

The research report on the non-Chinese speaking kindergarteners learning Chinese in Hong Kong: Situation and Support Measures



樂施會
OXFAM
Hong Kong

無窮世界
World
Without
Poverty



Background

With the support of Oxfam Hong Kong, Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Fund (SIE Fund) and Credit Suisse, “Start from the Beginning – Chinese Supporting Scheme for Non-Chinese Speaking Students in Kindergarten” was launched to support non-Chinese speaking (NCS) kindergarten students in learning the Chinese language. Supervised by Dr. LOH Ka Yee from Faculty of Education at The University of Hong Kong, Dr. TO-CHAN Sing Pui from Department of Early Childhood Education at The Education University of Hong Kong, and Dr Kwan Chi Ying from Department of Chinese Language Studies at The Education University of Hong Kong, the research team sends out qualified teachers to kindergartens with NCS students to deliver “Chinese enhancement class” for individuals and groups of students with similar Chinese proficiency. With the teaching curriculum and pace tailored for student’s language ability and cultural background, it is hoped that students can be more confident in class and hence facilitate their understanding when they are taught in the same classroom with Chinese speaking students. With an objective of narrowing the language proficiency gap between NCS students and Chinese speaking students, the project aims to integrate NCS students into the mainstream schooling, eventually enhance their future development in education and employment.

The first phase of project was conducted between June 2015 and August 2017. Before the launch, research team of Oxfam had collected data sample from students in a “pre test” (control group), which was then compared to the data sample collected during and after the academic term (experimental group). After comparing the student performance from “pre-test”, “mid-test” and “post-test”, the research team have found encouraging result. The average effect size¹ was 1.87 in the first year, meaning the Chinese learning efficiency of NCS students is very apparent. Other than the drastic increase of Chinese ability, students’ interest and confidence in learning Chinese were also increased. In terms of learning motivation, students are attentive and willing to converse

respondents

Tests	No. of students	Effect Size
字義測試	131	1.58
字形測試	131	1.48
字音測試	131	1.54
聯想字	131	1.47
自由書寫	131	1.98
Average	131	1.87

in Chinese. In terms of learning progress, students demonstrated abilities in comprehending the basic command made in Chinese by teachers, pronouncing simple words, and acquiring deeper understanding of structure and radicals of Chinese characters. Senior students are also able to recognize more Chinese characters.

In regard to the remarkable effectiveness of the pilot scheme, Oxfam was invited to attend the meeting of the Commission on Poverty where commission members not only expressed their support towards the scheme, but also demanded a follow-up from Education Bureau. Thereupon followed the meeting between Oxfam and officials of Education Bureau, in which the Education Bureau was recommended to provide “*Chinese as a Second Language enrichment course*” to NCS kindergarten students in pre-school education, as well as to increase resource on supporting NCS students, advance and broaden teacher training. In order to inform kindergarten teachers across Hong Kong about the scheme, Oxfam and its research team have constantly conducted teacher trainings for the past two years. Other than introducing the scheme and the details of the enhancement class, the team distributed surveys for the feasibility study on the format of enhancement class. As the attendants agreed on the effectiveness and feasibility of supporting scheme and format of enhancement class, it is generally believed that the Chinese proficiency, confidence and learning motivation of NCS participants have significantly improved, as well as the fact that they were abler to communicate with Chinese-speaking students and teachers in Chinese. It is also believed that the enhancement class will unlikely to add burden to the teachers’ workload and will allow teachers to acquire the skillsets in teaching NCS students. As a result, most teachers agreed to adapt “Free Quality Kindergarten Education” by Education Bureau to offer extra support to NCS students and hire trained Chinese teachers.

To further understand the current condition of NCS kindergarten students in pre-school education, Oxfam noted the need of collecting opinion from front-line teachers regarding the support provided for NCS toddlers in learning Chinese. In this regard, Oxfam together with HKU invited kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong to participate in a Sharing Session on 14 April 2018 to introduce the scheme and the enhancement scheme. From April 2018 to March 2019, the research team then conducted survey on kindergartens across Hong Kong with NCS students admission to evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of the enhancement class. The following sections will present the results of the survey.

Research objective

Objective 1: To evaluate the difficulty and needs for NCS students in learning Chinese

Objective 2: To collect the opinion of kindergarten teachers on Chinese enhancement class

Objective 3: To examine the shortcoming and amelioration of the existing education policy on NCS students in learning Chinese

Objective 4: To recommend complimentary policy in assisting NCS students to learn Chinese as a second language based on the research result.

Methodology

The teachers were invited and interviewed with a set of questionnaires. The printed questionnaires were sent to 994 registered kindergartens in Hong Kong as well as electronic questionnaires via QR code. 557 questionnaires were collected from the teachers. Among the 557 questionnaires, 429 of them indicated that they have experience teaching non-Chinese speaking students in the past two years; thus these 429 questionnaires were used for data analysis.

Research Tool

The survey examined the difficulties currently experienced by kindergarten teachers in teaching NCS children Chinese, as well as analyzed how the enhancement class can facilitate their learning process and its feasibility. Before the drafting process of the questions, relevant literature was reviewed and was drawn reference to, interviews were also conducted with teachers who are teaching NCS children in kindergarten and primary school to understand the current situation. Opinion is then comprehended and integrated into the survey.

The survey comprised of seven sections, including the Background of the kindergarten and teachers, Current condition and performance of NCS children in learning Chinese, Strategy in Chinese teaching, Support for NCS students in Chinese learning, Pre-school education policy of NCS students, Home-school Co-operation, and Difficulty and challenge in supporting NCS students.

Section 1: Background of the kindergarten and teachers

Drawn on the difference in teaching experience, kindergarten teachers may hold varying opinion towards the effectiveness and feasibility of enhancement class. In order to understand the teaching experience and seniority of kindergarten teachers in teaching NCS children, the first part of the survey examined the condition of NCS children in kindergartens, teaching experience and training background of teachers, and the support to NCS students in learning Chinese currently provided in kindergartens. For example, the number of NCS students taught, educational history and seniority of teachers and related trainings.

Section 2: Current condition and performance of NCS children in learning Chinese

The second part examined the current condition and performance of NCS children in learning Chinese. For example, for instance the difficulty of NCS students in learning Chinese and their ability to listen, speak, read and writing in Chinese.

Section 3: Strategy in teaching Chinese

The third part examined the strategies currently adopted in teaching NCS students Chinese, related information can help us in developing a better design of the enhancement class, so that its curriculum can better cater to children's in learning Chinese. For example, does their school offer additional support for NCS children in learning Chinese, adopt designated Chinese teaching material in class, or put stronger emphasis in teaching NCS students Chinese in specific.

Section 4: Support for NCS students in learning Chinese

This section gathered the opinion of kindergarten teachers regarding the enhancement class and other teaching strategy. For example, if using picture books, imitating actions or using nursery rhymes can effectively assist NCS students in learning Chinese.

Section 5: Pre-school education policy of NCS students

Section 5 gathered the opinion of kindergarten teachers towards the pre-school education policy of NCS students. For example, if the kindergarten applied for subsidy and its usage. The relevant opinion allows us to evaluate the current subsidy policy and provide suggestion.

Section 6: Home-school Co-operation

Home-school Co-operation has significant impacts on the effectiveness of teaching by kindergarten teachers. As a result, this section examined the communication condition between kindergarten teacher and NCS teachers, as well as the difficulty and arrangement. The relevant data facilitates the gradual expansion of support from school support to family support.

Section 7: Difficulty and challenge in supporting NCS students

This section examined the difficulty faced by kindergarten teachers in teaching NCS students Chinese. For example, huge gap between Chinese proficiency between NCS students and local student and the Incapability in taking care of NCS and Chinese-speaking students at the same time due to the different learning progress.

Results

Section 1: Background of the kindergarten and teachers

Survey for kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong designed by the research team examine the opinion of kindergarten teachers in teaching NCS students and its current condition. Among the invitations sent out to 994 kindergartens, 557 surveys were received. 429 of them indicated that they have experience teaching non-Chinese speaking students in the past two years. 72% kindergarten teachers have admitted more than 8 or above NCS students (see Figure 1). The majority of interviewed teachers have 6 years or more than 6 years of teaching experience, accounting for 55% (see Figure 2). 43% of the respondents have a minimum education attainment of bachelor degree (see Figure 3).

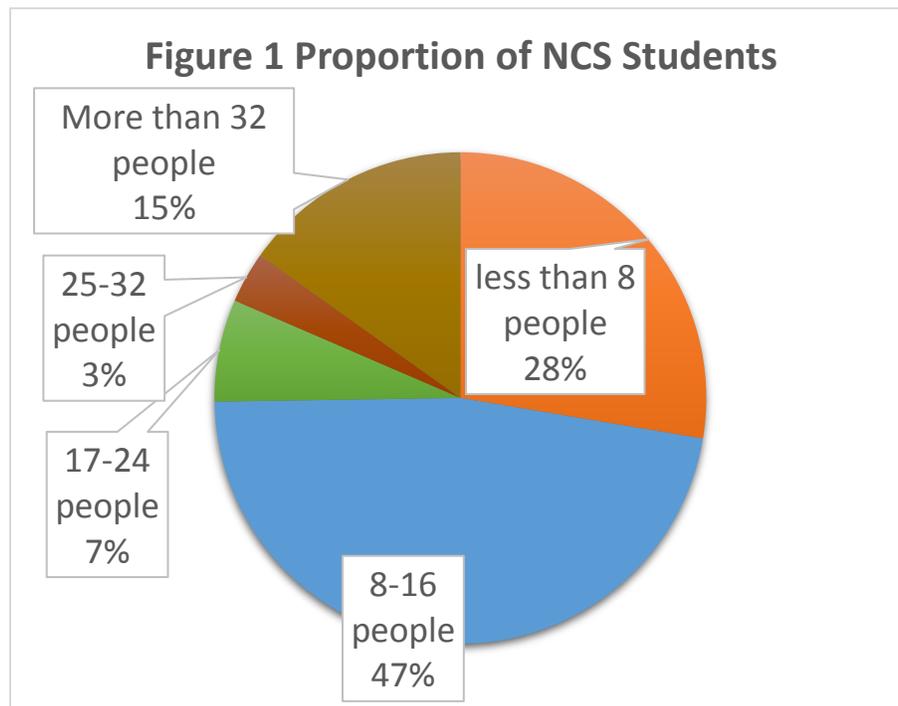


Figure 2 Teaching Experience

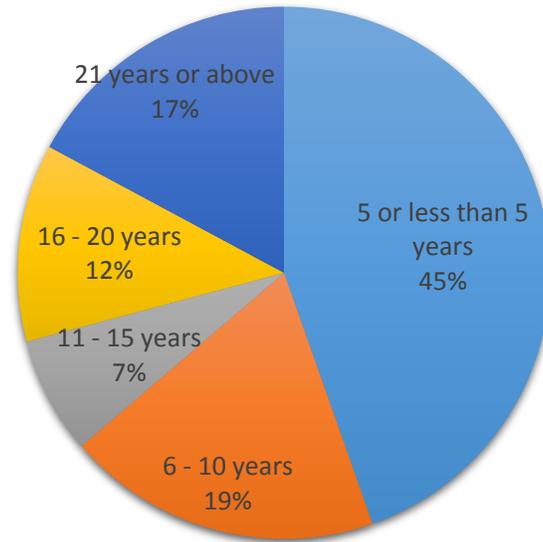
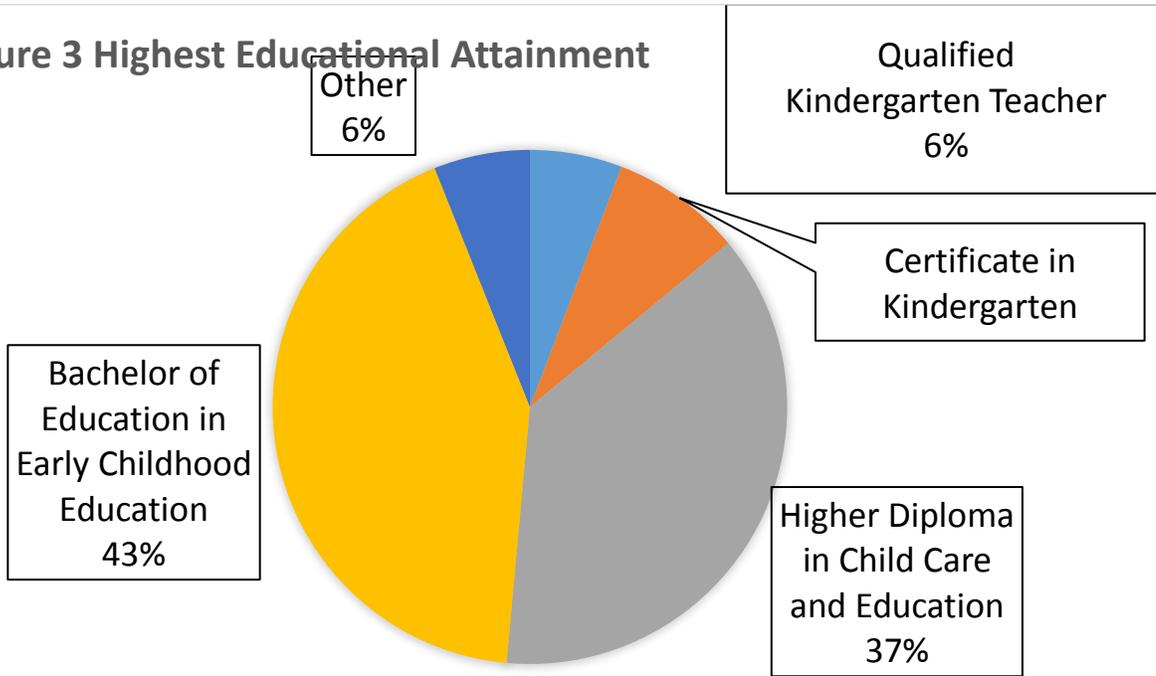


Figure 3 Highest Educational Attainment



In terms of professional training of NCS students, the majority of teachers (75%) indicated that they have never participated in any relevant training programme, the remaining 25% indicated that they have participated in any relevant training programme (see Figure 4). Nearly 80% have attended a talk, 39.6% have attended a seminar, 31.7% have attended the in-service training course recognized by the Education Bureau.

In terms of the existing professional training programme, only 62% of the respondents believed the programme matches their need whereas 38% of them believed the programme does not (see Figure 5). Most respondents believed there is a need to improve professional education program, including Student support and school culture (30.5%), and Teaching and learning Chinese as a second Language (29.6%) (see Figure 6). The Education Bureau has specified the qualification of kindergarten teacher, in which requires every kindergarten that received additional funding for NCS students to have at least 1 teacher complete the basic training programme in the academic year of 2018/19, around 66.3% of the interviewed teachers did not know about the policy (see Figure 7).

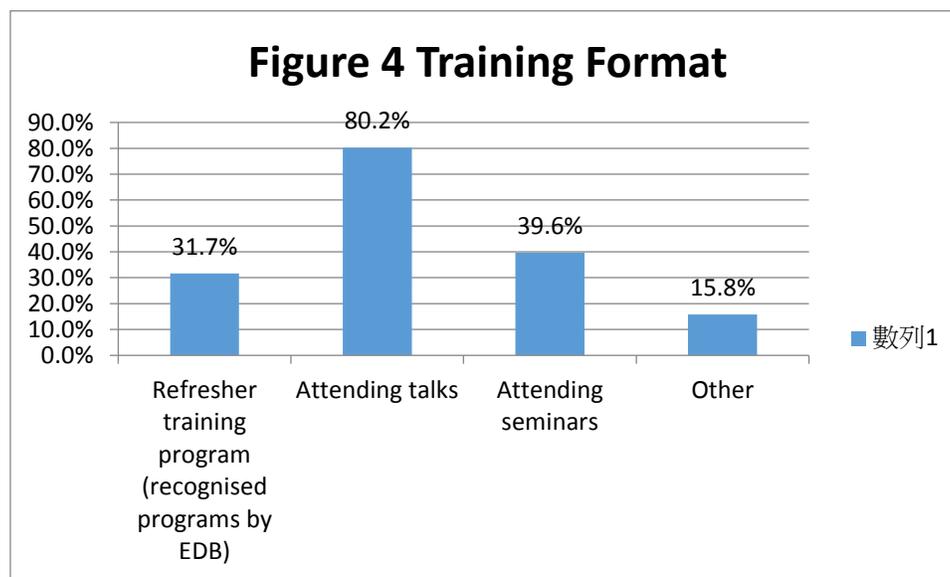


Figure 5. Does the existing professional education program in teaching NCS students matches your need?

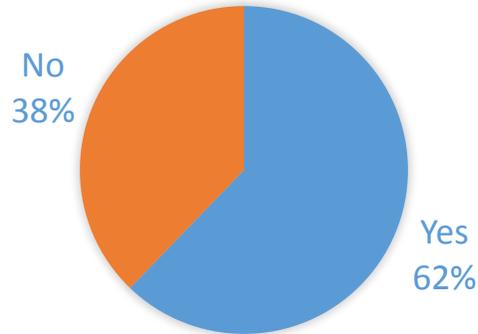


Figure 6 Professional education program that needs improvement

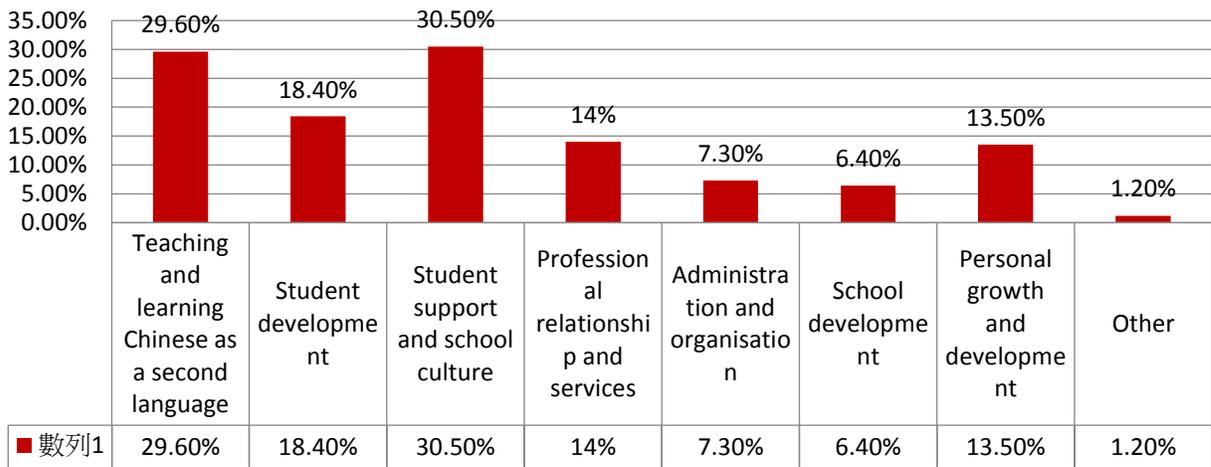
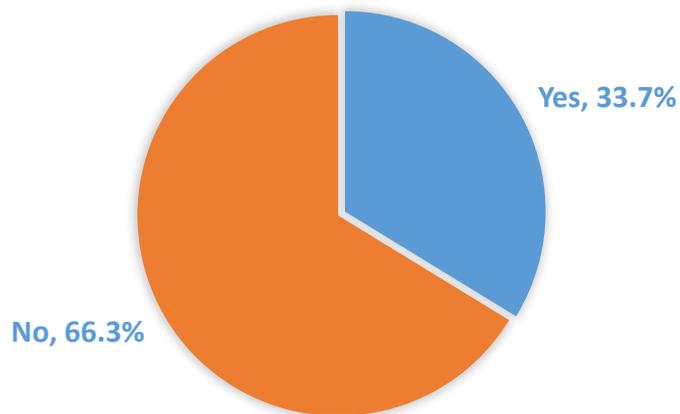


Figure 7. Do you know that at least 1 teacher is required to complete the basic training programme in the academic year of 2018/19?



In terms of the support given to NCS students in learning Chinese, although 99% of interviewed teachers believe it is important to help NCS students in learning Chinese (see Figure 8), there are 54% of them indicated that their kindergarten has not participated in any research project that support NCS students in learning Chinese (see Figure 9), and only 60% of them indicated that their school has employed non-Chinese speaking teaching assistant whereas 40% of them has not (see Figure 10). Besides, nearly 85% of kindergarten teachers indicated that the graduates of their school generally attend Chinese primary school (see Figure 11). While kindergarten is an important step for setting the fundament, inadequate support will cast significant impact to the NCS students in learning Chinese as their main language in a long run.

Figure 8. Is it important to help NCS students in learning chinese?

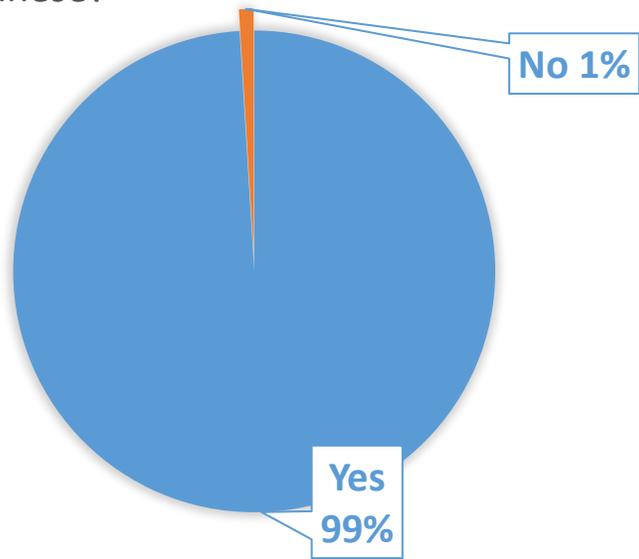


Figure 9. Has your school participated in any research project that support NCS students in learning Chinese?

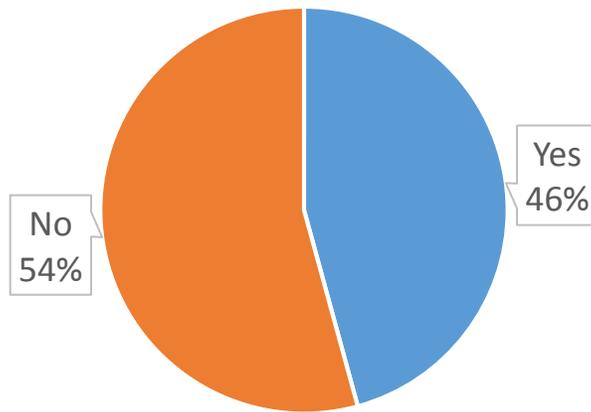


Figure 10. Has your school hired non-Chinese speaking teaching assistant?

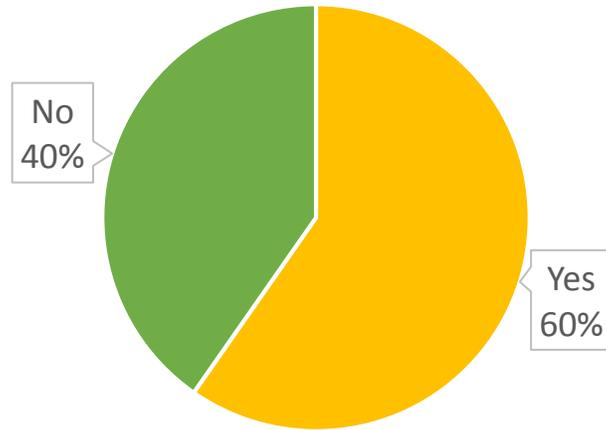
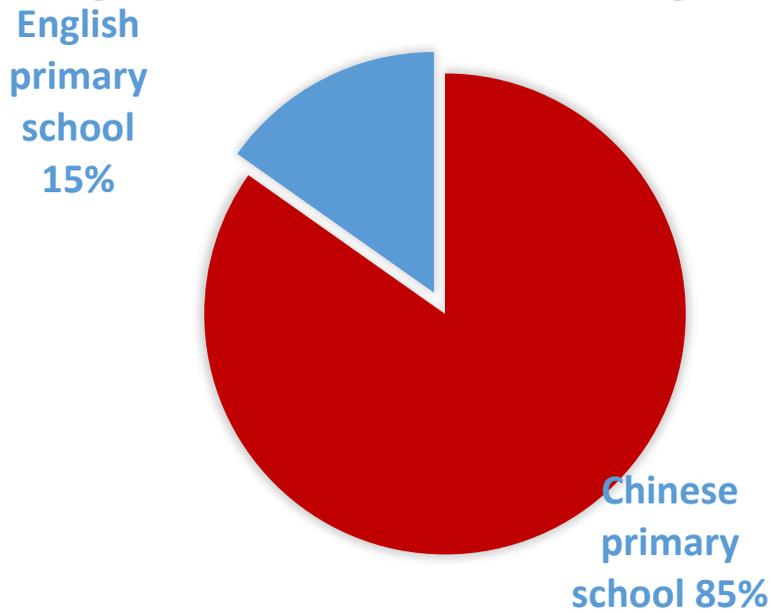
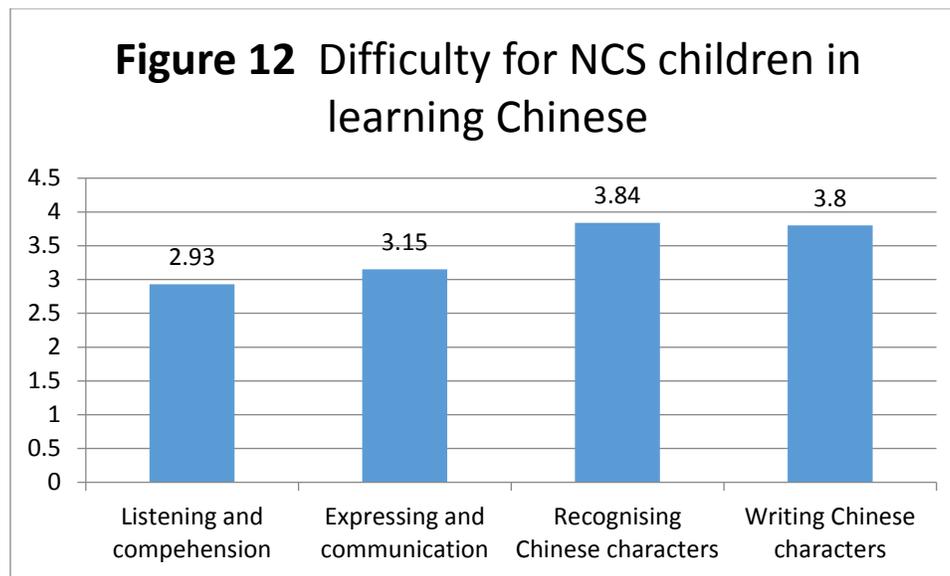


Figure 11. Enrollment condition of graduates

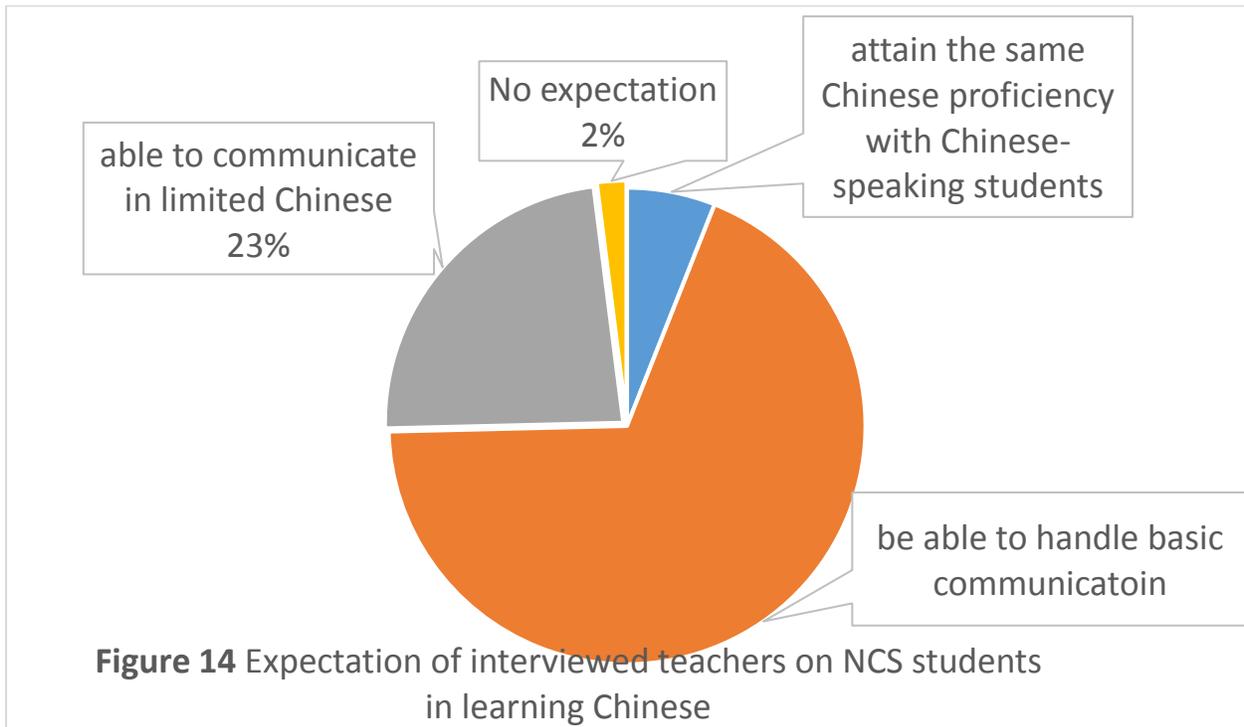
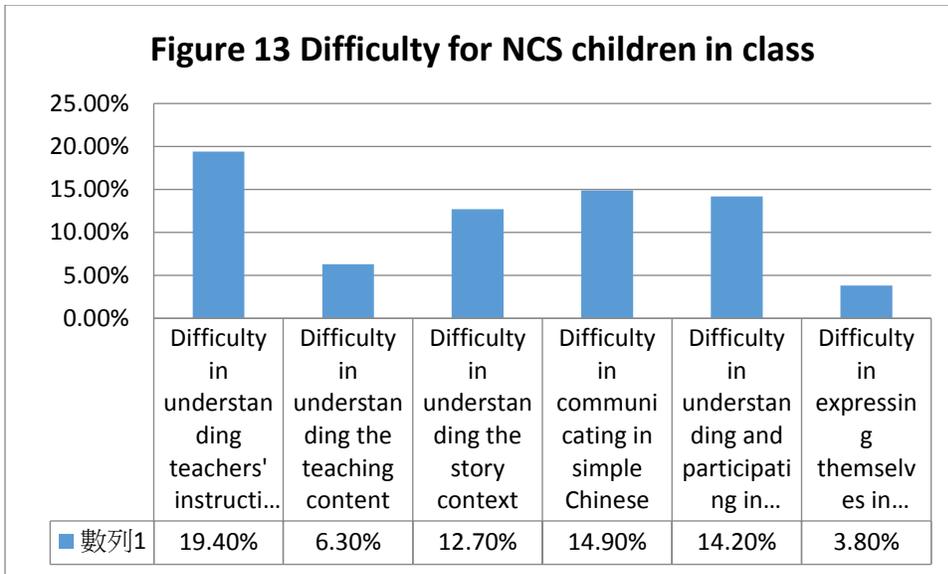


Section 2: Current condition and performance of NCS children in learning Chinese

According to the observation made by interviewed teachers, the greatest difficulty encountered by NCS children in learning Chinese is recognising Chinese characters, followed by writing Chinese characters (Figure 12). In class, the greatest obstacle experienced by NCS children is not being able to understand teacher's instruction (19.4%), to communicate in simple Chinese (14.9%) and to understand and participate in group activities (14.2) (Figure 13). Data also reflected that teachers do not have high expectation on NCS students in learning Chinese, 69% of respondents expected NCS children to have a Chinese proficiency which allow them to handle only basic communication, 25% of respondents even had no expectation of NCS students in learning Chinese or expected them to be able to handle limited communication.



(5 represents the hardest ; 1 represents the easiest)



Section 3: Strategy in teaching Chinese

In terms of Chinese teaching, 64% of interviewed teachers did not adopt designated Chinese teaching material (see Figure 15). Besides, nearly 40% of interviewed teachers did not put stronger emphasis in teaching NCS students Chinese (see Figure 16). Those teachers who has put stronger emphasis mostly focus on Listening and comprehension (Figure 17). Although it is reflected in section 2 that learning how to recognise and write Chinese characters are the greatest difficulty for NCS students (Figure 12), data (Figure 17) showed that only little support was given by kindergarten teachers in recognising Chinese characters, Understanding structure of Chinese characters , and writing Chinese characters. In addition, nearly 70% of kindergartens offer additional support for NCS students (Figure 18), which included offering supplementary tutorials after class, arranging teachers or teaching assistants in school to specifically take care/teach NCS children, or hiring NCS teachers or teaching assistants to specifically take care/teach NCS children (other forms of support are shown on Figure 19).

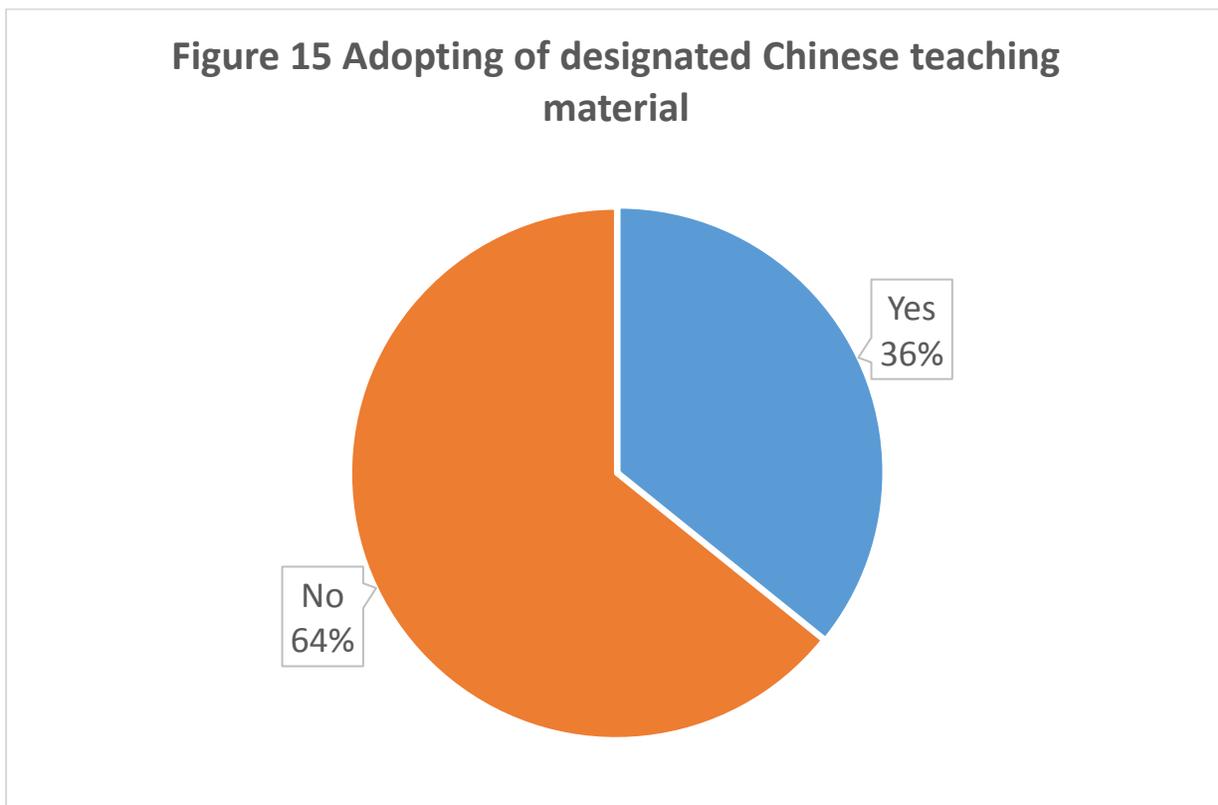


Figure 16 Stronger emphasis in teaching NCS students

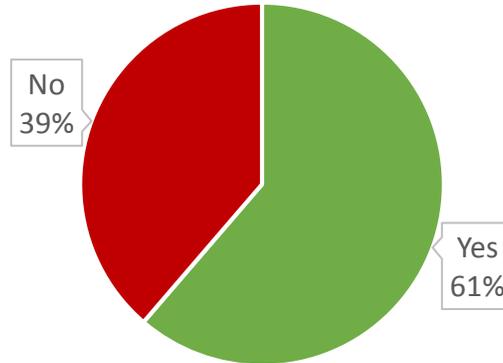


Figure 17 Teaching areas of emphasis to NCS students

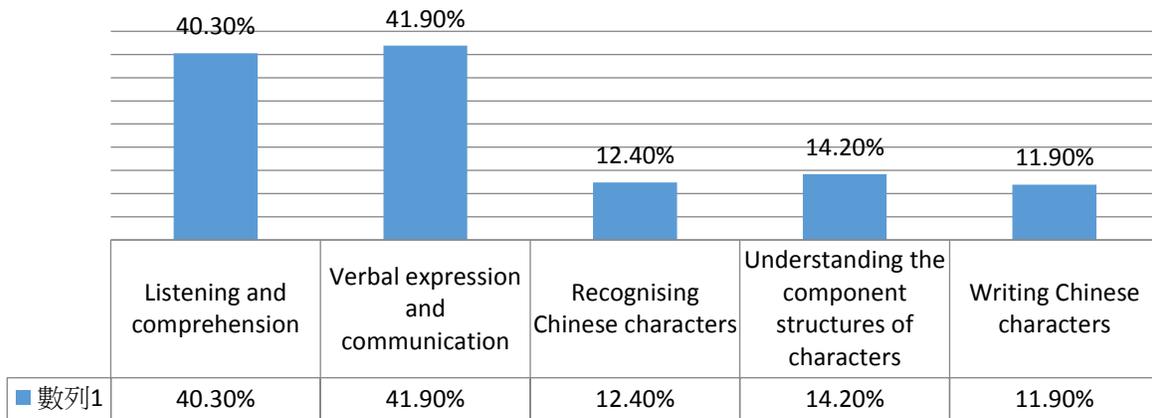


Figure 18 School that offer additional support

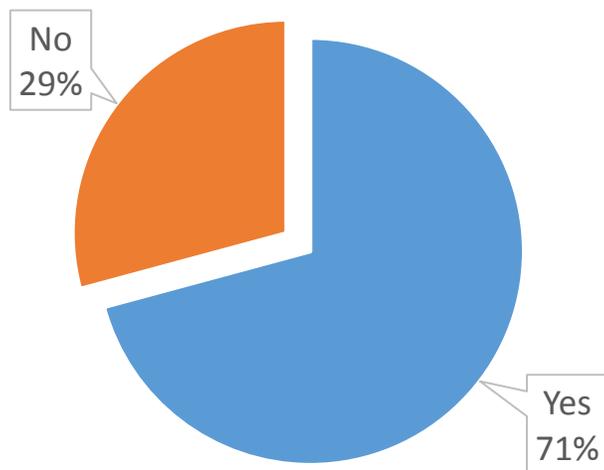
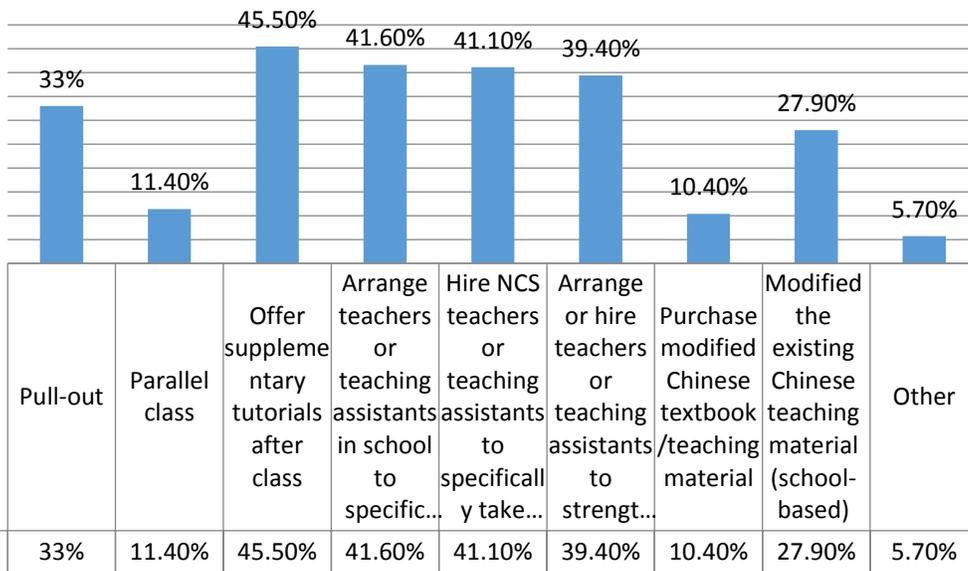


Figure 19 Forms of additional support (if any)



數列1

Section 4: Support for NCS students in learning Chinese

For the enhancement scheme offered to NCS students to learn Chinese as a second language, the support rate from interviewed teachers reached 96% (Figure 20), among which 63% believed interactive mode suggested by Oxfam is the most effective (Figure 21). Besides, 97% of respondents indicated that they would use it if there is a specifically designed “Chinese as a second language” curriculum which is tested to be effective in assisting NCS students in learning Chinese (Figure 22).

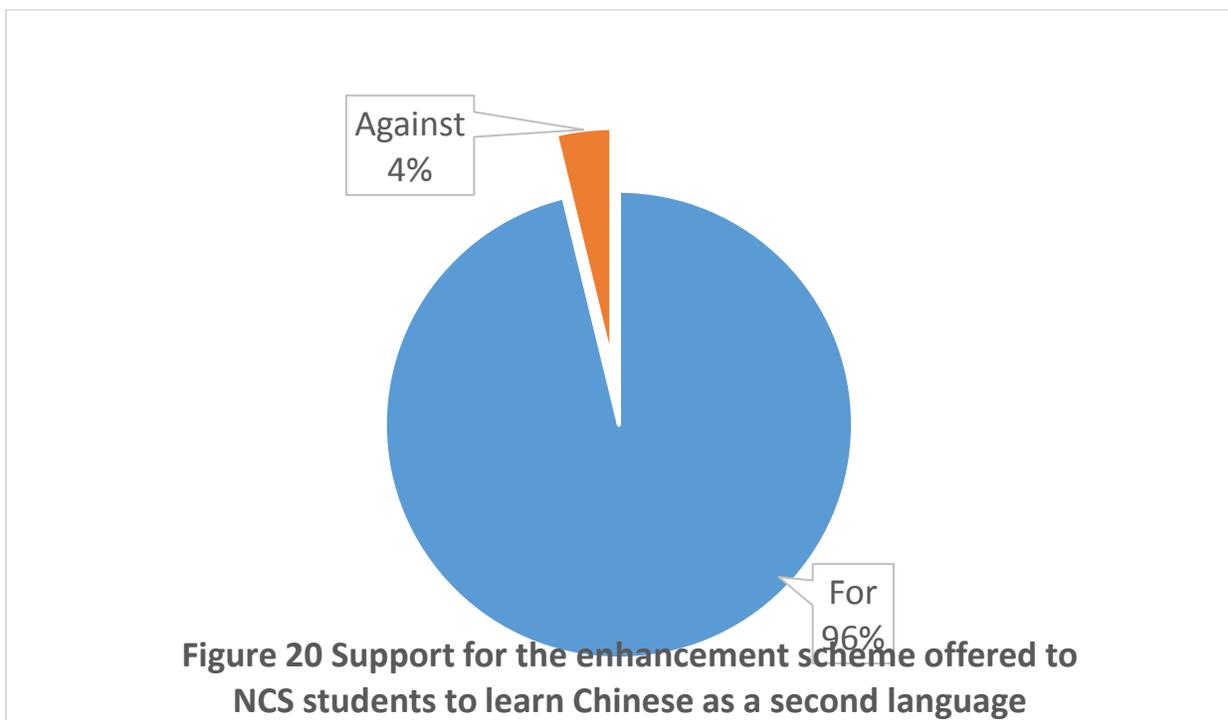


Figure 21 The most effective mode of support

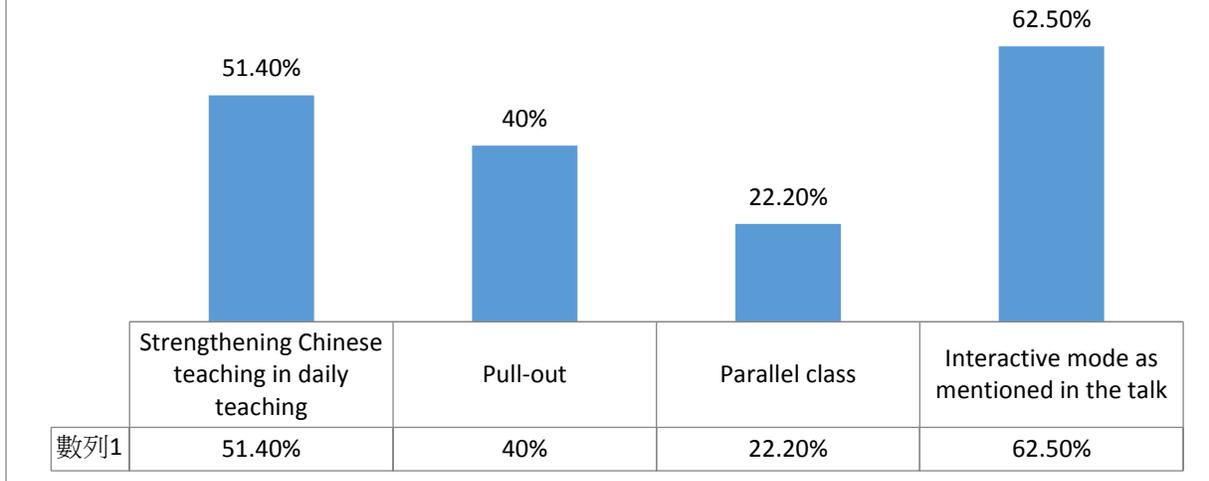
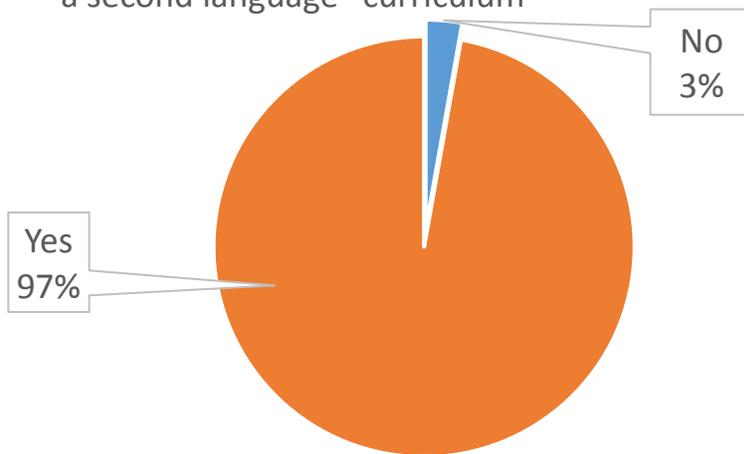


Figure 22 Would you adopt the specifically designed “Chinese as a second language” curriculum



Section 5: Pre-school education policy of NCS students

For the pre-school support to NCS students offered by Education Bureau, 64% of interviewed teachers believed there is a lack of support (Figure 23). 87% of the kindergarten applied for the subsidy from Education Bureau, 93% of them believed the subsidy is used efficiently.

Figure 23 The pre-school support to NCS students offered by Education Bureau

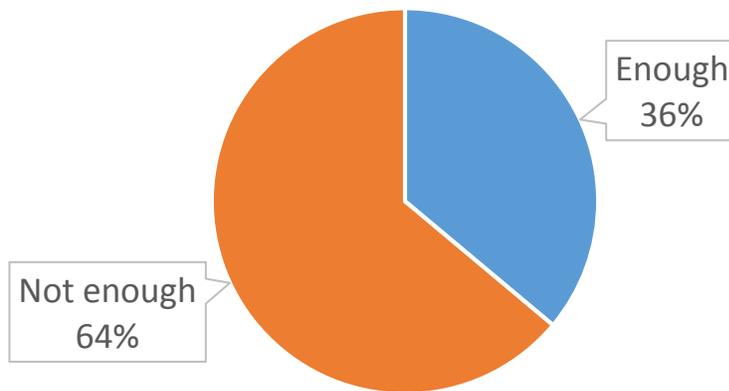


Figure 24 Kindergarten of interviewed teachers that admits 8 or more NCS students, which also applied for the additional subsidy offered by Education Bureau

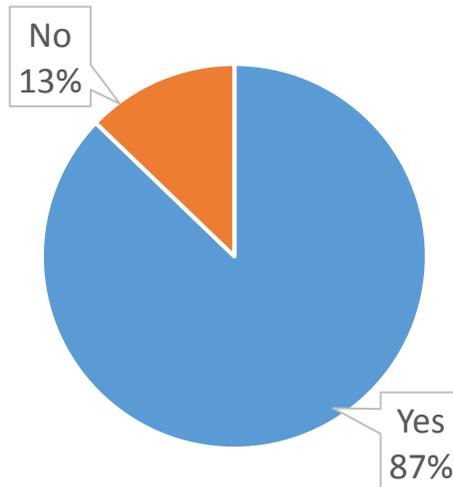
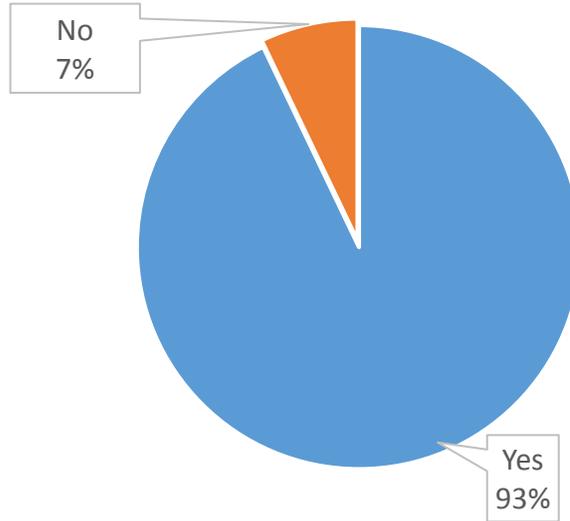


Figure 25 If yes, is the subsidy used efficiently?



Section 6: Home-school Co-operation

In terms of the communication condition with NCS parents, 70% of interviewed teachers indicated the presence of difficulties (Figure 26), which gave rise to different problem. 86.6% of them reflected that their students has forgotten to turn in assignment/reply slip due to the miscommunication with NCS parents, another 88.5% of them reflected their students has forgotten to bring utensils and 68.5% of them reflected their students has worn the wrong the inappropriate uniform to school because of the same reason.

In terms of the arrangement of communicating with NCS parents, interviewed teachers reflected the most commonly adopted format is arranging a designated teacher or teaching assistant to communicate with NCS parents (71.6%) and offer information of further education (69.1). Besides, 51.5% of them reflected that they had translated text and 21.3% translated school notices for NCS parents. 24.5% of teachers has used other measures in communicating with NCS parents, such as translating homework, evaluation report or oral translation etc. Only 16% indicated that they are still in touch with parents of NCS graduates.

Figure 26 Communication difficulty with NCS parents

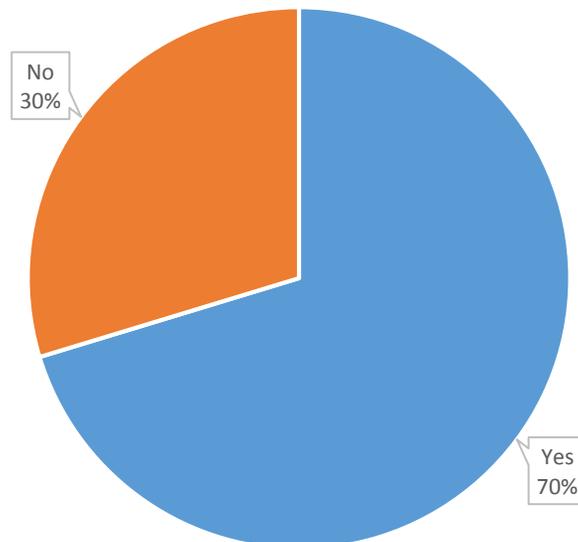


Figure 27 Occurance of situations as a result of miscommunication with NCS parents reflected by Interviewed teachers

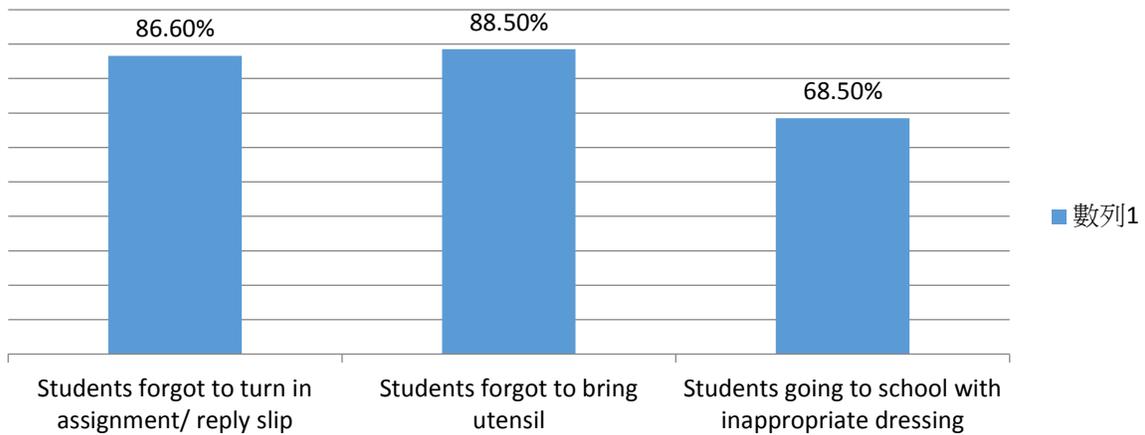
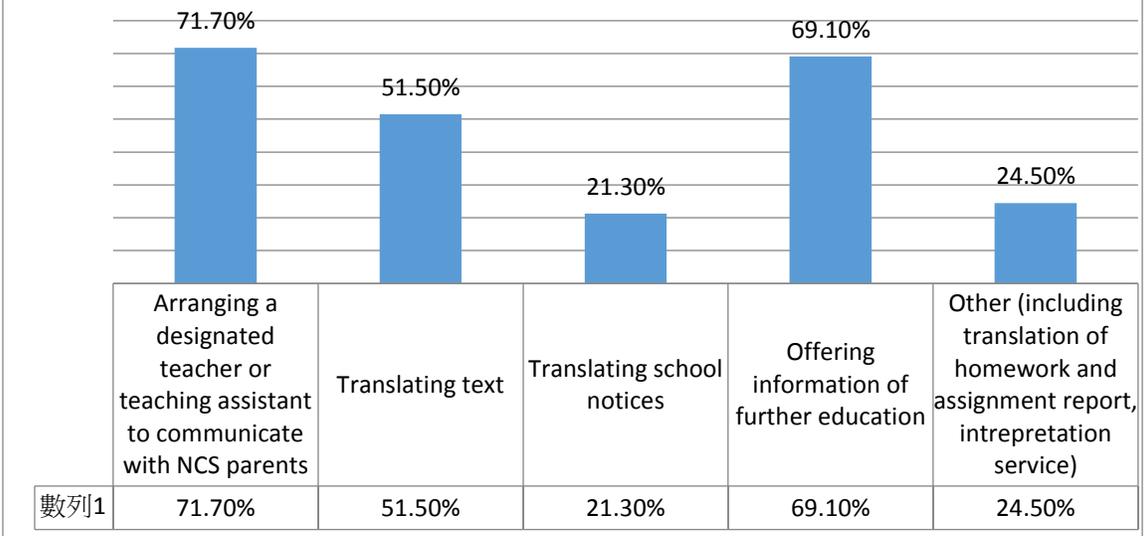
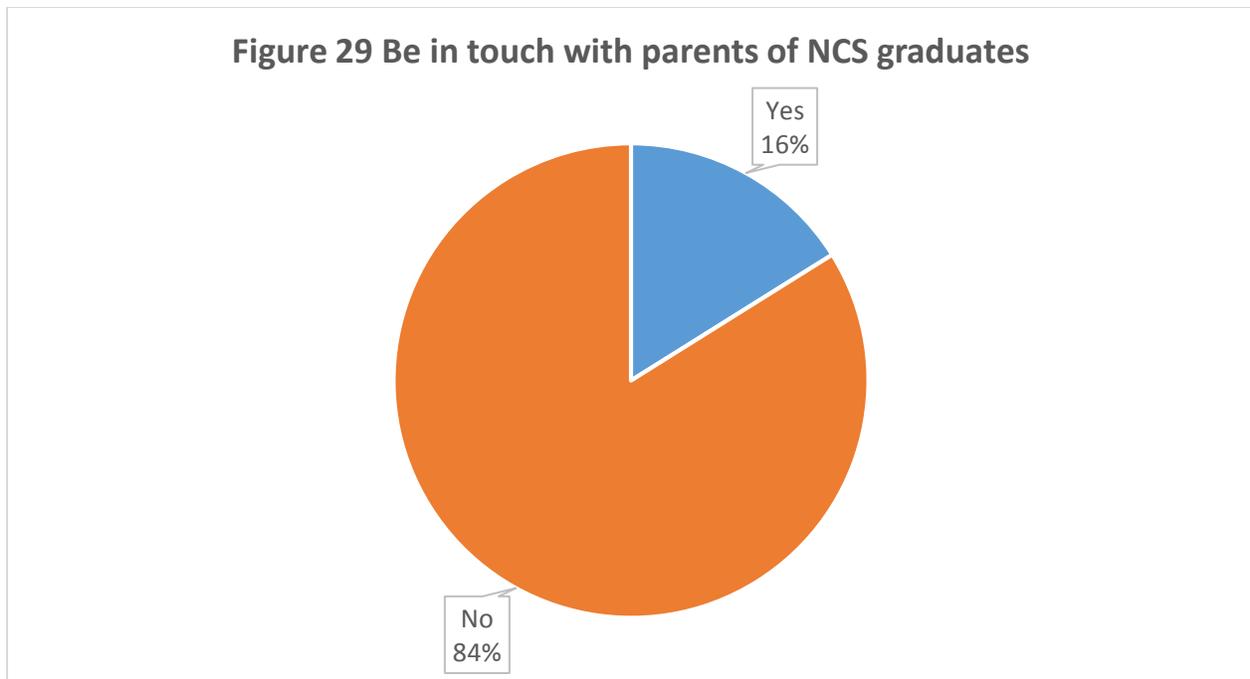


Figure 28 Arrangement to communicate with NCS parents





Section 7 Difficulty and challenge in supporting NCS students

In terms of assisting NCS students in learning Chinese, 99.8% of interviewed teachers indicated that the lack of learning opportunity of Chinese outside school exerted the most significant impact on their teaching (figure 30). 99.3% also indicated that the gap between Chinese proficiency between NCS students and local student created impact on their teaching. Other factors affecting the teaching include: “huge gap between Chinese proficiency between NCS students and local student” (99.8%), “Difficulty for NCS students in understanding certain topics or context due to cultural difference” (97.5%), and “Language barriers with NCS students leading to communication difficulties” (96.6%). Nearly half of the interviewed teachers believed “Necessity of using English to assist teaching” is one of the factors affecting teaching.

Balance between teaching NCS and Chinese-speaking students in class also added burden to the teaching (figure 31). 93.2% indicated that the “Incapability in taking care of NCS and Chinese-speaking students at the same time due to the different learning progress” brought significant impact on their teaching. 80% indicated that the reluctance of NCS students to communicate with Chinese-speaking students also caused some difficulties. Besides, 74% of teachers indicated that the reluctance of Chinese-speaking student to allow NCS students to integrate with them affected their teaching.

Besides, factor of NCS parents also exerted certain impacts on the teachings (figure 32). 88.3% of interviewed teachers indicated that the Incapability of NCS parents in assisting their children in doing homework affected the effectiveness of teaching. 98.8% believed that the low expectation of NCS parents towards their children’s academic performance is also a factor. 96.6% believed the Language barrier with NCS parents which leads to communication difficulties also affected their teaching.

In terms of teacher training, the majority of interviewed teachers (98%) indicated that there are lack of training focusing on teaching NCS students Chinese, which affect the effectiveness of teaching (Figure 33).

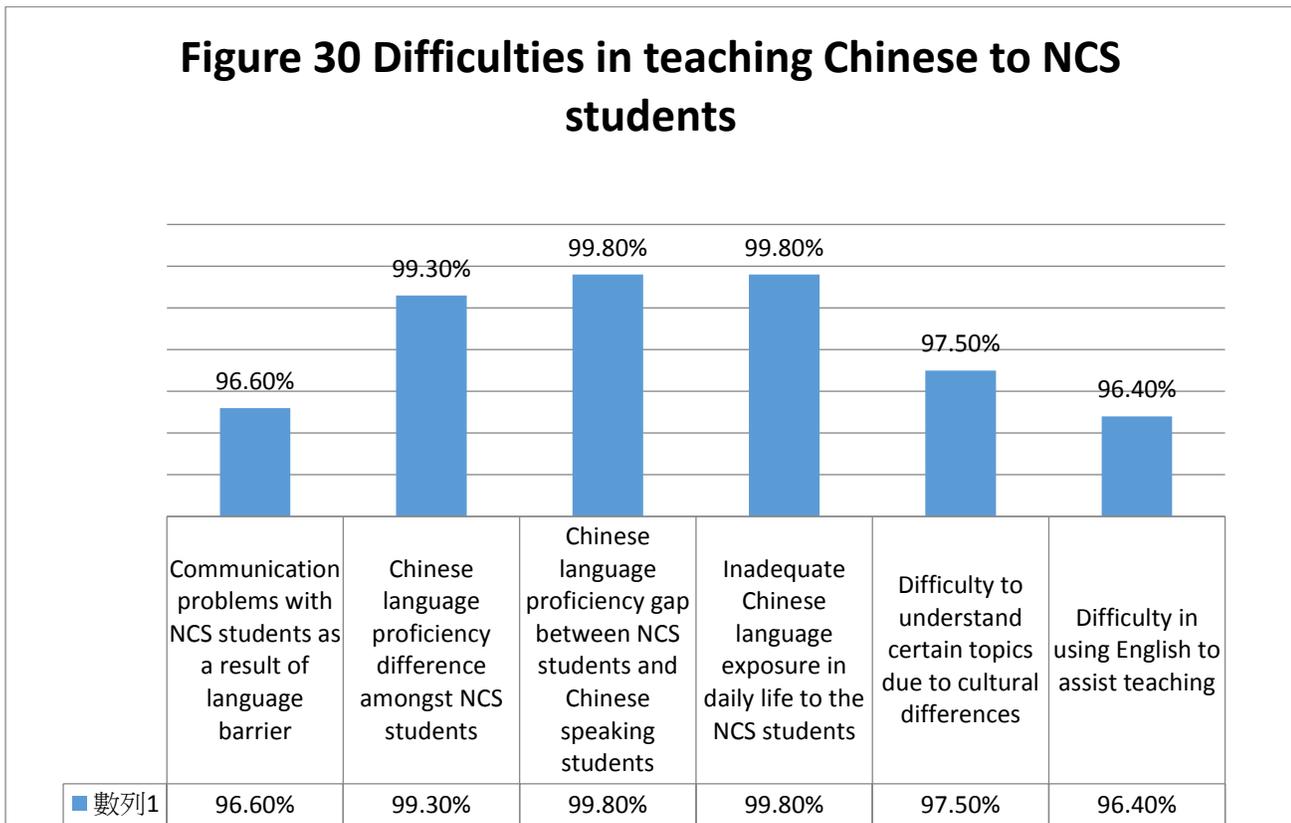


Figure 31 Difficulties in catering the learning needs of both NCS and Chinese-speaking students

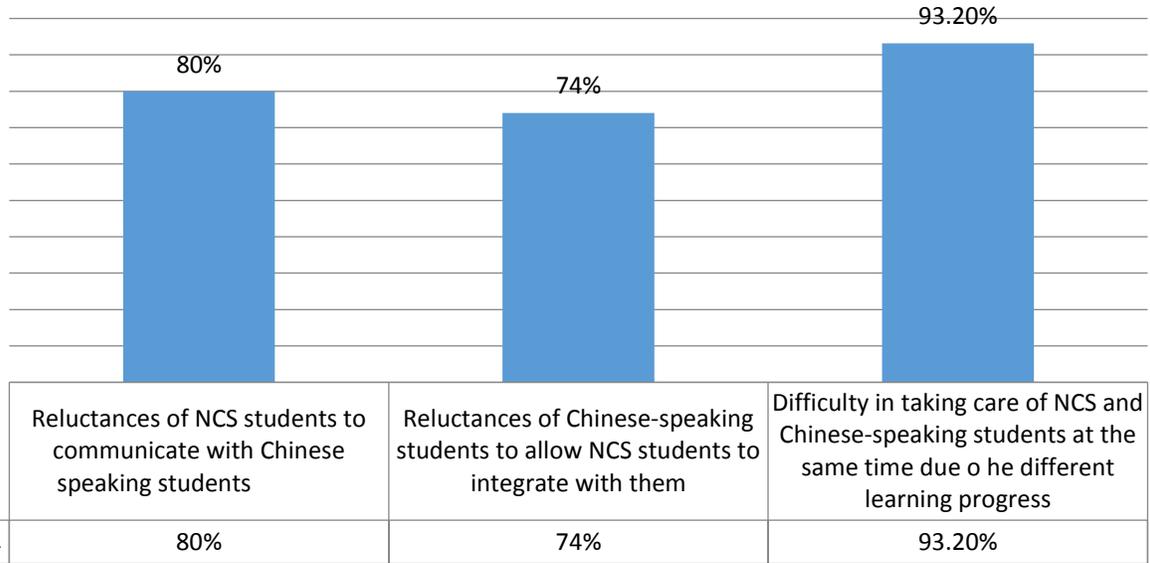


Figure 32 Factors related to NCS parents

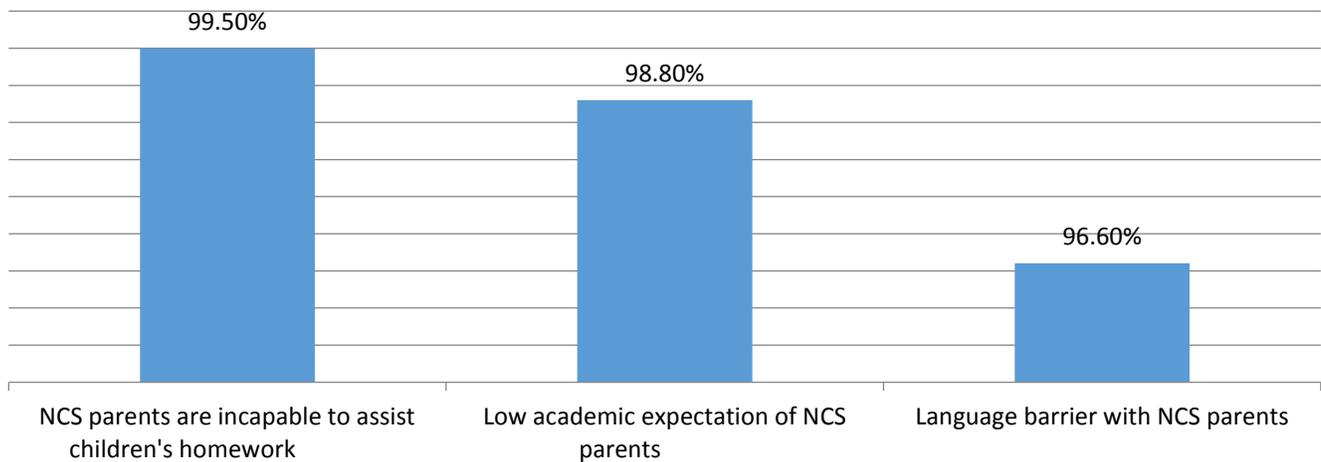
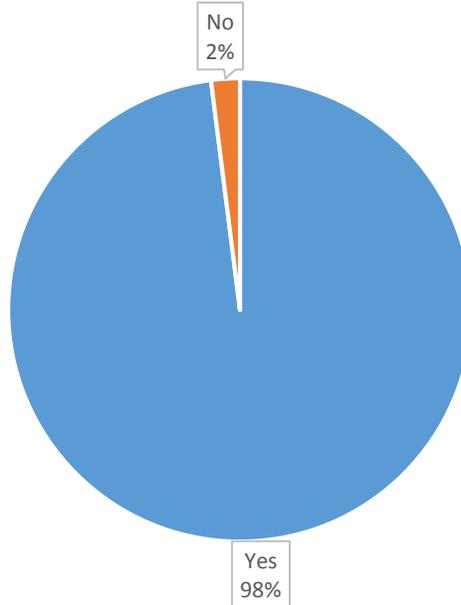


Figure 33 interviewed teachers reflected that Figure 33 interviewed teachers reflected that they have not received training of teaching NCS students, which affect the effectiveness of their teaching



Discussion

1. Difficulties and needs of NCS kindergarten students in learning Chinese

1.1 Lack of pre-school Chinese language environment/ language input

Most of the parents of NCS students do not speak Chinese. As a result, NCS students first start learning to communicate with parents in their mother language (Urdu, Indian) during early childhood. It is until the enrolment to kindergarten, at the age of 3, that they began to learn Chinese. As compared to the local students whose mother language is Chinese, NCS students has a lagged development of 2 years in language input. Besides, due to the rapid cognitive development, local students could also experience a radical improvement after the age of 3 which essentially widen the learning gap with the NCS students. As a result, it caused difficulties for the NCS students to catch up with the learning progress of the local students.

1.2 Inadequate family support

Despite the Chinese learning opportunity and environment offered in kindergarten, home and daily uses of language are the keys to language development. Nevertheless, most of the NCS parents are the first generation migrants to Hong Kong without formal education of Chinese, let alone understanding and reading of Chinese. Without a home environment that can practice Chinese, together with the absence of Chinese enhancement support outside home, the few contact hours in kindergarten would be the only chance to learn about Chinese for the NCS students. Nearly 90% of the interviewed teachers believed that the biggest challenge for NCS students in learning Chinese is the lack of usage outside school and Chinese learning opportunities.

1.3 Difficulty in communication and comprehension

As a result of limited proficiency in both English and Chinese, the NCS students encounter enormous difficulty in listening, speaking and understanding in class in kindergarten. 69.7% of the interviewed teachers indicated that their students had difficulty understanding the teaching context. Some teachers believed that the communication barrier would adversely impact students' learning motivation, concentration and participation in class, eventually exerting a further negative impact on learning progress.

2. Difficulty of kindergarten teachers

Attributed to the lack of learning opportunity and the Chinese language environment in the daily life of NCS students, as well as the inadequate support for Chinese learning, kindergarten teachers played an essential role in Chinese teaching. According to the survey result, kindergarten teachers experienced diverse challenges in teaching Chinese.

2.1 Handling the learning difference

In a kindergarten classroom, there are an average of 15-20 students, including both local and NCS students. While teaching, kindergarten teachers need to provide suitable assistance in accordance with their students' learning abilities and needs. Approximately 80% (79.5%) of the interviewed teachers stated that the difference of Chinese language proficiency between local and NCS students is significantly large, whilst 65% of the teachers believed that catering the learning progress of both local and NCS students at the same time is just incredibly difficult. Besides, 81.4% of the interviewed kindergarten teachers believed that there is a significant difference in Chinese language proficiency amongst the NCS students as well. In regards to the different starting point of each NCS student, teachers need to provide guidance based on each student's language attribute and that poses a lot of challenges to them.

2.2 Communication difficulty with NCS students

The majority of NCS students did not learn Chinese before entering kindergarten, making them only able to communicate in their mother-tongue language with limited English when first studying in kindergartens. 69.7% of the teachers reflected that they experienced difficulties in communicating with NCS students. Yet, English is a second language to most of the teachers, a 58.4% of teachers indeed experienced difficulties in using English to assist teaching.

2.3 Difficulty in home-school co-operation

Family participation is a key factor determining children's learning outcomes, for instance, the parental academic expectation and the time and effort invested in children's learning. However, nearly 98.8% of interviewed teachers reflected that parents have a low academic expectation, 99.5% of the teachers also reported that NCS parents are incapable to assist their children in doing homework which made teaching more difficult.

Despite the fact that 71.7% of the interviewed teachers reported that their school has arranged a designated teacher or teaching assistant to communicate with NCS parents specifically, there is nearly 96.6% experienced difficulty in communicating with the NCS parents. Problems attributed to the communication difficulties occur from time to time. For instance, 88.5% of the teachers reflected that their students have forgotten to bring utensils due to the miscommunication with NCS parents. 86.6% of them reflected that their students have forgotten to turn in assignment/reply slip and 68.5% of them reflected that their students have worn inappropriate uniform to school because of the same reason. Therefore, the lack of family support made it even harder for kindergarten teachers to teach NCS students.

2.4 Difficulties in handling cultural difference

Integrating students with a diverse background is equally challenging for kindergarten teachers. Approximately 98.5% of the interviewed teachers reflected that cultural difference of NCS students made it harder for them to understand certain topics related to Chinese culture. Nearly 80% of the teachers stated that NCS students are reluctant to interact with local students, making inclusive education more difficult. Besides, 74% of the teachers reflected that local students are also reluctant to be friend with the NCS students. This demonstrated the insufficient knowledge of teachers in handling multicultural education and cultural difference.

2.5 Tight schedule of teaching

Despite the fact that interviewed teachers expressed their concerns about NCS students, they experienced difficulties in providing additional guidance to individual NCS students as their time is limited by the tight schedule of teaching ascribed by school curriculum.

2.6 Absence of NCS students

Some interviewed teacher reflected that NCS parents often let their children absent from school without a reason which impeded students' learning progress. This reflected an inadequate awareness on the significance of early childhood education in NCS family.

3. Insufficient support on NCS students education

The second part highlighted the diverse difficulties encountered by kindergarten teachers and that have reflected a pressing need of professional training courses on teaching NCS student.

3.1 Inadequate teaching material

In regards to the different starting points of Chinese learning of NCS and local students, the curriculum initially designed for local students, apparently would not be applicable to the NCS students, who have a lack Chinese language foundation. Therefore, we urge the Education Bureau to design a curriculum with a focus of teaching Chinese as a second language, which allows NCS students to learn Chinese in a systematic and progressive manner.

3.2 Lack of consistency of relevant professional training

In this survey, only 25% of the interviewed teachers have received professional training on teaching NCS students, among which the one-off talk is the most popular format of professional training received by the teachers, (nearly 80% of the respondents). This reflected the teacher training is lack of consistency.

3.3 Mismatch of professional training and actual need

Nearly 40% of the respondents disagree that the professional training on NCS students teaching would satisfy the actual needs. Most interviewed teachers claimed that the professional training programs need to be improved and the topics related to student support and school culture (30.5%), and teaching and learning Chinese as a second language (29.6%) should be added into the professional training program.

3.4 Inefficient subsidy in supporting the learning of NCS students

More than 70% of the interviewed teachers indicated that their kindergartens have admitted more than 8 NCS students, 87% of which have applied for the additional fund from the Education Bureau. However, only 40% of the respondents indicated that their school has hired NCS teacher or teaching assistant to provide assistance for teaching NCS students and communicating with NCS students. This reflected that the subsidy is not entirely allocated to enhance the learning experience of NCS students.

3.5 Inadequate manpower and time

NCS students required additional support on learning and home-school collaboration. Many teachers reflected that teaching and administrative duties have occupied most of their working time. With a limited time, it is difficult for them to modify teaching material specifically for NCS students. During in-class activities, teachers also have challenges in spending additional time to communicate with the NCS students due to the language barrier, and explain the same instruction repeatedly to an individual student. Limited by the tight teaching schedule, it is difficult for teachers to take a balance between the local and NCS students within only 20 minutes lesson time. Interviewed teacher therefore called for increasing manpower at school to specifically handle the learning and communication needs for these NCS students.

4. Recommendation

5.1 Develop supplementary guide and teaching material for teaching Chinese as a second language

Given the discrepancy on the starting point of learning Chinese between the Chinese and non-Chinese speaking students, their Chinese language proficiency gap is significantly large that it is considerably difficult for teachers to cater the learning needs of both of them at the same time within a tight teaching schedule. EDB needs to adopt the evidence-based “Dynamic Enrichment Learning Mode” program (including the teaching material, teaching tool and lesson plan, assessment) in kindergartens to support teaching of Chinese as a second language. EDB also needs to support teachers taking part of the school time to provide learning enrichment to the non-Chinese speaking kindergarteners. Besides, the teachers need to assure their teaching is level-appropriate and students are learning Chinese language in a systematic and progressive manner.

5.2 Require a proportion of teachers to receive basic and advanced professional training

Regarding the in-service professional training, we suggest the EDB to strengthen Chinese as a second language professional training by increasing the course quota and enhance the curriculum, based on the existing basic and advance courses. The bureau could take the reference of teacher development implemented in special education support among the primary and secondary schools². For example, in five years, the EDB could require a certain proportion of teachers to complete basic and advance level professional training, to make sure the teachers have the necessary knowledge and skills in teaching non-Chinese speaking students.

In addition to the training, EDB should provide a career prospect for teachers or pre-service teachers to pursue in the specialist of teaching non-Chinese speaking students.

5.3 Provide support to the parents during primary one admission

We suggest the EDB should strengthen the parent support on the transition from kindergarten to primary one, such as: primary one admission procedure, facilitating parents to understand the local education system, increase the transparency on the medium of instruction used in different primary schools.

² EDB Circular No. 12/ 2015. Teacher Professional Development on Catering for Students with Special Educational Needs. Retrieved from: <https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/special/sen-training/index.html>

5.4 Review the existing additional funding mechanism for Primary and Secondary schools with NCS students

Sufficient support of primary schools will be the prerequisite for NCS students in smooth transition to Primary One. However, under the current additional funding mechanism, primary and secondary schools admitting ten or more NCS students are granted an additional funding ranging from \$0.8 million to \$1.5 million, while those admitting nine or less are granted \$50,000 only.

As a matter of fact, about 47.5% primary schools were with less than 10 NCS students in year 2017-18. ³According to the direct investigation report “Government’s Support for non-Chinese Speaking Students” issued by the Office of the Ombudsman issued in February 2019, it provided comment to the policy, “*The above situation shows that the difference of only one NCS student (whether admitting nine or ten students) could mean a difference of 16 times in additional funding to primary and secondary schools (i.e. \$50,000 for admitting nine students and \$0.8 million for admitting ten students).*”⁴ We recommend EDB should review the funding mechanism and increase the subsidies for schools admitting less than 10 NCS students so as to enhance the support of teaching.

Conclusion

With the escalating number of NCS students in local kindergarten, the learning difficulty encountered by them is unneglectable. Despite the measures launched by Education Bureau in the recent years (for example offering subsidy and training courses), most kindergarten believed the situation is yet to improve. As the challenges faced by kindergarten teachers remains apparent, there is a need for Education Bureau to tackle the problem promptly, for instance to increase the professional training for potential and serving teachers, to encourage talent training, to develop a comprehensive curriculum on Chinese as a second language and review the funding mechanism. These measures are believed to alleviate the current issues of the inadequacy of relevant professional training, the lack of comprehensive teaching material for NCS students and the inadequacy of manpower.

End

³ https://ofomb.ombudsman.hk/abc/files/2019-2_FR_DI422_Governments_support_for_non-Chinese_speaking_students.pdf, p.10

⁴ https://ofomb.ombudsman.hk/abc/files/2019-2_FR_DI422_Governments_support_for_non-Chinese_speaking_students.pdf, section 5.5

Appendix 1 –

Start from the Beginning – Chinese Supporting Scheme for Non-Chinese Speaking Students in Kindergarten – Survey for kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong

Co-organised by Oxfam, Faculty of Education at The University of Hong Kong, and the Department of Early Childhood Education at The Education University of Hong Kong

To further understand the current condition of NCS kindergarten students in pre-school education, Oxfam saw the need of collecting opinion from front-line teachers regarding the support provided for NCS toddlers in learning Chinese. In this regard, we are cordially inviting your school to participate in the “Start from the Beginning – Chinese Supporting Scheme for Non-Chinese Speaking Students in Kindergarten – Survey for kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong” co-organised Oxfam, Faculty of Education at The University of Hong Kong, and the Department of Early Childhood Education at The Education University of Hong Kong. The survey takes approximately 15 minutes.

The information provided would be confidential and served for research purposes only.

Section 1: Background of the kindergarten and teachers

The following questions enquire about the condition of NCS children in kindergartens and your teaching experience. Please fill in the survey according to your experience, or tick as appropriate.

1. How many students in total has your school admitted in the year 2017-18? _____ people
2. Did your school admit any NCS students in the year 2017-18?
 Yes (___ people) No
 Pre-school : ___ people ; Nursery Class : ___ people ; Lower kindergarten : ___ people ; Upper kindergarten : ___ people
3. What is your teaching experience? _____ year(s)
4. What grade are you teaching now? (you may choose more than 1 option)
 Pre-school Nursery Class Lower kindergarten Upper kindergarten
5. Did you teach any NCS students in this academic year? Yes (___ people) No
6. How many NCS students have you taught in the past two years? 0 person 1-10 people
 11-20 people 21-30 people \geq 30 people
7. What is your teaching experience with NCS students? _____ year(s)
8. What is your highest education attainment?
 Qualified Kindergarten Teacher Certificate in Kindergarten Education
 Higher Diploma in Child Care and Education Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education
 Other: _____
9. Have you ever received professional training on teaching NCS students?
 Yes (Please specify the course name) _____ No (Jump to Question 11)

If yes, please indicate the training format (you may choose more than 1 option):

- Refresher training program (In-service training course recognized by the Education Bureau)
- Attend a talk Attend a seminar Other : _____

The training programme mostly focuses on (you may choose more than 1 option):

- Teaching and learning Chinese as a second Language Student development
- Student support and school culture Professional relationship and services
- Administration and organisation School development
- Personal growth and development Other: _____

Organization of the training course or program: _____

10. Can you apply what you have learnt in the training course or program in your everyday teaching?

- Yes No

If not, please indicate the reason: _____

11. Do you think the existing professional education program in teaching NCS students matches your need?

- Yes No

If not, please indicate the area of professional education program you wish to improve? (you may choose more than 1 option):

- Teaching and learning Chinese as a second Language Student development
- Student support and school culture Professional relationship and services
- Administration and organisation School development
- Personal growth and development Other: _____

12. Do you know the Education Bureau has recently specified the qualification of kindergarten teacher, in which requires every kindergarten that received additional funding for NCS students to have at least 1 teacher complete the basic training programme in the academic year of 2018/19?

- Yes No

13. Has your school participated in any research project that support NCS students in learning Chinese?
 Yes No

If yes, please indicate the name of the supporting organization (for example: Education Bureau):

14. Has your school **arranged** a designated person in supporting NCS students to learn Chinese?
 Yes No

15. Has your school **hired** non-Chinese speaking teaching assistant? Yes No

16. Which kind of primary school did the graduates of your school generally attend in 2016-17? Chinese primary school English primary school

17. Please list the *three* most common primary schools that the graduates of your school attend in 2016-17:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

18. Do you think it is important to help NCS students in learning Chinese? Yes No

If yes, please indicate the main reasons (*you can choose more than 1 option*):

- Enhance the daily communication skill of NCS children
 Build a better foundation for NCS children's Chinese proficiency
 Enhance the kindergarten-primary school interface of NCS children
 increase their options of primary school enrolment
 Other: _____

Section 2: Current condition and performance of NCS children in learning Chinese

The following questions enquire about the performance of NCS students in learning Chinese. Please fill in the survey according to your experience, or tick as appropriate.

19. In general, which area do you think is more difficult for NCS students in learning Chinese? Rank with number 1-5 to indicate the level of difficulty. (**5 means the hardest, 1 means the easiest**)

- Listening and comprehension Verbal presentation and communication
 Recognising Chinese characters Writing Chinese characters
 Focusing in class Other (please indicate): _____

20. In class, do you think if the NCS children can ...

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Understand teacher's instruction? | <input type="checkbox"/> most likely | <input type="checkbox"/> partially | <input type="checkbox"/> not really |
| Understand the teaching context? | <input type="checkbox"/> most likely | <input type="checkbox"/> partially | <input type="checkbox"/> not really |
| Understand the story context? | <input type="checkbox"/> most likely | <input type="checkbox"/> partially | <input type="checkbox"/> not really |
| Communicate in simple Chinese? | <input type="checkbox"/> most likely | <input type="checkbox"/> partially | <input type="checkbox"/> not really |
| Understand and participate in group activities? | <input type="checkbox"/> most likely | <input type="checkbox"/> partially | <input type="checkbox"/> not really |
| Express themselves in group activities? | <input type="checkbox"/> most likely | <input type="checkbox"/> partially | <input type="checkbox"/> not really |

21. Which of the following statements is the most appropriate in describing your expectation on NCS students in learning Chinese?

- They should attain the same Chinese proficiency with Chinese-speaking students because _____
-
- Although they may sometimes make mistakes in comprehension or expression, they should still be able to handle basic communication because _____
-
- Although there may often make mistakes in comprehension or expression , they should still be able to handle limited communication because _____
-
- No expectation because _____
-

Section 3: Strategy in Chinese teaching

The following questions enquire about the strategy you used in teaching NCS students Chinese. Please fill in the survey according to your experience, or tick as appropriate.

22. Do you school adopt designated Chinese teaching material in class?

Yes (Please indicate: _____) No

23. Have you ever put stronger emphasis in teaching NCS students Chinese in specific?

Yes No (please jump to question 25)

If yes, which areas do you emphasise on? Rank with number 1-5 to indicate the level of importance to you. (5 means the most important ; 1 means the least important)

___ Listening and comprehension

___ Verbal presentation and communication

___ recognising Chinese characters

___ Understanding structure of Chinese characters

___ Writing Chinese characters

___ Other (please indicate): _____

24. When it comes to assisting NCS children in learning Chinese, which is the most common strategy you have used? (please answer accordingly, you can choose more than one option)

Listening and comprehension

Assist with body language

Imitate the action

Assist with picture

Assist with English

Other (please indicate: _____)

Verbal presentation and communication

Tell stories to children repeatedly

Repeat after listening to stories

Practice sentence structure

Sing nursery rhymes

Other (please indicate: _____)

Recognising Chinese characters

- Dictate psychological vocabulary 聯想識字
 flashcard Reading stories books
 Other (please indicate: _____)

Understanding parts and structure

- Use colour pens to indicate parts Assemble parts into word
 Literacy reading Games on parts
 Other (please indicate: _____)

Writing Chinese characters

- Imitation Free writing Copy book practices
 Other (please indicate: _____)

25. Does the school you are teaching in now offer additional support for NCS children in learning Chinese?
 Yes No

If yes, which format is commonly used? (you can choose more than one option)

- offer 「抽離班」 (separate NCS children from Chinese-speaking children, adopt a different curriculum)
 offer 「平行班」 (separate NCS children from Chinese-speaking children, adopt the same curriculum)
 offer supplementary tutorials after class
 arrange teachers or teaching assistants in school to specifically take care/teach NCS children
 hire NCS teachers or teaching assistants to specifically take care/teach NCS children
 arrange or hire teachers or teaching assistants to strengthen the communication with NCS parents
 purchase modified Chinese textbook/teaching material
 modified the existing Chinese teaching material (school-based)
 Other (Please indicate: _____)

Section 4: Support for NCS students in learning Chinese

The following questions enquire about your opinion towards NCS students in learning Chinese. Please fill in the survey according to your experience, or tick as appropriate.

26. Do you support offering enhancement scheme to NCS students to learn Chinese as a second language?

- Yes No

If not, what is/are the reason(s), please indicate: _____

27. If yes, which of the following mode should be adopted in the enhancement scheme to facilitate NCS students in learning Chinese? (you can choose more than one option)

- strengthen Chinese teaching in daily teaching
- offer 「抽離班」 (separate NCS children from Chinese-speaking children, adopt a different curriculum)
- offer 「平行班」 (separate NCS children from Chinese-speaking children, adopt the same curriculum)
- Interactive mode as mentioned in the talk (separate NCS students from Chinese speaking students only in Chinese classes, offer extra support for Chinese learning)

28. Do you think the following measures can effectively assist NCS students in learning Chinese?

	Very effective	Mostly effective	Slightly effective	Not effective
• Group learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Individual learning / learning in pairs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Use picture books to highlight learning theme and connect it with students own experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Imitate actions to assist children in understanding the stories or words meaning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Use pictures or objects to assist teaching, offer realistic learning experience | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Use nursery rhymes to strengthen the memorization of phonetic sound | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Teach sentence structure to strengthen the ability of students in self-expression | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Encourage students to introduce their own drawing , and hence promote students' literacy on words related to daily life | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Use game to assist students in recognising Chinese characters and their phonetic sound | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Use componential learning (部件識字法) to assist students in developing the concept of parts and structure | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Use the format of ' learning by doing ' to offer a more profound learning experience, and hence strengthen their memory | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Ask questions with their difficulties adjusted according to students' ability | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

29. If a specifically designed “Chinese as a second language” curriculum which included all above-mentioned elements and is tested to be effective in facilitating NCS students in learning Chinese, would you use it?
(如果有一專門為非華語幼兒而設的中文作為第二語言的課程，包含上述元素，並經驗證證實能有效幫助非華語幼兒學習中文，您會否採用?)

Yes

No (please indicate the factors of consideration):

Section 5: Pre-school education policy of NCS students

The following questions enquire about your opinion towards the pre-school education policy of NCS students. Please fill in the survey according to your experience, or tick as appropriate.

30. Do you think Education Bureau is offering enough pre-school support to NCS students

Yes No

If not, please indicate reason: _____

31. Does your school aware that starting from the academic year of 2017/18, Education Bureau offers additional subsidy to kindergarten that admits 8 or more NCS students (amount equivalent to the suggested salary of a kindergarten teacher)? Yes No

32. Did your school apply for this subsidy? Yes No (if not, please jump to question 34)

If yes, how does your school spend the subsidy? (you can choose more than one option)

hire NCS teacher or teaching assistant to provide Chinese enhancement scheme or assistance for NCS students (including 主流課堂/抽離班/平行班/輔導班)

hire NCS teacher or teaching assistant to enhance communication with NCS students and their parents

organise STEM teaching activity mainly in Chinese, increase Chinese lesson time

purchase non-school services or teaching material to assist NCS students in learning Chinese

purchase more books Others : _____

33. Do you think the subsidy is used efficiently? Yes No (if not, please jump to question 35)

If yes, which is the format? (you can choose more than one option)

arrange a designated teacher or teaching assistant to communicate with NCS parents?

translate text translate notice offer information of further education

Others: _____

40. Are you still in touch with parents of NCS graduates? Yes No

If yes, did the parents mention any difficulty for their children at the kindergarten-primary school interface? Please indicate: _____

Section 7: Difficulty and challenge in supporting NCS students

The following questions enquire about the difficulty and challenging teaching NCS students Chinese. Please fill in the survey according to your experience, or tick as appropriate.

Degree of impact on you (especially on teaching NCS students Chinese). 1 = no impact, 4 = huge impact

<i>Factor of NCS students</i>	No impact		Huge impact	
	1	2	3	4
41. Language barriers with NCS students leading to communication difficulties	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
42. Difference of Chinese proficiency among NCS students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
43. Huge gap between Chinese proficiency between NCS students and local student	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
44. 非華語幼兒於校外不會接觸中文，語境不足	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
45. Difficulty for NCS students in understanding certain topics or context due to cultural difference	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
46. Necessity of using English to assist teaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Balance between teaching NCS and Chinese-speaking students

- | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 47. Reluctance of NCS students to communicate with Chinese-speaking students | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 48. Reluctance of Chinese-speaking student to allow NCS students to integrate with them | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 49. Incapability in taking care of NCS and Chinese-speaking students at the same time due to the different learning progress | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Factor of NCS parents

- | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 50. Incapability of NCS parents in assisting their children in doing homework | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 51. Low expectation of NCS parents towards their children's academic performance | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 52. Language barrier with NCS parents leading to communication difficulties | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Factor of teacher training

- | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 53. I have not received training of teaching NCS students, which made it difficult to understand the methods of teaching them Chinese | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|

54. Other than the above-mentioned, what difficulties have you encountered in teaching NCS students?

Please return the survey at the sharing session 「非華語幼稚園學生學習中文支援模式發佈會暨教師專業發展分享會」 on 14 April 2018. If you are unable to attend the sharing session, please email to kgoxfam2@gmail.com, fax to 2517-4403, or mail to Room 404, 4/F, Runme Shaw Building, The University of Hong Kong.

Thank you for your valuable opinion!