

EMB attaches importance to providing education support for ethnic minorities

The Government's education policy is to provide appropriate learning opportunities for all students with a view to helping them attain all-round development. We understand the needs of the non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students, and have been putting in place various support measures. We are further stepping up our efforts by strengthening the relevant measures.

Has EMB provided education support for ethnic minority students?

- EMB attaches importance to providing education support for ethnic minority students. In this regard, we have laid down clear direction and specific measures, and are implementing these measures progressively. The measures include –
 - ~ EMB is providing centralized support to ten primary and five secondary schools designated for such support in the 2006/07 school year. Intensive on-site support is being provided to these schools to help them further enhance the learning and teaching, particularly in the Chinese Language subject, of the NCS students. The support takes the form of regular visits by professional officers to conduct collaborative lesson planning with teachers and to help the schools develop school-based Chinese Language curricula, learning and teaching strategies, school-based teaching resources / materials, learning activities and assessment designs, etc.
 - ~ Action is in hand to commission tertiary institution(s) to run a Chinese Learning Support Centre, which will support NCS students who are less proficient in Chinese (in particular the late starters) by offering remedial programmes for these students after school hours or during holidays, borrowing premises of relevant designated schools. The Centre will also participate in the development of related teaching resources and provide professional advice.
 - ~ Action is in hand to commission tertiary institutions(s) to run training programmes for Chinese language teachers in the designated schools (tenders are being invited).
 - ~ The 4-week Summer Bridging Programme currently confined to incoming ethnic minority Primary 1 entrants will be extended to cover also ethnic minority students proceeding to Primary 2, Primary 3 and Primary 4.
 - ~ Knowing that individual NCS students would like to be provided with the avenue to attain alternative qualifications in Chinese, necessary arrangements are being made for interested NCS students to participate in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) (Chinese) examination in Hong Kong starting from 2007.
 - ~ We have conveyed the views of the ethnic minority community to the local universities and post-secondary/vocational training institutions, and have encouraged them to continue to suitably allow flexibility for ethnic minority students when applying the Chinese language requirement during student admission and course design.
 - ~ Starting from recent years, we have provided information notes and conducted briefings on school places allocation systems in the major ethnic minority languages (e.g. Nepali, Urdu and Hindi). An NCS parent information package introducing the local education system and the educational support services for NCS students will be produced in the major ethnic minority languages for distribution in 2007.
- As for language education outside school, the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research will, making reference to its experience in administering the Workplace English Campaign, develop a Workplace Chinese Programme for meeting the needs of the NCS group.

The Race Discrimination Bill has provided exemption for medium of instruction (MOI) in the education sector. Would this be to the detriment of the ethnic minorities?

- MOI and teaching of Chinese are two different issues. Our MOI policy is premised on sound education philosophy and it takes into account the practical circumstances of Hong Kong. Our public-sector schools will not adopt ethnic minority languages as the MOI, for this would not be conducive to the learning of Chinese and English by ethnic minority students. Nor would it help their integration into the school and the wider community. That said, we put emphasis on teaching Chinese to ethnic minority children (irrespective of whether the school adopts Chinese or English as the MOI), and we have strengthened our support for schools/students in this regard (see section above).

Will EMB develop a curriculum on Chinese as a second language?

- There are views that EMB should develop an alternative curriculum and examination on Chinese as a second language. In fact, the measures that we are adopting are also addressing the needs of the NCS students:
 - ~ We appreciate that schools may need to adapt the teaching pedagogy, progress and materials in teaching Chinese to ethnic minority students. In this regard, we are providing assistance to the schools concerned to develop school-based curricula by adapting the central Chinese curriculum framework. During the process, we will draw reference from the curriculum design in individual international schools. The ultimate objective is to develop a set of curriculum design and resources for reference and deployment by local schools. Indeed, we note that the development of school-based Chinese curriculum for NCS students is also the approach adopted by many international schools.
 - ~ Necessary arrangements are being made to introduce the GCSE (Chinese) examination in Hong Kong starting from 2007 for NCS students in public-sector schools. This examination is suitable for students learning Chinese as a second language. In the long run, we will continue to examine if there is a need to introduce other Chinese Language examinations and qualifications for NCS students. The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority will also consider developing a separate Chinese Language examination for NCS students to provide yet another examination choice.

Will the EMB review the effectiveness of these measures?

- We will review the effectiveness of our measures from time to time. Of course the ethnic minorities will also have to play a part while the EMB is strengthening support. The learning effectiveness of students does not only hinge on the learning and teaching in schools, but is also affected by the extent of family support and the learning motivation of individual students, etc.

Will EMB adjust its policies in view of the Race Discrimination Bill?

- Our existing policies and measures are already in compliance with requirements of the Bill. Like all other bureaux and departments, EMB will no doubt comply with the requirements under the future legislation against race discrimination when formulating and implementing policies.