

LCQ12: Support for ethnic minorities

Following is a question by the Hon Lam So-wai and a written reply by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Erick Tsang, in the Legislative Council today (November 22):

Question:

According to the 2021 Population Census, there are about 620 000 ethnic minorities (EMs) in Hong Kong. Regarding the support for EMs, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that quite a number of EM students have reflected that they have encountered difficulties in studying the Chinese Language Subject specifically designed for Chinese-speaking students, whether the authorities have looked into the learning situation of EM students, and whether they will enhance the measures to support their learning of Chinese;

(2) of the current number and percentage of EMs appointed to the civil service, and whether more EMs will be recruited; and

(3) as the Social Welfare Department launched a three-year EM District Ambassador pilot scheme in 2020-2021 to enhance EM services provided by district centres/service units in nine districts with higher EM population, whether the Government has evaluated the effectiveness of the scheme?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Education Bureau (EDB), the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) and the Labour and Welfare Bureau, a reply is provided as follows:

(1) The Government is committed to encouraging and supporting the integration of non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students (including ethnic minority students) into the community, including facilitating their early adaptation to the local education system and mastery of the Chinese language. The EDB has implemented a series of support measures since 2014, which include the implementation of the "Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework" (Learning Framework) in primary and secondary schools, substantial increase in the additional funding for schools as well as provision of learning and teaching resources, teacher training and professional support for schools, thereby strengthening the support for NCS students to learn Chinese and the creation of an inclusive learning environment in schools.

As for curriculum, the "Learning Framework" implemented in primary and secondary schools has provided steps and methods for learning and teaching, and assessment according to the needs of NCS students of learning Chinese as

a second language. With reference to the "Learning Framework", teachers can set learning targets, learning progress and expected learning outcomes on reading, writing, listening and speaking, as well as adapt and develop teaching materials at the school-based level for NCS students with different starting points and abilities, so as to help them learn Chinese progressively. The EDB also offers "Applied Learning Chinese" courses at the senior secondary level for NCS students, including "Chinese in Business Service", "Chinese in Practical Context" and "Practical Chinese", to help them build a foundation for using Chinese in the workplace through learning the Chinese language in different contexts.

Furthermore, the EDB has all along been developing diversified learning and teaching resources to provide teachers with guidelines and support in curriculum planning, learning and teaching, and assessment. All these resources have been uploaded onto the EDB webpage and will be updated on an ongoing basis. Among others, the EDB has developed a set of learning and teaching materials, including student textbooks, workbooks and teaching reference materials, for NCS students at the primary level. The materials have been uploaded onto the EDB webpage and distributed to schools. Schools may adapt these materials with reference to their curriculum and students' abilities to cater for the different learning needs of NCS students. The EDB will continue to organise relevant professional development programmes to enhance teachers' professional capacity. Besides, the EDB has implemented other complementary measures, which include encouraging parents of NCS children to enrol their children in local kindergartens so that they would adapt to the local education system and to expose them to the learning of the Chinese language as early as possible; providing summer bridging programmes to help NCS students at the primary levels adapt to classroom setting and consolidate their Chinese learning; and providing parent education especially for parents of NCS students so that they would support and encourage their children to master the Chinese language as well as gain better understanding of the multiple pathways available to their children, etc.

Apart from the above, as per the additional measures set out in the Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address, the Government would continue to strengthen support for NCS students to facilitate their mastery of the Chinese language, including designing diversified learning materials under the Online Chinese Language Self-learning Resources for NCS students to help them extend their learning and consolidate what they have learnt in class; preparing for the offer of after-school Chinese language courses for lower primary NCS students on a trial basis using adapted learning materials for the Youth Chinese Test; and expanding the Summer Bridging Programme to include NCS students progressing to Primary Five and Primary Six to provide more comprehensive and continuous support for their Chinese learning.

(2) In the civil service recruitment process, the Government assesses all applicants on the basis of their ability, performance, character, and the stipulated entry requirements set according to the job requirements (including language proficiency requirements). Race is not a relevant consideration. Given that neither job applicants for civil service jobs nor serving civil servants are required to declare their ethnic origins, we do

not possess statistical information on the number of non-ethnic Chinese in the civil service.

The Government's policy is to maintain a biliterate and trilingual civil service. In order to maintain effective communication for delivering public services, Heads of Department/Grade will, having regard to the job requirements of the grades under their respective purview, specify appropriate Chinese and English language proficiency requirements as part of the entry requirements for the grades concerned. To achieve the policy objective of providing equal employment opportunities for all civil service job applicants (including non-ethnic Chinese), CSB has introduced a series of measures. The Government encourages departments to design their own language tests according to the job requirements of individual civil service grades to provide an additional way for applicants to meet the appointment requirements in respect of language proficiency. We will also strengthen dissemination of government recruitment information to non-ethnic Chinese, so they could receive such information in a more direct and efficient manner. In addition, we have launched an internship programme for non-ethnic Chinese students since 2019. Starting from this year, we provide the interns with basic workplace Chinese language training, with a view to enhancing their understanding on the application of the Chinese language and the required level of Chinese proficiency in daily work, as well as their interest in learning Chinese. The interns are also encouraged to continue to strengthen their learning of Chinese through other community resources.

(3) The Social Welfare Department (SWD) has launched a 3-year Ethnic Minority District Ambassador pilot scheme (pilot scheme) in nine districts with higher ethnic minority population since October 2020, providing additional resources to service units of the SWD and non-governmental organisations operating subvented welfare services to engage ethnic minorities or designated persons to enhance the provision of welfare services for ethnic minorities. As of September 2023, the pilot scheme contacted over 24 000 ethnic minorities and achieved satisfactory results. The pilot scheme has been extended for three years to September 2026. The SWD will continue examining the effectiveness of the pilot scheme to formulate the way forward.