

# 立法會

## *Legislative Council*

LC Paper No. CB(2)783/05-06

(These minutes have been  
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

### **Panel on Education**

#### **Minutes of meeting held on Monday, 12 December 2005 at 4:30 pm in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

<b>Members present</b>	: Dr Hon YEUNG Sum (Chairman) Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP (Deputy Chairman) Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-yee, GBS, JP Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, GBS, JP Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP Hon MA Lik, GBS, JP Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
<b>Member attending</b>	: Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
<b>Members absent</b>	: Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, SBS, JP
<b>Public Officers attending</b>	: <u>Item IV</u>  Mrs Fanny LAW, GBS, JP Permanent Secretary for Education & Manpower  Mr Michael TIEN, BBS, JP Chairman of the Education Commission's Working Group on Review of Secondary School Places Allocation and Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools

Ms Bernadette LINN  
Deputy Secretary for Education & Manpower 2

Item V

Mrs Fanny LAW, GBS, JP  
Permanent Secretary for Education & Manpower

Ms Bernadette LINN  
Deputy Secretary for Education & Manpower 2

Mr Billy WOO  
Assistant Secretary (Language Education), Education  
and Manpower Bureau

**Clerk in attendance** : Miss Flora TAI  
Chief Council Secretary (2)2

**Staff in attendance** : Mr Stanley MA  
Senior Council Secretary (2)6

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**I. Confirmation of minutes**  
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)429/05-06 and CB(2)585/05-06]

The minutes of the meetings held on 20 October and 14 November 2005 were confirmed.

**II. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting**

2. Members noted that no paper was issued since the last meeting.

**III. Items for discussion at the next meeting**  
[Appendices I and II to LC Paper No. CB(2)581/05-06]

Item for discussion at the next meeting

3. Members agreed that the Panel should discuss “Education for children of ethnic minorities” at its next regular meeting scheduled for Monday, 9 January 2006 at 4:30 pm. Members also agreed that the Equal Opportunities

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Commission and other concern groups should be invited to present views at the meeting. Referring to her written question regarding education for ethnic minorities raised at the Legislative Council (LegCo) meeting on 23 November 2005, Ms Emily LAU suggested that to facilitate discussion, the Administration should try to provide to the Panel relevant information on performance of students of ethnic minorities in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination, including their passing rates in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics.

Items for discussion at future meetings

*Quality and subsidisation of sub-degree programmes*

4. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong suggested that the Panel should discuss the quality and subsidisation of sub-degree programmes in January 2006. Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower (PSEM) responded that the Administration had established a working group to review the development of the sub-degree sector, and would put forward initial recommendations for consultation with the sub-degree sector in February 2006. Members agreed to discuss the item in February 2006.

*Workload of teachers*

5. Ms Audrey EU suggested that the Panel should discuss the workload of teachers in schools and receive views from teachers in this respect at a future meeting. She pointed out that many serving teachers had complained about the long working hours and heavy workload in schools. Members agreed to include the item in the list of outstanding items for discussion.

*Remuneration systems in University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions after deregulation of university salaries*

6. The Chairman suggested that the Panel should revisit the issue about the remuneration systems in UGC-funded institutions after deregulation of university salaries at a near future. Members raised no objection.

**IV. Review of medium of instruction for secondary schools and secondary school places allocation**

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)581/05-06(01) and (02)]

Improving English proficiency of students in CMI schools

7. Mrs Selina CHOW said that she was pleased that the within-school approach (i.e. adopting English as the medium of instruction (MOI) by class or by subject) at junior secondary levels would not be adopted and bifurcation of

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schools adopting English as MOI (EMI schools) and schools adopting Chinese as MOI (CMI schools) would be preserved. She considered that while the community in general recognised the benefits of mother-tongue teaching, parents were most concerned about the English proficiency of their children. She stressed the importance of the English proficiency of the community in maintaining the competitiveness of Hong Kong as an international metropolis. Mrs CHOW expressed concern that many serving English Language teachers had yet to achieve the required proficiency level. She asked whether there was any strategic planning to enhance the English proficiency of students in CMI schools in the long term.

8. The Chairman of the Working Group on Review of Secondary School Places Allocation and Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools (The Chairman of the Working Group) responded that the Working Group was well aware of the importance of teachers' capability and an English-rich learning environment to facilitate English teaching and learning in CMI schools. It was recognised that there must be a "structural change" in order to enhance the professional competency of the English language teachers in CMI schools.

9. The Chairman of the Working Group pointed out that the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) had set up the Professional Development Incentive Grant Scheme to support and encourage serving language teachers to acquire the relevant qualifications essential to ensuring their adequate preparation in proficiency, subject knowledge and pedagogy. The response to the scheme was favourable, and additional injection of funds had been approved for expanding its number of potential beneficiaries. Eligible serving language teachers might now pace their own professional development and apply for sponsorship under the scheme in the coming few years.

10. The Chairman of the Working Group said that the Education Commission had recommended the introduction of a targeted English enhancement scheme (the Scheme) for CMI schools by way of further injection into the Language Fund. The Scheme emphasised capacity building and was school-based as well as result-oriented, as opposed to a "one size fits all" programme. The Working Group had considered the diversity of individual CMI schools in terms of the family background and English proficiency of their students, the school culture and existing practices on the teaching and learning of English, and proposed to launch the Scheme to encourage CMI schools to work out plans and measures to build up capacity for raising the English proficiency of their students on a sustainable basis in six years, starting from the 2006-07 school year.

11. The Chairman of the Working Group further said that the creation of an English-rich environment in schools would enhance students' exposure to and usage of English inside and outside the classroom. Under the Scheme, schools would be invited to submit their proposals on enhancing the language

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proficiency of their students which should incorporate measures to create an English-rich environment for students. Upon approval, schools would be required to enter into a “performance contract” with the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB). Under the contract, schools would be required to achieve specific targets in enhancement of the English proficiency of their students. They would be expected to improve deployment of English Language teachers, develop a collaborative and reflective teaching culture, implement measures to cater for student diversity, and adopt a whole-school approach in enhancing the language proficiency of students. On student learning outcome, schools would be expected to set out their action plans and specific targets over six years with interim milestones of achievement. In brief, schools were expected to come up with a holistic and coherent plan to ensure effective utilisation of the extra funding and to improve students’ proficiency in English.

12. PSEM supplemented that principals and English Language teachers of individual CMI schools should discuss and come up with some feasible ways to improve the English proficiency of their students, having regard to the school context. They would not be required to prepare elaborate applications for the Scheme. A panel comprising both EMB representatives and language education experts would engage in a professional discourse with the principals and English language teachers to agree on an appropriate plan for each school covering five main areas, namely, professional upgrading of subject teachers who should help students to learn and use English across the curriculum; the use of non-recurrent funds to help create an English-rich environment, the effective deployment of English Language teachers, the development of an interesting curriculum and effective pedagogies to enhance students’ motivation to learn, and fostering a collaborative and reflective teaching culture in schools. She added that CMI schools were also encouraged to make use of existing resources for the establishment of an English-rich environment, such as the use of English in extra-curricular activities and internal communications.

13. Mrs Selina CHOW said that some CMI schools might need professional and expert support in preparing their strategic plans and measures to enhance the English proficiency of their students. She asked whether CMI schools under the Scheme would be allowed to procure external professional and expert advice or support to facilitate planning and implementation of the strategic plans and measures. The Chairman of the Working Group replied that it would depend on the nature of professional and expert advice or support the schools would like to procure. Schools would be allowed to do so as long as the professional and expert advice or support would contribute to the development of structural and sustainable changes in enhancing student learning outcome in English.

Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA)

14. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed appreciation that in coming up with the recommendations in the Report on Review of Medium of Instruction for

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Secondary Schools and Secondary School Places Allocation (the Report), the Working Group had tried to strike a balance among various interests in the community, which was not an easy task to do. The crux afterwards was to put the recommendations into implementation and avoid any deviation from the original purposes during the process.

15. Mr CHEUNG agreed that in the current circumstances, the use of the existing Pre-Secondary One Hong Kong Attainment Test (Pre-S1HKAT) as the scaling instrument for scaling primary schools' internal assessment results for banding purpose was the best choice among the available alternatives. He, however, pointed out that the adoption of the Academic Aptitude Tests (AAT) results was once regarded by the education sector as the best choice for the previous SSPA system under similar circumstances, and its implementation over the years had driven primary schools to engage in extensive drilling for the tests. He asked how the Administration would assess and monitor the situation in order to prevent schools from drilling their students for Pre-S1 HKAT in the long term.

16. The Chairman of the Working Group explained that the existing scaling instrument based on past AAT results since 2001 and the three-band system had already increased student diversity in secondary classes. The majority of secondary school teachers should possess sufficient professional knowledge and skills, as well as the room to develop school-based curriculum and effective teaching pedagogies to cater for widened student diversity. In other words, teachers would have to deal with students of different abilities in classes. It was, however, considered that a more reliable and updated scaling instrument should be adopted.

17. The Chairman of the Working Group agreed that any test that had a direct bearing on the allocation results for the students concerned would likely induce drilling. He, however, pointed out that pre-S1 HKAT was curriculum-based and a well-established assessment used by secondary schools. It would not entail additional workload for primary and secondary schools, and would obviate the need to introduce an extra assessment for students. He also pointed out that many parents initially had expressed reservations about the fairness of applying the scaling instrument indirectly, i.e. using the performance of students of the previous cohorts to scale the performance of the next cohort of students. They considered it more acceptable if the performance of the current cohort was used for scaling. However, after they found out during a briefing on the statistical approximation that such indirect scaling would on average change the banding result of less than one student in a class of 32 students from Band 1 to Band 2, and similarly less than one student from Band 2 to Band 3, some 60% to 80% of them agreed that indirect scaling should be adopted. The Working Group also considered that it was not worthwhile to re-introduce a high-stake assessment for the sake of removing such a small discrepancy.

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18. The Chairman of the Working Group added that the Working Group acknowledged that even with indirect scaling, some primary schools might still drill their students for pre-S1 HKAT since their results would affect the allocation results of the next cohort of students. However, parents and students would have less incentive to engage in extensive drilling for pre-S1 HKAT as the test results would not have any bearing on the students' own allocation results.

19. PSEM said that extensive drilling for pre-S1 HKAT could not be ruled out. However, with the operation of through-train and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools, the adoption of indirect scaling and a three-banding system, and the implementation of the basic competence assessments, schools and parents would have less incentive to drill their students. She added that in the light of the education reform, assessment of student learning outcome had been diversified to cover both academic and non-academic aspects of attainment. Past records showed that schools that relied on drilling did not out-perform schools that offered a more rounded education.

20. Referring to paragraphs 6.31 and 6.33 of the Report, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered that the Administration was well aware that schools might engage in unnecessary student drilling for pre-S1 HKAT. He was concerned that even with indirect scaling, some primary schools might for various reasons engage in unnecessary drilling of students for pre-S1 HKAT. He suggested that EMB should make use of its quality assurance mechanism and take appropriate actions to prevent unnecessary drilling in primary schools. He added that as through-train EMI schools must have no less than 75% of S1 intake belonging to the 40% students capable of learning through English, the through-train primary schools might have a stronger incentive to drill students for pre-S1 HKAT.

21. PSEM responded that EMB would monitor the situation through external school reviews and routine school visits. She also called upon parents to report to EMB any excessive drilling for pre-S1 HKAT.

Student capability

22. Mr Jasper TSANG noted that according to the research study conducted by the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) in 2004, at most 40% of S1 students were able to learn through English. The Working Group recommended that these 40% students could be identified on the basis of students' internal assessment results (including the second term of Primary five (P5) and the first and second terms of P6) as scaled by the existing pre-S1 HKAT. He asked whether there was any scientific basis to support the research finding that only 40% of S1 students were capable to learn through English or a second language in overseas places. If not, he asked whether the percentage of the students capable to learn through English would change with improvement in quality of basic education, or as a result of the implementation of the new MOI policy and

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arrangements in the long term.

23. The Chairman of the Working Group responded that in proposing the 40% threshold, the Working Group had made reference to the standard adopted by the Government under the Medium of Instruction Guidance for Secondary Schools and the research study conducted by CUHK in 2004 as detailed in Annex 5 to the Report. He agreed that the percentage of S1 students who were able to learn through English could change with improvement in quality of pre-primary and primary education in the long term.

24. The Chairman of the Working Group added that the results of many overseas researches had suggested that the capability of a student to overcome the language barrier when learning through a second language usually varied according to his learning motivation and proficiency in native language. Students with these attributes usually performed better in terms of overall academic achievements. In the circumstances of Hong Kong, assessment of students' EMI capability solely on the basis of their English proficiency would lead to over-emphasis on the subject of English Language by primary schools and parents. To ensure the development of a balanced curriculum in primary schools, the Working Group therefore recommended that the internal assessment results of P6 students should be scaled on the basis of their overall performance in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics in pre-S1 HKAT.

25. PSEM pointed out that a number of overseas researches had concluded that students learnt best through the mother-tongue, even for students who could learn through English. The Administration upheld the adoption of mother-tongue teaching to enhance student learning outcome in secondary schools. EMI schools, including schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme, should fulfil the prescribed criteria of student ability, teacher capability and support measures. To enhance the English proficiency of students in CMI schools, the Administration supported the recommendation of the Working Group to introduce the Scheme to facilitate the development of English-rich environment to enhance English learning in schools. PSEM added that the English proficiency of some students in CMI schools was very good. Around 17% of the top 40% P6 graduates had chosen CMI schools as their first choice in the 2004/05 school year. In this connection, the Chairman pointed out that these students might have opted for CMI schools after consideration of their chance of being admitted to EMI schools. He believed that mother-tongue teaching was not a factor of consideration in the choice of these students and a majority of them might have applied for enrolment in CMI schools for fear that their application for enrolment in popular EMI schools would be rejected.

26. Mr Jasper TSANG pointed out that the threshold of 40% S1 students being capable to learn through English had been adopted for decades, but the threshold was determined on the basis of empirical findings only. He said that he supported mother-tongue teaching but considered that students should be given a

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real choice in deciding whether they wanted to study in EMI or CMI schools. However, the threshold had in effect provided only the top 40% of P6 students with a choice in the selection of CMI or EMI schools, and created an adverse label against CMI schools and their students. He suggested that the Administration should fundamentally seek to increase the percentage of students who were capable of learning through English by improving the quality of language education in primary schools. Mr TSANG said that only if more than 80% of S1 students could learn through English, students would really have a choice in the selection of EMI or CMI schools, and enrolment in CMI schools and EMI schools would reflect the preference of students to learn through mother-tongue or English.

27. Ms Emily LAU said that she shared the view of Mr TSANG. She, however, appreciated that despite the controversies surrounding the MOI policy for secondary schools and the SSPA system, the Working Group had managed to strike an appropriate balance among the different views of the key stakeholders. Ms LAU anticipated that the stakeholders and the community as a whole would finally accept the recommendations in the Report.

28. The Chairman of the Working Group responded that the Working Group had thoroughly considered the views of the stakeholders and made appropriate adjustments to its original proposals as long as these adjustments would not depart from the educational philosophy of the Working Group. He agreed that the percentage of P6 students who were EMI-capable would increase with improvement in quality of language education in primary schools.

29. Ms Emily LAU asked whether the Administration had examined overseas experience in teaching through a second language. She pointed out that many Europeans could speak a number of European languages fluently. The Chairman of the Working Group responded that all European countries used mother-tongue in schools. The capability of their citizens to speak different languages was developed from subject studies in schools or universities.

30. Mr Patrick LAU noted that the research study conducted by CUHK to assess the percentage of S1 students' capability to learn through English was carried out for English Language classes only. He was concerned about the reliability of the finding that about 32% - 40% of S1 students in Hong Kong were able to learn through English.

31. PSEM responded that the Administration accepted the results of the research study as it was conducted by reputable academics and experienced teachers in English and other subjects, and had employed the widely adopted standard setting procedure, i.e. the Angoff method to analyse the capability required for S1 students to learn through EMI. She added that the research finding was based on empirical observations and assessment.

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Language education at primary level

32. The Chairman reiterated the importance of language education at primary level to increase the number of students who were capable of learning through English. He also considered that the development of Hong Kong should be geared towards the provision of quality services to the Mainland, given its proximity and potential economic developments in the years to come. He was of the view that MOI did not necessarily have a bearing on language proficiency. The Administration should aim to upgrade the biliterate and trilingual proficiency of the population. The Chairman suggested that apart from injecting some \$1.1 billion to improve quality of language education in secondary schools, the Administration should allocate additional resources to improve quality of language education at primary level. He considered that the development of students' language ability should start from primary schools. Ms Emily LAU and Ms Audrey EU expressed support for the Chairman's suggestion.

33. PSEM responded that the Administration had increased funding for primary school education by about 70% as compared with the allocation in 1997, and a large proportion of the increase was to improve language education at primary schools, including the provision of the Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme, specialised teaching starting with English Language, the Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers, the capacity enhancement grant which enabled primary schools to employ English Language Teaching Assistants to assist in English teaching, creation of curriculum leaders, and allocations from the Language Fund and Quality Education Fund for the implementation of various schemes and programmes to enhance language education in primary schools. The investment in language education in primary schools was equally, if not more, substantial than for secondary schools. She added that the provision of additional resources to secondary schools was necessary to help students who missed the opportunity to benefit from the various language support services for primary schools.

34. Ms Audrey EU pointed out that the results of the first Basic Competency Assessment (BCA) in English Language for P3 in 2004 and for P6 in 2005 were not satisfactory. The education sector expected that the results of the first BCA for S3 in 2006 would probably be more discouraging. She considered that if the English standard of P6 students was not up to the basic requirement, the creation of an English-rich environment to upgrade students' English proficiency would not be very fruitful. She asked whether the 70% increase of resources for primary school education would increase the percentage of P6 graduates who were capable to learn through English, and if not, whether additional resources should be allocated to improve the situation.

35. PSEM responded that in education, money alone could not guarantee positive results. It would take time for the various language improvement measures to bear fruit. The BCA results provided information on students'

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attainment in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics for schools to plan the appropriate teaching strategies and pedagogies for their students. Following the release of the first BCA results for P3 in 2004, the Finance Committee had approved a grant of \$200 million in early 2005 to support language education at the pre-primary and primary levels. EMB was planning to launch an overseas English immersion programmes for serving English teachers in primary schools in 2006.

36. PSEM further said that upgrading students' proficiency in English should be strategically planned at system level and achieved through learning inside and outside the schools. In other words, participation of parents and the community as a whole in this regard was essential. Apart from the creation of an English-rich environment in schools, students should be provided with opportunities to learn and practise English at home and in the community. Coupled with the benefits of mother-tongue teaching, CMI schools should be able to enhance students' learning in subject matter, as well as develop their proficiency in English.

37. The Chairman of the Working Group supplemented that as of mid-2005, some 1000 primary and 500 secondary school English Language teachers had applied for the Professional Development Incentive Grant Scheme. The enthusiastic response from primary school English teachers to the scheme had reflected that they were committed towards professional development in the subject they taught.

Through-train schools

38. Mr Patrick LAU sought clarification of the concerns among parents about the requirement for through-train schools under the new MOI arrangements. In response, PSEM explained that a through-train secondary school would have to admit all the P6 graduates of its linked primary school. This lack of control over the quality of its S1 intake had created uncertainty as to whether 85% of the P6 graduates were among the 40% students who were capable of learning through English, thus posing a threat to the school's EMI status and dampening its intention to form a through-train with the primary school concerned. To allay the concern among the prospective through-train secondary schools, the Working Group had recommended to lower the threshold percentage of EMI-capable students to 75% for S1 entrants from the linked primary schools while maintaining the threshold of 85% EMI-capable students for the external S1 intake. Furthermore, to allow more time for the linked primary schools to improve English teaching and learning, the Working Group also recommended that the deadline for secondary schools complying with the through-train principles to decide whether to form through-trains would be deferred to 31 May 2012. PSEM added that existing through-train schools in general were confident that they could meet the lower requirement on student ability as prescribed.

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**V. Injection into the Language Fund**

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)581/05-06(03) and CB(2)581/05-06(04)]

Targeted English enhancement scheme for CMI schools (the Scheme)

39. Ms Audrey EU said that the Administration should make use of the savings arising from the decline in student population to improve the quality of basic education. She considered that apart from the provision of overseas immersion programmes for language teachers, there were other ways to upgrade quality of language education in primary schools, such as the provision of additional teachers and training on English writing for teachers and students. She asked how the Administration had worked out the budget of \$500,000 a year for each CMI school under the Scheme to build up its capacity in English teaching. She requested the Administration to elaborate on the major considerations in the design and operation of the Scheme.

40. PSEM responded that savings of educational resources arising from a decline of student population had been ploughed back into basic education. She explained that the budget of \$500,000 a year was proposed after consultation with individual CMI schools. The Scheme was school-based as well as result-oriented. CMI schools joining the Scheme were expected to implement measures which would help build up their capacity for raising the English proficiency of their students on a sustainable basis. Examples of such measures included teacher training, curriculum development, and hire of services for the purpose of knowledge transfer, etc.

41. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed concern about the input and output performance targets which would be specified in the performance contract for assessment of a CMI school's improvement in quality of English teaching and learning. He considered that the quantitative performance targets such as improvement in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) results were more objective and popular than the qualitative ones such as effective deployment of English Language teachers. Referring to paragraph 6(c)(ii) of the Administration's paper, he pointed out that the performance of a school in HKCEE in the subject of English Language would largely depend on the quality of student intake as well as the quality of teaching and learning. Given the decline in student population, it appeared very likely that the top P6 graduates would continue their secondary studies in popular public sector EMI schools, Direct Subsidy Scheme schools and private independent schools. As a result, more CMI schools would have a large enrolment of band three students. He considered that these CMI schools would be in a disadvantaged position to achieve the output performance targets, such as an additional 10 percentage points of students obtaining a pass or credit in English Language (Syllabus B) in HKCEE. He asked how the Administration would set the performance targets for CMI schools with a large intake of band three students.

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42. PSEM responded that EMB would agree with the participating CMI schools on their input and output performance targets, taking into account the school context. The achievement of an additional 10 percentage points of students obtaining a pass or credit in HkCEE English Language (Syllabus B) was cited in the Administration's paper as an example of quantitative indicator on improvement in students' performance. She pointed out that there are other performance indicators which could also be adopted. The Administration would take into account a school's existing status in identifying and agreeing with the school a set of performance targets, in terms of the input and output parameters, to be set out in the performance contract throughout the six-year period.

43. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that CMI schools would endeavour to achieve the agreed targets in the performance contracts, as any failure would affect their student enrolment in the future. He considered that the Administration should not withdraw the funding support in case a school had failed to meet the agreed targets after the first three years, as it would adversely affect students. Ms Audrey EU expressed a similar view.

44. PSEM explained that the Scheme was intended to cover all CMI schools without any pre-conditions for participation. The Administration expected a considerable number of eligible schools would submit their applications over the next two years and would set aside sufficient funds for this purpose. Schools wishing to join the Scheme from the beginning of the 2006-07 school year were expected to submit their proposals to EMB in March 2006. The Administration would establish a panel comprising both EMB representatives and language education experts to examine the school proposals and decided on the amount of grants to be approved. The Panel would also engage in professional discourse with the principals and English language teachers of individual schools to agree on appropriate plans and performance targets to be achieved. The Administration hoped that all the participating schools would succeed in achieving the performance targets which were mutually set. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong asked whether unspent funds in the Scheme could be retained for the implementation of improvement measures on language education in schools. PSEM explained that the use of unspent funds under the Scheme would have to follow the administrative rules and regulations governing the use of non-recurrent grants. Any unspent funds would be returned to the Language Fund.

45. Mr Patrick LAU said that he had no objection to the proposed injection of \$1.1 billion into the Language Fund. However, he and Mr MA Lik considered that the Administration should enhance language proficiency of students by allocating additional resources to basic education. Mr LAU also suggested that the Administration should provide additional resources to promote reading of English books in primary schools. Ms Emily LAU expressed support for improving quality of language education starting from the pre-primary level.

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She urged the Administration to speed up the implementation of professional development programmes for pre-primary teachers in language education.

46. PSEM replied that in response to the call for strengthened support to language education in the pre-primary and primary levels, the Finance Committee had approved a grant of \$200 million to provide additional funding support. In order to better understand the teaching of English in kindergartens of various scales and profiles, a pilot scheme was launched in October 2005 to provide support to 17 kindergartens in providing quality English exposure to pre-primary students. The pilot scheme would run until the end of the 2005-06 school year. The results of the pilot scheme would provide useful references for the formulation of a more comprehensive and sustainable support strategy for English and/or Putonghua language education for pre-primary level in Hong Kong. The Administration planned to earmark some \$100 million from the Language Fund for extending the pilot scheme to cover all of the 700-odd kindergartens in the territory in the long run. In addition, EMB would consider providing pre-primary teachers with opportunities to participate in overseas immersion programmes.

Support for schools to increasingly use Putonghua to teach Chinese Language

47. Mr Jasper TSANG asked whether the Administration had formulated a policy on use of Putonghua to teach Chinese Language in schools. He pointed out that when he was a member of SCOLAR, there were views that the use of Putonghua to teach Chinese Language was in conflict with the policy on mother-tongue teaching and would affect student learning outcome. He asked whether the benefits of using Putonghua to teach Chinese Language had now been confirmed by research studies.

48. PSEM responded that similar to EMI-teaching, effective use of Putonghua to teach Chinese Language required the creation of a Putonghua-rich environment and the provision of appropriate support for schools and teachers. Available research studies on the subject suggested that the positive effects of using Putonghua as MOI for Chinese Language on students' learning were more apparent at junior levels.

49. PSEM further said that in September 2005, SCOLAR had joined hands with the Primary Chinese Language Education Research Association in conducting a territory-wide survey to find out the extent to which schools were using Putonghua to teach the Chinese Language. A summary of the major findings was in Annex A to the Administration's paper. Among the over 800 schools responded to the survey, over 160 had expressed interest in trying out the use of Putonghua to teach Chinese Language in the coming few years. As views and readiness of schools on the subject were still varied, the Administration had yet to formulate a policy on use of Putonghua as the MOI for teaching Chinese Language. In the mean time, the Administration considered it appropriate to

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provide funding support for schools which wished to pilot teaching Chinese Language in Putonghua. Based on their experience, EMB would decide on the future direction and, where appropriate, formulate a more concrete plan and timeframe on the matter.

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Summing-up

50. Members noted that the Administration intended to submit the proposal to the Finance Committee for consideration at its meeting on 13 January 2006. Members in general expressed support for the proposed injection into the Language Fund. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide the Panel with its research findings on the pilot scheme on improving English language education in kindergartens and the scheme on using Putonghua as MOI for teaching Chinese Language in schools when available.

**VI. Any other business**

51. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:30 pm.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
6 January 2006