

# 立法會

## *Legislative Council*

LC Paper No. CB(4)506/19-20(04)

Ref: CB4/PL/PS

### **Panel on Public Service**

**Special meeting on 4 May 2020**

### **Updated background brief on employment of non-ethnic Chinese in the civil service**

#### **Purpose**

This paper provides background information on issues relating to the employment of non-ethnic Chinese ("NECs") in the civil service, and summarizes the major views and concerns expressed by members at meetings of the Panel on Public Service ("the Panel").

#### **Background**

2. According to the Administration, appointments to the civil service are based on the principle of open and fair competition. The race of a candidate is not a relevant consideration in the assessment for selection, appointment and promotion of civil servants. The arrangement of specifying the appropriate Chinese and English language proficiency requirements ("LPRs") as part of the entry requirements for appointment to individual grades having regard to the job requirements of the concerned grades is in line with the guidance of the Equal Opportunities Commission as set out in its Code of Practice on Employment under the Race Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 602) ("the Code of Practice") issued in July 2009. Under the Code of Practice, 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.

#### Review of LPRs and other relevant measures

3. As advised by the Administration, the following measures have been implemented to facilitate the recruitment of candidates whose first language is not Chinese:

- (a) *Review of LPRs* - The Civil Service Bureau ("CSB") conducts reviews of LPRs of all civil service grades from time to time in consultation with the bureaux/departments ("B/Ds"). CSB had completed a comprehensive review on the entry requirements relating to Chinese language proficiency for all the civil service grades in February 2018. The number of grades that have lowered or removed requirements for Chinese written proficiency has increased to 53 grades;
- (b) *Acceptance of results of non-local public examinations and Applied Learning Chinese subject* - The results of specified non-local public examinations<sup>1</sup> on the subject of Chinese language are accepted for the purpose of appointments to civil service. Moreover, results of "Attained" and "Attained with Distinction" for Applied Learning Chinese subject for non-Chinese speaking students at senior secondary level<sup>2</sup> are also accepted for the purpose of meeting the relevant Chinese LPRs for civil service appointments;
- (c) *Adjustments in recruitment selection process* - Some departments have suitably adjusted their recruitment selection process, particularly the part concerning tests of communication ability;<sup>3</sup>
- (d) *Implementation of employment initiatives* - Departments may employ NECs to meet operational needs where appropriate. Some of these departments include the Education Bureau, the Hong Kong Police Force ("HKPF") and the Social Welfare Department. The Home Affairs Department ("HAD") has designated positions for people who can command South/Southeast Asian language(s) widely spoken in Hong Kong to work in its Race Relations Unit to support its work on promotion of racial harmony and enhancement of support services for NECs. The Labour Department has engaged employment assistants proficient in NEC languages at two job centres on a pilot basis since 2017 to strengthen employment support for NEC job seekers;
- (e) *Dissemination of recruitment information* - CSB has been encouraging more B/Ds to place recruitment advertisements, where appropriate, with the support service centres for NECs run by the

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<sup>1</sup> Chinese language results in the United Kingdom International General Certificate of Secondary Education /General Certificate of Secondary Education /General Certificate of Education ("GCE") 'Ordinary' Level as well as GCE 'Advanced'/'Advanced Subsidiary' Levels are accepted for the purpose of appointments to the civil service.

<sup>2</sup> The first cohort of non-Chinese speaking students completed the Applied Learning Chinese subject in summer 2017.

<sup>3</sup> For example, applicants of Police Constable who meet the basic academic qualifications and prescribed English language proficiency standard but do not meet the required Chinese LPRs will be arranged to sit for the Government Standard Examination.

HAD, with the objective of widening the trawl for NECs for the recruitment exercises concerned. As at late March 2019, recruitment information of over 40 civil service posts with lowered Chinese LPRs had been disseminated to NECs via the above channels; and

- (f) *Promotional efforts* – Departments have launched various types of promotional programmes to encourage and help young NECs for future employment. HKPF and LD continue to launch programmes for young NECs such as training camps or serving as service ambassadors. CSB has posted a video on the Government Youth Portal, introducing government job opportunities for NECs, and featuring a NEC civil servant who shared her experience in applying government jobs. School talks were also arranged with HAD to share with NEC secondary school students the employment of NECs in the Government.

### **Discussions by the Panel**

4. The Panel had discussed employment of NECs at previous meetings. The major views and concerns expressed by Panel members, and the Administration's responses are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

#### Racial profile of the civil service

5. Some members enquired about the number and proportion of NECs in the civil service and suggested setting a target ratio of NEC employees in the civil service. They also urged the Administration to regularly update and publicize such information for public scrutiny.

6. The Administration responded that it had adopted a policy of equal opportunities in employment, and the race of a candidate was not a relevant consideration in the recruitment process. Instead of setting a target ratio of NEC civil servants, the Administration considered it more appropriate to facilitate NEC's employment in the civil service by providing them with equal access to openings like other applicants. As neither applicants for civil service posts nor serving civil servants were required to indicate their ethnic origins in the appointment process, information about the number and proportion of NECs in the civil service was unavailable. However, based on the information available through informal channels such as direct contacts, the Administration noted that NECs were recruited to fill vacancies in various grades such as Administrative Officer, Police Constable, Fireman and Artisan, etc. in the past two years.

7. In this connection, the Administration had conducted voluntary anonymous surveys to gather statistics on the racial profile of the civil service in 2011 and 2013. In the latter survey, 24 690 civil servants (15.4% of the 160 441

serving civil servants as at 31 March 2013) responded to the survey while 470 (or 1.9%) of them were NECs. The Administration considered that the distribution of individual NEC groups in the civil service as revealed in the 2013 survey was comparable to that in the general population as noted in the 2011 Population Census.

8. With a view to evaluating the effectiveness of the measures adopted by the Administration in facilitating the employment of NECs in the civil service, as well as to better understand the employment situation of NECs for providing relevant support, members urged the Administration to resume the survey to collect some baseline figures for comparison purpose.

9. Taking into account the low response rates and that the information so collected might not be able to reflect the true picture, the Administration said that it had not conducted such surveys after 2013 and the survey might not be a cost-effective means to gather statistics on the racial profile of the civil service. Given that the number of grades which had lowered/would lower LPRs had been further increased to 53, the Administration would review the effectiveness of the above initiative in facilitating the employment of NEC in the civil service and then decide whether, and if so, how to conduct another survey.

#### Employment of NECs in the civil service

10. In response to members' enquiry about the reasons for the small proportion (only less than 1%) of NECs in HKPF and the Correctional Services Department ("CSD"), the Administration advised that in 2015-2016, 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 (as at end December 2017), HKPF received 67, 67 and 31 applications for Police Constable from NECs respectively, while 11, 18 and 9 of them had been appointed, representing success rates of 16%, 27% and 29%. The rates were higher than those of other applicants at 13%, 11% and 13% respectively. As regards the recruitment exercises of Assistant Officer II of CSD, around one to two out of dozens of applications from NECs were successful in each of the past three years. Besides, a cross-disciplined forces training programme targeting NEC youths had been introduced to provide them with discipline, physical and team-building training.

11. As to the suggestion of providing Chinese language training to NEC civil servants to better assist them in performing their duties, the Administration responded that Chinese language training tailored for the vocational needs of NEC staff had already been organized to facilitate their effective performance of duties and career advancement.

#### LPRs for civil service appointments

12. Noting that many NECs in Hong Kong possessed good academic qualifications, and yet were unable to join the civil service because they failed to meet the LPRs for civil service appointments, members in generally

supported imposing a lower level of Chinese LPRs, particularly written Chinese, for appointment of civil service posts. The Administration replied that as to ensure effective delivery of public services, appropriate Chinese and English LPRs had to be specified as part of the entry requirements for appointment to individual grades having regard to the operational needs and job requirements. CSB would liaise with B/Ds on ways to facilitate the employment of NECs to civil service posts which require comparatively lower entry requirements, e.g. Artisan and Motor Driver, etc.

13. A member expressed concern that some individual B/Ds had their own internal language assessments in addition to LPRs. The Administration clarified that all B/Ds had to accept the Chinese language results of specified non-local public examinations, in addition to local qualifications. During the selection process, some B/Ds might arrange other tests or interviews which could help assess the applicants' job-related communication ability, and that should not be regarded as additional language tests imposed on applicants.

14. At the Panel meeting on 15 April 2019, a member enquired about the recruitment situation of NECs in those 53 grades upon the implementation of lowering Chinese LPRs after the review mentioned in paragraph 3(a) in February 2018. The Administration explained that whether recruitment exercises would be conducted depended on the vacancy position of individual grades. The recruitment situation in those grades would be kept in view and reported to the Panel as appropriate.

#### Public services provided to NECs

15. With a view to improving the provision of public service for the NEC community in Hong Kong, members suggested that for those departments which provide direct service to the NEC communities, e.g. the Immigration Department, the Administration should increase the number of NEC civil servants in these departments, and substitute the Chinese LPRs for the relevant grades with LPRs of the relevant NEC language. The Administration replied that the Immigration Department had engaged interpreters proficient in specified NEC languages to meet its specific operational needs of communication with NEC on immigration matters. Besides, applicants who possessed foreign language skills would be awarded extra marks in the recruitment selection process for some grades. As mentioned in the policy initiatives of CSB regarding the 2018 Policy Address and Policy Agenda, the Civil Service Training and Development Institute would provide newly recruited civil servants and front-line staff with more training related to cultural sensitivity and equal opportunities to further facilitate access by NECs to public services they required.

16. At its meeting on 26 February 2018, the Panel passed a motion to request the Administration to set up for departments closely related to ethnic minorities some ratios in respect of employing NECs with designated language

competencies as holders of civil service posts. The wording of the motion is in **Appendix I**.

### **Relevant questions raised at Council meetings**

17. Members had raised questions on the employment situation of and support services provided to NECs in civil service in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2020-2021.<sup>4</sup>

### **Latest development**

18. When briefing members on the policy initiatives under CSB in the 2019 Policy Address, the Secretary for the Civil Service advised that CSB had launched an internship programme for NEC university students on a pilot basis in 2019. A total of 16 NEC university students nominated by the eight universities funded by the University Grants Committee took part in the programme and were attached to various government departments for an internship lasting about eight weeks. CSB would continue to hold the internship programme next year in view of positive feedback received from the participants.

19. Separately, the Administration expected that about 1 600 officers would receive trainings on cultural sensitivity / equal opportunities in the Civil Service Training and Development Institute in 2019, doubling that of 2018.

20. The Administration will update the Panel on the employment of NECs in the civil service on 4 May 2020.

### **Relevant papers**

21. A list of relevant papers is in the **Appendix II**.

Council Business Division 4  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
25 April 2020

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<sup>4</sup> See: Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2020-2021 by the Finance Committee - Reply Serial No. [CSB019](#), [CSB034](#), [CSB045](#), [SB006](#), and [SB014](#).

**Panel on Public Service**

**Motion passed under agenda item V on "Employment of non-ethnic Chinese in the civil service" at the meeting on 26 February 2018**

(Translation)

To promote racial integration and provide better services to people of different races in Hong Kong, this Panel urges the Government to set up for departments closely related to ethnic minorities some ratios in respect of employing non-ethnic Chinese with designated language competencies as holders of civil service posts.

Moved by: Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP

## Appendix II

### Employment of non-ethnic Chinese in the civil service

#### List of relevant papers

Meeting	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Public Service	18 April 2016	<a href="#">Administration's paper</a> <a href="#">Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	15 May 2017	<a href="#">Administration's paper</a> <a href="#">Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a> <a href="#">Administration's follow-up response to issues raised at the Panel meeting</a>
	26 February 2018	<a href="#">Administration's paper</a> <a href="#">Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a> <a href="#">Administration's response to the motion passed at the meeting</a>
	15 April 2019	<a href="#">Administration's paper</a> <a href="#">Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>