Committee on the Promotion of Racial Harmony

Notes of the meeting on 21 July 2015

**Present**

**Home Affairs Department (HAD)**

Mrs Candy Yeung (Acting Chairman) Assistant Director

Mr K Y Cheng Chief Executive Officer

Mr Alfred Shum (Secretary) Senior Executive Officer

**Official Members**

Miss Yik Wai King Principal Information Officer (Local Promotion) Information Services Department

Ms Ng Yin Yi, Elaine Education Officer (Placement and Support)2 Education Bureau

Ms Lau Hang Yee, Jessica Labour Officer (Employment Services)

 Labour Department

**Non-official Members**

Mr Mohamed Ibramsa Sikkander Batcha

Mr Brian Chau

Dr Theresa Cunanan

Mr Kul Prasad Gurung

Dr Sharmila Gurung

Ms Ho Wai-yee, Lucilla

Mr Hameed Jalal

Mr Mohammad Liaqat

Mr Amirali Bakirali Nasir

Dr Rizwan Ullah

**In Attendance**

Dr Gordon Tsui Convenor, Sub-committee on Catering for Student Diversity, Committee on Free Kindergarten Education

Mrs Conny Li Senior Education Officer (Kindergarten Special Duty 2), Education Bureau

Ms Catherine Law Senior Labour Officer (Employment Services)(Policy), Labour Department

Mr William Ng Labour Officer (Employment Services)(Shatin), Labour Department

Mr Raymond Ho Senior Equal Opportunities Officer, Equal Opportunities Commission

**Absent with apologies**

Mr Jack Chan Deputy Director of Home Affairs

Mr D C Cheung Principal Assistant Secretary (Constitutional & Mainland Affairs)

Mr Dewan Saiful Alam

Ms Rosalia Kamariah Kesuma

Ms Bungon Tamasorn

Mr Yeung Chuen Chow, Thomas

1. Introduction
	1. Mrs Candy Yeung, Assistant Director of Home Affairs, explained that owing to an unforeseeable urgent matter, Mr Jack Chan, Deputy Director of Home Affairs, was not able to attend the meeting. Hence, she chaired the meeting on his behalf.
	2. Acting Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting, in particular two new members, Mr Batcha and Dr Cunanan, and a new representative from the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), Mr Raymond Ho, who attended the meeting for the first time.
	3. Acting Chairman congratulated Mr Amirali Bakirali Nasir for receiving the award of the Medal of Honour and Mr Mohammad Liaqat, Dr Rizwan Ullah and Ms Lucilla Ho Wai-yee for receiving the award of the Chief Executive’s Commendations for Community Services on the HKSAR Establishment Day.
2. Confirmation of the notes of discussion on 5 December 2014
	1. The notes of the last meeting held on 5 December 2014 were confirmed.
3. Matters arising from the meeting on 5 December 2014
	1. There was no matter arising from the meeting on 5 December 2014.
4. Report of the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education by Education Bureau
	1. At the invitation of Acting Chairman, Mrs Conny Li of the Education Bureau (EDB) briefed Members on the Report of the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education (the Report) with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation.
	2. Issues raised by Members and the discussions were summarised below:

## Scope of free kindergarten education

* + 1. The Report proposed that the Government’s funding should cover half-day service as the basic provision while additional resources be given to kindergartens (KGs) providing whole-day and long whole-day service. A Member enquired about the operating hours of KGs. Dr Tsui replied that there were half-day KGs, whole-day KGs (open from 9am to 4pm) and long whole-day KGs (open until the evening). Noting that some parents regarded KG as day-care centres, a Member suggested that the Government should consider giving additional support so as to relieve teachers from non-teaching work.

## Financial incentives for KGs admitting Non-Chinese Speaking (NCS) students

* + 1. The Report proposed that a grant comparable to the salary of one teacher should be provided for KGs admitting, say, eight or more NCS students. A Member asked whether a KG would receive more assistance if it had more than 8 NCS students. Dr Tsui said that the purpose of the grant was to enable KGs to enhance the support for NCS students. At the same time, it was not desirable for individual KGs to admit a large number of NCS students. Therefore, the proposed grant is capped at one teacher’s salary for each KG.
		2. Dr Tsui added that the assistance could be used by the KG holistically to support the learning of NCS students through the Chinese medium, such as recruiting ethnic minority (EM) assistants, engaging translation services, and organising seminars for parents of NCS students and other learning activities. Members worried that the assistance might not be used on NCS students and suggested that there should be an accountability mechanism. Dr Tsui replied that the Committee on Free KG Education recommended each KG to set up a management committee for monitoring the management of KGs including recruitment of teachers and use of funds, etc.

## Support for NCS students and their parents

* + 1. A Member commented that some EM parents might not have the necessary information on sending their children to KGs. He suggested that KGs should provide information to them in languages other than Chinese. Some Members commented that parents’ participation and an “immersed Chinese learning environment” at home were important. Dr Tsui said that KGs and parents should join hands to promote learning the Chinese language among EMs.
		2. Dr Tsui said that enhancing the teacher-pupil ratio from 1:15 to 1:12 as proposed in the Report would give teachers more capacity to cater for learner diversity and the needs of NCS students. KGs might also apply to the Language Fund and the Quality Education Fund for funding to organise activities and develop appropriate strategies to support NCS students. In addition, EDB had been providing professional development programmes and school-based support services to enhance teachers’ capacity in catering for children with diverse needs, including NCS students.
		3. A Member said that EM students lived in different clusters in the territory and had to travel a long way to schools. He suggested looking into transportation problems of EM students.
		4. To further address the diversity in KG, a Member opined that more teacher training opportunities should be provided to EMs. Dr Tsui supplemented that the ‘University-School Support Programmes’, with expertise solicited from the tertiary sector, provided school-based support services for KGs in addressing the learning needs of NCS students.

## Support for children with special needs

* + 1. In response to a Member’s enquiry on the support for EM children with special needs, Dr Tsui pointed out that the Report proposed increasing rehabilitation places for students with special needs and implementing an enhanced service mode with a view to rendering holistic support for KG students with special needs, their parents/carers and the KGs they were attending. It was considered that the support of a multidisciplinary team (comprising allied health professionals such as clinical psychologists, occupational therapists and speech therapists) for KGs was essential to cater for the students in need of additional support. A Member suggested that suitable facilities should also be provided to students with disabilities.

## Research on KG education

* + 1. It was proposed in the Report that more researches should be conducted on the latest trends in child development and the impact of the new policy on the quality of KG education. In response to a Member’s enquiry on the research methodology, Dr Tsui explained that one of the objectives was to develop appropriate strategies to be deployed to support NCS students in learning the Chinese language. He also pointed out that the Report recommended conducting more studies on the needs of NCS students in learning the Chinese language.
	1. Acting Chairman thanked for the presentation made by Mrs Li and the sharing of Dr Tsui.
1. Employment services for ethnic minorities provided by the Labour Department
	1. At the invitation of Acting Chairman, Ms Catherine Law of the Labour Department (LD) briefed Members on the employment services for ethnic minorities provided by LD with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation. Mr William NG and two Employment Services Ambassadors for Ethnic Minorities (EM ambassadors) of LD, Mr Gurung Pratik Man and Miss Fozia Bibi, shared with Members on the implementation of the Employment Services Ambassador Programme for Ethnic Minorities (ESA Programme).
	2. Issues raised by Members and the discussions were summarised below:

## Employment Services for EM Job Seekers

* + 1. Noting that LD was running two Industry-based Recruitment Centres (one for the catering industry and one for the retail industry), a Member enquired why there was no centre for the construction industry. Ms Law replied that the Recruitment Centre for the Construction Industry was being set up and would probably open in early 2016.
		2. A Member asked whether job seekers could register with LD for receiving vacancy information. Ms Law replied that after job seekers registered on the Interactive Employment Service Website and provided information like working experience, academic attainment, preferred jobs and working locations, they would receive information on vacancies suitable for them regularly.
		3. A Member commented that the monthly updates of employment briefing and job fair schedules sent by LD to his *madrassah* were useful to his students.
		4. A Member suggested that in organising job fairs, LD could search for more job vacancies in the construction industry or other industries which were more popular among EMs. Ms Law said that LD has been regularly organising inclusive job fairs which offered vacancies from a variety of industries and most of them were suitable for EMs.

## Employment Services Ambassador Programme for EMs

* + 1. Members were interested in the details of the ESA Programme and were generally supportive of the programme. Ms Law said that under the 2nd phase of the programme which commenced in March 2015, 17 ambassadors were recruited to receive on-the-job training in 13 job centres and two recruitment centres.
		2. A Member commented that internship programmes could help students gain experience and have better idea of their career and life planning. He suggested that government departments should offer more internship places. Acting Chairman said that both the government and private sectors provided a lot of internship opportunities especially during the summer. There were also sharing sessions which allowed students to understand more about the structure and work of the government.
		3. A Member asked the EM ambassadors whether their language proficiency had any implication on their salary level. An ambassador said that it was true that EM job seekers with better language skills usually could find a job more easily. A job with more attractive remuneration normally required applicants to have proficiency in certain languages. Another ambassador commented that EMs had to put extra effort in learning Chinese so as to secure jobs with good prospects but he would not regard it as unfair. A Member agreed that one’s language proficiency might determine his earning capacity but that applied equally to everyone, not only EMs. Therefore, it was important that young people should be given more support and opportunities to learn and enhance their language skills.
1. Any Other Business
	1. The Secretary reported that a sharing session was organised by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority for attendees of the Ethnic Minority Forum and representatives of the banking industry to exchange views on opening bank accounts by EMs. During the session, attendees acknowledged that there were tightened international regulatory requirements and it was a challenge for the banks’ management to ensure a uniform service standard. Attendees agreed that strengthening communication between banks and clients was important. A Member said that some of his clients also encountered difficulties in opening bank account but did not consider it an ethnic issue.
	2. Mr Raymond Ho told the meeting that EOC had organised a seminar jointly with the Hong Kong Association of Banks and the Hong Kong Institute of Bankers in July to provide bank staff with information on the Race Discrimination Ordinance and cultural sensitivity.
	3. For the date of next meeting, Members would be duly informed nearer the time.

Home Affairs Department

December 2015