

South China Morning Post 南華早報

Only one in five Hong Kong job adverts cater to non-Chinese speakers or readers, research finds

PUBLISHED : Monday, 02 May, 2016, 9:52pm

UPDATED : Monday, 02 May, 2016, 9:52pm

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Ethnic minority advocacy group Unison says the government needs to do more to help non-Chinese speakers in searching for jobs

Less than 20 per cent of job vacancies advertised online cater to those who cannot speak, read or write Chinese in Hong Kong, a new survey of 1,500 job adverts shows.

Spoken and written Chinese is a must even for jobs requiring manual skills or labour, such as air-conditioning engineer, warehouse keeper and hair stylist, researchers found.

[Hong Kong ethnic minorities fall through the cracks](#) [1]

They said the survey reflected the importance of Chinese language ability in the city, and raised questions over potential unfairness to ethnic minorities in job seeking, as some employers might not have considered whether the job vacancies genuinely needed such linguistic skills.

Chinese and English are the city's official languages.

"Chinese language is really more important than we thought in Hong Kong's job market," said Yip Ho-ling, research officer of ethnic minority advocacy group Unison, which conducted the study in April 2014 and December last year.

Researchers collected information from 16 online job search databases in the city, covering various occupations such as managers, professionals, service workers, mechanics and skilled agricultural and fishery workers.

Around 56 per cent of the jobs did not mention Chinese language requirements, but among the rest of the ads that did, up to 99 per cent asked for spoken or written Chinese ability.

[57 per cent of Hong Kong's ethnic minority children with special needs stop attending school](#) [2]

Unison received responses from recruiters behind 82 of the 839 ads that did not mention Chinese language requirements, and found that up to 67 per cent asked for such skills.

Furthermore, 39 per cent of all the ads were in Chinese only or contained some vital information in Chinese, researchers found.

That meant if job seekers did not read, speak or write Chinese, they would only have access to

19 per cent of vacancies advertised online, the research concluded.

Yip said some jobs might not need Chinese language skills, but employers who did not consider ethnic minority candidates would put such requirements in the ads out of habit.

She said the government had programmes helping employers review their job requirements to better accommodate specific groups such as the middle-aged, but the programmes did not cover non-Chinese-speaking job seekers' needs.

Dr Ng Shun-wing, head of the Institute of Education's department of education policy and leadership, criticised the government's lack of Chinese language education support for ethnic minorities.

Ng, who was not involved in the survey, said although the government had given extra funding to schools with non-Chinese-speaking pupils to provide special support, it did not offer the schools any guidance on what level of Chinese language ability these pupils should reach, or set any goals for the schools to achieve.

Prativa Sapkota, a 20-year-old biology student at the University of Science and Technology, said she was rejected for an internship at a multinational medical company after she was unable to answer questions in fluent Cantonese during the interview.

Sapkota, who came to the city from Nepal 10 years ago, said she entered a local secondary school designated for ethnic minorities. "I didn't realise until graduation that the Chinese I learned there was never used in daily life," she said.

Topics: Ethnic minorities in Hong Kong

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