



Submission to the Panel on Education

Meeting on Monday, 8 January 2007

in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

5 January 2007

Dear Honorable Panel Members,

The Unison¹ would like to seek some clarifications during your discussions on the agenda item on 'Formulation of an alternative Chinese Language curriculum for non-Chinese speaking students'

1. How do existing supportive measures help implement Chinese curriculum for NCS students?

According to the paper provided by the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) (LC Paper No. CB (2)757/06-07(20) issued on 2 January 2007), the EMB is sending supporting staff to help develop school-based Chinese curriculum for schools that had admitted NCS students. We would like to seek clarifications on the following:

- i. How many supportive staff do they have for these schools?
- ii. What kind of background training do they have?
- iii. How does the supporting team function?
- iv. How long will the supporting team last for ?

We strongly believe that if NCS students cannot learn Chinese properly, it has nothing to do with their learning capacity, the problem is rather a matter of programme design and the lack of genuine supportive measures. This is something beyond the question of learning discrepancy between Non Chinese Speaking (NCS) and Chinese Speaking (CS) students.

As a matter of fact, this illustrates why Chinese is taught as second language in other countries and regions, China and Taiwan , for instances. If EMB insists to teach the NCS students with the

¹ The Hong Kong Unison Limited is a local based non-profit, non-governmental organization. Over the past five years, we have been actively involved in advocating the rights of the ethnic minority residents of Hong Kong and in particular, those of the south Asian descent. More importantly, we have also strived hard to bring to public attention the adverse social factors at the root of many of their problems, and in campaigning to alleviate them. We have been working on a variety of issues which, among other, include educational development of the ethnic minority children and on drug and gang violence related issues of the young people.



Hong Kong Unison Limited

香港融樂會有限公司

Address: Flat B, 16/F, Skyline Tower, 18 Tong Mi Road, Mongkok, Kowloon.

Tel.: 2789 3246

Fax: 2789 1767

Web-site: www.unison.org.hk

Email: director@unison.org.hk

curriculum originally designed for native Chinese speaking students, and defined the difficulties thereby arising as learning discrepancies between NCS and CS students, the problems will be never solved, This in effect is an indirect discrimination. We would like to point out that it is not uncommon for foreigners to learn Chinese, but they do so with a set of methods different from what we native Chinese speakers use. We hope EMB will take note of and work on the root of the problem instead of going round it. To this end, we urge that EMB will

- i. establish the policy of learning Chinese as a second language;
- ii. set up a task force and assume the leading role to research on a Chinese curriculum (from primary one to secondary five) that is suitable for NCS students;
- iii. provide sufficient resources to train teachers and support the implementation of such a curriculum;
- iv. to normalize the curriculum;
- v. provide sufficient number of classes (some NCS secondary schools only provide 4 lessons Chinese language per week), not fewer than what CS students are having for their Chinese language classes;
- vi. establish indicators for effective learning for each level of study
- vii. clearly define direction of examinations and qualifications for recognition
- viii. Set up a concrete time table for implementation
- ix. support the publishers to produce relevant textbooks and teaching materials.

Given the large amount of work involved for the development of a comprehensive curriculum, which will include the design and the writing up of syllabus outlines, editing and pilot testing of curriculum etc; any piece-meal and short-lived measures are unlikely. They are largely insufficient to overcome the problems of the NCS students.

2. . Concerns on proposal to sit in the GCSE Examination:

Regarding EMB's suggestion for NCS students to sit in GCSE examinations in 2007, we have the following concerns.

First, GCSE is an exam specially designed for students who have English as their mother tongue. For the NCS students who are predominantly South Asians, such an arrangement will probably turn into a double burden for them.

Secondly, the level of Chinese tested in the GCSE examinations is relatively basic. We wonder if EMB has ever considered if its curriculum can help equip NCS students with sufficient Chinese language skills to live and work in Hong Kong.

Furthermore, the results of GCSE are released two weeks after the ones from the HKCEE, which



means that the NCS student will not be able to apply to F.6 at the same time with the Chinese speaking students.

We would like to know if EMB has worked out any solutions for this problem. As most employers in Hong Kong are either unfamiliar with or have not recognized the qualifications gained from the GCSE (Chinese curriculum), we would like to know how the EMB will help these employers to understand the difference between GCSE and the HKCEE. Will the Civil Service Bureau recognized the qualification of GCSE (Chinese) as equivalent to the HKCEE (Chinese Subject) one during their recruitments?

At the moment, universities have made no indications regarding minimum requirements for admission for the CGSE (Chinese) students. How should the GCSE students set their target of examinations? How to guarantee the universities would exercise their so-called 'flexibility'?

3. How to guarantee the quality of teachers training?

To teach Chinese as a second language requires professional training. Will any experts in this area be invited to partake in the teacher-training programs? If not, how can we be assured not to come up with the same problems we now encounter for the school-based Chinese curriculum, e.g. to have discrepancies between syllabus, inconsistency and lack of standardized methods of teaching, lack of general recognition and designed programmes sometimes being beyond students' abilities.

We look forward to your reply to our concerns and questions. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Fermi Wong
Executive Director
Hong Kong Unison Limited

Encl.: 1. Letter to the Chief Executive
2. Press cuttings



Hong Kong Unison Limited
香港融樂會有限公司

Address: Flat B, 16/F, Skyline Tower, 18 Tong Mi Road, Mongkok, Kowloon.

Tel.: 2789 3246 Fax: 2789 1767 Web-site: www.unison.org.hk Email: director@unison.org.hk

21st September 2006

The Office of the Chief Executive

The Chief Executive,

Mr. Donald, Tsang Yam Kuen, JP

Dear Mr. Tsang,

We, the Hong Kong Unison Limited¹ and the undersigned, are writing to urge for your attention to the plights and the unfair situation ethnic minority children in Hong Kong are made to face under the current educational set up. We wish to highlight in particular the problems they have encountered in learning Chinese language – problems which by their consequences have deprived these young people, permanent residents of Hong Kong, from enjoying equal rights and opportunities in their future development. It is also by consequences of these problems that we are debarred from becoming a society with true harmony, one that embraces the core values of justice and equal opportunities, which you, as the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, have reiterated in different occasions.

Mr. Chief Executive, we recall you once told your audience in a public occasion a fable in which a family of mice, being threatened by a cat, was saved solely by the mother's imitation of a dog's bark, upon which she instructed her children about the invaluable skill of a foreign language.

Mr. Chief Executive, it is apparent that you are attuned to the potential benefits and real necessity of pursuing foreign languages. Yet, at the present moment in Hong Kong there exists a crisis directly stemming from this field, one that prevents a certain section of our society from truly being able to prosper and achieve their best; a recurring menace born out of society and government's collective apathy, helping to render many of your ethnic minority citizens incapable of advancing beyond a narrow and limited future. Mr. Chief Executive, it is our aim to bring to your attention their plight, so that you may recognize its danger and act to promote a solution.

¹ The Hong Kong Unison Limited is a local based non-profit, non-governmental organization. Over the past five years, we have been actively involved in advocating the rights of the ethnic minority residents of Hong Kong and in particular, those of the south Asian descent. More importantly, we have also strived hard to bring to public attention the adverse social factors at the root of many of their problems, and in campaigning to alleviate them. We have been working on a variety of issues which, among other, include educational development of the ethnic minority children and on drug and gang violence related issues of the young people.



Ethnic minority youth have never been able to learn Chinese effectively

It is estimated that there are 8,000 ethnic minority students in government/government-aided schools, outnumbering even special needs children, yet the former have received much less attention than the latter.

Hong Kong society has always had a misconception about the Chinese language competency of ethnic minorities. It is often believed that due to their fluency in spoken Cantonese, most ethnic minority individuals are similarly fluent in writing and reading the Chinese language.

This conclusion however, is highly erroneous. Presently, Chinese primary students generally have a Chinese vocabulary of about 3,000 words, compared to less than a hundred words on the part of non-Chinese students. What is the root of this discrepancy one may ask? We believe it is due to an inefficient learning apparatus in the majority of the schools, that foreign students are not facilitated to grasp the essentials of the Chinese language, such as structure of Chinese characters, grammar, pronunciation or sentence structure. In fact, there is no comprehensive learning programme in place to provide suitable instruction to a foreign student with no knowledge of these core facets. Requiring these ethnic minority students to study the same Chinese Language syllabus as ethnic Chinese students is simply unrealistic and will effectively drive them to give up in despair. Exacerbating this problem is the lack of immediate family support, as parents often lack the knowledge themselves. Illiteracy in Chinese thus becomes a cross-generational problem.

Knowledge of Chinese has become the biggest hurdle in further education and career development

Every year, about 500 non-Chinese students take the Hong Kong O-level Certificate of Education Examination. Were the results of these students to be compiled, they would most likely to be highly alarming (the Examinations Authority has refused to release such results on the ground that examination results are not differentiated along ethnic lines).

To require non-Chinese students to sit the same examinations in Chinese Language as their ethnic Chinese counterparts is most unfair. Although these students are offered French, Urdu and Hindi in order to fulfill the requirement of a second language, without a recognized qualification in the Chinese language which is an official languages, they face grave difficulties in further education and in career development.



Annually, fewer than 20 non-Chinese students are admitted to Form Six among the 500 HKCEE students who study in Government/Government Aided/Government Direct Subsidized schools and fewer than five to tertiary education, truly disheartening figures when seen as a proportion of the total number.

The majority of the ethnic minority students cannot consider vocational training either for their competency in Chinese language is often lower than that required by the VTC/IVE or Project Yi Jin. This leaves them no choice but to opt for positions in the low-skill labor market. Yet, even in these positions, they can be readily turned away when prospective employers discover that they have difficulty filling in application forms. Ethnic minority youth thus are forced back onto a path well-trodden by their predecessors: low-income and low-skill jobs, often in discriminatory work conditions. No matter how hard they endeavor, they are by default, relegated to poverty.

New educational measure for ethnic minority students too hasty

Against this background, the Education and Manpower Bureau opened up primary school places in mainstream schools for them to admit non-Chinese speaking students in 2004. However, the result of this hasty measure with neither sufficient planning nor a vision for long term development has been far from satisfactory. Many ethnic minority children have been left to find themselves bewildered by a Chinese language curriculum far beyond their capability and level. Neither do they have a natural environment at home to help them with their study nor are their teachers well equipped to handle students without any foundation. All that such a measure has done at most is to have alerted many teachers, school principals and legislators about the desperate situation of the ethnic minority students in Hong Kong.

The failure of the Education and Manpower Bureau initiative

The Bureau is publicly funded, yet it has refused our repeated call to assume a coordinator's role in developing a more well-rounded policy for our ethnic minority students. Instead, it has left it for individual schools, many of which have no experience at all in handling ethnic minority students, to develop their so-called "school-based curriculums" to cater the needs of these students. Needless to say, the resulting curriculums vary greatly in substance, quality and level of difficulty among schools. This decentralized curriculum development for the ethnic minority students without the basic framework and guidelines is highly problematic, especially when the schools do not have the ability to consult different parties and do not have enough resources and manpower to do scientific surveys and experiments before the new curriculum is being adopted. This inappropriate decentralized approach can be regarded as only an excuse for



the Bureau to shift the responsibility. In the end, it is the ethnic minority students who have to bear the grunt.

Faced with students with different and distinct needs, and with no overall guiding approach many teachers are helpless too. The Bureau has tried to showcase a few successful cases to camouflage the overall failure of its measures and their ineffective outcomes for most schools and students.

A problem in education becoming a social problem

It is worthwhile taking a moment to consider just how much talent and potential amongst ethnic minority students has gone to waste as inappropriate educational policies go? The long slighted educational needs of theirs have led to the continued impoverishment of these young people and other issues linked with their lack of prospect and their dislocation as youth. Some youth among these minorities have taken to drugs and crime as an outlet, tarnishing their records and making their future even gloomier. Must the problem get out of hand before it is properly addressed? It is time for us to act on the case.

Education is a long-term endeavor, the later it is started, and the more non-Chinese speaking students will be sacrificed. Our inaction on this issue must come to an end.

In China, there is the “Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi” (中國漢語水平考試, HSK) used specifically for non-Chinese speaking people; in Taiwan, similarly, there is the Chinese Proficiency Test (華語文能力測驗, CPT) to test the Chinese competency of foreigners. It only seems archaic that Hong Kong should lag behind in this fashion.

A mission in co-invention and integration

Mr. Chief Executive, you have set yourself the mission of creating a harmonious society. You advocated constructing a stable and harmonious environment, resolving conflicts and minimizing disagreements, and defending the public interest. You also emphasized creating sufficient space for individual development and choice, and ensuring equal opportunity, especially equality in education. We firmly believe that once you understand the essence of the problem now bedeviling the ethnic minority students, a path will be opened up for this group of students under your able leadership.



Hong Kong Unison Limited

香港融樂會有限公司

Address: Flat B, 16/F, Skyline Tower, 18 Tong Mi Road, Mongkok, Kowloon.

Tel.: 2789 3246 Fax: 2789 1767 Web-site: www.unison.org.hk Email: director@unison.org.hk

Our requests:

We sincerely ask you to instruct the Education and Manpower Bureau to:

1. develop a set of systematic curriculum guidelines on Chinese language (from Kindergarten One to Secondary Five/Seven) with complementary infrastructural support for non-Chinese speaking students;
2. assume an active role in coordinating related activities;
3. establish an institutional framework for assessing and recognizing the qualifications of non-Chinese speaking students in Chinese as a foreign/second language;
4. encourage and subsidize publishers to compile the relevant curriculum.

We hope, Mr. Chief Executive, that you will recognize the suffering and difficulties faced by the ethnic minority students and their families, and that you will help to make Hong Kong their true home for the generations to come. We plead that you will meet and discuss with us soon for more intimate knowledge on the issues we have raised. If you need any further information, please contact me at 2789 3246.

Thank you for your kind attention and we look forward to your positive reply.

Yours Sincerely,

Fermi Wong Wai Fun
Executive Director
Hong Kong Unison Limited

Co-signed by

(A) The Committee on the Promotion of Racial Harmony under Home Affairs Bureau

1. Ms Raees Begum Baig
2. Mr. Manohar Chugh
3. Mr. James Arthur Elms
4. Ms Aruna Gurung
5. Mr. Sem Lim Njauw
6. Ms. Devi Novianti
7. Ms Vandana Rajwani
8. Mr. Buddhi Bahadur Thapa



9. Ms Wong Wai Fun, Fermi
10. Dr. Paul Yung
11. Mr. Saeed-Uddin M. H.

(B) Non-Government Organizations and Professional bodies

1. Hong Kong Professional Teachers Union
2. Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor
3. YMCA of Hong Kong (Cheung Sha Wan Centre)
4. Friends of Hope Education Fund
5. Mission To New Arrivals Ltd
6. Hong Kong Christian Institute
7. Hong Kong Unison Limited
8. Civil Human Rights Front

(C) Ethnic Minority Organizations/concern groups and Trade Unions

1. Chinese Muslim Cultural and Fraternal Association
2. Pakistan Association of Hong Kong
3. Kowloon Mosque and Islamic Centre
4. Khatme-Nubuwwat Movement Hong Kong
5. Hong Kong Muslim Women Association Ltd
6. Hong Kong Chinese Islamic Federation
7. Hong Kong Islamic Youth Association
8. Filipino Migrant Workers Union
9. Cordillera Alliance in Hong Kong
10. Abra Tinguian Ilocano Society
11. United Pangasinan Hong Kong
12. MIGRANTE Sectoral Party - Hong Kong Chapter
13. Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants
14. United Filipinos in Hong Kong (Unifil-Migrante-HK)
15. Bethune House Migrant Women's Refuge
16. Asian Migrant's Coordinating Body
17. International Human Rights Forum
18. Human Welfares Association
19. Pakistan Traders Association
20. Cultural Integration Society
21. Hong Kong Integrated Nepalese Society



Hong Kong Unison Limited
香港融樂會有限公司

Address: Flat B, 16/F, Skyline Tower, 18 Tong Mi Road, Mongkok, Kowloon.

Tel.: 2789 3246 Fax: 2789 1767 Web-site: www.unison.org.hk Email: director@unison.org.hk

22. Nepal Chambers and Commerce HK
23. Hong Kong Nepalese Federation
24. Indian Muslim Association
25. International Human Rights Channel
26. Dharan Hong Kong Forum
27. HK Kirat Rai Association
28. Hong Kong Nepalese Women Association
29. Hong Kong Samparka Samiti
30. The Ethnic Nepalese Federation of HK
31. Nepali Kala Mandir
32. Far East Overseas Nepalese Association
33. Secretary, British Gurkha Ex-Serviceman Association HK

Encl.



文章總數: 1 篇

EDU
EDU6

南華早報

2006-07-01

Language a prison, words a sentence

Minorities are marginalised because they lack Chinese skills. Will Clem reports they are offered French instead

THEY SAY THEY ARE Hong Kong's silent minority, swept to the periphery of an education system already notorious for excluding outsiders.

Non-Chinese-speaking students - the children of Hong Kong's growing ethnic minorities communities - are standing up and demanding an education that places them on an equal footing when they enter the jobs market. And the skill they are asking for is language: the Chinese language.

"We struggle with three languages, our own and then English and Chinese," said Joanne So, 20, one of a delegation of young people from ethnic minorities who met with education officials last week to present their case. "Chinese is essential if you want to do anything in Hong Kong."

According to equal rights group Hong Kong Unison, more than 95 per cent of ethnic minority Form Five leavers were not given the secondary school opportunity to study Chinese language, which is a pre-requisite for most post-secondary and vocational courses.

A pass in the Chinese language paper of the civil service Common Recruitment Exam is also required for a long list of government positions, including forestry officer, pest control officer and librarian.

But up to now, the vast majority of non-Chinese-speaking students have been taught French instead of Chinese. Advice on the Education and Manpower Bureau's website still directs parents of non-Chinese-speaking students to a list of schools that offer French as an alternative to Chinese.

"Why is French given to us? We have no opportunity to use French in Hong Kong," said Azir Khan, 22, another member of the delegation. "We need to be taught Chinese."

At a meeting of the Legislative Council's panel on education in January, education officials reluctantly accepted requests from legislators and community representatives to investigate a separate curriculum in Chinese as a second language to offer non-Chinese-speaking students an officially recognised qualification.

But concern groups say the bureau is dragging its feet and suspect the EMB has no intention of ever developing the curriculum.

A second curriculum is unnecessary, officials argue, as students living in Hong Kong and studying alongside local Chinese classmates should be able to follow the standard curriculum.

"Today's [Chinese language] curriculum is very broad, catering for students with a range of abilities," said Cheng Man-leung, the EMB's senior curriculum development officer for Chinese language education. "We are currently writing the new senior secondary curriculum, which will have even more scope for catering for diversity."

At a seminar on the subject jointly held by Hong Kong Unison, Oxfam and the Professional Teachers' Union last Saturday, Mr Cheng said the bureau was concerned an alternative curriculum for second-language learners could foster prejudice.

"We have to be very careful with terms like 'another curriculum' for 'other people'," he said. "We could start out trying to help these students but end up harming them."

The bureau also did not subscribe to the view that a single syllabus would meet the needs of all non-Chinese-speaking students.

"We don't believe one curriculum could be produced to suit all non-Chinese speakers," he said. "What might be right for Pakistani students might not be right for Southeast Asians."

He said these different needs were best met through a school-based approach.

But educators, academics and legislators disagree.

Yeung Sum, chairman of Legco's education panel, said developing a second-language learners' curriculum would be "the most logical" solution.

"This is what everybody expects," Dr Yeung said. "We hope they can set up a Chinese curriculum for non-Chinese speakers as quickly as possible. It is impossible to expect that they would be able to take the same curriculum as Chinese students."

The Frontier legislator and a member of the panel, Emily Lau Wai-hing said the current system put these students at a distinct disadvantage. "Hong Kong society is actually very prejudiced. We are prejudiced against other Chinese people, against Guangdong people, against Shanghai people and even more so against non-locals," she said.

"I don't care if it is one curriculum or two curricula. But it needs to work. If you could really get the results from a single curriculum, we wouldn't need to be here discussing this right now."

For the past two years, however, a number of schools with greater numbers of non-Chinese-speaking students have been developing their own curricula for teaching Chinese as a second language, with funding from the EMB.

At Delia Memorial School (Broadway) in Mei Foo, one in five students is of Pakistani descent, Nepalese children make up 18 per cent of the student body, Indians 13 per cent and Filipinos 12 per cent.

Principal Chan Kui-pui said the students scored far below the Hong Kong average in Chinese ability in pre-secondary aptitude tests when they entered the school. "On the bell curve, they are at the very far

left. They are virtually invisible," he said. This level of Chinese ability put non-Chinese-speaking students under the standard expected even of Band Three students. "If there were 10 bands, our students would be Band 10. If there were 100 bands, they would still be Band 100.

"You need to match the teaching to the students' abilities. You can give a 1,000-word lecture and no matter how eloquent you are, if the students don't understand a word it is a waste of time.

"We take a whole-language approach, rather than separating it into grammar and so forth. The emphasis is on communication."

The school recently conducted a study of students' attitudes to learning the language. "More than half said they now enjoyed learning Chinese. That is the most important thing because if they don't enjoy it they won't learn, no matter how hard you try to teach it."

But while students were more confident using the language generally, very few showed interest in taking public exams in Chinese, highlighting the need for an alternative qualification.

He called on the EMB to give more direct support in developing Chinese language teaching for non-Chinese speakers.

"Designing a curriculum doesn't just take money," he said. "It requires support from a whole range of academics. This is a very difficult job for teachers to do."

Leung Yuet-sheung, secretary of the Professional Teachers' Union's executive committee, said it was unfair to expect teachers to develop a language curriculum "off their own back".

"This has to be researched properly, otherwise we won't know where to start," she said. "This is not the job of teachers."

She said it was imperative for the EMB to set out a core curriculum for Chinese as a second language that would introduce standardisation across the system.

"If every primary school does it differently, there will be a problem when the students get to secondary school - they will all be at different levels," she said.

Yusuf Yu Chi-wan, principal of Islamic Kasim Tuet Memorial College in Chai Wan, said the school had experienced success with tailoring language teaching to the needs of non-native speakers but had yet to find an appropriate Chinese qualification for non-Chinese speakers to take that was both widely recognised and which fitted their needs.

The mainland's HSK (Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi) certification was the closest, but tested students in spoken Putonghua not the Cantonese spoken by students at the school. The same went for the British GCSE in Mandarin Chinese as a second language.

EMB officials opposed a standard qualification for Cantonese because there was not a "critical mass" who would sit the exam, Mr Yu claimed.

A qualification would also be useful for older members of the ethnic minorities community who had already left school, he added.

文章編號: 200607010270121

本文章版權屬於 南華早報 所有，現由慧科訊業有限公司發放，如需轉發，必須獲該報同意。版權所有，翻印必究。

----- 1 -----

慧科訊業有限公司 查詢請電: (852) 2948 3888 電郵速遞: sales@wisers.com 網址: <http://www.wisers.com>
慧科訊業有限公司 (2007)。版權所有，翻印必究。

I am like a blind person . . . I miss out on so many things in my workplace

For Sithi Hawwa, a mother of two and teacher at Delia Memorial School (Broadway) in Mei Foo, moving to Hong Kong from South India 13 years ago was almost like developing a disability.

"Hong Kong is no fun if you speak no Cantonese," Ms Hawwa said. "I am like a blind person. I need someone to take me around everywhere and tell me what is being said. I miss out on so many things in my workplace - meetings, events and decisions - simply because I don't understand Cantonese."

When the eldest of her two sons - Thasbeeh, now 13 - was old enough to enter primary school, Ms Hawwa was initially determined he would not end up with her linguistic "blindness". She wanted him to learn Chinese.

But as he had no prior knowledge of spoken or written Chinese, Ms Hawwa found he was not eligible for "98 per cent of the primary schools in Hong Kong".

"They asked me: 'How can your son compete with local Chinese students?'"

She relented, and sent him to a school where he was taught French, and no Chinese. "French in a Chinese city - does that sound logical to you?" she said. "Learning French in Hong Kong is not going to help him in any way." Ms Hawwa said he was placed at another disadvantage when he came to selecting a secondary school.

"Because his second language was French, he couldn't apply to any of the English medium schools that teach Chinese," she said. "He had fewer choices than his Chinese classmates who did less well than him in class."

Ms Hawwa's younger son, Ahnaaf, is now about to enter primary school.

"Do I want him to learn Chinese or not? If he learns Chinese, how will it affect him? Is his Chinese learning going to be able to continue later, when he enters secondary school?"

"Learning here is not for pleasure, it's for pressure - you either sink or swim. So much for Asia's World City."

I AM LIKE A BLIND PERSON . . . I MISS OUT ON SO MANY THINGS IN MY WORKPLACE

For Sishi Hawwa, a mother of two and teacher at Delta Memorial School (Bridgeway) in Mei Foo, moving to Hong Kong from South India 13 years ago was almost like developing a disability.

"Hong Kong is so fun if you speak no Cantonese," Ms Hawwa said. "I am like a blind person. I need someone to take me around everywhere and tell me what is being said. I miss out on so many things in my workplace - meetings, events and decisions - simply because I don't understand Cantonese."

When the eldest of her two sons - Thaashob, now 13 - was old enough to enter primary school, Ms Hawwa was initially determined he would not mix up with her linguistic "blindness". She wanted him to learn Chinese.

But as he had no prior knowledge of spoken or written Chinese, Ms Hawwa found he was not eligible for "98 per cent of the primary schools in Hong Kong".

"They asked me: 'How can your son compete with local Chinese students?'"

She relented, and sent him to a school where he was taught French, and no Chinese: "French in a Chinese city - does that sound logical to you?" she said.

"Learning French in Hong Kong is not going to help him in any way," Ms Hawwa said he was placed at another disadvantage when he came to selecting a secondary school.

"Because his second language was French, he couldn't apply to any of the English medium schools that teach Chinese," she said. "He had fewer choices than his Chinese classmates who did so well than him in class."

Ms Hawwa's younger son, Ahmad, is now about to enter primary school.

"Do I want him to learn Chinese or not? If he learns Chinese, how will it affect him? Is his Chinese learning going to be able to continue later, when he enters secondary school?"

"Learning here is not for pleasure, it's for pressure - you either sink or swim. So much for Asia's World City."



LIFE ON THE EDGE: The education system makes no allowance for Sishi Hawwa, her sons Ahmad, 5, Thaashob, 13, and Mohamud Laddaf.
Photo: Steve Gray

文章編號: 200607010270122

本文章版權屬於 南華早報 所有，現由慧科訊業有限公司發放，如需轉發，必須獲該報同意。版權所有，翻印必究。

Q&A

My daughter is half-Chinese and is in Primary One in a local school. She is struggling to keep up with her Cantonese, both written and spoken. Her teacher has suggested we hire a private tutor. How can I find one?

Education reporter Jill Yung responds:

The number of private tutors in Hong Kong has expanded a lot over the past 20 years.

The army of private tutors working in Hong Kong are mainly university students seeking part-time work, and retired teachers. There are also many students from secondary schools, with those from elite schools seen as being at a premium.

Private tutors offer tutorial lessons, or oversee homework, for students in groups or individually. Fees range from \$50 to \$200 an hour.

Sessions inevitably vary according to the needs of the students. Some tutors focus on certain subjects, while some help in all subjects. Some might be experienced in the HKCEE or A-level syllabus, while others might specialise in working with much younger children. Tutors will help with school work and exams, and often give pre-lessons on topics coming up. An increasing number are giving special tutorials on specialist subjects such as languages, arts, music and computer skills, for which they may charge more.

There is a huge variety of private tutors to meet the wide range of student needs. But finding a good tutor is more difficult. There is no directory to turn to and they rarely advertise in newspapers.

However, there are various tutoring agencies that can help.

Type "private tutor and Hong Kong" on Google and a list of more than 50 agencies comes up. Most provide free services to parents with commission normally paid by the tutor.

Some agencies have websites where you can upload your requirements. Private tutors registered with them will contact you directly. Some sites post information about the tutors registered with them.

There are also a number of English education forums used by English-speakers in Hong Kong to find Putonghua or Cantonese teachers.

Another alternative is to post your own notice in a supermarket.

The fees charged depend mainly on the grades of students and the lesson content. Specialist classes for subjects such as languages normally cost more. But for a primary school child you should not expect to pay more than \$100 an hour. Negotiation with tutors is always possible.

The following links might help you:

Private tutor agencies (Chinese):

<http://tutor.square.hk/>

www.enzyme.com.hk/index.asp?PageNo=1

www.tutorprof.com/

www.kitken.com.hk/

Private tutor agencies (English):

www.100tutor.com/main/index_e.php

English online education forums:

www.geobaby.com/forum/forum21.html

www.hkexpats.com/



文章編號: 200607010270123

本文章版權屬於 南華早報 所有，現由慧科訊業有限公司發放，如需轉發，必須獲該報同意。版權所有，翻印必究。

我的夢想

《漢字的結構》作者左民安說，中文字的字形和字義有密切關係，而按前人分析漢字的結構，可歸納出6種造字法，包括象形、指事、會意、形聲、轉注、假借……

明顯地，「半途出家」學習中文僅5年的11歲巴基斯坦裔女孩Fatimah，不會懂得這些複雜抽象的道理。但在香港出生成長的她，每天下課後還是會練習用中文寫短文，然後拿給老師批改，反覆努力令她在中文測驗中拿到了33分——不及格，但已是班上少數族裔同學中的最高分數。

Fatimah說，她盼望藉學好中文融入香港社會。只是隨着班級愈高，中文課程愈深，加上現時教統局並無規定學校需增加資源協助少數族裔學生念中文，Fatimah這條路注定非常難走。

這天，她將一篇作文送給記者（下文斜體字），翻開一看，題目欄上寫着「我的()」——「我不懂得寫『夢想』這兩個字。你教我好嗎？」Fatimah說。

文：梁啓綸 圖：楊陽明

比起Fatimah，她更喜歡人家叫她的中文名：李小冰。「媽媽不懂中文，但我住在香港，想有個中文名，就在看書時挑了這個名字給自己，不過有時會寫錯字，變了季小冰……」小冰，你可知道中國人「行不改名坐不改姓」是啥意思？不過既然比她年長一歲的胞姊Maryam，所改的名字是直譯的「瑪莉安」，那麼姓李也好姓季也好，大概都無關重要。

立志學好中文打入港人圈子脫貧

小冰家有7名成員，媽媽、3個哥哥和3個姊姊。長兄次兄已找到工作遷出，三哥、四姊就在觀塘地利亞中學念中五，會考在即；小冰與瑪莉安年紀相若，在元朗惠州學校念同班小五，班上有幾個情況相似的少數族裔同學：在港出生、家人不懂中文、小學時才首次接觸中文課本，學習時非常吃力。小冰一家領綜援過活，生活清苦，她在作文中便常透露要學好中文的決心，以及對將來能學有所成覓得工作、讓母親家人脫離貧窮的盼望。

我的中文很差。雖然沒有家人教，很努力來教我們，我很多謝你們5年了，但是我的中文考試比教（很多分）。

晚上9時許，小冰的三哥、四姊放學回家，他們說，由於中文太難，已決定不報考中文科，改選法文。記者問四姊，對會考有信心嗎？畢業後打算出來找工作還是繼續念書？她支吾以對，良久才說：「我們信奉的宗教（伊斯蘭教）和傳統，不主張女性工作。」但另

一方面，她對會考信心又不大……哪怎辦？「她等着嫁人呀！」瑪莉安笑着說，隨即被四姊追打。

小冰媽媽在港生下幾名子女，但因不懂中文，一直只能申領綜援過活。好不容易兩名兒子長大了出來找工作，卻因相同問題無法找到穩定工作，到現在兩人總算在一家巴基斯坦人開設的貿易公司上班，但收入亦不高。小冰母親常說，現在只能將希望付託於瑪莉安與小冰姊妹倆身上，盼她們學好中文，打進港人圈子，找到好工，脫離貧窮宿命……「你們聽，她『串』我呀！」

小冰說：「我不到哥哥姊姊那間中學念書，那裏沒得念中文！」可是假如現在中文不及格，將來便選不到有中文科的主流中學。「我現在有努力溫習，平時出街也會記記商舖店名學中文字，例如日本城啦、惠康啦……」小冰的四字詞運用得非常不錯，作文時會用「東歪西倒」、「東張西望」；在分辨中文書面語和口語時，亦較胞兄胞姊有信心。記者來訪，平日以巴基斯坦語溝通的瑪莉安與小冰姊妹，也會遷就客人用粵語對話——「你們聽，她『串』我呀，她話自己健康，那麼肥唔健康呀！」連吵嘴鬥氣，用詞亦非常地道港式。然而，踏入五年級下學期，中文科的課文逐漸變得艱深，像小冰正在溫習的一篇，就是講述明代醫藥學家李時珍完成其著作《本草綱目》的經過。課文中不時出現如「贈醫施藥」等詞語，對中醫全無概念的小冰看得一頭霧水。

小冰母親知道，女兒到了五年級，成績就會被評核並作分配中學之用，她千叮萬囑到訪的香港融樂會總幹事王惠芬，請她為女兒挑選好學校，最重要的，就是讓她們能繼續學習中文。

政府早前把《種族歧視條例草案》刊憲，條例保障任何人不會因其種族而受歧視，涵蓋範圍包括僱傭、教育、設施和服務提供等，但民政事務局常任秘書長林鄭月娥被問及學校是否須為少數族裔學生作授課語言的特別安排時，表示「語言」並不納入條例內容中，換言之學校及教育團體毋須為非中國籍學生提供額外的中文教育。

我看見一個很黑色的人，原來她是一個乞丐，我真是很傷心，然後我聽到有一些人說：「哼！不去學校就一定會這麼啦！」

我到了惠康一看，我東張西望，我出了一點微笑，然後決定了，我會做一個收銀員。我也知道了，每一個工作都是很辛苦很努力先可以成功，每一個工作不是低或高的。

英文全班第一中文33分

小冰在6年前入讀小學一年級，因不諳中文令成績受影響，留級一年。自此以後，她便下定決心學好中文，「我英文科有86分，全班第一呀，中文就得33分……」她說，要學好中文是有幾個原因，包括想日後繼續升學等，但最重要是因為希望滿足母親願望。

老師也當然，小冰媽媽也許不知道，女兒的心願其實只已經學中文是當上超市收銀員，做一個勤勞、認真工作的人；

前年少了

但王惠芬指，類似小冰家庭的個案其實非常普遍。她說，聯合國曾指政府有責任教育少數族裔學習社會的主流語言作第二語言，方便他們融入社會，但現時教統局並無措施支援少數族裔學童學中文，而會考中文科對這類中文基礎薄弱的學童而言，亦太深奧，結果他們多數不報考或考試不及格。

少數族裔學中文學校無支援

幾乎所有主流中學的預科課程，都要求學生會考中英文科及格，大部分少數族裔學生便不合資格；另一方面，專業教育學院、職訓局等，亦只以中文授課及考試，少數族裔學生又沒資格報讀，結果這一群始終不能透過學歷改善就業情況，難以脫貧。另一方面，現時法例亦無規定僱主在刊登招聘廣告時，需同時用中英文書寫，王惠芬說，少數族裔因此錯失了不少工作機會，「年紀小的沒能好好接受主流教育，成年的又缺乏渠道找工作，要他們怎讓擺脫貧窮？」她批評《種族歧視條例草案》並無正視上述問題，呼籲當局檢討，並為少數族裔學生增加學習中文的資源。

媽媽都希望我和姐姐的中文讀好，因為在我的家庭裏，只有我和姐姐的幫助，所以媽媽就想我們成功。有幾次，我問媽媽你想不想我做工作呢？媽媽說：「你的心想不想做工作呢？我很希望你可以成功，我們大家都和你一齊。」媽媽的話沒有說完，她就流眼淚了，我也流眼淚，立刻摟着媽媽的身體。如果全世界不和我一齊，但我媽媽一定會和我一齊，我希望可以成功就好。

「找到了！找到『夢想』了！」這晚小冰為了能完整寫下作文題目，鏗而不捨地花了10多分鐘查字典：「『夢想』就是『Dream』，D-r-e-a-m，呀，找到了！找到『夢想』了！我懂得用中文寫『我的夢想』了！」只是前路遙遙，單靠一本字典、一顆熱心，似乎還不足夠讓小冰在下次考試多拿27分——要是她還想追逐夢想，那是最起碼要多取得的分數。

隔了兩天，記者再請小冰為我們手寫此報道的標題，雖然還是寫錯字，但看着她一筆一筆、端端正正的寫着，還是能感受到她付出的努力。

Equality chief accepts language fears

Human rights groups have a good case in their fight for a special curriculum on Chinese as a second language for minority students, the chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission said yesterday.

However, Raymond Tang Yee-bong argued that it would be logically wrong to identify new arrivals from the mainland as a distinct race in the Race Discrimination Bill.

The bill had its first reading in the Legislative Council on Wednesday following its release last month.

Mr Tang said yesterday minority groups had a legitimate concern about the bill's most controversial exemption - that of the language of instruction in schools.

[The human rights groups] have a good case there. There is no way one can promote racial harmony without giving those affected a reasonable chance to acquire linguistic skills, he said.

The exclusion has been described by critics as a shield for the Education and Manpower Bureau against any legal implication for its lack of support for an alternative curriculum for minorities to learn in Chinese in mainstream schools.

Mr Tang said that in his secondary school days there was a Cantonese curriculum tailored for Eurasians and other minorities as an alternative to the more difficult Chinese curriculum for native Chinese.

If it could be done 50 years ago when I was young, there is no reason why you can't do it now, he said.

But he also urged human rights groups to address the problem in a realistic manner, explaining that Hong Kong did not have a critical mass of ethnic minority students to warrant the adoption of education systems introduced in some overseas countries to help minorities learn in a non-native language.

Mr Tang also warned that too many exemptions in a law would open the way for many arguments and calls for justifications.

Responding to criticisms of the government's exclusion of new mainland immigrants from the bill, Mr Tang said it would be impractical to consider them as a separate race, as doing so would require the drawing of a timeline to define mainland immigrants who would be considered new.

A cardinal principle in any regulation is regulatory consistency. But discrimination usually took place over a period of time, he said.

A regulation should not say that the same act by the same individual was okay on one side of the timeline, but not okay on the other side of the line, he said.

Mr Tang also asked for constructive dialogue and compromise from all parties during the legislative process.

He said it would be very sad if the bill had to be shelved or reintroduced to the new legislature in 2008, as this would mean many more years would pass before it would take effect.

The bill may not win the Nobel Prize but it reflects a genuine effort on the part of the government to get it on the statute books, he said.

The bill is the outcome of almost 10 years of campaigning for racial discrimination to be outlawed.

Mr Tang also called on the government - which this month broadened the jurisdiction of the commission to cover the bill and promised an initial injection of \$6 million - to set up a litigation fund specifically for the commission to take complainants' cases to court.

So far, we have not been constrained by our budget in determining which cases to take to court. We simply reduce our spending elsewhere, which is not good, he said.

Copyright (c) 2000. South China Morning Post Publishers Ltd. All rights reserved.

文章編號: 200612160270042

本文章版權屬於 南華早報 所有，現由慧科訊業有限公司發放，如需轉發，必須獲該報同意。版權所有，翻印必究。

----- 1 -----

慧科訊業有限公司 查詢請電: (852) 2948 3888 電郵速遞: sales@wisers.com 網址: http://www.wisers.com
慧科訊業有限公司 (2007)。版權所有，翻印必究。

EMB put on notice to assist switch into Chinese

The Education and Manpower Bureau is not doing enough to help ethnic minority and returnee students prepare for when Chinese becomes compulsory under the new senior secondary curriculum, a prominent principal said this week.

Veronica Ma Kit-ching, principal of Marymount Secondary School in Happy Valley, accused the EMB of failing to provide adequate transitional measures for schools that have traditionally offered French as an alternative for non-Chinese-speaking students.

Chinese language is one of four core subjects students will be compelled to study when students currently in Form One reach Form Four. The other three subjects are English, maths and liberal studies.

Students will continue to be able to study French and other foreign languages, but only as an elective in addition to Chinese and English.

Ms Ma said her school, along with traditional elite schools La Salle College, St Mary's Cannossian College and St Joseph's College, had met with Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower Chris Wardlaw but had not yet received a follow-up.

"I have been told over the phone that they are still discussing this matter but it is already three or four months," Ms Ma said.

Some of the students from Chinese families would be able to cope with the Chinese curriculum but the majority of ethnic minorities students lacked the family support.

"These students can't follow the normal curriculum for native speakers," she said. "There needs to be a second curriculum."

The EMB has consistently rejected calls for an alternative Chinese curriculum, despite pressure from ethnic minorities, concern groups and legislators.

The bureau maintains the standard curriculum is not designed specifically for native speakers and can be adapted for individual students' needs.

Ms Ma said it was unfair for the change to be sprung on students only once they reached secondary school.

"No matter whether they are Chinese, non-Chinese-speaking or ethnic minorities, they should be told from the start, when they enter primary school," she said. "It should not be our responsibility to tell the parents. The EMB should be informing people they have this policy. Many people are not aware of this problem."

However, Mr Wardlaw said the bureau had been maintaining a dialogue with the schools and he was due to meet them again next week.

"Essentially it is a transitional issue," he said. "I think the schools genuinely know they need to make some arrangements to help these students learn Chinese."

But he stressed that schools with a tradition of offering French as an alternative to Chinese would not be forced to change "abruptly".

"It will happen over time," he said. "We can't expect them to change overnight."

文章編號: 200612160270069

本文章版權屬於 南華早報 所有，現由慧科訊業有限公司發放，如需轉發，必須獲該報同意。版權所有，翻印必究。

----- 1 -----

慧科訊業有限公司 查詢請電: (852) 2948 3888 電郵速遞: sales@wisers.com 網址: <http://www.wisers.com>
慧科訊業有限公司 (2007)。版權所有，翻印必究。