

For discussion on
15 May 2017

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. Appointment to the civil service is 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.

Language Proficiency Requirements (LPRs)

3. In order to maintain effective communication for delivering public service, the Government specifies appropriate Chinese and English LPRs as part of the entry requirements for appointment to individual grades having regard to the job requirements of the grades concerned. This arrangement 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, 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. To ensure that ethnic minorities, like other applicants, have equal access to job opportunities in the Government, we 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. These adjustments include –

- (a) setting 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; and
- (d) replacing written test in Chinese by group interview.

5. Since 2016, we have adopted a targeted approach in reviewing the Chinese LPRs of specific grades by asking heads of department/grade (HoDs/HoGs) to specifically examine the necessity for proficiency in written Chinese particularly for jobs the duties of which should not involve much written communication or can accommodate written communication in either English or Chinese.

6. Through this targeted approach, the number of grades that have lowered or removed requirements for Chinese written proficiency has increased from about 20 grades to 31 grades. For example, the Supplies Attendant grade¹ has removed LPRs set at a proficiency equivalent to Primary 6 standard. Instead, for written proficiency, candidates are only required to be able to write simple Chinese or simple English, instead of both languages. Another example is the Artisan grade², with some departments now accepting written proficiency in simple English as an

¹ Supplies Attendant is a general grade under the management of Government Logistics Department, with officers posted to various bureaux/departments (B/Ds) and generally responsible for assisting in general storekeeping duties and performing manual / simple clerical work.

² Artisan is a grade which serves a number of departments. Some of the HoDs with Artisans under their charge have adjusted the Chinese LPRs after taking into account the operational requirements of the respective departments, e.g. Artisans in Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and Fire Services Department (FSD) who perform duties such as field work and maintenance of fire fighting appliances.

alternative to written proficiency in simple Chinese. With experience gained in the past year or so, our effort in reviewing the Chinese LPRs will continue.

7. 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 Education Bureau (EDB) in the 2014-15 school year, Civil Service Bureau (CSB) has promulgated in early 2015 guidelines on the acceptance arrangement for this new subject for B/Ds to follow. The first cohort of non-Chinese speaking students will complete the Applied Learning Chinese subject this summer. In anticipation of job applicants possessing results of the Applied Learning Chinese subject, CSB would remind B/Ds of the foregoing acceptance guidelines.

Tapping the Talent Pool of Ethnic Minorities

8. 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 continued to undertake appropriate measures to tap into the pool of talents possessing such knowledge. The Police Force and Social Welfare Department have continued to employ Police Community Liaison Assistants in Police Districts and Welfare Support and Liaison Assistants in Integrated Family Service Centres respectively to strengthen communication with local ethnic minority communities. Home Affairs Department (HAD) has recruited persons who can command South/Southeast Asian language(s) widely spoken in Hong Kong in its Race Relations Unit. Also, Immigration Department (ImmD) has since 2010 been engaging interpreters proficient in specified ethnic minority languages to help the

department in communicating with ethnic minorities regarding immigration matters. In 2017, Labour Department (LD) will engage employment assistants proficient in ethnic minority languages at two job centres on a pilot basis to strengthen employment support for ethnic minority job seekers. CSB will continue to liaise with other B/Ds which services have interface with ethnic minorities to identify room for trawling suitable candidates who possess foreign language skills, including ethnic minority applicants, for relevant jobs in the Government.

9. To facilitate dissemination of recruitment information on government jobs, CSB has been encouraging more B/Ds to place recruitment advertisements, where appropriate, with the Support Service Centres for Ethnic Minorities run by HAD, with the objective of widening the trawl for ethnic minorities for the recruitment exercises concerned.

10. Some departments have organised engagement projects targeting non-ethnic Chinese (NEC) youths to enhance their understanding of the work in the Government. For example, the Police Force, Correctional Services Department, FSD and ImmD conduct career talks specifically for NEC youths from time to time. Moreover, some government departments have organised sharing sessions for NEC students under EDB's Life Planning Education initiative for enhancing students' understanding of the job nature and career paths in the civil service. In addition, LD 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

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

Civil Service Bureau
May 2017