

**Provision of Consultancy Service for a Study on Good Practices
in Primary and Secondary Schools to Support Non-Chinese Speaking Students**

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Executive Summary

I. Purpose of the Study

The Education Bureau (EDB) commissioned the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) to conduct a study in primary and secondary schools in order to identify good practice in supporting non-Chinese-speaking (NCS) students. The results of that study, including examples of good practice, are provided in this report. Schools can consider the relevance and applicability of these practices according to the context of their own schools, in relation to such issues as school policy, cultural norms and values, teacher experience and skills, as well as student needs and characteristics.

II. Background of the Study

In addition to the various measures implemented by the EDB to facilitate the integration of NCS students into the local education system and to enhance their learning effectiveness, schools that admit NCS students also offer a variety of support services for their NCS students which they have developed as a result of their own initiatives.

This research investigated 21 schools (14 primary and 7 secondary) that admit NCS students. These schools were identified as potentially having good practices in place to support NCS students. Evidence of this good practice was collected through: (a) repeated in-depth interviews with principals, teachers, counsellors, school social workers, and NCS students and their parents; (b) observation of relevant remedial programmes and services (e.g. after-class lessons); and (c) brief questionnaire surveys of NCS students (mostly through interviews) in order to collect data on their evaluation of different programmes.

III. Major Findings

A total of 25 different types of good practice have been identified by this study. These practices can be broadly divided into (a) popular and core programmes (printed in *italic* in the table below), which are applicable to all schools – even those that admit only a few NCS students, and (b) support programmes, which are effective in similar contexts (e.g. according to teacher experience level and availability of other resources).

The 25 types of good practice are further grouped into six categories (A – F) as shown in the table below:

A. School Management and Holistic School Practices	
1.	School Management Policy
2.	Teacher Training
B. Remedial Programmes	
3.	<i>Peer Tutoring Programme on Chinese Reading</i>
4.	<i>Peer Tutoring Programme for Newly Admitted NCS Students</i>
5.	Cantonese Activities to Create a Chinese Environment
6.	<i>Remedial Chinese Language Programme</i>
7.	<i>School-based Chinese Curriculum</i>
8.	Mathematics Programme
C. General Academic Programmes	
9.	Making Accommodations for Assignments and Assessments
10.	Offering Non-traditional Subjects
11.	Pen-pal Programme
D. Non-Academic Programmes	
12.	Outings
13.	Cultural Activities
14.	Multicultural Education
15.	Demonstrating NCS Students' Strengths
16.	Parent-Teacher Programme
17.	Parents' Day
18.	Career Planning
19.	Health Enhancement Programme
E. Integrated Programmes	
20.	<i>Summer Bridging Programme</i>
21.	<i>Adaptation Programme for Newly Admitted Students</i>
22.	Within-School Integration
23.	<i>NCS Teaching Assistants</i>
F. Classroom Management and Discipline	
24.	Classroom Management
25.	Disciplinary Programme

IV. Brief Description of the 25 Good Practices

A. The Seven Most Popular Good Practices

The seven good practices (printed in *italics* in the list above) described below are regarded by both the schools and the research team as good and are the most popular measures because of their high level of effectiveness and efficiency. These seven practices are applicable in all schools that admit NCS students.

Remedial Programmes

(1) Good Practice 3: Peer Tutoring Programme on Chinese Reading

- (a) There are many advantages of using peer tutors (or volunteers from other schools) to provide individualized instruction or practice on Chinese character memorization for NCS students.
- (b) Tutoring activities can be scheduled before school, during lunch hours, or after school. Whenever they are held, it is important for the students to establish a tutoring session schedule and abide by it.
- (c) In a typical implementation, big brother/sister tutors assist their NCS tutees in reading story books or memorizing new words using flash cards. Words that are not recognized by the tutees are noted and tested repeatedly until full mastery is achieved. The big brother/sister tutors report the tutees' progress and obtain new sets of flash cards from the teachers. Sometimes teachers help and monitor the tutors and tutees in the early stage of the programme, but otherwise they allow the tutors to take charge in their regular meetings with their tutees.
- (d) A peer tutor/tutee programme is also useful because it can help to build a social network; however, the more important aim of the programme is to assist NCS students in their academic study. The pairing of NCS students with Chinese-speaking (CS) students to help each other improve their Chinese and English language skills, respectively, is an interesting extension of this kind of tutor/tutee programme. However, it should be noted that the matching of students' abilities and the forming of appropriate pairs may not always be easy.

(2) Good Practice 4: Peer Tutoring Programme for Newly Admitted NCS Students

- (a) Suitable students can be asked to fulfil the role of mentors or big brothers/sisters in order to take care of NCS students and help them to mingle with the local CS and NCS students. One obvious advantage of peer tutoring is that individual attention can be provided for NCS students in need without creating a heavy workload for teachers. However, the effectiveness of such programmes depends on how they are implemented; some programmes can provide very effective help for NCS students and alleviate teacher workload, whereas others are less effective.
- (b) A few, important elements should be incorporated into such programmes in order to ensure success: (i) some initial, close supervision by the teacher is desirable, but

responsibility should be shifted gradually to the senior schoolmate/classmate mentor; (ii) the peer tutoring should be highly structured, incorporating concrete activities (e.g. word cards, story reading) for the mentors and mentees to follow during their private individual meetings, and some record keeping may also be desirable; and (iii) there should be some assessment so that both the mentor and the mentee can see the progress/improvement being made.

- (c) It is always desirable and important for teachers to assign one or two socially more mature classmates to take care of newly admitted NCS students.
- (d) If there is a relatively large number of peer tutors (big brothers/sisters) in a school, it is desirable to conduct some basic training for these tutors.

(3) Good Practice 6: Remedial Chinese Language Programme

- (a) Understandably, NCS students are likely to have difficulty in following a syllabus delivered in the Chinese language as well as in the study of the Chinese language. Schools that admit NCS students should therefore offer some form of remedial Chinese language programme.
- (b) The kind of help, and its effectiveness, varies from programme to programme.
- (c) There are many benefits to be gained by teachers developing their own instructional packages. The ownership, professional knowledge gained, and familiarization with NCS cultures through this process are some of the potential advantages. However, given the large amount of time that has to be invested and the similarity in the packages so produced, it is more cost effective and less time consuming for teachers to access packages available through the EDB, universities or other channels and to revise them to match the context of their particular school. Needless to say, the continuous support of the EDB in the area of instructional package development and adaptation is an important factor in ensuring the quality and availability of these packages.
- (d) Within school, the competence and commitment of the chairs of panels or team leaders are critical factors for the success of these language programmes.
- (e) A successful remedial Chinese language programme usually has most of the following characteristics: (i) committed mid-level member of staff (e.g. chair of a panel) to manage the programme; (ii) an instructional package which has been efficiently developed based on various resources; (iii) a system to monitor students' progress; and (iv) meetings to convince parents of the importance of learning Chinese.

(4) Good Practice 7: School-based Chinese Curriculum

- (a) When a school has a substantial number of NCS students, generally the teachers would like to develop their own Chinese curriculum and teaching materials.
- (b) The development of a school-based Chinese curriculum is usually supported by EDB or the Quality Education Fund (QEF).
- (c) In one school, for example, in the first semester in P.1, the NCS students use a set of books recommended by the Language Learning Support Section of EDB, together with

other materials used by the mainstream Chinese students. In the second semester in P.1, they then moved on to use the Chinese textbooks used by the Chinese students in the first semester of P.1. In another school, a complete set of P.1 to P.6 Chinese textbooks were adapted and modified from the existing curriculum with the help of a tertiary institute. Generally, the teachers involved had a reduced teaching load while working on the adaptation of materials for NCS students.

- (d) As in the case of remedial Chinese language programmes (Good Practice 6), a large amount of time has to be invested in the design of a school-based Chinese curriculum and there is similarity in the packages so produced. It is more cost effective and less time consuming for teachers to access packages available through the EDB, universities or other channels and to revise them to match the context of their particular school.
- (e) The characteristics needed for the success of the school-based Chinese curriculum are similar to those required for the remedial Chinese language programme, discussed above.

Integrated Programmes

(5) Good Practice 20: Summer Bridging Programme

- (a) Summer bridging programmes are generally extremely useful in preparing NCS students for their P.1 study or for newly arrived NCS students joining various forms in mainstream Chinese schools. It is strongly recommended that all NCS students, including those newly arrived, should participate in some form of summer (or other relatively long-term) preparatory programme before joining mainstream Chinese schools, unless there are justifiable grounds (e.g. totally fluent in Chinese) for not doing so.
- (b) The two main aims of the bridging programme are to (i) familiarize NCS students with school routines and (ii) improve their Chinese language ability.
- (c) In a typical programme, instruction is mainly conducted through the medium of English because NCS students have limited Chinese language competence. The programme usually starts with some ‘ice-breaking’ and self-introduction activities. This is then followed by briefings given by the school’s principal members of staff. Oftentimes, a major component of the programme is the teaching of basic Chinese. In order to add fun and interest to such programmes, NCS students could also participate in Chinese cultural experiences (e.g. having dim sum in a Chinese restaurant). For senior-level NCS students, summer courses are more likely to serve as remedial programmes through which they can catch up and revise subject matter learnt during the school term. Bridging programmes tend to last from 50 to 100 hours and can take place over a period of two to four weeks. The class size is generally small with less than 15 students. Teachers can sometimes be paid on an hourly basis for teaching summer programmes.
- (d) It is likely that NCS students will have a full load of remedial lessons during school term time. It would therefore be useful to conduct summer programmes for NCS students at all educational levels (not only at P.1 and S.1) in order to help them consolidate what they have learned at the current level of study and prepare for transition to the next level.

The content of these programmes should be optimized to meet the needs and interests of NCS students. These programmes could include sports, games, outings, and other activities to make them more appealing to NCS students.

- (e) As these programmes are not purely academic in nature, school social workers should be involved in their design.
- (f) Programmes in some schools are loosely organized with few learning objectives. In order to maintain NCS students' motivation to learn, such programmes should have rich content with plenty of opportunity for students to see and demonstrate improvement.
- (g) Unfortunately, many NCS parents are not enthusiastic about their children attending summer programmes. Thus, primary schools may have to work hand-in-hand with kindergartens in encouraging NCS parents to enrol their children in these summer programmes.

(6) Good Practice 21: Adaptation Programme for Newly Admitted Students

- (a) The aim of adaptation programmes is to narrow the gap in abilities (e.g. Chinese language competence) between NCS and CS students.
- (b) These programmes are focused and conducted mostly after (or before) school.
- (c) Consistently across most schools, adaptation programmes have been found to be extremely useful in helping NCS students adapt to the mainstream school environment. Benefits include familiarization with the school setting (school routines) and remedial lessons on various academic subjects (Chinese, Mathematics, etc.).
- (d) One major challenge which schools encounter is the need to find methods to attract NCS students and encourage their parents to enrol their children in this type of programme. Greater effort is needed to publicize the benefits of these adaptation programmes to kindergartens and to other non-Chinese social groups.
- (e) Many teachers design their own curricula and instructional materials for adaptation programmes, and generally they are quite proud of the materials being produced. However, because there are not many noticeable differences between the packages, teachers could save an enormous amount of time and effort by adopting or revising materials which are available through various government or university channels.
- (f) These adaptation programmes serve many purposes and teachers could therefore also consider including materials (e.g. school routines) in addition to the academic content into their teaching packages.
- (g) Schools that admit a large number of NCS students throughout the school year could consider running adaptation programmes at fixed, regular intervals (e.g. September, January, April) in order to accommodate newly arrived NCS students.
- (h) Schools should consider inviting CS students to assist in the delivery of these adaptation programmes in order to (i) build up strong social relationships between pairs of NCS and CS students (or quadruples (2 NCS + 2 CS)), and (ii) provide individualized help to NCS students.

- (i) One aim of the adaptation programme is to build a social network of both new and existing NCS and CS students for newly admitted NCS students. Thus, teachers in charge of these adaptation programmes should familiarize themselves with group-building techniques and should build in some activities to achieve this aim.
- (j) Entrance tests can be arranged, but it is advisable that all NCS students should be encouraged to join. In this way, the students attending such programmes are not stigmatized.
- (k) The participation of Teaching Assistants (TAs), particularly helpers who specialize in assisting NCS students, would also be very useful.
- (l) In addition to providing extra remedial teaching in the Chinese language, the purpose of the adaptation programme is to build both social support and interest in study. In long-term programmes, more opportunities could be provided for NCS students to demonstrate their skill and competence (e.g. through dancing and singing). With respect to duration, it was observed that the longer the programme, the better the outcome.

(7) Good Practice 23: NCS Teaching Assistants

- (a) The contribution of helpers or TAs who can speak the native languages of the NCS students is highly valued not only by principals and teachers in many of the schools researched, but also by the parents of NCS students.
- (b) NCS helpers and TAs, whether full or part time, contribute tremendously as interpreters, particularly at the beginning of the school term in P.1 when some newly admitted NCS students are unable or barely able to communicate in either Chinese or English.
- (c) These NCS TAs and helpers also assist the school by liaising with NCS parents and informing them of various school functions and activities.
- (d) Some secondary schools also hire a few of their NCS graduates as TAs to run various tutorial groups for junior-level students and to undertake administrative work (e.g. contacting NCS parents).

B. The Other Good Practices

School Management and Holistic School Practices

(1) Good Practice 1: School Management Policy

The school's senior management team formulates the school policies which determine the support measures available for NCS students. It is recognized that the provision of organized, co-ordinated activities for NCS students is both necessary and useful. Moreover, the capability and devotion of the senior management team makes a real difference to the effectiveness of the activities and the successful implementation of school policies in this area. Thus, it is vital to assign the various tasks of NCS student support to the right members of the team and to appoint a committed team leader; this is much more important than forming a large team. The team should (i) co-ordinate all the NCS services in the school, (ii) equip themselves and other colleagues with the requisite knowledge and skills in order to

help NCS students enhance their learning effectiveness and to facilitate their social integration, and (iii) periodically review and refine the support measures in the light of the practical experience gained and the feedback received.

(2) Good Practice 2: Teacher Training

Teachers with little or no experience in teaching NCS students would benefit greatly from participating in knowledge sharing with more experienced colleagues from other schools. It is also desirable that schools build a support network within school so that novice teachers can work closely with more experienced colleagues. In addition, teachers can make use of knowledge and skills acquired from the professional development activities offered by the EDB (e.g. training programmes and seminars) to conduct in-house training and sessions for knowledge sharing. Moreover, the EDB has also formed a support network to promote mutual support between designated and non-designated schools through the sharing of knowledge about and experience of supporting NCS students.

Remedial Programmes

(3) Good Practice 5: Cantonese Activities to Create a Chinese Environment

It is very important that schools develop activities that provide opportunities for use Chinese in order to assist NCS students to learn the Chinese language. For a school with a large proportion of NCS students, the creation of a linguistic environment based on the Chinese language is essential in order that NCS students can learn Chinese through practice. The challenge for teachers is to find tasks that require minimal teacher supervision and maximum, active NCS student participation. The activities should (i) be interesting and challenging, (ii) provide plenty of opportunity for individual students to use the language, and (iii) not involve too much teacher supervision.

(4) Good Practice 8: Mathematics Programme

More teachers are now aware that many NCS students have difficulty in catching up with the Mathematics curriculum. Various schools have tried different methods for teaching mathematics content which are tailored to the unique needs of their NCS students. Some common strategies include repeating the lesson, providing more exercises, simplifying the content, and using more graphs and illustrations. However, the suitability of the method usually depends on the specific topic being taught.

General Academic Programmes

(5) Good Practice 9: Making Accommodations for Assignments and Assessments

Teachers in general are concerned about whether NCS students should be assessed with or without accommodations being made for their lack of Chinese language ability. For practical reasons, some teachers might adjust their assessment questions and procedures for

NCS students, particularly in Chinese and Mathematics. In such cases, it would be useful to make available a set of school-based accommodation guidelines for the reference of all teachers. Moreover, teachers should be aware that making accommodations should not be or be seen to be tantamount to reducing the learning expectations for these students. It would be desirable to set clear, challenging, and achievable expectations for NCS students in a supportive environment, particularly when they are in educational levels which are not sitting ‘high-stake’ examinations.

(6) Good Practice 10: Offering Non-traditional Subjects

Schools with a large proportion of NCS students may wish to offer academic subjects which are preferred by NCS students in order to cater for their interests. These subjects may include elective subjects in senior secondary forms as well as preferred subjects in lower forms. This is a particularly useful approach for secondary schools where NCS students have freedom to choose their academic subjects. However, students should not be given the impression that they are being provided with an easier route to academic success. The non-traditional subjects should be chosen to suit the students’ competences, interests, and future careers, rather than be seen or used as softer examination options.

(7) Good Practice 11: Pen-pal Programme

In addition to enhancing the communication between NCS and CS students, a pen-pal programme may facilitate social integration. In order to reduce the workload of language teachers, schools could consider assigning some staff administrators or senior students to screen the letters for inappropriate content. Teachers can also use ‘the blog’ as an interactive platform to motivate the interest of students. In order to make the pen-pal programme more effective, there should be (i) more opportunities to write, (ii) less intervention by teachers, (iii) more opportunities for students’ work to be read by more classmates/schoolmates, and (iv) some incentive systems (e.g. ‘Best Article of the Week’ award, ‘Teachers’ Choice of the Month’ award).

Non-Academic Programmes

(8) Good Practice 12: Outings

The out-of-school activity provides an alternative method of learning which could also help to enhance social integration between NCS and CS students. It would be useful to pair up NCS and CS students during outings to facilitate the establishment of long-term relationships (e.g. between classmates) instead of short-term ones (e.g. between CS and NCS student-pairs who meet only once during the outing). Out-of-school activities are particularly valuable for NCS students with low socioeconomic status (SES) because their parents may not have been able to take them to the various places of interest in Hong Kong. Instead of relying heavily on several teachers to run these activities, it is recommended that schools with only a few NCS students enlist the assistance of big brothers/sisters because

they can help teachers supervise these activities as well as build relationships with the NCS students.

(9) Good Practice 13: Cultural Activities

Cultural functions are popular activities in schools that have NCS students on their rolls. A mutual appreciation of the cultures and customs of other countries helps to alleviate misunderstanding and enhance social integration. Cultural activities should be carefully organized to enrich the learning content.

(10) Good Practice 14: Multicultural Education

Some schools with a large proportion of NCS students have specifically designed an alternative curriculum or a set of learning activities to enhance social integration. A joint, systematic effort is made to plan and organize these multicultural activities. In most schools, the multicultural programme will generally be integrated into various school activities and functions.

(11) Good Practice 15: Demonstrating NCS Students' Strengths

Helping NCS students to demonstrate their competence in academic and non-academic activities is a good way both to enhance their self-esteem and increase their participation in school activities. Adopting this approach will subsequently facilitate the integration of NCS students with their CS schoolmates because it is believed that learning about and appreciating others' cultural strengths help to build social integration. Schools could, for example, schedule regular activities to showcase the talents and skills of NCS students.

(12) Good Practice 16: Parent-Teacher Programme

It would be useful for schools with a large number of NCS students to create more opportunities whereby their parents can better understand their children's social and learning needs. These activities could start with parent participation in a social activity (e.g. a cooking class), but ultimately they should serve to enhance student learning. These activities also help NCS parents to become familiar with school policies and routines. In order to facilitate communication and promote parental involvement, some schools have also invited NCS parents to help the school liaise with other NCS parents [e.g. by encouraging them to join the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)]. It has been observed that NCS parents particularly welcome activities which provide opportunities for them to discuss their children's learning in school with teachers.

(13) Good Practice 17: Parents' Day

The Parents' Day is especially useful because it helps NCS parents to gain a better understanding of the local educational system and also provides an opportunity for them to discuss issues concerning their children's learning and behaviour in school. It is suggested that schools could benefit from making a greater effort to engage NCS parents who have

children in the lower forms (P.1, S.1), for example, by using two class teachers per class to meet with NCS parents more frequently. When effective communication channels are established, NCS parents are more likely to be ready to work with the school in supporting their children's study in the senior levels. During parent-teacher meetings, it would be desirable, and perhaps emotionally touching, to ask students to write a personal note (or card) to pass on to their parents through the teachers (e.g. as an expression of appreciation to parents) and likewise for parents to write personal notes to their children (e.g. to express their love and concern for their children).

(14) Good Practice 18: Career Planning

In addition to enhancing the effectiveness of the Chinese language learning experience for NCS students, career guidance programmes for these students should also be enhanced. Career counselling programmes are particularly important for NCS students planning to work in Hong Kong after graduating from secondary school. For these students, the guidance provided is crucial in determining their future career paths. However, students should never be led to believe that these programmes are being provided because of their poor academic performance. Given the relatively limited resources within each individual school, it is suggested that schools in the same geographical region should consider the possibility of conducting joint-school career seminars for their students. Inviting successful NCS graduates in various careers to share their study and work experiences would definitely provide good role models for those NCS students who are soon to graduate.

(15) Good Practice 19: Health Enhancement Programme

The health enhancement programme is a university-initiated project. Its objective is to improve the school attendance rate through promoting student health and it addresses four major themes: physical health, emotional health, family hygiene, and home safety. Furthermore, the project also aims to promote the social integration of ethnic minorities through health-related activities. The health programme is specifically targeted at NCS students and their families. This programme is fully supported by the university and thus, even if schools find this type of programme effective, it is difficult for individual schools to run a similar large-scale programme by themselves. Nevertheless, incorporating the topics of a healthy diet, personal hygiene, and personal growth into the formal or informal curriculum is always desirable.

Integrated Programmes

(16) Good Practice 22: Within-School Integration

Many of the schools researched in this study have various programmes in place to facilitate the social integration of NCS students. An effective programme generally consists of the following characteristics: (i) plenty of opportunity for NCS and CS students to interact; (ii) tangible results and outcomes (NCS and CS students do not just meet, they produce something together); (iii) minimal teacher intervention and supervision; (iv) 'show-and-tell'

sessions for students to demonstrate the results and outcomes of integration activities; (v) plenty of opportunities for students to revise their work plan through learning activities; and (vi) an effective leader (mid-level member of staff) to oversee the programme.

Classroom Management and Discipline

(17) Good Practice 24: Classroom Management

The classroom discipline of NCS students may not be a particularly pressing problem in schools; however, helping NCS students to understand the school rules and regulations is still important. This can be done through the summer bridging programme or adaptation programme for newly admitted NCS students. Moreover, it is desirable that NCS students have the same class teacher in order that their progress through school can be effectively monitored. This ensures that the NCS students (and their parents) do not have to adjust to new class teachers and that the class teachers are fully aware of the background (e.g. family circumstances) and learning needs of each NCS student.

(18) Good Practice 25: Disciplinary Programme

Schools with NCS students use different methods to reduce the occurrence of student misbehaviour, (e.g. demerits can be removed through students being of service or demonstrating good behaviour for a period of time). It is recommended that schools should use a range of interventions, support measures, and consequences as well as provide learning opportunities for reinforcing positive behaviour.

V. Recommendations

(1) Concerted efforts to maximize the effectiveness of support for NCS students

- (a) Isolated measures generally have very limited effects on developing and articulating good practices. Even if certain measures are useful at some points in time, the effects may not be long lasting. Thus, teachers should pay attention to the contextual factors and other necessary conditions to maximize the effectiveness of good practices.
- (b) In schools with an extremely small number of NCS students, the best approach may be to assign a few designated, caring teachers to work very closely with those students. When there are designated teachers in place, who can observe individual students closely and respond quickly and effectively to their needs, it should be unnecessary for a school to develop a wide variety of policies to support NCS students.
- (c) If a school starts to admit a sizeable number of NCS students, it is strongly recommended that one mid-level member of staff (e.g. vice-principal, chair of counselling team) should be assigned to co-ordinate the services provided for NCS students. It is advisable for the co-ordinator to hold periodic meetings to review (i)

school policies, (ii) remedial services, and (iii) the progress of individual NCS students. It is also desirable that this co-ordinator participate in relevant professional development activities to enhance their knowledge on remedial services for NCS students.

- (d) In order to implement some of the good practices identified by this study, a much more concerted effort is required from a larger team of teachers and the strong leadership of a mid-level member of staff (co-ordinator). These good practices include: 2 (Teacher Training), 3 (Peer Tutoring Programme on Chinese Reading), 4 (Peer Tutoring Programme for Newly Admitted NCS Students), 5 (Cantonese Activities to Create a Chinese Environment), 6 (Remedial Chinese Language Programme), 7 (School-based Chinese Curriculum), 8 (Mathematics Programme), 9 (Making Accommodations for Assignments and Assessments), 13 (Cultural Activities), 14 (Multicultural Education), 15 (Demonstrating NCS Students' Strengths), 17 (Parents' Day), 20 (Summer Bridging Programme), 21 (Adaptation Programme for Newly Admitted Students), and 23 (NCS Teaching Assistants).
- (e) Success in raising the educational achievement and improving the social integration of NCS students is dependent upon a collaborative effort between schools, government departments (e.g. Education Bureau, Social Welfare Department), families of NCS students (parental support, commitment), and the children themselves (motivation and hard work).
- (f) In order to facilitate the learning effectiveness and social integration of NCS students, the EDB has already provided a huge amount of resources, including: 'Supplementary Guide to the Chinese Language Curriculum for Non-Chinese Speaking Students', 'Path to Mastery of Chinese Characters: Courseware on Chinese Character Writing', 'Path to Moral Excellence: Primary Chinese Language Learning Software on Traditional Chinese Virtues', 'From Traditional to Simplified Characters: Simplified Chinese Character Courseware', 'From Simplified to Traditional Characters: Traditional Chinese Character Courseware', 'Lexical Items with English Explanations for Fundamental Chinese Learning in Hong Kong Schools'. Many other teaching guides and textbooks have also been designed by other agencies with the support of the EDB.
- (g) The educational seminars and sharing sessions on the teaching of NCS students organized for teachers by the EDB should be continued because these activities provide useful opportunities teachers to enhance their professional knowledge and skills. The designated schools have a great deal of experience in supporting NCS students, for example, through employing (i) different methods to build a supportive learning environment for NCS students and (ii) specific teaching strategies for

teaching Chinese and other subjects to NCS students. Designated schools have much to share with their neighbourhood schools.

- (h) The current services provided by the EDB have been very enthusiastically received by teachers. These services include: (i) on-site support to schools (in curriculum design/development, teaching, learning and assessment strategies, etc.); (ii) development of learning and teaching materials (and making them available through the Web); (iii) organization of regular sharing sessions/seminars; and (iv) provision of resources (e.g. special grants) to enable designated schools implement school-based support measures for their NCS students. The services provided by the EDB have been well received and have delivered solid support to schools, and they should be continued.

(2) Effective strategies for supporting NCS students in learning Chinese

- (a) Based on this study's analysis of the various strategies in place, it is recommended that schools should include the following characteristics in their programmes of support to NCS students learning Chinese: (i) plenty of opportunity for individual students to use the language actively (not just as observers); (ii) activities which are perceived by students as challenging tasks; (iii) the minimum amount of teacher supervision possible; (iv) activities through which students can see their own progress; (v) structured design (stages of development, structured curriculum); (vi) careful planning; and (vii) if practicable, participation of senior students as helpers (to alleviate teacher workload).
- (b) The successful support system for NCS students is dependent upon the positive effect created by the incorporation of different elements, including: (i) a dedicated mid-level member of staff (co-ordinator); (ii) remedial programmes (e.g. before-/after-school tutorials, summer bridging programmes); (iii) tailored teaching materials (designed by the Chinese teachers or supported by the EDB); and (iv) peer-assisted programmes (e.g. big brother/sister scheme), which together can provide more regular and daily support to NCS students.
- (c) There are a variety of approaches that can be adopted in the teaching of Chinese to foreign learners, including the Romanization of Chinese words. However, as observed, no particular method or teaching package has the overwhelming support of the education sector. Nevertheless, it can be said that, in general, more cultural (e.g. Chinese festivals) and local, contextual materials (e.g. introducing local tourist attractions like The Peak) could be incorporated into learning packages. In addition, Chinese teachers can make use of the commonly accepted successful language teaching strategies, such as repeated practice, authentic thematic approaches, and total immersion. Teacher experience also suggests that maintaining student interest and

motivation is of equal importance in order that students continue to take on the challenge of learning Chinese.

- (d) It is recommended that, for academic-related remedial activities, explicit measures (e.g. short quizzes) should be used to monitor the progress of students because this approach is likely to provide strong reinforcement of learning. Providing NCS students with the opportunity to see that they are making small yet continuous improvements is a strong driving force which motivates them to keep working hard on their learning despite these activities sometimes being repetitive.
- (e) Some teachers and parents believe that lowering the standard pass mark and providing extremely easy tasks may boost NCS students' confidence. However, this approach may convey a sense of low expectation to students and may not be in their best interest. For example, the students may lose their ability to motivate themselves to try harder when faced with difficult academic problems. The provision of a suitably challenging curriculum for NCS students should be encouraged. Some schools in Hong Kong have tailored their curriculum (in Chinese and other subjects) in order to provide a more challenging standard and learning environment for their NCS students. It was found that, in these schools, such curriculum reforms were quite successful and that NCS students were able to learn more under the revised curricula.
- (f) Quite often, activities such as competitions, games and debates are used by schools because they are considered to be 'good' motivational strategies. However, teachers should differentiate between strategies that 'catch' the interest of students and those that 'hold' their attention and maintain their motivation. For example, competitions are generally exciting and can easily catch students' attention. However, sometimes (i) the activity may not be rich in content and (ii) may not be an effective strategy through which to help students learn (e.g. competitions usually involve short answers). Moreover, most students watch rather than actively participate in language activities (e.g. in a debate).
- (g) Novel tasks and assessments in a secure setting (e.g. competitions, quizzes and tests which do not lead to loss of face in front of the class) are useful strategies to employ when students begin to learn new or complicated subject matter. However, as the knowledge and skills of the students improve, teachers should gradually move on to activities that can hold the interest of NCS students during the learning process. However, as stated above, exciting activities may attract students' attention, but they do not necessarily offer the majority of students the opportunity to participate (e.g. practicing the language) and, as such, this is a strategy which only 'catches' rather than 'holds' students' attention.

- (3) Maximizing the benefits of integration of NCS students into mainstream schools
- (a) When a school first admits a few NCS students, these students are totally immersed in a Cantonese/Chinese environment and, irrespective of the great difficulties they may encounter, generally they attain a much higher level of Chinese language ability and become socially well integrated with other CS students. This is in contrast to the experience of NCS students in designated schools where all their schoolmates are NCS students.
 - (b) When a school admits more NCS students, usually the school begins to offer more organized support services for NCS students. However, gradually, as more NCS students are admitted, a tipping point is reached and the school decides to allocate NCS and CS students to different classes/streams. The NCS students then have their own Chinese lessons and they may also learn the majority of other academic subjects through the medium of English. Consequently, NCS and CS students attend classes separately and form social groups which are defined by their own ethnic group. In many cases, the school is virtually divided into two schools – one for NCS students and one for CS students – within the same physical campus. Usually, opportunities for social integration decrease and NCS students may lose the chance to practise the Chinese they have learned in class.
 - (c) As more NCS students are now joining mainstream schools and are gradually progressing through the education system (e.g. from primary to secondary school), more schools will start to admit a sizeable number of NCS students and move towards having different streams (NCS/CS) in the same school. Both the EDB and schools should be alert to the possible negative effects of adopting this approach, as described in (b) above. It is recommended that schools which allocate NCS students to separate streams should consider making the effort to implement additional programmes in order to ensure that there are plenty of academic and non-academic activities to enhance social integration as appropriate.
 - (d) Like any other teaching strategy, the effectiveness of a method depends to a large extent on the teachers and the targeted students, as well as other contextual factors. Schools are strongly advised to periodically re-evaluate the effectiveness of the support services they provide for their NCS students.
- (4) Early entrance to local kindergarten and family support for NCS students
- (a) The role of parents is quite easily neglected; however, it is an extremely crucial element in the success of NCS students in school. It was observed that those NCS students who are able to progress at the same pace as their Chinese counterparts have usually had a good headstart. This is because they have attended local kindergartens which use Chinese as the medium of instruction and/or they have extremely supportive parents

who believe that good mastery of Chinese is the best way for their children to succeed academically, socially, and later in the workplace, in their new home, Hong Kong. Parents should be encouraged to (i) send their children to a local kindergarten as early as possible and (ii) immerse their children in a Chinese-speaking environment with a view to facilitating their adaptation when proceeding to primary school.

- (b) Kindergarten teachers are strongly advised to (i) seriously discuss with NCS parents the benefits of immersing their children in Chinese-speaking (rather than English-speaking) programmes and (ii) encourage NCS parents to send their children to the summer bridging programmes arranged by primary schools.

- (c) Many primary school teachers have already expended a great deal of effort in designing summer bridging programmes and before-/after-school remedial courses. However, more time and effort should perhaps be spent on securing the full support of NCS parents in order that they enrol, motivate, and support their children in these activities. Teaching assistants who support NCS students, if available, would be of great help in persuading NCS parents of the importance of these activities. In addition, the EDB should continue or indeed enhance their existing support to schools in order that they can organize successful summer bridging programmes for incoming NCS P.1 entrants and existing NCS students proceeding to P.2, P.3 and P.4.