

Press Releases

LCQ10: Educational support for ethnic minority students

Following is a question by the Hon Starry Lee Wai-king and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Michael Suen, in the Legislative Council today (November 16):

Question:

According to the Report on the Working Group on Education for Ethnic Minorities published by the Equal Opportunities Commission earlier, the number of ethnic minority ("EM") students in Hong Kong has increased from about 10 000 three years ago to about 12 000 at present; and having held a series of meetings to exchange views with stakeholders and the Education Bureau, the Working Group noted that there are various challenges to the academic pursuit of EM students, of which learning Chinese remains the greatest. Regarding the enhancement of the educational support for EM students, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the number of EM students in Hong Kong as at September this year, broken down by the level in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools as well as tertiary institutions; the details of various educational support measures and funding currently provided to them by the authorities;

(b) with a view to encouraging EM students to integrate into the mainstream education system as early as possible, whether it will consider providing language and manpower support to pre-school education institutions, so as to assist such institutions in admitting EM children; if it will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(c) whether it will consider implementing a pilot scheme to offer Chinese language "immersion classes" for EM students studying in mainstream schools, so as to ensure that they understand and comprehend the course contents taught in class; if it will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(d) given that at present the commercial market lacks Chinese language teaching materials suitable for EM students, whether the authorities will consider publishing relevant teaching materials to provide adequate and appropriate Chinese language teaching support for these students as well as the schools concerned; if they will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(e) whether it will consider subsidising teachers in mainstream schools to take some advanced courses on EM's cultural background, so as to enhance their awareness of cultural diversity; if it will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(f) what measures the authorities have in place to enhance EM parents' understanding of mainstream schools, and provide adequate information to help them choose the schools for their children; and

(g) whether it will consider setting up a database covering the education, vocational training and employment situations of EMs, so as to facilitate the formulation of appropriate strategies on educational and youth support for EMs; if it will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government is committed to supporting non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students' learning of the Chinese Language to facilitate their early adaptation to the local education system and integration into the community. Support measures for NCS students, which are developmental in nature, have been progressively implemented since 2006. With more NCS students enrolling in local schools, we are now examining the support measures, taking into account stakeholders' views, in order to enhance the learning effectiveness of NCS students. My reply to the question raised by Hon Lee is as follows:

(a) We have been collecting student information about NCS students through the annual Enrolment Survey to formulate support measures, making reference to other information. Relevant statistics including information on the number of NCS students in the 2011/12 school year are being collected and verified. As usual, it is expected that relevant statistics will be finalised by the end of this year. Admission to post-secondary programmes, including certificate/diploma, higher diploma, sub-degree and undergraduate courses, is offered to eligible applicants, irrespective of their race and language spoken at home. Normally, the concerned institutions do not require applicants to indicate their ethnic origin or first language. Hence, comprehensive statistics on the number of NCS students receiving tertiary education are not available.

Details of support measures for NCS students and the additional funding incurred in the 2010/11 school year are tabulated at Annex.

(b) To facilitate NCS children's early adaptation to the local education system, we will continue to encourage NCS parents to send their children to receive local pre-primary education, and render professional support to pre-primary institutions to help NCS students lay a solid foundation for their learning.

(c) and (d) To address the practical needs of NCS students, we issued the Supplementary Guide to the Chinese Language Curriculum for NCS Students and dispatched a series of learning and teaching materials to schools in late 2008. The Supplementary Guide, which includes four curriculum modes of "immersion in Chinese Language lessons", "bridging/transition", "specific learning purposes" and "integration", enables schools to help their NCS students learn progressively based on their diverse aspirations, needs and learning pace, with a view to attaining different recognised qualifications for articulation to multiple progression pathways.

Through collection, adaption and consolidation of relevant learning and teaching materials, we have compiled two sets of "textbooks" in Chinese Language for NCS students, covering different learning stages of the primary and secondary levels. These "textbooks" were dispatched free of charge to schools in 2009 and 2010 for use by teachers and NCS students. We have also commissioned a university to develop assessment tools covering the dimensions of characters recognition, characters writing, listening, speaking, reading and writing for schools' internal use. These assessment tools have been uploaded onto the Education Bureau (EDB)'s website for schools to assess the learning outcome of Chinese Language of their NCS students, with a view to setting specific learning targets so as to enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching with reference to the assessment results.

Besides, in order to enhance the Chinese proficiency of NCS students, we have commissioned a university to operate the Chinese Language Learning Support Centres, provided funding to non-designated schools to put in place diversified extended Chinese learning programmes and organised Summer Bridging Programmes for NCS students in primary schools. These measures serve to reinforce

what the NCS students have learnt in Chinese language classes at schools.

(e) Various modes of professional training have been organised for teachers teaching NCS students, including commissioning tertiary institutions to operate relevant programmes and inviting experienced school professionals and experts in relevant fields to share their experiences on racial harmony in school and equality in education with schools and teachers.

(f) Basic information, such as the NCS Parent Information Package: Your Guide to Education in Hong Kong, leaflets on the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme (PEVS), explanatory pamphlets on the Primary One Admission (POA) and Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) systems, etc., is provided in major ethnic minority languages for NCS parents. Besides, briefing sessions with interpretation service are organised to familiarise NCS parents with the arrangements of PEVS, POA, SSPA and our support measures so as to encourage them to send their children to schools offering local curriculum. We have also set up a hotline to answer enquiries from NCS parents and students.

(g) Regarding the support for vocational training and employment, the Government, through the Vocational Training Council (VTC), will continue to provide vocational education and training to eligible persons. NCS students may also apply for the specially-designed vocational education and training programmes offered by the Institutes of Vocational Education and Youth Colleges of VTC.

The Employees Retraining Board (ERB) has offered dedicated courses in English to meet specific training and employment needs since 2007. The ERB's appointed training bodies will also provide trainees of full-time dedicated courses with a six-month placement service which offers close follow-ups, assistance and support in their job search. To further strengthen the service for clients moving on from training to employment, the ERB has put in place a collaboration mechanism on the provision of job vacancies with the Labour Department (LD). With the consent of the related employers, the ERB and LD regularly exchange information on job vacancies to enhance the employment opportunities of ERB trainees and other job seekers. The ERB also seeks views from its Industry Consultative Networks and the focus groups set up for ethnic minorities to devise training programmes to meet the needs of its trainees and different industries.

Ends/Wednesday, November 16, 2011
Issued at HKT 14:53

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