

Information Note

LegCo Panel on Education

Education Support for Ethnic Minority Children

Purpose

This note outlines the education support measures provided by the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) for ethnic minority children. For EMB, ethnic minority children generally refer to South Asian (mainly Indian/Pakistani/Nepalese) children who are residing in Hong Kong.

Background

2. It has been an established Government policy to facilitate the early integration of ethnic minority students into the local education system. In recent years, many ethnic minority students were locally born to Hong Kong permanent residents of a non-Chinese ethnic origin. To better facilitate their children's future academic and career pursuits locally, many parents would also like their children to study Chinese and to send them to local schools. Taking into account the wishes of ethnic minority parents and after exchanging views with concern groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), allocation arrangements for admission to Primary 1 and Secondary 1 have been revised as from the 2004 allocation cycle onwards. Ethnic minority students may now have a choice of opting for mainstream schools or schools that traditionally admit a larger number of ethnic minority students. The LegCo Panel on Education were informed of the relevant arrangements and support previously. At the special Panel on Education meeting on the Policy Address 2005 held on 20 January 2005, Members requested the Administration to report the latest development of the support measures for ethnic minority students in mainstream schools.

Support Measures for Ethnic Minority Students

3. Academics specializing in multicultural education generally consider that education for ethnic minority students in mainstream schools concerns not just the teaching and learning of local languages, but also integration into the local education system. A number of related studies indicate that collaboration among different ethnic groups helps bring about not only cross-cultural integration and fraternity, but also enhancement of students' self-confidence and academic results. With this in mind, apart from providing adaptation programmes for ethnic minority students before their joining local schools,

EMB also offers various support services for schools admitting these students with a view to facilitating their early integration and smooth adaptation into the local education system and school life. The support measures are outlined in the ensuing paragraphs.

Support Services for Newly Arrived Ethnic Minority Students

4. To help newly arrived ethnic minority students cope with the learning environment in local schools, EMB provides public sector schools with a School-based Support Scheme Grant. Schools can flexibly make use of the grant to run school-based support programmes (e.g. supplementary language classes) for the students.

5. EMB also invites NGOs to run 60-hour Induction Programmes for newly arrived ethnic minority students. The programme contents include knowing the community, basic learning skills and Chinese language.

6. A block grant is also provided to designated schools for running full-time 6-month Initiation Programmes for newly arrived ethnic minority students. The programme provides these students with real classroom experience so as to enhance their Chinese and English language standards, help them adjust to the local society and foster their personal development. Newly arrived ethnic minority students may choose to attend the programme before joining mainstream schools. EMB will provide suitable school placements for these children after they have completed the programme.

Bridging Programme for Ethnic Minority P1 Entrants

7. EMB also invited some schools to run a 4-week Bridging Programme for ethnic minority P1 entrants during the summer vacation in 2004. The programme aims to provide the new entrants with some learning experiences before they attend the local schools. Through a wide range of learning and teaching activities conducted inside the classroom (including speaking, listening, reading and writing), students gain exposure to being taught in Cantonese, which will not only help them cope with the imminent needs in daily life, but also raise their interest in learning the Chinese language. The programme also provides opportunities for students to get in touch with local Chinese culture and know how life is like in local schools. The programme has been well received and will be offered again in the 2005 summer vacation.

Support in Curriculum Development

8. For the learning of the Chinese language, EMB recommends schools to refer to the Chinese Language Curriculum Guide prepared by the Curriculum Development Council, and to develop school-based curriculum to suit the needs of their students, with a view to achieving the principal education aims of lifelong learning and whole-person development. The support team from the Curriculum Development Institute of EMB provides on-site support to schools and assists teachers to design and implement school-based Chinese Language curriculum (e.g. through implementing Pull-out Chinese Language Learning Programme and Peer Mentoring Scheme to help ethnic minority students bridge the gap with normal class learning). The team also advises teachers on teaching, learning and assessment strategies and developing learning and teaching resources. They also demonstrate teaching and evaluate students' learning. Besides, the support team reviews regularly with school heads and teachers the progress of their students' learning and share views on issues relating to teacher development.

Development of E-sharing Platform

9. EMB is developing an e-platform for language teachers to share their experiences in the development of school-based language curriculum and teaching and learning resources. Experiences of different schools in catering for the learning needs of the ethnic minority students would be collected and shared. These include good practices in enhancing the motivation of ethnic minority students for language learning, successful learning experiences, school-based curriculum plans, learning and teaching materials and references etc.

Mutual Support Network and Experience Sharing

10. EMB assists schools admitting ethnic minority students to form a mutual support network. Through this network, schools can share experiences and effective strategies in motivating ethnic minority students and enhancing their ability to learn Chinese. Up to now, 41 primary schools and 2 secondary schools have joined the network.

11. A number of territory-wide and district-based experience sharing sessions have been held on themes of common concern, such as "Understanding the culture, learning the language", "From teaching the Chinese characters to catering for learning differences", "Adaptation and learning needs of non-Chinese speaking students in Primary 1" and "Helping the non-Chinese speaking students integrate into mainstream schools". Through these experience

sharing sessions, teachers could acquire deeper understanding of ethnic minority students in respect of their languages, living habits, religions and cultures. They also have a clearer picture of the problems of ethnic minority students in learning the Chinese language and how to address the problems through appropriate teaching strategies and materials. In October 2004 and between February and March 2005, EMB organized a series of briefings and experience sharing sessions, aiming to help teachers know better how to cater for the adaptation needs and learning differences of ethnic minority students. Very positive feedback was received from the teachers attending the sharing sessions. They considered such activities useful and would try to adapt relevant teaching strategies and materials.

Enhancing Communication

12. To enhance communication between schools and ethnic minority parents, EMB has provided schools with templates of commonly used internal school circulars in both English and Chinese. Information leaflets on education and support services for ethnic minority students have also been translated into English and a number of ethnic minority languages. EMB is also developing a web-based platform on Education Services for Ethnic Minority Children to provide teachers with information such as teacher development workshops and experience sharing sessions, different kinds of teaching support materials and reference materials provided by NGOs to schools and parents.

Other Resources

13. To optimise the effective use of resources, EMB encourages schools with ethnic minority students to flexibly deploy the different resources currently provided for meeting students' diverse learning needs, such as Remedial Teaching, Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme, Capacity Enhancement Grant, Student Guidance Service Grant, etc. By adopting a whole school approach, schools should be able to map out more systematic and effective support strategies to address the learning needs of ethnic minority students.

14. Schools can also apply to join the newly introduced School-based After-school Learning and Support Programmes to broaden the outside classroom learning experiences of ethnic minority students in need and enhance their understanding of the community and sense of belonging.

Enhancing Ethnic Minority Parents' Understanding of Pre-primary Education

15. At present, EMB disseminates information on kindergarten education services to the ethnic minority parents through the Regional Education Offices,

NGOs and other frontline departments. There are suggestions that attendance at kindergartens or child care centres would enable ethnic minority children to gain exposure to Chinese language at an early age and would therefore facilitate their integration into local primary schools. To this end, we would enhance dissemination of the related information to help ethnic minority parents understand better the pre-primary education services available to them.

Research

16. To further understand the integration of ethnic minority students in the school community, EMB commissioned a local university to conduct a 3-year longitudinal study in November 2004. The study will track the development and adaptation of the ethnic minority children newly allocated to P1 in mainstream schools in the 2004/05 school year until they complete P3 in the 2006/07 school year. This study is now at the data collection stage.

Vocational Training

17. Apart from the integration support services for ethnic minority students at the school level, EMB also provides vocational training opportunities for these students so as to better prepare them for future employment. For instance, the courses offered by the Institute for Vocational Education under the Vocational Training Council (VTC) are conducted in English and are also open to ethnic minority students.

18. Besides, to enable ethnic minority students to acquire job knowledge and skills and to understand the workplace requirements, the following piloting courses of the Career Oriented Curriculum (COC) for senior secondary students offered by the Caritas Adult and Higher Education Service, the VTC and the Hong Kong Association of Accounting Technicians in the 2005-07 school years can be conducted in English subject to sufficient demand from students:

- Logistics Fundamentals
- Automotive Technology in Practice
- Principles of Robotics
- Practical and Computerised Accounting for Small and Medium Enterprises
- Fundamental Fashion and Image Design
- Computer Networking

19. With the above arrangements, ethnic minority students would develop their generic skills, values and attitudes, acquire the knowledge and skills as well as understand the workplace requirement of a particular occupational area. In so doing, they can be better prepared for their future studies and work.

Conclusion

20. While a wide range of support services have been provided for ethnic minority students at different stages and levels, we are aware that social integration cannot be achieved overnight. To effect genuine integration, active involvement and effort of ethnic minority students and their families is required. We believe that with the co-operation and support from different stakeholders, ethnic minority students would become more positive to, and more motivated and confident in learning. Eventually, they would be able to integrate smoothly into local society and contribute to its well-being.

Education and Manpower Bureau
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