

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Policy Initiatives on Education in the Policy Agenda for the 2005-06 Policy Address

Introduction

This note elaborates on the new and on-going initiatives in education set out in the Policy Agenda of the 2005-06 Policy Address.

Policy Agenda of the 2005-06 Policy Address

Enlightened People with a Rich Culture

A. New initiatives

Increase resources, including topping up of the Language Fund, for enhancing the language standards of the community

2. Development of higher levels of biliteracy and trilingualism have always been the goals for aspiration of the Hong Kong community. In order to develop a more concerted approach to improving the language competencies of our population, the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) completed in 2003 a two-year review of language education in Hong Kong which set out a range of measures along the following broad directions –

- (a) **to specify a clear and realistic set of expected language competencies**, including the introduction of basic competency assessments (including both student assessment and system assessment) in Chinese and English for students in different key stages, development of standards-referenced examinations for the Chinese Language and English Language subjects in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination for implementation by 2007, the specification of expected English competencies for university graduates and entry-level professionals to give them a better idea of employers' expectations, and the development of a standards-referenced assessment on Putonghua proficiency for students of Secondary Three or above; and
- (b) **to create a more motivating language learning environment**, including the greater use of language arts in primary schools, the promotion of co-curricular language activities, building of a professional language teaching force with good language proficiency, subject knowledge and pedagogy as well as the motivation to seek continual professional development, the provision of English or Putonghua exposure to kindergarten children by qualified teachers, the endorsement of the long-term vision of using Putonghua to teach Chinese Language in schools, and the provision of professional support to language teachers on curriculum reform.

Implementation of these recommended measures were underway since completion of the review and many of them have been supported by the Language Fund.

3. Meanwhile, new developments bring new challenges. The rapid social and economic restructuring of Hong Kong over the past decade and the growing global inter-connectedness have placed greater premium on higher literacy standards than ever before. There is therefore a need to further strengthen support to schools in delivering the expected outcomes by the community. At the same time, exposure to a wider range of international cultures (including the impact brought by the rise of the Mainland and other Asian nations) also means a more diverse language environment. More investment into maintaining the necessary language environment therefore seems necessary and imminent.

4. There have been calls from the education sector and the community at large for measures to strengthen our language education at schools other than those described in para. 2 above. These include more focused support for schools to strengthen the teaching and learning of English Language and widen exposure to English outside class, as well as the wider use of Putonghua to teach Chinese Language. During public consultation by the Education Commission (EC) on review of the medium of instruction policy for secondary schools, many urge the Government to ensure that students who are learning their non-language subjects in the Chinese medium can be proficient in English at the same time.

5. Since the existing provision for the Language Fund is pretty much committed or earmarked for on-going initiatives including those mentioned above in para. 2, further injection would be necessary for the planning and implementation of additional measures. The Administration will consult this Panel again on any such new initiatives at a later stage, and seek the Finance Committee's endorsement of an injection into the Language Fund. In particular,

we would like to map out initiatives having regard to the EC's recommendations on the medium of instruction policy (para. 9 below) and the input of SCOLAR. That said, we are fully aware that any further investment into the area of language education must be on the basis of adding value to the current raft of supportive measures and ensuring the most effective delivery of language education support to schools.

B. On-going initiatives

Studying the possibility of simplifying and rationalising the teaching grade structure of public sector schools

6. A holistic review of the existing teaching grade structure to reflect the operational needs of public sector schools, delineated areas of responsibility by rank and professional competency requirements was completed. At present, the initial recommendations and their implications are being analysed. We shall further refine these recommendations before public consultation.

Planning with schools still operating in bi-sessional mode to work towards enabling all primary school students to have opportunities to study in whole-day primary schools

7. Of the 58 school premises which are still in use for bi-sessional operation in the 2005-06 school year, 34 have agreed plans for conversion to whole-day primary schooling. We shall continue to monitor the conversion of these 34 schools.

8. We hope to reach an agreement with the remaining bi-sessional schools on the arrangement for conversion to whole-day operation by 2007. We shall, based on their latest development, work out the plans to implement whole-day primary schooling with the sponsors.

Consolidating the views expressed during the public consultation on the long-term arrangements of the Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools and Secondary School Places Allocation System and deciding on the way forward

9. The Working Group on Review of Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) and Medium of Instruction (MOI) for Secondary Schools under EC conducted public consultation between 3 February 2005 to 2 July 2005 on the long-term arrangements for both the SSPA and MOI. The Working Group is analysing the feedback collected and EC will submit the final recommendations to the Administration by the end of this year.

Taking forward the new senior secondary education and higher education reform and continuously engaging and consulting stakeholders during preparation for implementation in 2009

10. The *New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education – Action Plan for Investing in the future of Hong Kong* was published in May 2005. The Report set out the road map for introducing the new academic structure including a design blueprint for curriculum and assessment, a timetable including key milestones and financing arrangements. We are now working closely with stakeholders in the drafting and refining of the curriculum

and assessment frameworks of New Senior Secondary (NSS) subjects. The NSS curricula are being benchmarked with curricula of major overseas education systems. The Curriculum and Assessment Guide of each NSS subject will be published in 2006. To ensure on-going communications between EMB, stakeholders and the public, we have set up a 334 Web-Bulletin as the communication platform. Seminars and meetings with stakeholders groups to disseminate information and to gather views and suggestions will also continue.

11. To support the implementation of NSS, a series of workshops for school leaders have been launched to support school leaders in the preparation phase for implementation of NSS. Professional development programmes to build professional capacity of teachers have also started. To create space for teachers, additional funding has been provided to schools, including the disbursement of the Teacher Professional Preparation Grant to all secondary schools starting from 2005 for a period of four years. Preparation for particular subjects of focus has also been kicked off. A web-based resource platform has been launched in October 2005 to provide learning and teaching resources for Liberal Studies teachers. Supported by significant enrolment increase and an improved funding arrangement, piloting of the career oriented curriculum continues this school year.

Continuing our efforts to developing Hong Kong as a regional education hub by facilitating the admission of non-local students to study Hong Kong as well as encouraging student exchange activities

12. Hong Kong is a strong candidate for becoming the regional hub of education. Leveraging on our strengths, we have, since the last Policy Address, significantly relaxed our immigration control in respect of the types of institutions

and programmes which can admit non-local students. Notably, students from the Mainland are now allowed to enter Hong Kong for full-time accredited programmes at degree and above levels, both within and outside the University Grants Committee (UGC) sector; while those admitted to accredited sub-degree programmes may come for study on a personal basis. For the first time, non-local students may also enroll in our part-time courses.

13. To increase Hong Kong's competitiveness in the global quest for talents, we have already removed the quota for non-local research students for some years. For other UGC-funded programmes, balancing liberalisation and necessary control, we have raised significantly the ceiling for admission of non-local students, from 4% of the student target numbers in the 2004-05 school year, to 10% this year. Students may also enter Hong Kong for exchange programmes at degree or above level lasting for up to one year without being subject to any quota restriction at all.

14. Student exchanges are part of our institutions' regular academic activities and they are free to deploy resources for this purpose. In addition to this, we encourage our institutions to offer scholarships to high calibre students. By extending the scope of the \$1-billion Second Matching Grant Scheme to cover scholarships for non-local students, institutions will be better placed to tap private funds which can support and sustain scholarship offers in future.

15. Relaxation in immigration control, coupled with funding support, provide a strong impetus for our higher education institutions to internationalise their student body. We are confident that, with the joint efforts of the government and the education sector, Hong Kong will make great strides in becoming the

Education Hub of the region.

Providing additional resources starting from the 2005-06 school year for public sector primary schools to implement specialised teaching, firstly for English to be followed by Mathematics and/or Chinese

16. In order to enable teachers to focus on the teaching of the subject they specialise in, additional resources have been made available for public sector primary schools for the implementation of specialised teaching starting with English in the 2005-06 school year then to be followed by Mathematics and/or Chinese. Under this initiative, 414 aided primary schools with 12 or more classes are provided with additional resources to implement specialised teaching in the 2005-06 school year.

17. Schools are encouraged to adapt the idea flexibly having regard to the expertise available and their particular situation. EMB will review the effectiveness of the scheme in three years and consider its long term arrangements.

Continuing the implementation of the school-based professional support programmes to provide targeted support at the school level to empower frontline educators in capacity building and to take forward education initiatives in a strategic manner

18. In the 2004-05 school year, the School-based Professional Support Programmes financed by the Education Development Fund were implemented as scheduled. Through concerted efforts, the Programmes have made significant achievements. In the 2005-06 school year, building on the experience gained, we

will continue the Programmes and strive to enhance our support services as well as improve the mode of operation by taking into consideration schools' specific needs arising from curriculum development, teacher development and school development. For further enhancement of the quality and impact of our support services, the School-based Support Services Office was established in September 2005 to coordinate school-based support services both within EMB and with external partners. This new office also serves to strengthen the knowledge management and information management in relation to our support services so that better matching of school support to the needs of schools can be realized. The processes of school support will contribute to enhancement of professional partnerships and building learning communities.

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