

Commission on Poverty (CoP)

Assistance to Ethnic Minorities in Training and Education

PURPOSE

This paper updates Members of new initiatives to strengthen assistance to ethnic minorities in training and education, including workplace language programmes, strengthening vocational training, as well as enhanced educational support measures for ethnic minority students.

BACKGROUND

2. At the CoP meeting held on 27 September, Members suggested that the Administration should strengthen efforts to provide more targeted assistance to ethnic minorities in training and education in order to help them integrate into the local employment market.

CURRENT EFFORTS

3. The Administration is mindful of the difficulties encountered by ethnic minorities, particularly those who are non-Chinese speaking, in integrating into the mainstream community. The Administration has implemented a series of practical measures to help them adapt to life in Hong Kong, particularly in the areas of education and employment, e.g.

- (a) language courses in spoken and written Cantonese and English for adults from the ethnic communities;
- (b) vocational training courses and trade tests conducted in English offered by the Vocational Training Council (VTC) and the Construction Industry Training Authority (CITA); and
- (c) school-based support services (e.g. the school-based Chinese language curriculum).

4. The Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) promotes racial equality through public education and fosters a culture of mutual respect and social harmony. However, a working knowledge of the local language would help ethnic minorities to participate more fully in the local employment market.

NEW INITIATIVES

Workplace Language Programmes for Ethnic Minorities

5. In response to the suggestion by the CoP, HAB will launch new programmes and offer dedicated workplace language programmes to ethnic minorities, particularly the unemployed, in order to enhance their employability and adaptability to the local employment market.

6. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) will be commissioned to run programmes which include the following activities –

- (a) spoken and written Cantonese and English courses which are designed specially for job seeking and for use in the workplace;
- (b) field trips and classroom lessons to encourage practice of the language in a ‘real-life’ environment; and
- (c) cultural activities and interest groups to facilitate students’ understanding of the cultural and employment environment in Hong Kong.

Strengthening Vocational Training for Ethnic Minorities

7. To provide more vocational education and training opportunities to ethnic minorities students, the VTC has put in place dedicated programmes for ethnic minority youths and adults since September 2006, offering a total of 70 places. Another 15 programmes providing 230 places will be offered from November 2006 to July 2007.

8. Given the growing demand for vocational training from non-Chinese and/or non-English speaking ethnic minorities, VTC and CITA would recruit speakers of the main minority languages (eg: Urdu and Nepali) as interpreters in vocational training courses, and to translate course materials into these minority languages. The actual number of such classes and the implementation time-frame will be adjusted in the light of actual demand for the classes and cost for their provision.

9. In addition, the Employees Retraining Board has explored the provision of suitable retraining programmes for adults from the ethnic communities. The training manuals for retraining courses for work as security and property attendants, and domestic helpers have been translated into English. As a pilot project, these retraining courses will be conducted in English. The implementation timetable and the number of retrainees will be subject to the actual demand for the courses.

Enhanced Educational Support Measures for Ethnic Minorities Students

10. The Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) will implement the following enhanced educational support measures for ethnic minorities students to better prepare them for integration into the mainstream community -

- (a) EMB will provide intensive on-site support to designated schools in developing the school-based Chinese Language curriculum to enhance the learning and teaching of the Chinese Language to ethnic minority students. 10 primary and 5 secondary schools have been designated in the 2006/07 school year.
- (b) Intensive on-site support includes regular visits by professional officers to conduct collaborative lesson planning with teachers to develop the school-based Chinese Language curriculum, learning and teaching strategies, school-based teaching resources / materials, learning activities and assessment designs, etc. School-based and inter-school professional development activities will also be provided.
- (c) Tertiary institutions will be commissioned to run a Chinese Learning Support Centre in 2007 to offer remedial programmes for students who are less proficient in Chinese, in particular the late starters, and to participate in the development of related teaching resources and provide professional advice.
- (d) Tertiary institutions will be commissioned to run training programmes for Chinese language teachers in the designated schools, beginning from the second half of the 2006/07 school year.
- (e) The existing 4-week Bridging Programme in the summer vacation for ethnic minority Primary 1 (P1) entrants will be extended to cover also ethnic minority students proceeding to P2, P3 and P4 to help them consolidate what they have learnt at Key Learning Stage 1 (P1 - P3) and to prepare for smooth transition to Key Learning Stage 2 (P4 - P6).

- (f) Vacant premise in Yuen Long will be made available for operation of more support programmes for ethnic minority children to meet their specific needs.
- (g) In view of the fact that individual ethnic minority students would like to be provided with the avenue to attain alternative qualifications in Chinese, the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) will administer the General Certificate of Secondary Education (Chinese) examination in Hong Kong starting from 2007.
- (h) A Workplace Chinese programme (with appropriate courses and qualifications) will be developed to enhance the employability of those ethnic minority individuals who are not proficient in Chinese but have gone past the stage of learning Chinese in schools.

ADVICE SOUGHT

11. Members are invited to note the new initiatives in paragraphs 5 – 10 above.

Commission Secretariat

(With input from Home Affairs Bureau and Education and Manpower Bureau)

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