

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1377/08-09
(The minutes have been seen by
the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

**Minutes of special meeting
held on Thursday, 15 January 2009, at 10:30 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

- Members present** : Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan (Chairman)
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, SBS, JP
Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king
Hon Tanya CHAN
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee, GBS, JP
Dr Hon Samson TAM Wai-ho, JP
- Member absent** : Hon WONG Yuk-man
- Public Officers attending** : Mr Michael SUEN Ming-yeung, GBS, JP
Secretary for Education
- Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Ms Priscilla TO
Administrative Assistant to Secretary for Education

Mr Jeremy YOUNG
Political Assistant to Secretary for Education

Ms Mable CHAN
Deputy Secretary for Education (2)

Dr Catherine CHAN Ka-ki
Deputy Secretary for Education (5)

Ms IP Ling-bik
Principal Assistant Secretary (Education Commission &
Planning)

Attendance by invitation : Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union

Mr FUNG Wai-wah
Vice President (Internal Affairs)

Mr HON Lin-shan
Deputy Director, Rights and Complaints Department

Young Civic

Mr Eric TSUI
Executive Committee

Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers

Mr WU Siu-wai
Vice President

Ms WOO Man-yee
Assistant to Chairman

Grant Schools Council

Mr George TAM Siu-ping
Chairman

Mrs Clara LAU
Vice Chairman

Hong Kong Subsidized Secondary Schools Council

Mr LIU Ah-chuen
Chairman

Ms Irene YAU Oi-yuen
Vice Chairman

Civic Party

Ms Annie KI
Exco Member

Mr LAM Seung-wan
School Principal

Education Convergence

Mr CHOI Kwok-kwong
President

Mr HUI Wai-tin
Vice President

HKICC Lee Shau Kee School of Creativity

Mr IP Kin-yuen
Principal

Mr NG Man-chun

Lion Rock Institute
Mr Andrew SHUEN Pak-man
Research Director

Mr MAK Ip-sing
District Council Member, Yuen Long District Council

Hong Kong Minority Communities Association

Mr Rai Enraj

Federation of Parent-Teacher Associations of the
Central and Western District

Mr David LEUNG
President

Mr Luther CHOI
Vice President

The Association of Hong Kong Chinese Middle
Schools

Mr YIP Chee-tim
Chairman

Ms Enian TSANG
Committee Member

Committee on Home-School Cooperation

Professor WONG Po-choi
Chairman

Federation of Parent-Teacher Association, Tai Po
District

Mr HO Chu-ping
Vice Chairman

Mr Raymond HO Man-kit
District Council Member, Sai Kung District Council

Miss LI Kwai-fong
Convenor of Working Group on Education and Youth
Services, Tuen Mun District Council

Federation of Parent Teacher Association of Yuen
Long District

Mr Scipio WU
Representative

Mr K K FU
Executive Member

Tseung Kwan O Parents Association

Ms Winnie KAM
Vice-President (Internal)

The Association of English Medium Secondary Schools

Mrs Rosalind CHAN
Chairman

Mr CHAN Shiu-choy
Ex-co Member

Hong Kong Association of Heads of Secondary Schools

Mr Michael WONG Wai-yu
Chairperson

Mr YUEN Pong-yiu
Vice Chairperson

The Open University of Hong Kong Students' Union

Mr WONG Tsz
President

Miss Olivia CHUI Pui-kei
Academic Officer

Coalition of Education-concerned Parents

Mr Simon Y K CHAN
Chairman

Mr Peter P K CHOW
Spokesman

The Hong Kong Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools Council

Dr LAM Kin-wah

Dr CHAN Wai-kai

Subsidized Primary Schools Council

Mr TANG Kwai-tai
Chairman

Mr Langton CHEUNG Yung-pong
Vice-Chairman

Hong Kong Primary Education Research Association

Mr William LEE Siu-hok
Deputy Chairman

Mr CHONG Sing-him
Executive Committee Member

Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of
Hong Kong

Ms CHAN Yan-chuen
Deputy Spokesperson on Education Policy

Clerk in attendance : Miss Odelia LEUNG
Chief Council Secretary (2)6

Staff in attendance : Mr Stanley MA
Senior Council Secretary (2)8

Ms Y S LAM
Council Secretary (2)3

Miss Jenny LEE
Legislative Assistant (2)6 (Acting)

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I. Fine-tuning the Medium of Instruction Policy
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)623/08-09(01) and (02)]

Members noted the background brief entitled "Medium of instruction for secondary schools" prepared by the Legislative Council (LegCo) Secretariat.

2. At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for Education (SED) highlighted the objectives of fine-tuning the medium of instruction (MOI) policy to increase the opportunities for junior secondary students to get exposed and to

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use English inside the classroom while promoting mother-tongue teaching. To enhance effective learning of students, schools would be given greater autonomy in selecting the appropriate MOI with regard to student ability, teacher capability, school's support measures and the requirements of individual subjects. He referred members to his speaking note which was tabled at the meeting for details.

(Post meeting note: the speaking note was issued to members after the meeting vide LC Paper No. CB(2)695/08-09 on 16 January 2009.)

Oral presentation by deputations

*Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union (HKPTU)
[LC Paper No. CB(2)696/08-09(01)]*

3. Mr HON Lin-shan said that since the education sector had diverse views on fine-tuning the MOI policy and to concentrate its efforts on the implementation of the new senior secondary (NSS) academic structure, HKPTU urged the Administration to shelve the fine-tuning proposals for three years and to consult the stakeholders again. He was concerned that the learning outcome of the 15% students might be neglected under the proposed framework when a school with 85% of Secondary 1 (S1) student intake in a class belonging to the top 40% group in the previous two school years would be given full flexibility in determining the MOI arrangements. Instead of minimizing the labelling effect among schools, the proposal would intensify the labelling effect among students. HKPTU was particularly concerned about the proposal to allow schools to transform the 25% English-medium extended learning activities (ELA) into the adoption of English as the medium of instruction (EMI) for individual subjects. Schools would highly likely adopt EMI for the subjects of Mathematics as well as Integrated Science and might compromise students' learning effectiveness and affect the high international ranking of Hong Kong on these subjects. This would also create pressure on teachers for content subjects.

*Young Civic
[LC Paper No. CB(2)653/08-09(01)]*

4. Mr Eric TSUI said that Young Civic welcomed the proposals to fine-tune the MOI policy. In its view, front-line teachers knew their students best and should be given greater flexibility in adopting the teaching mode most suited to their students. Mr TSUI referred to his personal experience to explain the difficulties encountered in switching from CMI to EMI when he proceeded to junior secondary schooling and the need for teachers to use Chinese to facilitate senior secondary students' understanding in class. Young Civic considered that the existing problem lay with the bifurcation of schools into EMI and CMI schools. Young Civic considered it necessary to differentiate lecturing from textbook. Where necessary, teachers could use Chinese to explain English

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textbooks in class. In brief, schools should be given the flexibility to decide the MOI arrangements.

Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers (HKFEW)
[LC Paper No. CB(2)696/08-09(02)]

5. Mr WU Siu-wai highlighted the main points in the HKFEW's submission. He said that the debate on the impact of the MOI policy on students' proficiency in English should not be taken as the failure of mother-tongue teaching. While not objecting to the fine-tuning proposals, HKFEW was concerned that the extent of Government's support for mother-tongue teaching might be different from that under the prevailing MOI policy. In its view, mother-tongue teaching was beneficial to junior secondary education, including EMI schools. With the introduction of flexibility in MOI arrangements, labelling effect would not exist between EMI and CMI schools but among junior secondary students with varying English ability. HKFEW was particularly concerned about the pressure on content subject teachers as they had to attend training courses to equip themselves for EMI teaching. HKFEW proposed the implementation of the fine-tuning proposals in two stages to allow schools and front-line teachers more time for adaptation. For the first stage, the increase of ELA to 25% of the total lesson time for junior secondary classes could be implemented in September 2009. The flexibility for schools in determining the MOI arrangements should be implemented in 2012. During the transition period, CMI schools could be converted into EMI schools, subject to the fulfilment of the prescribed criteria, while EMI schools could continue to maintain their EMI status until 2012 even if they failed to meet with the requirements.

Grant Schools Council
[LC Paper No. CB(2)696/08-09(03)]

6. Mr TAM Siu-ping said that the Council supported any language policy conducive to achieving the objective of bi-literacy and trilingualism and maintaining Hong Kong's competitive edge on the international arena. The Grant Schools Council supported the fine-tuning proposal to allow schools greater autonomy in selecting the appropriate MOI with regard to student ability, teacher capability and school support measures. However, the Council had reservation about the "top 40%" criterion in deciding whether a school should be given the flexibility in MOI arrangements. The Council considered it necessary to facilitate teachers in strengthening teaching pedagogies so as to alleviate their workload when switching their MOI in teaching content subjects. In the Council's view, both Chinese and English were essential to the development of Hong Kong in the long run.

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Hong Kong Subsidized Secondary Schools Council
[LC Paper No. CB(2)696/08-09(04)]

7. Mr LIU Ah-chuen said the Council was of the view that the learning outcome of students and facilitating students' further study and employment should be the rationale for formulating the fine-tuning proposal. Different MOIs should be adopted for students with different ability. The Council supported the enhancement of English teaching at junior secondary levels to facilitate articulation to higher education the MOI for which was mainly English. As such, the Council supported the proposal to increase ELA to 25% of the total lesson time for each of the junior secondary levels. The Council called for an increase of resources to enhance English teaching in primary schools and implement small group teaching for languages in secondary schools. The number of language teachers in the school establishment should also be increased.

Civic Party
[LC Paper No. CB(2)623/08-09(03)]

8. Ms Annie KI said that Civic Party supported the fine-tuning proposal to increase the exposure of students to English. However, Civic Party was concerned about the transfer of the labelling effect from among schools to within schools and the increase of workload in schools as assessment had to be conducted before allocating students to the appropriate classes at junior secondary levels. Civic Party was also concerned about the readiness of teachers to cope with the requirements of the "by class" and "by subject" MOI arrangements. Civic Party called on the Education Bureau (EDB) to provide support to teachers in adopting appropriate teaching pedagogies to cope with the requirements and to enhance communication with frontline teachers as well as parents to promote their understanding of the fine-tuning proposal.

Education Convergence
[LC Paper No. CB(2)696/08-09(05)]

9. Mr CHOI Kwok-kwong said that the Convergence supported the implementation of the fine-tuning proposal in 2010-2011. While considering it appropriate to remove the bifurcation of schools into EMI and CMI schools, the Convergence disagreed with the proposal to provide only those schools meeting the prescribed criteria with the flexibility in determining the MOI arrangements as this would lead to labelling effect. In its view, all schools were bilingual schools with different extent of EMI and CMI teaching, and schools should determine the MOI that best suited their students on the basis of professional autonomy. Schools should have the flexibility to adopt the "by class", "by subject" or "by group" arrangements. The Convergence called on EDB to provide integrated support including strengthening the support for schools to adopt mother-tongue teaching, more flexibility for schools to adopt teaching

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arrangements and reduction of class size to 30 students, to secondary schools from 2009 to 2014.

Mr Ng Man Chun

10. Mr NG Man-chun said he could not understand why EDB still used academic results of students as the criterion for determining EMI or CMI to be adopted by schools and that criterion would last for six years. Further, he queried why the academic performance of students of a school in the previous two years would determine the MOI arrangements for students for the following six years. In his view, the promotion of mother-tongue teaching might not meet the needs of ethnic minority students who learned better in English. He also raised concern about the teaching of Liberal Studies in English under the new academic structure. He opined that in deciding school policy, schools might have more considerations about their own interests rather than those of students.

The Lion Rock Institute

[LC Paper No. CB(2)733/08-09(01)]

11. Mr Andrew SHUEN criticised the existing education system and the hypocrisy of the decision-makers as their children might not have gone through the local education system. Without much confidence in the existing education system and financial means to pursue alternative routes, Mr SHUEN said he could not afford to have children. He suggested that frontline teachers should be given the flexibility to determine the MOI arrangements and parents the choice to select schools for their children irrespective of residential district or religion or any other criteria. He opined that small class teaching should not be implemented.

HKICC Lee Shau Kee School of Creativity

[LC Paper No. CB(2)653/08-09(02)]

12. Mr IP Kin-yuen said that while he agreed with the need to give more freedom to schools and parents, their choice might be conflicting. In his view, the core issue under the current education system was the serious labelling effect. With bifurcation of schools into EMI and CMI schools and students into EMI and CMI students, CMI students were stigmatized as second-class and their confidence was dampened which in turn affected their motivation to learn. In his view, Hong Kong had an edge over the Mainland and Taiwan in language environment, but compared with Hong Kong, the latter two places did not experience so many administrative requirements in teaching languages. Mr IP urged that more autonomy and flexibility be given to schools to make professional decisions on MOI arrangements.

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Mr MAK Ip-sing
[LC Paper No. CB(2)670/08-09(01)]

13. Mr MAK Ip-sing said that he supported the fine-tuning proposal. He had consulted many school principals and parents in Yuen Long and found that they supported the proposal as well. The proposal would increase students' exposure to English, and students' proficiency in English would facilitate articulation to university education and enhance employment opportunity. Mr MAK said that to enhance learning effectiveness, teachers should adopt flexible MOI arrangements. For example, teachers could use Chinese when explaining the English textbooks. He was also concerned about education for the non-Chinese-speaking ethnic minority groups who, in his view, should learn better in English. These students should be allocated to EMI classes solely on grounds of ethnicity. He hoped that more resources could be provided to schools with relevant training given to teachers under the fine-tuning proposal.

Hong Kong Minority Communities Association

14. Mr Rai Enraj said that most ethnic minority children in Hong Kong attended CMI schools, and every year about 98% of these students failed in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE). For those ethnic minority children studying in EMI schools, the results were also not satisfactory. As a result, very few ethnic minority students could get admitted to universities. To address the issue, the Association proposed that there should be as many EMI schools as possible, in particular in the New Territories, and ethnic minority children should be given the chance to attend these schools. The ethnic groups should also be allowed to decide their own curriculum. While acknowledging the importance of learning the Chinese language in Hong Kong, the Association considered that the Chinese language should not be imposed on ethnic minority children and they should be allowed to learn the language at their own pace.

Federation of Parent-Teacher Association, Tai Po District
[LC Paper No. CB(2)751/08-09(01)]

15. Mr HO Chu-ping said that the Federation supported the fine-tuning proposal to provide schools with the autonomy to decide the MOI arrangements in accordance with students' ability. More resources should be allocated to schools for supporting teachers to implement the fine-tuning proposal. The Federation noted from consultation with parents that they looked for a major reform of the MOI policy with the introduction of the fine-tuning proposal, whereas schools wished to have the autonomy to determine the MOI arrangements appropriate to the varying standards of students. The Federation hoped that EDB could provide appropriate arrangements for the various stakeholders in implementing the fine-tuning proposal.

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*Federation of Parent Teacher Associations of the Central & Western District
[LC Paper No. CB(2)696/08-09(06)]*

16. Mr David LEUNG said the Federation believed that the fine-tuning proposal could minimize the labelling effect among schools and enhance students' competitiveness. Given that English was the MOI in universities, students would prefer more exposure to English at junior secondary levels. The Federation called for the provision of more resources to schools as well as teachers and stepping up parent education so that a proper language environment could be built up at home. Mr LEUNG added that in making secondary school choices, parents would take into account the ability of their children and would not refer simply to the number of "flexible classes" a school would have.

*The Association of Hong Kong Chinese Middle Schools
[LC Paper No. CB(2)696/08-09(07)]*

17. Mr YIP Chee-tim said that the Association objected to the fine-tuning proposal as the labelling effect would be intensified among schools and schools might further be classified into schools with EMI classes, flexible classes and CMI classes. Instead of minimizing the labelling effect, the proposal would intensify it within schools. While upholding mother-tongue teaching, the Association supported the increase of ELA to 25% of the total lesson time. The Association suggested that a school meeting the threshold of having 85% of the student intake belonging to the top 40% should be allowed to use English as MOI, and other schools would be bilingual schools to adopt mother-tongue teaching with the 25% ELA time for the "by subject" or "by session" arrangements.

Committee on Home-School Cooperation

18. Professor WONG Po-choi said that attention should be paid to the details instead of the terms of the fine-tuning proposal. He pointed out that parents had expressed support for the fine-tuning proposals which was promised on providing flexibility to all schools but with varying degree. Using the scaffolding theory of comfort zone, development zone and temporary unreachable zone as an illustration, Professor WONG considered that students should be helped to develop their potentials within the zones reachable to them and should not be forced to go to the unreachable zone in no time. Neither should they be allowed to stay in the comfort zone only. Students should be provided with the opportunity to get exposed to English. The Committee welcomed the flexibility for schools to determine their MOI arrangements to enhance students' English proficiency, which was conducive to the pursuit of further study and employment.

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Mr HO Man-kit

19. Mr HO Man-kit shared his personal learning experience in an EMI school. He was dissatisfied with the disparity of treatment between families with means and without means in terms of the education received by their children. Children of the former families could study in international schools, whereas children of the latter families had no choice but to study in local schools where the MOI, staffing establishment and resources allocated were dictated by EDB. In his view, voucher for education was the only way out with the choice given to parents. He supported any policy and measures to give greater autonomy to schools in teaching and learning including MOI. He appealed to the stakeholders to support the fine-tuning proposal.

Miss LI Kwai-fong

20. Miss LI Kwai-fong welcomed the fine-tuning proposal. She said that to avoid generating pressure and resistance from the education sector, the fine-tuning proposal should be introduced in a gradual manner and schools should not be labelled. In her view, both Chinese and English were important and should be given equal weight. She suggested that to enhance the Chinese proficiency of students in EMI schools, teachers could use Chinese in class and more Chinese subjects should be provided to increase students' exposure to Chinese culture and philosophy. By the same token, the English proficiency of students in CMI schools could be enhanced through means like using more English textbooks and English terms in class.

Federation of Parent Teacher Associations of Yuen Long District

21. Mr Scipio WU said that parents welcomed the fine-tuning proposal but were concerned about how it would be implemented and whether it would benefit students. The Federation considered that the proposal would aggravate the labelling effect within schools and downgrade mother-tongue teaching. It would be easier for students to adapt under the bifurcation of schools into EMI and CMI schools as the MOI was either English or Chinese. However, under the fine-tuning proposal, the MOI arrangements would become diversified. With the impending implementation of the NSS structure, it was undesirable to generate additional workload on teachers as they might have to teach in both languages. To ensure that the fine-tuning proposal was on the right track, the Federation suggested that a pilot scheme should be implemented first.

Tseung Kwan O Parents Association
[LC Paper No. CB(2)623/08-09(04)]

22. Ms Winnie KAM said the Association supported the fine-tuning proposal but urged the Administration to monitor consistently and effectively

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when schools disseminated the information of their MOI arrangements and plans for enhancing the Chinese and English proficiency of students. The Association called on the Administration to allocate more resources to schools to develop ELA and provide more support to parents to facilitate their school choices. The Association also called for the removal of bifurcation of schools into EMI and CMI schools to eradicate the labelling effect in the long run.

The Association of English Medium Secondary Schools
[LC Paper No. CB(2)850/08-09(01)]

23. Mrs Rosalind CHAN said that education should be student-oriented. Under the present system, about 20% of the students were given the opportunity to learn in both languages and it was not doing justice to students who had the ability to learn more than one language. With more students receiving tertiary education and the need to use English at non-managerial levels at work, it was necessary for students to learn better English. In the Association's view, some teachers welcomed the adoption of EMI for content subjects as they had used English to learn the subjects in the past. The Association requested the provision of professional development training for teachers and a transitional period of three years for teachers to attain the qualifications required for adopting EMI for content subjects. The Association supported the deployment of more resources to primary schools to enhance students' English proficiency and the use of more English in primary education to facilitate articulation to secondary education. Mrs CHAN added that the Association supported the fine-tuning proposal.

Hong Kong Association of Heads of Secondary Schools
[LC Paper No. CB(2)696/08-09(08)]

24. Mr Michael WONG said that the Association supported the "by-session" arrangement but objected to the "by-class" arrangement as the latter would aggravate the labelling effect among schools and allow only the top 40% students to have the flexibility in MOI arrangements. Moreover, the "by-class" arrangement would also create pressure on the stakeholders, in particular teachers as they had to use both languages in teaching a content subject. He added that the "by-class" arrangement would bring about the undesirable effects as pointed out in the Report on Review of Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools and Secondary School Places Allocation published in 2005 (the 2005 Report) and downgrade mother-tongue teaching. The "by-class" arrangement was not the only means to enhance students' English proficiency.

The Open University of Hong Kong Students' Union
[LC Paper No. CB(2)696/08-09(09)]

25. Miss Olivia CHUI said that the rationale of the fine-tuning proposal was good and a more enriched English learning environment would be created for students. However, two points were worth noting. First, the basis of calculation

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of the top 40% students was largely on the students' overall academic performance in the previous two years rather than their English proficiency, which would lead to a situation that students who were good in English but not so in other subjects would be unable to learn in EMI, which might benefit them most. Second, the actual time spent on and the quality of ELA in CMI schools would be difficult to assess. Secondary schools without EMI classes might not find the fine-tuning proposal beneficial at all as the labelling effect might be intensified in the long run.

Coalition of Education-concerned Parents
[LC Paper No. CB(2)707/08-09(01)]

26. Mr Peter CHOW said that he personally welcomed the fine-tuning proposal. Since 2006, the Coalition had commissioned the University of Hong Kong to conduct six rounds of opinion polls on parents on the issue of MOI. The feedback from parents on the fine-tuning proposal was positive. Mother-tongue teaching in the past decade had resulted in a drop in students' language proficiency and an increase of pressure on teachers, students and parents. Parents considered that the fine-tuning proposal was in the right direction and should be supported. The Coalition suggested that in implementation of the proposal, EDB should allocate more resources for the development of bilingual teaching materials and reduction of paper work on the part of teachers. The bifurcation of schools into CMI and EMI schools should be removed. The Coalition also called on EDB to provide more support for the stakeholders such as organizing regular brain-storming workshops for exchange of idea and sharing of experience.

The Hong Kong Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools Council

27. Dr LAM Kin-wah said that the Council supported the fine-tuning proposal. He pointed out that Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools had long experience in implementing flexibility in MOI arrangements. The introduction of the fine-tuning proposal and bilingual education was beneficial to the development of Hong Kong into an education hub. The Council considered that the fine-tuning proposal should be student-oriented and school-autonomous in exercising professional judgement. Certain subjects such as Religious Studies and Liberal Studies could be taught in Chinese. Flexibility should also be given to schools in using the 25% ELA time. Resources should be considered for schools to implement small class teaching. A grace period of three to five years might be provided for schools to implement the fine-tuning proposal.

Subsidized Primary Schools Council
[LC Paper No. CB(2)707/08-09(02)]

28. Mr TANG Kwai-tai said that the main concern of the Council was students' proficiency in both English and Chinese for further studies and

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employment. The Council supported in principle the fine-tuning proposal to allow greater professional autonomy to schools in MOI arrangements. EDB should ensure that schools would be accountable to their stakeholders in making professional judgement. The Council appealed to parents to consider other factors in addition to the MOI in making school choice for their children. The Council considered that in deciding the number of EMI classes or flexible classes, schools should make reference to the students' performance in the current academic year instead of the previous two years to minimize mismatch. The Council supported the allocation of more resources to primary schools to enhance students' English proficiency. The Council also called on EDB to work out an overall strategy to enhance students' English proficiency in primary schools instead of having piece-meal measures in this regard.

*The Hong Kong Primary Education Research Association
[LC Paper No. CB(2)696/08-09(10)]*

29. Mr William LEE said that according to the results of a survey conducted in 2008, primary school teachers were most dissatisfied with the effectiveness in enhancing students' English and Chinese proficiency in the education reform and over 90% of the respondents supported the increase of students' exposure to English at junior secondary levels. The Association therefore supported the fine-tuning proposal to enhance the language proficiency of students and to increase the ELA time. The Association welcomed the establishment of a scholarship for qualified school graduates planning to pursue a relevant degree and teacher training in English Language and incorporation of English enhancement as one of the priority areas in the invitation of the Quality Education Fund. The Association suggested that native-speaking English teaching assistants should be provided and more resources should be allocated to schools with more classes for employing native-speaking English teachers.

Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB)

30. Ms CHAN Yan-chuen said that DAB was positive about the fine-tuning proposal as it would increase school autonomy in deciding the appropriate MOI arrangements for enhancing students' exposure to English. She stressed that the fine-tuning proposal should be student-oriented, and the MOI arrangements should be decided in accordance with student ability, teacher capability and support measures of schools. Notwithstanding its support for the proposal, DAB was concerned about the availability of a mechanism for students to change class when their language ability had improved, the increase of teachers' workload and the need to dispel public misconception of the second-class status of CMI schools. Parents should be educated about the merits of learning a second language step by step and the need to put their children's ability as the prime concern. Through proper education, the labelling effect on CMI schools could be gradually removed.

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The Administration's response

31. SED said that the Administration was encouraged by the enthusiastic responses from stakeholders on the proposed fine-tuning framework and that the objectives and the overall direction of the fine-tuning proposal had generally been accepted by different sectors in the community. There was a consensus on the need to enhance the English proficiency of students to facilitate their transition from junior secondary to senior secondary and/or post-secondary education. The Administration would take into account the concerns, views and suggestions raised at the meeting when finalizing the implementation details. He emphasized that with the objectives of the fine-tuning proposal to increase the exposure of junior secondary students to English inside the classroom while upholding mother-tongue teaching, the prescribed criteria of "student ability", "teacher capability" and "support measures of schools" for adopting EMI teaching should be maintained. While acknowledging the difference between learning the English Language and creating an environment for English learning, SED pointed out the importance of arousing students' interest to learn, with reference to his observations in school visits. To further enhance the English learning environment, the ELA time would be increased to 25% at junior secondary levels. Schools were encouraged to use the ELA time and formulate strategies to motivate students to learn in a rich English environment.

The fine-tuning proposal

32. Dr Priscilla LEUNG expressed support for fine-tuning the MOI for secondary schools. She said that the bifurcation of schools into EMI and CMI schools a decade ago had deprived the opportunity of junior secondary students in CMI schools to learn through English. In her view, Hong Kong had a bilingual environment as evident in the display of bilingual signboards everywhere. She considered it important for students to be bilingual and to learn in a bilingual environment. She supported the "by-class" arrangement and quoted her successful experience to study in a secondary school with EMI and CMI classes to illustrate the importance of school autonomy in determining the MOI arrangements. However, she called for prudence in adopting the "by subject" arrangements. She pointed out that the Chinese University of Hong Kong was previously bilingual, but it had evolved to the present stage that all University Grants Committee-funded institutions used only English as the oral medium. For practical needs, it was all the more important for students to be proficient in English. She called on the Administration to provide resources for local teachers and students to participate in English immersion programmes overseas.

33. Dr Priscilla LEUNG sought clarifications from HKPTU and Mr Raymond HO on their respective suggestions to shelve the fine-tuning proposal and to adopt a voucher system. She expressed reservations about the latter.

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34. Mr HON Lin-shan explained that given the diverse views and various concerns expressed by front-line teachers and parents on the proposal for fine-tuning the MOI policy and the imminent implementation of the NSS academic structure in the 2009-2010 school year, HKPTU considered it necessary to postpone the implementation of the fine-tuning proposal until the NSS academic structure had been implemented to cover senior secondary levels in full. HKPTU was concerned that teachers might not be able to cope with two initiatives at the same time.

35. Mr Raymond HO responded that schools should be given more autonomy in teaching and learning. He referred to the view of a renowned American professor that providing parents with complete freedom in making school choices would help alleviate poverty of a country. He considered the voucher system an effective means.

36. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that the fine-tuning proposal would overturn the existing mother-tongue teaching at junior secondary levels. He did not object to the overturn as mother-tongue teaching was adopted at junior secondary levels while EMI was promoted in higher education. He stressed that the MOI policy should facilitate students to learn and enhance students' motivation and interest to learn. To achieve these objectives, schools should be given full autonomy to adopt the MOI arrangements including the use of English or Chinese textbooks but different oral medium. He considered that the fine-tuning proposal could not remove the labelling effect but create another type of labelling in terms of the number of EMI classes in each school. He called on the Administration to map out how to help parents make school choice on the basis of the schools' academic merits including the MOI arrangements but never the number of EMI classes a school would have.

37. SED responded that under the proposed fine-tuning framework, schools would be given greater flexibility in determining the MOI arrangements in a professional manner while upholding mother-tongue teaching and the prescribed criteria for adopting EMI teaching as mentioned in paragraph 31 above. He considered it undesirable to focus the discussion on the labelling effect among schools. In any event, parents knew their children best and were in the best position to make school choice. He believed that parents would not consider only the number of EMI classes a school would have when making school choices.

38. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan considered SED's explanations contradictory in that while claiming to respect the choice of parents and to give flexibility to schools in determining the MOI arrangements, the Administration required the exercise of such choice and flexibility within the proposed framework. In effect, schools would not be given full autonomy in determining the MOI arrangements. He reiterated his view that schools should be allowed to adopt the MOI

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arrangements to meet their students' needs as long as students' learning could be facilitated.

39. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that teachers and parents shared the common goal to enhance students' proficiency in both Chinese and English, but how the fine-tuning proposal could achieve the goal was questionable. Given the objective of the fine-tuning proposal to enhance the English proficiency of students, he opined that a more direct and effective approach should be to improve the teaching and learning of the English Language subject and the Chinese Language subject by such measures as adopting small class teaching to enhancing teacher-student interactions in class, and providing remedial English lessons to the academic low-achievers so as to boost their English proficiency. With appropriate pedagogies and support, all students should be expected to attain a satisfactory level of English proficiency after 12 years of primary and secondary education. He opined that the fine-tuning proposal would create confusion and conflicts among individual schools and parents, particularly on how to admit students to EMI or CMI classes. He was gravely concerned that quite a number of CMI schools would adopt EMI for teaching Mathematics and Science subjects and EMI schools would adopt EMI for teaching arts, physical education and religious studies. He had reservations about the effectiveness of adopting EMI for content subjects in enhancing students' English proficiency, and opined that adopting EMI for such subjects would affect learning effectiveness. Given the diverse views expressed, he questioned whether the fine-tuning proposal was the right way forward. He requested the Administration to address the concern of teachers and parents when mapping out the detailed arrangements.

40. In response, SED pointed out that there were concerns in the community where mother-tongue teaching had enhanced learning effectiveness, but students were less confident and motivated in learning English. Given the fact that schools had been provided with resources including additional teachers to teach the English Language in small groups and operate remedial English classes, the lack of an environment for English learning was a problem to tackle. The objective of fine-tuning the MOI policy was to increase the opportunities for junior secondary students to get exposed to English inside classroom.

41. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong remarked that not all schools were provided with the resources to adopt small group teaching for the English Language subject or operate remedial English classes for needy students. He reiterated his suggestion to improve the teaching and learning of the English Language subject and the Chinese Language subject by adopting small class teaching and providing remedial English classes. He emphasized that the adoption of EMI for a few content subjects at junior secondary levels could not upgrade students' English proficiency.

42. Mr TAM Yiu-chung said that DAB supported the direction of fine-tuning

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the MOI policy to address parents' concern under the prevailing MOI policy. DAB shared the views of parent groups, and understood the concerns of teachers and principals about the implementation arrangements. While he considered it necessary to smooth the implementation, it was inappropriate to postpone the implementation until the NSS academic structure had been implemented at senior secondary levels in full. He called on the Administration to work in partnership with schools to address the concerns arising from the implementation of the NSS academic structure and concurrently, the fine-tuning proposal. He added that labelling effect would be inevitable, yet he had faith in parents in making the best school choice for their children. He sought information on the implementation details of the fine-tuning proposal.

43. SED responded that the Administration would take into account the views and concerns of the deputation and continue to communicate with the stakeholders to address their concerns. Subject to the approval of the Executive Council, the fine-tuned MOI arrangements would take effect from the 2010-2011 school year. In order to allow lead time for schools to consult their own stakeholders on the school-based MOI arrangements under the prescribed criteria and to inform parents of the arrangements for S1 admission in the 2010-2011 school year, it was planned to inform schools the details by end-May 2009. Should the fine-tuning proposal lack support, the revised MOI arrangements including the review of MOI status for individual schools as recommended in the 2005 Report would be implemented in the 2010-2011 school year according to schedule.

44. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that students' performance in the English Language subject as well as the Chinese Language subject in HKCEE had declined in recent years. The fine-tuning proposal should aim to improve students' language proficiency through quality teaching and learning of both subjects. He shared his experience of being a secondary school teacher of Mathematics at different levels for almost three decades. He had adopted EMI and CMI for teaching Mathematics and had also used Chinese as the oral medium to explain the English textbooks and materials. There were benefits of using English textbooks with Chinese as the oral medium to facilitate student learning of science subjects such as Mathematics in the light of the need to adjust the MOI for content subjects with regard to the ability of students. He considered it impractical to expect the enhancement of students' English proficiency by means of adopting EMI for content subjects. In his view, schools should be given the autonomy to decide MOI arrangements appropriate to their students.

45. In response, SED said that the Administration, having tracked the students' performance, was not aware of an obvious decline in the result of the Chinese Language subject in HKCEE. He reiterated the need to uphold the prescribed criteria under the fine-tuned MOI framework. In adopting EMI for any content subjects, schools should take into account the needs as well as

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learning progress of their students and readiness and capability of teachers to ensure that the learning effectiveness would not be compromised.

46. Ms Audrey EU agreed that the proposed fine-tuning of the MOI policy should aim at improving the English environment in schools instead of removing the labelling effect on schools or students. She noted that while parent groups supported the proposed fine-tuned MOI policy, school councils, principals and teacher associations had expressed concerns. She doubted whether the Administration could reach a consensus with the school sector on the implementation details for submission to the Executive Council in May 2009.

47. SED pointed out that the Administration had been engaging the stakeholders in discussion on the proposed fine-tuned MOI arrangements since last year. Given the controversial nature of the subject as well as different interests and wish of stakeholders, it would be impossible to come up with a consensus on the implementation details. The Administration had to make a decision after thorough deliberation of the concerns and views received. SED added that the fine-tuning proposal was not mooted from scratch but within the principles and criteria promulgated under the revised MOI arrangements in the 2005 Report. These principles and criteria had to be upheld.

48. Ms Audrey EU said that she personally had reservations about using Chinese for teaching content subjects with English textbooks. However, Young Civic and Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung had mentioned about different experiences of such practice on some students. She enquired about the Administration's stance on adopting CMI for teaching content subjects with English textbooks. She also sought information on the rationale for setting the ELA time at 25% of the total lesson time.

49. SED clarified that CMI teaching should include, by definition, adopting Chinese primarily in teaching in class, supported by Chinese textbooks and teaching materials with assessment and evaluation primarily in Chinese to facilitate students to reinforce what they had learnt. The same principles applied to EMI teaching. As recommended in the 2005 Report, the ELA time for S1, S2 and S3 was 15%, 20% and 25% respectively. To increase students' exposure to English, the ELA time was suggested to be raised to 25% of the total lesson time (excluding the lesson time for English) at junior secondary levels. Given the flexibility under the ELA time, teachers might use English materials/resources, where appropriate, to enhance teaching and learning of content subjects which were conducted primarily in Chinese.

50. The Chairman said that schools' decision on MOI arrangements might depend on the situation of student enrolment. To mitigate the concern about under-enrolment arising from the student population drop, she called on the Administration to put the consolidation policy for secondary schools in abeyance until the fine-tuning proposal be put in place. She invited the deputations to

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suggest measures to minimize the possible labelling effect among schools on implementation of the fine-tuning proposal.

51. Professor WONG Po-choi informed that the Committee on Home-School Co-operation had thorough discussion with the Federations of Parent-teacher Associations in the 18 districts about the fine-tuning proposal. Parents considered that the decision should rest with schools on the adoption of "by class" and/or "by subject" arrangements. Parents welcomed the requirement for schools to release information of their MOI arrangements for individual subjects in a standardised manner. However, they did not consider it appropriate for schools to disclose the number of EMI, CMI or flexible classes in the School Profiles for Secondary One admission. Individual schools should explain their school-based MOI arrangements in detail to parents. Professor WONG added that the Committee on Home-School Cooperation would collaborate with the Federations to promote parents' proper attitude and ways in making school choice.

52. Mr YIP Chee-tim said that the Association of Hong Kong Chinese Middle Schools was of the opinion that schools would compete for operations of flexible classes. Requiring all schools to have 25% ELA time at junior secondary levels to enhance students' English proficiency might minimise the competition.

53. Mr Michael WONG said that the Hong Kong Association of Heads of Secondary Schools suggested that to mitigate the labelling effect, schools should be named EMI schools and bilingual/trilingual schools. The former would adopt EMI teaching for all subjects except Chinese Language and Chinese History, whereas the latter would adopt EMI or CMI teaching for individual content subjects in accordance with their school-based MOI arrangements. The Administration should consult the school sector on the proposed classification of schools.

54. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong read out an e-mail from a serving secondary school teacher to illustrate his/her workload and anxiety in a CMI school about the possibility of switching to teaching content subjects in English amidst the student population decline, low morale of teachers and implementation of the NSS academic structure in the 2009-2010 school year. He pointed out that despite the provision of professional development and supply teachers, many schools had already requested their teachers to equip themselves for EMI teaching for content subjects in anticipation of the implementation of the fine-tuning proposal in the 2010-2011 school year. He asked how the Administration would alleviate teachers' workload.

55. SED agreed that the Administration should finalize the implementation details as soon as possible. He stressed that under the proposed fine-tuned framework, greater flexibility would be given to schools to decide on their

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school-based MOI arrangements, but schools should give due regard to their student ability and school circumstances including teachers' capability when adopting the appropriate MOI arrangements. Schools should encourage their teachers to attend relevant professional development programmes in preparation for EMI teaching as appropriate. Only when students and teachers were ready could a school adopt EMI for a content subject effectively. SED reiterated that the Administration had not compelled and would not compel schools to adopt any MOI arrangements.

56. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong remarked that owing to competition for students, principals might be left with no choices but to adopt EMI for content subjects. He urged the Administration to sort out the implementation details with a view to allaying the concerns of teachers and principals and appealed to those deputations and individuals expressing support for the fine-tuning proposal to examine the implementation details carefully.

57. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung reiterated that schools should be given full discretion in formulating their school-based MOI policy including the use of English or Chinese textbooks for content subjects but with different oral medium. He quoted some examples to show the effectiveness of "English textbooks but Chinese oral medium".

58. SED explained that in the absence of empirical evidence of the above arrangement, it would not be desirable to set it as a teaching strategy/pedagogy under the fine-tuning. Individual schools might wish to provide justifications for the practice.

59. Mrs Rosalind CHAN strongly disagreed with such arrangement. She said that in the interest of students, schools should insist on the use of EMI for content subjects with English textbooks if English was adopted as the MOI and students would learn to adjust to EMI with time. She repeated the experience a decade ago that some schools had used Chinese as the oral medium with English textbooks and students were neither proficient in Chinese nor English. Hence, the MOI guidance was issued in 1998.

60. The Chairman thanked the deputations and individuals for their views and requested them to provide written submissions should they have not done so.

II. Any other business

61. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:20 pm.