

For discussion on 9 January 2006

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Education for Children of Ethnic Minorities

Purpose

Further to the information note provided to the LegCo Panel on Education in July 2005 [LC Paper No. CB(2)2305/04-05(01)], this paper presents the latest position of support measures provided by the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) to address the education and training needs of the ethnic minority students¹ in Hong Kong.

Background

2. Unlike other expatriate families which may come and go, most of the ethnic minority families in the territory have taken Hong Kong as their home. Our policy, therefore, is to facilitate the early integration of ethnic minority students into the local education system. Based on information provided by applicants in the context of school places allocation, we reckon that some 500 non-Chinese speaking (NCS) ethnic minority students are admitted into Primary One (P1) each year. The information does not include the group of ethnic minority students who do not wish to disclose their background or who are fluent in Chinese.

3. At present, ethnic minority students may enter primary and secondary schools² in the public sector under the same allocation systems as applied to other local students. They may choose to enter either mainstream schools or schools that traditionally admit a larger number of NCS students (seven primary schools and three secondary schools). In practice, most ethnic minority parents still prefer to enrol their children in schools that traditionally admitted a larger number of ethnic minority students.

¹ For EMB, ethnic minority children generally refer to South Asian (mainly Indian/Pakistani/Nepalese) children who are residing in Hong Kong.

² Including secondary schools under Direct Subsidy Scheme that participate in the allocation system.

4. The following sections set out the support measures currently made available by EMB to these students and to schools admitting them.

Support Measures for Ethnic Minority Students in Schools

Support Services for Newly Arrived Ethnic Minority Students

5. We have invited non-government organisations (NGOs) to run 60-hour Induction Programmes for newly arrived ethnic minority children. The purpose is to help them learn more about the community, acquire basic learning skills and get an early exposure to the 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 who choose to be enrolled in bridging courses before they formally start their schooling. The programmes are pitched at various levels, depending on the age and education levels of the students. They provide real classroom experience, help the students acquire basic Chinese and English, help them adjust to the local society and foster their personal development. Suitable school placements for these children are arranged on completion of the programme.

7. To help newly arrived ethnic minority students cope with the learning environment in local schools, EMB also provides public sector schools admitting these students 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.

Bridging Programme for Ethnic Minority P1 Entrants

8. EMB has invited individual schools to run a 4-week Bridging Programme for ethnic minority P1 entrants during the summer vacations of 2004 and 2005. The programme focuses on exposure to oral and written Chinese in a classroom setting, through a wide range of speaking, listening, reading and writing activities. The programme does not only prepare students for P1 classes, but also help them cope with the imminent needs in daily life and raise their interest in learning the Chinese language. It also provides opportunities for students to get in touch with local Chinese culture and know how life is like in local schools. Around 360 ethnic minority students attended the Bridging Programme in the summer of 2004 and 2005 respectively with positive feedback from school heads, teachers, parents and pupils. The programme will be offered again in the 2006 summer vacation.

Support in Curriculum Development

9. For the learning of the Chinese language, schools are recommended 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. In the 2004/05 school year, we provided curriculum development support to 40 schools admitting ethnic minority children at P1, including the schools which traditionally admit a larger number of these children. In 2005/06 school year, the number of schools receiving support has increased to over 50. The support mainly takes the form of experience sharing and development of resources as detailed in paragraphs 13 to 16 below.

10. Our support team also provides intensive on-site support to schools on request. The support includes assisting 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 the ethnic minority students cope with normal class learning), advising teachers on teaching, learning and assessment strategies and on the development of learning and teaching resources, teaching demonstration and evaluation of students' learning. 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.

11. Based on our observations and the feedback received so far, the on-site support has a positive impact on students' learning, teachers' professional development and school development, as set out below-

Student Learning

- (a) From surveys and lesson observations, the ethnic minority students generally have engaged actively in classroom activities and enjoyed their Chinese lessons. The support has enhanced students' motivation and confidence in learning Chinese.
- (b) The language abilities of the ethnic minority students have also improved noticeably. A few months after their entry at P.1, nearly all children can use 100% Cantonese in responding to teachers and can comprehend a conversation in Cantonese. Students' repertoire of Chinese words has also increased such that they can read simple Chinese texts and perform simple writing tasks. Some children have caught up with the mainstream after the P.1 final examination. Others may take longer depending on their ability, efforts and family support.

- (c) With a caring school environment and helpful peers and seniors, most children have integrated into school life without much difficulties and have cultivated a good sense of belonging to the school.

Teacher Development

- (a) It is quite obvious that the encouraging attainment of these children has in turn increased the confidence of the teachers.
- (b) There is better understanding of the needs of these children, resulting in an increase in teachers' capacity to design more appropriate curriculum and more variety of teaching strategies and resources.

School Development

- (a) Schools have adopted a more holistic approach to catering for the needs of these children, by using different strategies to facilitate bridging with the normal curriculum. Examples include the use of pull-out programmes and adapted curriculum.
- (b) To better support these children to learn Chinese and to integrate into school life, schools have involved the key stakeholders, such as parent, teachers, social workers and other students to build up a harmonious and support learning environment.

Further Support at Secondary Levels

12. With adequate support at primary levels, it is hoped that the majority of ethnic minority students would have been integrated into the local schools by the time they enter secondary schools. For those students who need continuous support and who may not have benefited from the support at primary levels, we offer school-based support measures to the concerned secondary schools. Efforts focus on adaptation of the normal curriculum, development of suitable learning and teaching materials and the use of teaching strategies that encourage cultural integration and peer learning. In addition, efforts facilitating experience sharing (to be addressed below) are also applicable to secondary schools.

Experience Sharing Network

13. We assist schools admitting ethnic minority students to form a mutual support network. Through this network, schools share experiences and effective strategies in motivating ethnic minority students and enhancing their ability to

learn Chinese. Up to now, the number of primary and secondary schools in the network has increased to 53.

14. To enable teachers understand more about the adaptation and learning needs of the NCS children, an experience sharing session, “Love & care for children: Catering for their individual differences”, was organised immediately after the completion of the Primary One Admission allocation 2005 exercise in June 2005. Another experience sharing session on the theme “From diversified support measures to enhancing the learning of the Chinese Language” was organised in October 2005. The session kept the schools up-to-date on the diversified support measures provided by this bureau and the concerned organisations for the ethnic minority students, and helped to enhance teachers’ competence in developing the students’ techniques and strategies in reading Chinese.

15. With effect from August 2005, we have strengthened the experience sharing by developing a themed webpage named “Education Services for Non-Chinese Speaking (NCS) Children” at our website. Apart from listing the bureau’s services for the NCS children, the webpage also provides an e-platform for the teachers to share their experiences and good practices.

16. We have also produced a CD-ROM featuring the experiences of schools and explaining their strategies in the three aspects of “management and organisation”, “student support” and “teaching and learning support”. The CD-ROM also features specific measures for building literacy in the Chinese language and for designing teaching and learning materials.

Enhancing Communication with Parents

17. To enhance communication between schools and the ethnic minority parents, templates of commonly used internal school circulars in both English and Chinese are provided to schools. We have also made available information leaflets on education and support services in the languages of the major ethnic minority groups. The websites of the organisations serving the ethnic minority communities are linked to our themed webpage to facilitate easy search of information by schools, parents and the general public.

Other Resources

18. To optimise the effective use of resources, schools with ethnic minority students have also been flexibly deploying the different resources currently provided for meeting students’ diverse learning needs, such as resources for

Remedial Teaching, Intensive Learning Support Grant under the New Funding Mode, Capacity Enhancement Grant, Student Guidance Service Grant, etc. to provide support measures for the ethnic minority students. 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.

19. Schools may also apply to join our 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.

Research and Survey

20. To evaluate the integration of ethnic minority students in the school community, we have 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 these students complete P3 in the 2006/07 school year.

21. Meanwhile, to better understand how mainstream schools are helping the ethnic minority children which they have admitted, we conducted a survey in December 2005 among the mainstream schools which have admitted ethnic minority students in P1 for the 2005/06 school year. A summary of the findings is as follows:

(a) Integration into the School Community

The majority of the mainstream schools have made use of peers support schemes, such as Big Brothers and Sisters Support/Reading Schemes and Guidance/Love Ambassadors Schemes, to help these children mingle with the local students. Some mainstream schools have provided these children with individual pastoral care by assigning school guidance personnel, class teachers, subject teachers or NCS teaching assistants to individual ethnic minority students.

(b) After School Learning Support

Almost all the schools have provided these children with after school homework support. Volunteers from NGOs, subject teachers, teaching assistants or students with better language ability have served as tutors to help the ethnic minority students with their homework and with their learning of Chinese through literacy building activities.

(c) Communication with Parents

Most schools have indicated that they do not have much difficulties communicating with parents of the ethnic minority students. Those parents who could not communicate in English or Cantonese normally seek assistance in interpretation from their children, the teaching assistants, NGOs or friends.

Enhancing Ethnic Minority Parents' Understanding of Pre-primary Education

22. Ethnic minority families are eligible to apply for fee assistance under the Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Subsidy Scheme on par with the local children. We have encouraged the pre-primary sector to admit ethnic minority children, and have received their positive response. Based on the feedback from schools admitting ethnic minority students in P1 for the 2005/06 school year, roughly some 80% of ethnic minority entrants at P1 have received pre-primary education. To facilitate the early integration of ethnic minority students into the local community and the school system, we have been disseminating information on kindergarten education services, in Chinese and English, to the ethnic minority parents through the Regional Education Offices, NGOs and various frontline departments (including District Offices, Family Services Centres of Social Welfare Department and Maternal and Child Health Centres of Department of Health). Frontline staff have also been explaining the services available to those ethnic minority parents approaching us direct or referred by the NGOs.

Vocational Training

23. Our aim is to ensure that ethnic minority students have access to vocational training opportunities. 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. With effect from 2006/07 school year, the VTC will offer an additional 360 places for ethnic minority students with S5 attainment or below to enrol in tailor-made courses in disciplines mostly sought by them, e.g. courses in hospitality, computer animation, beauty care etc.

24. Besides, to enable ethnic minority students to acquire job knowledge and skills and to understand the workplace requirements, the Caritas Adult and Higher Education Service, the VTC and the Hong Kong Association of Accounting Technicians have indicated to schools their readiness to conduct some of the piloting courses of the Career Oriented Curriculum (COC) for

senior secondary students in English in the 2005-07 school years subject to sufficient demand. Course providers have also approached individual schools which enrolled students of ethnic minorities with the message.

Conclusion

25. On the education front, our aim is to help the ethnic minority students overcome any hurdles in learning at an early stage and to enhance their motivation and confidence in learning. We also aim to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge that would help them integrate into the local community. Social integration involves more than education, and is a gradual process. To bring about genuine integration, continuous and collective efforts involving the ethnic minority students, their families and the entire community are required.

Education and Manpower Bureau
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