



Ms. Bernadette Linn
Deputy Secretary
Education Bureau
15/F, Wu Chung House,
213 Queen's Road East,
Wan Chai, Hong Kong.

30 October, 2007

Dear Ms. Bernadette Linn,

Thank you for communicating with Hong Kong Unison regarding the recently released document: “Flexibility in the Application of Chinese Language Requirement for the Admission of Non-Chinese Speaking Students into UGC funded Institutions” (LC Paper No. CB(2)2573/06-07(01)). Hong Kong Unison momentarily welcomes the Education Bureau’s move to allow non-Chinese speaking students to gain admission to University through the JUPAS scheme. We believe that this is a positive step in the right direction in providing more opportunities to Ethnic Minority communities to break the poverty cycle.

While Hong Kong Unison appreciates the developments outlined in the aforementioned paper, I would like to bring to your attention several points that need urgent clarification:

1. While the discussion of flexibility is welcomed in the admissions process for Ethnic Minority students (or Non-Chinese speaking students), the options presented in point 3, have the potential of creating a system that disadvantages the very students it hopes to benefit. **Under what circumstances will each of the criteria listed under point 3 be applied? How will the Education Department ensure that secondary schools are well-informed and have confidence in the proposed University admissions system to adjust their own admissions standards when assessing Ethnic Minority applicants?**





2. On point 3(b), supposing there are two candidates, one is Chinese-speaking and the other falls into the classification of Non-Chinese speaking. In this case, **will the Non-Chinese speaking student have to demonstrate achievements in other academic subjects over and above the Chinese speaking student in order to gain admission?**

3. As you are probably aware, some Ethnic Minority families are highly mobile, frequently going back and forth between Hong Kong and their country of origin despite being permanent residents of Hong Kong. The frequent move disrupts their children's educational progress, including their Chinese language learning. Regarding the first definition of Non-Chinese speaking student for the purposes of University admissions detailed in point 6(a), it states that students will be considered if he/she "has learned Chinese Language for less than six years while receiving primary and secondary education." **Whether the definition of "less than six years" is a continuous tally of six years or a sum of the total of years?**

4. We are delighted that the Education Bureau shares in Hong Kong Unison's belief in the importance for Hong Kong's Ethnic Minorities to learn the Chinese language, however we are unclear as to the type of curriculum recommended for Ethnic Minorities in this respect. As we interpret from point 8, it is up to individual schools to prove that their Ethnic Minority students can qualify for an "adapted and simpler curriculum."
 - i. **Firstly, what is the Education Bureau's definition of an "adapted and simpler curriculum"? What examples of an "adapted and simpler curriculum" can the Education Bureau provide as guidelines to schools?**

 - ii. **Under what more concrete criteria will schools and Ethnic Minority/ Non-Chinese Speaking students be judged to be able to follow an "adapted and simpler curriculum"?**

5. Many primary and secondary school teachers from CMI schools and Designated Schools have expressed that they lack the expertise in teaching Chinese as a Second Language. Moreover, they feel that the lack of proper training and the lack of resources have shifted the burden onto teachers to develop curriculum materials on their own to meet the standards of the mainstream or adapted curriculum. **What types of support (i.e. teacher's trainings, teaching materials) will the Education**



Bureau provide to teachers to ensure that students are well prepared to pass basic examination standards?

6. The current paper makes no mention of the different schooling options currently available to Ethnic Minority students, which in reality complicates the schooling difficulties faced by Ethnic Minority students in furthering their education. As you are well aware, since 2004, Ethnic Minorities have been able to enter CMI schools. Although they are provided with the same opportunities as Chinese students, nevertheless the language and cultural difference in their family background means that they are at a disadvantaged starting point.
- i. **With regards to point 6b) and point 8, will Non-Designated schools (i.e. CMI schools) with Ethnic Minority students be allowed to follow an “adapted and simpler curriculum”? And, how will these schools prove that they are following such a curriculum?**
 - ii. **For CMI schools who are unable to follow an “adapted and simpler curriculum”, what concrete supportive measures, for example: more funding for schools to hire Ethnic Minority Teaching Assistants, more teacher’s trainings on teaching Chinese to Second Language Learners, will be appropriated to schools?**
7. On the suggested way forward, we highly encourage the Education Bureau to actively continue its preliminary work with UGC institutions to specify the alternative Chinese language qualifications and the minimum acceptable grading for each institution as well as individual University departments. **Hong Kong Unison would like to request the Education Bureau to outline a detailed timeline for implementation and that the Education Bureau will make the suggestions in the present paper into policy.**
8. Furthermore, we are concerned and would like to seek clarification:
- i. **As to whether GCSE Chinese is an acceptable alternative Chinese language qualification for entry into Hong Kong’s higher institutions?**

- ii. **More specifically, can the Education Bureau confirm the weighting placed on GCSE Chinese in entry requirements**



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for Secondary 6 and University? We urge University departments to place the same weighting on GCSE as HKCEE (i.e. 2 points at HKCEE carries the same weight as GCSE grade E) for consideration for further advancement to Secondary 6 and University admissions.

- iii. Finally, as an important logistical consideration, if indeed GCSE is an accepted qualification, the results are published later than HKCEE results thereby putting Non-Chinese speaking students at a disadvantage in finding an A-level place. **How will the Education Bureau streamline the release of GCSE Chinese results with the release of HKCEE results?**

Hong Kong Unison looks forward to continuing its cooperation with the Education Bureau in improving the state of Ethnic Minority communities. I would **appreciate a swift reply** to clarify the above queries.

Thank you for your kind attention!

Yours Sincerely,

Fermi Wong
Executive Director

cc.

Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor, Director, Mr. Law Yuk Kai
Legislative Council, members of Bills Committee (RDB) and Panel on Education

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