

For information on
18 April 2016

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service

Employment of Ethnic Minorities in the Civil Service

Purpose

This paper provides an update on the implementation of the measures to facilitate the employment of ethnic minorities in the civil service.

Equal Access to Job Opportunities in the Government

2. The Government, being the largest employer in Hong Kong, is a strong advocate for equal opportunities in employment. Appointments to the civil service are based on the principle of open and fair competition. All candidates in an open recruitment exercise are assessed on the basis of their ability, performance and character, and having regard to the stipulated entry requirements (including language proficiency) set according to the job requirements of the grade concerned. Race is not a relevant consideration in the selection process. The Government has continued to implement suitable measures to ensure that ethnic minorities, like other applicants, have equal access to job opportunities in the Government.

Review of the Language Proficiency Requirements (LPRs)

3. English and Chinese LPRs are set for the purpose of recruitment to individual civil service grades taking into account their job nature and operational requirements, including the need for maintaining effective communication. In considering the appropriate level of LPRs to be adopted, Heads of Department/Grade (HoDs/HoGs) are to observe the

relevant guidance in the Code of Practice on Employment under the Race Discrimination Ordinance issued by the Equal Opportunities Commission, which provides that an employer must ensure that any language requirement for a job is relevant to and should be commensurate with the satisfactory performance of a job.

4. Civil Service Bureau (CSB), together with HoDs/HoGs, have been making on-going efforts to review and, where appropriate, adjust the LPRs and recruitment formats (particularly the part concerning tests of communication ability) set for individual grades. Since 2010, over 20 grades have made suitable adjustments, including –

- (a) setting a lower Chinese LPRs while not compromising operational requirements;
- (b) requiring written proficiency in either English or Chinese instead of written proficiency in both languages;
- (c) identifying posts within the grades concerned for which lowered Chinese LPRs would not compromise satisfactory performance of the relevant duties; or
- (d) replacing written test in Chinese by group interview.

In the light of the experience in implementing the measures above, our efforts in reviewing the LPRs will continue.

5. Noting that some civil service job applicants have learned Chinese as a second language or have studied abroad, the Government accepts Chinese language results of specified non-local public examinations in addition to local qualifications for the purpose of meeting the LPRs for civil service recruitment. Specifically, Chinese language results in the United Kingdom International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), General Certificate of Education (GCE) ‘Ordinary’ (‘O’) Level and GCE ‘Advanced’/ ‘Advanced Subsidiary’ (‘A’/ ‘AS’) Levels are accepted. Also, with the introduction of the Applied Learning Chinese (for non-Chinese speaking students) subject by the Education Bureau in the 2014-15 school year, CSB has promulgated guidelines on the acceptance arrangement for this new subject for bureaux/departments (B/Ds) to follow.

Tapping the Talent Pool of Ethnic Minorities

6. Knowledge in the languages and cultures of ethnic minority communities is relevant to the provision of public services for these communities. In this regard, relevant B/Ds have been undertaking appropriate measures to tap into the pool of talents possessing such knowledge. For example, the Police Force and Social Welfare Department have employed Police Community Liaison Assistants in Police Districts and Welfare Support and Liaison Assistants in Integrated Family Service Centres respectively. Also, Home Affairs Department (HAD) has designated positions for people who can command South/Southeast Asian language(s) widely spoken in Hong Kong to support its work on promotion of racial harmony and enhancement of support services for ethnic minorities. Where appropriate, some departments like Immigration Department (ImmD) require proficiency in specified ethnic minority languages for specific services. Going forward, CSB will continue to liaise with other B/Ds whose services have interface with ethnic minority communities to identify room for trawling suitable candidates who possess foreign language skills, including ethnic minority applicants, for relevant jobs in the Government.

7. To facilitate dissemination of recruitment information on government jobs, CSB has encouraged other B/Ds to place recruitment advertisements, where appropriate, with the Support Service Centres for Ethnic Minorities run by HAD. B/Ds will continue to follow up in this regard.

Other Supporting Measures

8. Some departments have organised engagement projects targeting non-ethnic Chinese (NEC) youths to enhance their understanding of the work in the Government. For example, Correctional Services Department, Fire Services Department and ImmD conduct career talks specifically for NEC youths from time to time. The Police Force organises visits to Police Units as well as sharing sessions on work experience for NEC youths. Since August 2015, the Police Force has introduced a referral programme, under which NEC applicants for Police

Constable who have failed in a recruitment exercise would be referred to participate in relevant projects such as those on Chinese language and job interview skills. In addition, Labour Department has been undertaking the “Employment Services Ambassador Programme for Ethnic Minorities” since September 2014, under which NEC youth trainees serve at job centres and job fairs while undergoing on-the-job training.

Advice Sought

9. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

Civil Service Bureau
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