A Study on the Challenges Faced by Mainstream Schools in Educating Ethnic Minorities in Hong Kong (2018-2019)

January 2020

The research team interviewed altogether 9 principals and 24 teachers from 9 primary schools during Oct-Nov 2018. Based on the interview results, the team designed two questionnaires for teachers and principals, and conducted a survey in Hong Kong during Feb-June 2019.

121 Principals completed the survey. Principals, who participated in the survey, covered 41.4% of schools with NCS students.

1230 teachers participated in the survey. Teachers, who participated in the survey, are coming from 135 primary schools, which covered 46.2% of schools with non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students.

612 Chinese language subject teachers are working in schools with NCS students. 11 teachers did not indicate the subject they taught.

607 Non-Chinese language subject teachers are working in schools with NCS students.

37.8% of Chinese language subject teachers are confident in teaching NCS students to achieve the learning level of Chinese speaking students.

54.1% of Non-Chinese language subject teachers are confident in teaching NCS students to achieve the learning level of Chinese speaking students.

95% of Principals expressed that teaching assistants are generally lack of teaching experience, while NCS students need experienced teachers to carry out pull-out support.

93% of Principals found difficulties in employing teachers with skills of teaching Chinese as a second language.

95% of Principals expressed that NCS students, who had never been educated in local kindergartens, have experienced most difficulties in adapting to the mainstream curriculum.

98% of Principals expressed that the Education Bureau (EDB) should allow greater flexibility in using the subsidy to support NCS parent-school communication and organise cultural integration activities.
Difficulties faced by teachers

- 61% 86% have greater difficulty in “ensuring NCS students to be able to keep up with the schedule of the mainstream curriculum”
- 61% have greater difficulty in making NCS students achieve the learning goals of the mainstream curriculum
- 94% 91% The EDB provides no special support measures or guidelines for communication with NCS parents
- 62% 74% have difficulties in catering for the learning needs of both Chinese and non-Chinese speaking students at the same time

Chinese language subject teachers’ difficulties

- 96% Chinese language subject teachers expressed that the mainstream Chinese language curriculum is too difficult for NCS students
- 96% Chinese language subject teachers expressed that there is a lack of teaching Chinese as a second language teaching resources that match the mainstream curriculum
- 91% Chinese language subject teachers believed that despite the use of the integration and pull-out learning as dual-track measures, it is still difficult for NCS students to reach similar Chinese language level as the Chinese speaking students before the internal examinations for Secondary School Places Allocation purpose.
Home-School partnership

Social Integration
(Promoting Peer Support)

Pre-conditions for effective learning support to non-Chinese speaking students

Learning and Teaching
(collaborative teaching, professional teacher training, complete set of teaching materials)

Bridging program for smooth transition from kindergarten to Primary One
Suggestions to the Education Bureau

- Ensure the received subsidy to be used by schools to support NCS students' learning (96% teachers, 90% principals)
- Add a coordinator position (NCSCO) to coordinate the learning support work and promote cultural inclusion (94% teachers, 88% principals)
- Implement special measures on school-NCS parent communication and cultural integration (97% teachers, 98% principals)
- Provide teaching materials matching with the “Second Language Learning Framework” (97% teachers, 98% principals)
- Improve the flexibility of using the funding (96% teachers, 93% principals)
- Add a Non-Chinese speaking students support teacher (NCSST) position to support group teaching and cultural integration (98% teachers, 98% principals)
- Give professional recognition to teachers of NCS students (75% teachers, 87% principals)
- Require a certain number of teachers to receive relevant training (96% teachers, 93% principals)
- Provide support to the teaching and learning of non-Chinese language subjects (94% teachers, 98% principals)
- Set up professional development requirements for teachers who teach NCS students (95% teachers, 92% principals)
- Promote more sustainable and closer collaboration between schools and university experts (95% teachers, 92% principals)