in understanding other subjects especially Mathematics and General studies which are taught in Chinese.
- i.ii. A consequence of this is that their academic grades in these primary schools could be lower than that if they studied in an English Medium School, therefore affecting their entry options into their secondary school of choice.

ii. In all schools

- ii.i. If there are few NCS in a school, particular resources at an appropriate level may not be justifiable. Without the support of the EMB, it will be difficult for the school to allocate

¹ It is because currently the school choices of ethnic minority students are very limited. The minority children are largely concentrated in 11-12 government (or aided or direct subsidized) primary and secondary schools even though there are more than 1,200 schools in Hong Kong. It lacks opportunities to interact with their Chinese counterparts, turn out could only have a very narrow social connections and no integration with local mainstream society.

extra resources or staff to take care and support those few students.

ii.ii Due to the initial language barrier, NCS may not be able to keep up with the standard of their Chinese counterparts.

ii.iii. With few NCS in a school, NCS may be left feeling isolated and lonely.

(C) In order to address the problems that may occur as mentioned above, we will make the following recommendations to the EMB.

i. Allocation of Primary 1 places

Unison agrees in principle with the dispensing of the existing AAT Group 3 arrangement, which combines ethnic minority students with Chinese speaking students in the allocation process of Primary 1 places, subject to but not limited to the following condition:

- i.i. Around 1 to 3 such schools in each district, the exact number of schools to be based on the population density of ethnic minority students in a given area. We believe that this would:
 - a. Avoid the number of ethnic minority students being diluted too thinly in schools, leaving those students feeling isolated, or too concentrated in one area or in one or a few schools, which would impede the goal of integration
 - b. Enable these schools to develop the necessary skills and receive adequate support from the EMB.
 - c. Assist in adopting “One School – Two Systems” if there is adequate/significant number of NCS in a school. In this case, the school can have English and Chinese medium teaching sections.

ii. Ethnic minority students in Chinese Medium Instruction Primary and Secondary schools

We ask the EMB to provide support to, but not limited to, the following ways:

- ii.i. To provide teacher with trainings like cultural sensitivity, micro- teaching skills for ethnic minority students and any other necessary skills to facilitate them to teach ethnic minority students.

At present, there is not any systematic and standardized Chinese curriculum provided by those traditional NCS schools, therefore the minority children’s Chinese ability is very limited or nil, it directly affects their educational and vocational prospects. (For details please refer to the study report by HKU –CCPL & Unison HK)

- ii.ii. To set up a teachers support network for sharing and support (regional wide) that teachers must attend on a regular basis and may form as part of their professional development.
- ii.iii. To make concrete effort to dissolve the worries of the school personnel under the new arrangement and honor the effort paid by the pioneers.

- ii.iv. To appoint an official at Bureau level to be responsible for ethnic minority students' progress and the co- ordination of effecting changes and monitoring schools' progress. The monitoring of ethnic minority students should not be limited to ethnic minority students in Chinese Medium Instruction schools, but also those in schools which have traditionally accepted ethnic minority students. We ask for at least the same changes that were made for disabled students (Integration education for disability students) when educational policy was changed to enhance those students' education.

- ii.v. To offer resources to schools so that they may employ additional staff to assist ethnic minority students in any school where ethnic minority students are accepted. The number of additional staff should be made proportional to the number of ethnic minority students in a particular school. According to some CMI schools experiences, teacher assistant with ethnic minority backgrounds can be very helpful with emotional and psychological support, as well as communication with EMS and their parents.

- ii.vi. To ensure that funding is allocated specifically for ethnic minority students in schools that accept those students and that the funding may not be used for other purposes. That is to say that any funding offered to ethnic minority students' education may only be spent on these students' education and these school have the obligation to provide details of how the money has been spent in its annual audit.

3. Transition from a Chinese Medium Instruction Primary 6 to Chinese Medium Instruction Secondary 1

Unison asks the EMB to seriously consider the following changes to support the changes that may be made to the allocation of Secondary 1 places:

- iii.i. Based on the principle of having around 1-3 schools for primary school, there should be the same number of secondary schools available in each district based on the population density of

ethnic minority students. This will allow a “through- train” educational path for ethnic minority students and that ethnic minority students moving from primary and secondary schools may have a better coordinated change.

iii.i. To allow for a period of around 3 years as a transition period for ethnic minority students. This is to say that should an ethnic minority student studying that a Chinese Medium Instruction school is too difficult to adjust to, they may return to schools which accepted ethnic minority students.

4. Chinese Curriculum

Unison asks the EMB to set up a policy governing Chinese curriculum for ethnic minority students. Unison asks for the establishment of a Chinese curriculum policy, which are listed, but not to be limited in the following points:

iv.i. To develop a Chinese curriculum with a minimum standard attainment of Chinese as a second language per level??? in Primary 1 to 6.

iv.ii. For ethnic minority students in secondary 1 to 5, a new syllabus for Chinese as a second language should be established, which will prepare them for an internationally recognized examination (for example: GCSE (UK examination)). The qualification should be accepted by but not limited to further studies institutions, applications for civil servant positions, vocational training institutions.

iv.iii. The Chinese curriculum should be a systematic one that will allow teachers and students to continue smoothly from primary to secondary schools regardless of whether the ethnic minority students attend a Chinese or English Medium Instruction School. ???

5. “Small classes” teaching

Unison supports the notion of small classes teaching especially for ethnic minority students. Ethnic minority students are highly diverse which include but are not limited to the following differing factors:

- ethnic origin;
- language;

- cultural background;
- age;
- religion;
- education background / mentality towards education;
- academic ability;
- length of stay in Hong Kong;
- ability to integrate into Hong Kong;
- ability to integrate into their own ethnic group;
- socio- economic status etc

6. Further consultation and studies

Unison strongly encourages the EMB to continue and to further consult with parents, students, teachers and other concerned parties about the development of ethnic minority students' education. Ongoing studies should be carried out to monitor the progress of any changes which effect these students' education.

7. The 4A principle

Available, Accessible, Adaptable, Acceptable. This is a 4A principle that we believe should be followed by the EMB in its change of education policy.

School places for all students should be available and accessible. This is to say that ethnic minority students must have equal opportunities when being taken into consideration for school places allocation. Adaptable means that cultural sensitivity should be actively promoted to allow for cultural exchange and understanding as well as mutual appreciation for different cultural characteristics. This may include issues of dress code and teacher training to support this change. Extra resources should be available to help ethnic minority students during a transitional period to adjust to new environments.

Acceptable means that the EMB should introduce special measures and extra support to ensure that the result of academic performance of the NCS is acceptable. Such as a result of public examinations, performance of school terms, minimum standard of all academic subjects that an average student should be able to achieve.

8. Public Education

Integration education policy for ethnic minorities should be promoted widely to win public supports, especially from the Chinese parents sector. With contribution and support from all sectors, we believe the ethnic minorities in Hong Kong will have a better prospect in the future.