

For information

Legislative Council Panel on Manpower

**Vocational Training and Vocational Education Programme
for Ethnic Minorities**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the existing publicly-funded vocational training and vocational education programme for ethnic minorities in Hong Kong.

Background

2. At the meetings of the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Manpower held on 24 October 2006 and 17 May 2007, the Administration was requested to provide the following information relating to vocational training and vocational education for ethnic minorities -

- (a) details of training courses offered to ethnic minorities, provision of assistance to help them secure employment and the number of persons who had secured employment;
- (b) career-oriented training programmes and retraining courses offered by the Vocational Training Council (VTC) and the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) for ethnic minorities; and
- (c) number of the Continuing Education Fund (CEF)-approved training courses designed to meet the specific needs of ethnic minorities.

The requested information is set out below for Members' reference.

**Vocational Training and Vocational Education Programme Provided
by the VTC and the ERB**

3. The Administration provides vocational training and vocational education to our citizens, irrespective of their race or ethnic origin. To this end, the Administration has made available a range of different training

and retraining programmes through training providers including the VTC and the ERB. Non-Chinese speakers, including the ethnic minorities, may enroll in these programmes provided that they meet the entry requirements. To cater for the specific needs of ethnic minorities, the VTC and the ERB have also organised a number of dedicated programmes for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) persons to enhance their employability and facilitate their integration into the community.

4. The Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau has already issued to the LegCo on 20 April 2010 (vide LC paper No. CB(2)1354/09-10(01)) a checklist of measures relating to vocational training for ethnic minorities. The checklist is attached again at Annex for ease of reference. The services provided by the VTC and the ERB are summarised in the ensuing paragraphs.

The VTC

5. The VTC offers vocational education and training programmes to eligible persons irrespective of race or ethnic origin. Students who meet the basic entry requirements may apply for admission to the VTC's courses. For admission of NCS students to courses requiring a pass in Chinese Language in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination, alternative qualifications in Chinese such as General Certificate of Secondary Education, General Certificate in Education and International General Certificate of Secondary Education may be considered.

6. Post-secondary 5 level courses offered by the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education and Hong Kong Design Institute of the VTC mainly use English as the medium of instruction, which may be supplemented with Chinese as when and where required and appropriate. Additional supports such as counseling, tutorial classes, workshops, career counseling, etc. are provided to help NCS students better adjust to the learning environment. Special Chinese/Cantonese modules have also been arranged to help NCS students acquire the local language/dialect for better social integration.

7. The VTC also offers vocational education and training programmes targeted at NCS students and working adults, including full-time certificate/diploma courses for Secondary 3 and Secondary 5 school leavers, applied learning programmes for senior secondary students, vocational development programmes for non-engaged youths, as well as preparatory courses for trade tests and part-time certificate courses for working adults.

8. The vocational education and training programmes offered by the VTC equip NCS with the necessary knowledge and skills for further study and employment. About 50% of the full-time NCS graduates in the 2008/09 academic year pursued further study, and most of the others (90%) obtained employment within six months after graduation.

The ERB

9. Since mid-2007, the ERB has been providing dedicated training courses delivered in English to cater for the specific needs of ethnic minorities. Apart from providing dedicated courses for ethnic minorities, the ERB has also put in place various special measures and services for ethnic minorities to facilitate and support their training and job search. Staff training has also been provided to ERB's frontline staff and training bodies to promote understanding of ethnic minority culture and enhance staff sensitivity in providing services to ethnic minorities.

10. As with other trainees, ethnic minorities taking the full-time placement-tied training courses would be provided with free placement service after graduation. The duration of placement service period for ethnic minorities is six months, which is longer than the three-month period for other ERB trainees. Apart from full-time placement-tied courses, the ERB also offers part-time generic skills training courses for ethnic minorities. Since the launch of these dedicated training courses in mid-2007 and up to 30 June 2010, a total of 592 ethnic minority trainees had completed their training courses. Some 67% of the trainees who graduated from the full-time placement-tied courses were successfully placed into jobs within the six-month placement service period.

Courses under the CEF

11. Under the current arrangement, persons meeting the following requirements may apply for up to a ceiling of \$10,000 to pursue continuing education under the CEF -

- (a) Hong Kong residents who have the right of abode or the right to land or remain in Hong Kong with no restrictions;
- (b) those who have enrolled in and paid the tuition fee on equal monthly instalment basis for a reimbursable course before the course commences; and

- (c) those who are aged 18 - 65 at the time of application and on seeking reimbursement of the course fees.

12. Under the CEF's registration mechanism, course providers may initiate training courses in response to market demand. As at end-June 2010, around 7 000 courses were registered under the CEF. Ethnic minorities, like other members of the public, meeting the above criteria can choose from the wide variety of courses and apply for CEF subsidies. We are not aware of any CEF course that is specifically designed for ethnic minorities.

Advice Sought

- 13. Members are requested to note the content of this paper.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
Education Bureau
August 2010

**Existing and planned measures
on the promotion of equality for ethnic minorities**

Vocational Training

Various courses and facilities of vocational education and training are provided through the Vocational Training Council (VTC), the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) and the Construction Industry Council (CIC) to eligible persons who are able to meet the admission requirements, irrespective of their race or ethnic origin.

In particular, to cater for the needs of non-Chinese speaking persons, a number of courses and programmes are conducted in English. Specific courses such as those in Cantonese are also specifically designed to meet their needs.

A. Vocational Training Council

Services concerned The VTC offers a wide range of vocational education and training courses. To ensure vocational education and training services are accessible to all irrespective of race, special consideration has been taken to cater for the needs of ethnic minorities.

Existing Measures Dedicated vocational education and training courses for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) youth and adults

- VTC offers a wide variety of dedicated courses for ethnic minority youth and adults to meet their multifarious training needs. These courses include full-time certificate/diploma courses in business, hotel & tourism, food and beverage services for Secondary 3 and Secondary 5 school leavers, applied learning programmes for senior secondary students, part-time trade specific short courses for adults, full-time Vocational Development Programmes for non-engaged youth, basic vocational Chinese short courses and module-based training courses.

Acceptance of alternative Chinese Language qualifications

- Where a course (including VTC's Higher Diploma and Diploma programmes) requires a pass in HKCEE Chinese Language for admission, alternative Chinese Language qualifications of NCS students may be considered.
- Assessment of future work
- Around 500 NCS students have been enrolled in various dedicated programmes of VTC in the 2008/09 academic year. VTC plans to provide similar number of places in various dedicated programmes for NCS students in the 2009/10 academic year.
 - Course provision will be reviewed in consultation with NGOs which have been providing services for NCS youth and adults to map out future programmes to better meeting their needs.
- Additional Measures Taken / To Be Taken
- To promote racial equality in its learning and working environment, VTC has drawn up guidelines for reference by its operation units. Training and sharing sessions will be arranged for staff and students to increase their awareness and sensitivity on racial equality. VTC will also organize activities to promote a culture of inclusion and facilitate integration between local and ethnic minority students.

B. Employees Retraining Board

- Services Concerned
- The ERB provides training courses and services to enhance the skills, quality, employability and competitiveness of the labour force (with an education attainment of sub-degree or below). The full-time training courses are career-oriented, with the aim at helping the unemployed get jobs through appropriate skills training and job placement support services. The part-time vocational skills upgrading courses enable the labour force to update and upgrade their skills. The part-time generic skills training courses, encompassing foundation skills such as languages, numeracy, information technology, personal attributes, aim at enhancing the overall quality of the labour force.

- With a view to improving the employability of the ethnic minorities and facilitating their integration into the local community, the ERB provides dedicated training courses delivered in English since mid-2007 to suit the aspirations and training needs of the ethnic minorities. Special measures and services are provided to facilitate and support their training and job search.

Existing
Measures

Dedicated courses for ethnic minorities

- In 2008-09, a total of 265 ethnic minority trainees attended 5 full-time placement-tied courses and 3 part-time generic skills courses.
- The ERB has launched a pilot job-searching integrated course known as “Employment Set Sail” conducted in English for ethnic minorities to enhance their understanding and knowledge of local job market, workplace culture, as well as job-searching channels and skills.
- The ERB has launched a pilot “Workplace Chinese Communication” programme in collaboration with the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research, and the Vocational Training Council to provide part-time workplace Cantonese training for ethnic minorities. Based on the experience of this pilot scheme, the ERB has revised the course contents. Two new courses on workplace Cantonese for ethnic minorities are developed and launched in 2009-10.
- The ERB set up two separate focus groups in June 2008 to help identify the training and employment needs of ethnic minorities, as well as to advise on strategies for promoting ERB courses and services to ethnic minorities. The focus groups comprise representatives from ethnic minority groups, NGOs and training bodies (TBs).
- Based on the advice of the focus groups and proposals submitted by TBs, 17 full-time and 12 part-time courses are offered in 2009-10. Among which 2 are specially designed Youth Training Programmes offering altogether 9 different streams of studies, dedicated for the non-engaged youth (aged 15-20) in the ethnic minority groups.

- The ERB has reserved a total of 2 000 training places for the provision of dedicated courses for the group in 2009-10.

Special measures and support services

- The ERB has been exercising flexibility in regard to the minimum class size for training courses dedicated for ethnic minorities.
- Interpretation services have been arranged in class where necessary and appropriate through teaching assistants who can speak English and ethnic minority languages to facilitate teaching and learning.
- Ethnic minority trainees who have completed the placement-tied courses are provided with six-month placement follow-up service, whereas a three-month placement follow-up period is normally provided for other trainees.
- The ERB has extended the coverage of its existing Course Development Incentive Scheme to include courses dedicated for ethnic minorities, so as to encourage TBs to develop more new courses that cater to the needs of the ethnic minority target group.
- To foster awareness of the training opportunities available to ethnic minorities, the ERB has issued a series of promotional materials (including prospectus, poster, leaflet and roll-up banner) in English and ethnic minority languages (including Hindi, Urdu, Nepali, Indonesian and Sinhalese) for distribution to ethnic minority groups via different channels. Advertisements on courses have been placed in different newspapers targeting the ethnic minorities.
- In reaching out to the ethnic minorities and gauging their needs, the ERB staff have carried out frequent visits to cultural and religious gatherings of the ethnic minorities.
- The ERB also sponsors TBs to run district-based promotional activities targeting the ethnic minorities and employers. The ERB will continue to explore more channels to reach out to the ethnic minorities.

- To further enhance its promotional efforts, the ERB has been in close liaison with the regional support service centres for ethnic minorities operated by NGOs funded by the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, in disseminating information about the ERB to ethnic minorities.
- A resource corner has been set up in the ERB's Training cum Employment Resource Centre in Sham Shui Po to provide training and employment information and other support services to ethnic minorities.
- The ethnic minority groups can make use of a wide range of services and facilities, as well as participate in workshops offered by the Centre. Self-help groups have been formed to facilitate sharing of information and mutual support among ethnic minority members. They may also join the "Case Management Service" to receive intensive follow-up and support service offered by experienced social workers.

Staff training

- To promote understanding of ethnic minority culture and enhance staff sensitivity in providing services to ethnic minorities, the ERB organised 4 sessions of workshop on cultural characteristics of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong in collaboration with Unison for frontline staff in the ERB and its TBs in July 2008 and January 2010. Similar workshops will be held annually for refreshing the cultural awareness and understanding on ethnic minorities among ERB and TB staff.
- The ERB conducted 4 tailor-made training sessions for agency heads of its TBs and ERB staff in May 2009 and March 2010. At the sessions, attendees were briefed by Training Officer of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) on the Race Discrimination Ordinance (RDO) with special focus on vocational training. Similar training sessions will be conducted annually by the ERB for briefing newly appointed TBs, and for sharing of experience on application of the RDO and the Code of Practice issued by the EOC.

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| Assessment of Future Work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The ERB will gauge the views of ethnic minority groups on its current measures and support services and conduct a survey to understand better their training needs. |
| Additional Measures Taken / To Be Taken | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The ERB will explore the feasibility of enrolling ethnic minorities who can comprehend Cantonese into some appropriate non-EM-dedicated classes by making available English training manuals. This would effectively broaden and diversify training to the group. Also, the ERB will devise a systematic Chinese language training scheme covering Chinese listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills to enhance the much needed workplace language skills of the ethnic minorities. ● The ERB will invite employers to join its focus group discussion in order to foster better understanding and exchange of views on promoting the employability of the ethnic minorities. ● In addition to the current 6 languages, the ERB will include Tagalog and Thai in its promotional materials from 2010-11. Advertisements will be placed in newspapers and websites popular among the ethnic minorities. ● The ERB will review the outcome of the dedicated courses organised taking into account trainees' and training bodies' feedback as well as market demand in the course of enhancing the training contents and training plan for the ethnic minorities. |

C. Construction Industry Council

Services Concerned The Construction Industry Council (CIC) is fully committed to creating, promoting and maintaining a working and living environment which provides equality of opportunity, and is free of any discrimination, harassment and vilification for all its employees, trainees, visitors and the public to whom CIC provides goods, services or facilities.

Under Section 29 of the Construction Industry Council Ordinance, the CIC has established a committee known as the "Construction Industry Training Board" to provide, amongst

others, training courses and trade testing services for the construction industry through the Construction Industry Council Training Academy (CICTA).

Existing Measures

- CIC provided training courses on Equal Opportunities to all centre managers and department heads.
- CICTA currently offers 9 safety related courses and 1 part-time skill enhancement course conducted in English.

Assessment of Future Work

- CIC would formulate and implement its Equal Opportunity Policy and review it after a few years of implementation.
- CICTA would keep under review the demand and effectiveness of the above courses.

Additional Measures Taken / To Be Taken

Provision of courses

- CICTA is considering offering other appropriate courses and trade tests in English should the demand arise in future.

Equal Opportunity Policy

- Subject to the endorsement of the CIC Council, CIC will issue the Equal Opportunity Policy to all staff of CIC for reference.
- The Policy forms the framework for action in promoting racial equality and put it into practice at different stages of employment and in delivery of services so that employees, trainees, visitors and contractors feel safe and supported in an environment which positively reinforces equality of opportunity.
- The Policy includes specific examples to illustrate the Racial Discrimination Ordinance, training programmes on Equal Opportunities and Procedures for Handling Equal Opportunity related issues / problems.
- The Policy covers the staff recruitment, selection, training and development and the provision of services by CICTA including the vocational training courses and trade tests for the construction industry.

Staff training

- CIC would provide training and refreshment courses on Equal Opportunities to all its staff.

Vocational Training Council
Employees Retraining Board
Construction Industry Council
April 2010