

ITEM FOR FINANCE COMMITTEE

HEAD 156 – GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT : EDUCATION BUREAU

Subhead 700 General non-recurrent New Item “Grant to the Language Fund”

Members are invited to approve the creation of a new commitment of \$500 million for injection into the Language Fund.

PROBLEM

We need to inject additional funding into the Language Fund to sustain its efforts in supporting projects and initiatives to improve Hong Kong people’s proficiency in Chinese (including Putonghua) and English.

PROPOSAL

2. To meet rising community expectations of the language standards of our students and workforce, the Secretary for Education proposes to inject \$500 million into the Language Fund to enable it to launch new initiatives and strengthen existing ones in, but not limited to, the following areas –

- (a) strengthening the teaching and learning of English in secondary schools;
- (b) enhancing after-school support for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students in Chinese Language learning;
- (c) creating a facilitating language learning environment (including English and Putonghua) for students in schools;
- (d) strengthening research and development on language education to facilitate the formulation of language education policies; and

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- (e) raising the language proficiency of Hong Kong's workforce in English and Putonghua.

JUSTIFICATION

3. Since 1994, the Finance Committee has approved five injections, totalling \$2,500 million, into the Language Fund. Added to the injection is a total interest income of \$446.6 million accrued by the Fund over the years. Taking into account the total grant of \$2,783.4 million already approved for various projects (of which \$1,344.8 million has already been spent and \$1,438.6 million committed for initiatives in progress) and \$6.3 million spent on other miscellaneous expenses, the Fund had an outstanding balance of \$156.9 million as at the end of March 2010. Of this, \$140.6 million has been earmarked for on-going initiatives, leaving only a non-earmarked balance of about \$16 million. The proposed lump sum injection will enable the Trustee of the Language Fund to continue to fund worthwhile initiatives and programmes on the advice of the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR).

Strengthen the teaching and learning of English in secondary schools

Objective of the scheme

4. With the implementation of the Fine-tuning the Medium of Instruction (MOI) for Secondary Schools starting from Secondary 1 in the 2010/11 school year, schools will no longer be classified into schools using Chinese as the medium of instruction (CMI schools) and schools using the English medium of instruction (EMI schools). The MOI arrangements of schools will become diversified with appropriate teaching strategies devised to address students' needs having regard to the schools' circumstances. Against this development, individual schools need to build on the basis of the English Enhancement Scheme (EES) for Secondary Schools, funded by the Language Fund in 2006 to build schools' capacity in the teaching and learning of English and enhancing students' English proficiency, to implement and/or refocus their approved measures under the EES so as to tie in better with their MOI arrangements. Therefore, we need to introduce a Refined EES for schools to implement new school-based measures or refine the existing measures in the years leading up to the full implementation of the Fine-tuning at junior secondary levels by the 2013/14 school year.

5. The proposed Refined EES seeks to enable schools to further develop their whole-school language policies such as strengthening cross-curricular English enrichment programmes through in-depth collaboration of English Language teachers and non-language teachers to sustain capacity building in the teaching and

learning of English, facilitating the smooth transition between different key stages of English learning, and catering for learner diversity in English learning. As such, given their different contexts, schools should consolidate their existing resources and practices and come up with holistic and coherent plans to ensure that the extra funding to be provided will make a sustainable impact on students' English language learning.

Eligibility

6. Similar to the original EES, all public sector secondary schools, secondary schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme and special schools offering ordinary secondary curriculum will be eligible for support under the Refined EES. As schools will no longer be classified into CMI schools and EMI schools upon the implementation of the Fine-tuning, a budgetary ceiling of \$1 million will be set for each applicant school under the Refined EES, taking into account the budget approved under the original EES and market capacity in providing the relevant services to facilitate schools to implement their school-based measures.

Vetting and monitoring

7. A vetting panel comprising language education experts and representatives from the Education Bureau (EDB) will assess the appropriateness and feasibility of the proposals of individual schools. Schools are expected to commence their approved measures in the 2010/11 school year the earliest to tie in with their fine-tuned MOI arrangements and complete implementation by the 2013/14 school year the latest. Upon approval of their proposals, schools would be required to enter into a performance contract with the Government which would include their implementation details and output targets to be achieved. In line with the School Development and Accountability Framework, the Refined EES plan should also form part and parcel of the whole-school language policy. It should be incorporated into the School Development Plans, and the schools concerned would be held accountable for their effectiveness facilitating the implementation of fine-tuned MOI arrangements. Moreover, EDB would conduct supervisory visits to monitor schools' performances and provide advice.

8. The original EES has a funding balance of about \$97 million¹ as at December 2009. We intend to earmark a sum of \$323 million from the Language Fund for the Refined EES. We may refine the exact scope and sum required on the advice of SCOLAR, having regard to the merits of proposals received and overall progress of the scheme.

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¹ Out of \$880 million earmarked from the Language Fund for the EES, the amount of funding approved was \$728 million with another estimated sum of \$55 million earmarked for schools whose measures are subject to review, leaving a balance of no more than \$97 million.

Extend after-school support in Chinese Learning for NCS Students

9. Upon examination of the support measures put in place for primary and secondary NCS students with reference to the feedback from major stakeholders, we see the merits of implementing a project on after-class support for NCS students in non-designated schools² to reinforce their Chinese language learning. Funding will be provided to non-designated schools on annual application for a period of three years to roll out various modes of after-school Chinese extended learning at schools such as training of Chinese learning skills, peer collaboration in studying Chinese, tutorial classes, etc. The proposed project would complement the after-school support service of the Chinese Language Learning Support Centres operated by the University of Hong Kong and allow time for the Centres to expand their existing services to support the NCS students studying in non-designated schools.

10. Schools admitting 15 or more NCS students may apply for funding to provide after-school Chinese extended learning services for their own NCS students as well as NCS students from nearby schools. Schools which have admitted less than 15 NCS students may also join hands with nearby schools having NCS students with EDB's assistance and apply for funding to provide after-school Chinese extended learning services within their schools. The amount of funding for each applicant school per annum would depend on the number of NCS students –

Number of NCS students	Amount of funding per annum
15-19	\$50,000
20-29	\$100,000
30-59	\$200,000
60 or more	\$300,000

Applicant schools taking the lead to pool NCS students from nearby schools will each be provided with an additional amount of \$100,000 per annum since the schools will be responsible for the administrative work including liaison with other schools and parents.

11. We intend to earmark \$77 million for enhancing the support measures for NCS students. The exact scope and sum required may be refined depending on the progress of the project and the advice of SCOLAR. In line with

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² Designated schools with a critical mass of NCS students have been set up to facilitate the development of supporting teaching materials and the sharing of experiences with other schools admitting NCS students. These schools are provided with focused support by EDB including a recurrent grant to enhance the learning and teaching of NCS students.

the School Development and Accountability Framework, schools would be held accountable for ensuring the quality and effectiveness of the services. EDB would conduct supervisory visits and collect stakeholders' feedback through surveys to monitor schools' performances, and provide advice as necessary.

Create a facilitating language learning environment for students

12. SCOLAR has launched a number of initiatives to create a richer language environment for primary and secondary students in recent years, including, for example, the annual promotion of Putonghua, the "Drama-in-education English Alliance" and the promotion of reading via the "Reading Ambassador and Reading Contract Project". These are successful initiatives well received by schools and students. They can arouse the interest of students in learning the languages, provide students with opportunities to use the languages in a non-academic context and increase students' confidence.

13. To sustain the momentum, SCOLAR considers that there is a continuing need to provide more opportunities for students to use and learn English and Putonghua outside the classroom. SCOLAR has advised that the Government should consider strengthening existing and/or launching new measures along the following directions –

(a) Encourage student exchanges

Encourage inter-school activities (e.g. between local and international schools) and better utilise the Mainland exchange programmes to provide students with more opportunities to use English and Putonghua in a real life setting.

(b) Enrich the after-school language environment

Recruit volunteers (e.g. native English/Putonghua-speaking students, and volunteers from tertiary institutions, trade organisations and professional bodies, etc.) to conduct after-school co-curricular activities in English or Putonghua.

(c) Promote reading and writing

Assist schools to acquire good reading materials, organise book sharing events for students, launch reading campaigns, strengthen parental support on reading, and launch large-scale writing competitions/campaigns.

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(d) Collaborate with the media

Collaborate with the mass media, in addition to non-governmental organisations/educationalists/the business community, in organising activities to promote reading and writing.

14. We intend to earmark a sum of \$50 million for implementing measures to create a facilitating language learning environment for students. Details of the measures, including scope, budget and implementation timetable, would be developed and subject to the further advice of SCOLAR.

Support research and development on language education

15. Globalisation and Hong Kong's closer ties with the Mainland have changed community expectations and created greater market demands for a workforce proficient in both Chinese and English. The landscape of education in Hong Kong is also undergoing many changes, including, for example, expansion of educational opportunities under the new senior secondary structure, increased choice and diversity for schools such as diversified MOI arrangements, and the use of Putonghua in Chinese language teaching.

16. Against the above background, there is a need to strengthen research and development in language education to obtain useful information on Hong Kong's language needs and demands, as well as important feedback on the existing language education policy. Such information would provide references to the Government in the formulation of language education strategies and effective deployment of resources. Research and development projects will also enrich the knowledge bank on language learning and good practices, hence facilitating the relevant stakeholders, including schools and course providers, to improve learning, teaching and course provision.

17. SCOLAR has recently set up a Research Committee to identify priority areas for exploration. The Committee will discuss and propose strategies and practical framework for SCOLAR's consideration. We intend to earmark \$20 million for the purpose, subject to SCOLAR's further consideration and deliberation on the exact scope and budget required.

Raise workforce language proficiency

18. To raise the public's awareness of the importance of enhancing one's English proficiency, SCOLAR has launched the Workplace English Campaign and the promotion of Putonghua in collaboration with the media. We need to step up the existing efforts to raise English and Putonghua proficiency of our workforce to

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meet the challenges of globalisation, enhance our competitiveness, and embrace opportunities arising from our closer exchanges with the Mainland. Measures may include –

- (a) design and development of curriculum and language courses that address the needs of individual industries/occupations;
- (b) giving commendations to companies with good practices to encourage employees for enhancing language proficiency and invite them to publicise their successful experiences and good practices;
- (c) promoting development of open e-learning platform(s) to provide easy access to learning opportunities and allow target users to learn at their own pace at time that suits them; and
- (d) launching large-scale publicity campaigns, including Internet and TV promotion, to sustain the efforts of promoting the importance of raising English and Putonghua proficiency.

19. The above are only preliminary ideas that would require further study and planning. We intend to earmark \$30 million for raising the language proficiency of Hong Kong's workforce. Details of the measures including scope, budget and implementation timetable would be developed and subject to the further advice of SCOLAR.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

20. As set out in paragraphs 4 to 19 above, we intend to allocate the proposed injection of \$500 million as follows –

Measures	Estimated expenditure (\$ million)
(a) Strengthen English language education in secondary schools	323
(b) Extend after-school support in Chinese Learning for NCS students	77
(c) Create a facilitating language learning environment for students	50
(d) Support research and development on language education	20
(e) Raising workplace language proficiency	30
TOTAL	500

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The detailed arrangements for these measures, including their timeframe of implementation and exact allocation, will be subject to further deliberations by SCOLAR. We will closely monitor and review funding allocation and may refine resource deployment among the expenditure categories listed above. As in the past, we will submit periodic reports to SCOLAR on the use of the Fund and seek its advice on any refinement in allocations.

21. Subject to Members' approval, we will inject \$500 million into the Language Fund in 2010-11. We have earmarked the funding required for the purpose in the 2010-11 Estimates.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Consultation with SCOLAR and the school sector

22. In his Budget Speech delivered in February 2010, the Financial Secretary proposed injecting \$500 million into the Language Fund to further upgrade our biliterate and trilingual proficiency with a view to maintaining the competitiveness of Hong Kong and embracing the opportunities brought by our economic integration with the Mainland. SCOLAR met in March 2010 to discuss the proposal and advise on the measures to enhance language proficiency. It supported the proposals of the Refined EES and the enhanced support measures for NCS students which are detailed above, subject to approval by this Committee on the proposal of injection of \$500 million into the Language Fund. SCOLAR also made recommendations on the directions concerning measures to create a facilitating language learning environment for students and to raise the language proficiency of our workforce, also as set out in the paragraphs above. Following the consultation with SCOLAR, we have gauged the views of school representatives, including school councils and associations on the proposals of the Refined EES. Their response to the implementation details, including the proposed budgetary ceiling for each applicant school, was positive in general.

Consultation with Legislative Council Panel on Education

23. We consulted the Panel on Education on 13 May 2010. Members supported the proposed injection in general. A few Members expressed concern about whether the proposed budgetary ceiling under the Refined EES would meet the needs of schools which have insufficient English language environment. As requested by Members, we have provided supplementary information concerning the language proficiency of students in Hong Kong to the Panel on 3 June 2010.

BACKGROUND*The Language Fund*

24. The Language Fund was set up in March 1994 with an initial allocation of \$300 million, held in trust under the Director of Education (now the Permanent Secretary for Education) Incorporation Ordinance (Cap. 1098), to provide financial support for projects and activities aimed at improving Hong Kong people's proficiency in Chinese (including Putonghua) and English. The Fund is operated in accordance with a Trust Deed which sets out the objects of the Fund, the broad principles governing the disbursements, as well as the management framework. SCOLAR, established in 1996 to advise the Government on language education issues in general, is responsible for advising the Trustee of the Fund on the policies and procedures governing the operation of the Fund.

25. Since 1994, the Finance Committee has approved five injections into the Language Fund. Details of the injections are summarised below –

Year	Amount (\$ million)
1994	300
2001	200
2003	400
2005	500
2006	1,100
TOTAL	2,500

26. Over the years, through the use of the Language Fund, projects spanning a wide variety of language education and research activities have been conducted by a range of organisations including tertiary institutions, schools, educational bodies, and government departments. Major projects and initiatives carried out or being carried out have been complementing the Administration's policy and efforts in building a professional language teaching force, supporting for the learning and teaching of languages in schools, as well as supporting the development of school-based programmes for upgrading the students' language proficiency. Many of them pioneer innovation and changes in language education. A highlight of these projects is at the Enclosure.

Encl.

**Major Completed/On-going Projects
Funded by the Language Fund**

(I) Professional Development of Language Teachers

- **The Professional Development Incentive Grant Scheme for Language Teachers (PDIGS)** – PDIGS was launched in April 2004 to encourage serving language teachers to attain certain qualifications. PDIGS provides language teachers who joined the profession before the 2004/05 school year incentive grant to meet 50% of their tuition fees, subject to a maximum of \$30,000 per teacher. A total of \$525 million has been allocated for the Scheme, and more than 8 000 applications have been approved with funds spent and earmarked at about \$207 million. The percentage of language teachers equipped with relevant subject knowledge and pedagogy has risen remarkably by two-fold from 29% in the 2003/04 school year to 62% in the 2008/09 school year.
- **Overseas Immersion Programme for English Language Teachers** – Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) started to sponsor the Overseas Immersion Programme in the 2006/07 school year to provide English Language teachers of primary schools with an opportunity to learn and experience innovative learning and teaching methods, materials and curricular activities in English as a second language, and to gain deeper knowledge of the English language and understanding of the culture of English-speaking countries. The programme was extended to cover principals of primary schools in the 2007/08 school year to broaden their exposure and to enhance their curriculum leadership in English language education. SCOLAR sponsors each participant 85% of the tuition fee upon successful completion of the tour. A total of \$27 million has been allocated for the project. Teacher participants are required to implement school plans to improve English language teaching in their schools after completion of their tour. As of April 2010, the Programme has sponsored 401 teachers and 53 principals in 20 tours. Teachers reported that the immersion programmes had given them an eye-opening experience. Many have introduced the newly acquired teaching methods into their classes/schools.
- **Putonghua Summer Immersion Course Subsidy Scheme** – the Scheme provides a maximum subsidy of \$12,500 for teachers to attend summer immersion courses in the Mainland. The rate of subsidy is based on the teachers' performance in the Putonghua Shuiping Ceshi that they have achieved before and after the immersion courses. A total of \$24 million has been allocated for running the Scheme from 2000 to 2012. The Scheme has

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been conducted on an annual basis (except in 2003 and 2008 due to the outbreak of SARS and Beijing Olympics respectively). Over the years, over 1 450 teachers were subsidised under the Scheme. With more schools trying to use Putonghua to teach Chinese Language in recent years, this subsidy scheme would help enhance the capacity of Chinese Language teachers, and is hence conducive to the attainment of the long-term vision to use Putonghua to teach Chinese Language.

(II) Supporting Schools in the Learning and Teaching of Languages

- **The Task Force on Language Support** – the Task Force, with an allocation of \$278 million from the Language Fund, was established in 2004 to help schools implement the curriculum reform. It seeks to promote curriculum leadership development and enhance the quality of language education through the process of curriculum planning, implementation of different learning and teaching strategies and on-going evaluation. Support is rendered to schools through on-site visits (by conducting collaborative lesson planning and action research), professional development activities of different scales and on different topics, and consultancy services. The Task Force, which comprises language experts and seconded teachers, has provided intensive school-based support to nearly 580 and 320 primary schools in Chinese and English language education respectively and 415 and 370 secondary schools in Chinese and English language education respectively in the past five years. In the 2009/10 school year, support is being rendered to about 400 primary and secondary schools. Experiences of those schools are documented and shared through CD-ROMs, publications, and the websites of the Education Bureau (EDB) and Hong Kong Education City. The support service is now provided by the Language Learning Support Section under the School-based Support Services Office in EDB.
- **“Quality English Language Education at Pre-primary Level” Project** – the Project was launched in the 2006/07 school year to provide training and support to kindergarten teachers in pedagogical knowledge and appropriate teaching approaches and skills. Each participating kindergarten would receive either intensive on-site support or consultancy service for two years. A total of \$85 million has been allocated for the project. Over the past four years, the team has provided support to 112 kindergartens. In the 2009/10 school year, the team is supporting 73 kindergartens. The Project is well received by principals, teachers of kindergartens and the parents. The Project explores and develops more comprehensive models of quality English exposure to children at pre-primary level and thereby facilitates the formulation of a long-term strategy on supporting English language education at pre-primary level.

/Scheme

- **Scheme to Support Schools in Using Putonghua to Teach Chinese Language Subject** – in the 2008/09 school year, SCOLAR launched a scheme to assist schools to implement using Putonghua to teach Chinese Language. The Support Scheme is carried out in four phases, providing support to 40 primary and secondary schools in each phase. There will be a total of 160 schools benefited from the 2008/09 to 2013/14 school years. The professional support given to schools comprises three components: (a) support rendered by experts from the Mainland and local consultants to help schools implement their plan on using Putonghua to teach Chinese Language; (b) seminars/workshops on theories of and pedagogy in using Putonghua to teach Chinese Language; and (c) exchange activities conducted locally and in the Mainland to increase teachers' exposure to different teaching practices. Supply teacher grant is provided to the participating schools to create rooms for teachers to implement their school plans and attend professional development programmes. About \$225 million was allocated for the Scheme. We believe that, by encouraging and supporting more schools to implement the use of Putonghua to teach Chinese Language, the Scheme would play a significant role in the attainment of the long-term vision of using Putonghua to teach Chinese Language. As of the 2009/10 school year, there are 80 primary and secondary schools being supported under the Scheme.

(III) Supporting School-based Language Enhancement Programmes

- **English Enhancement Scheme for Secondary Schools** – the objective of the Scheme was to build up schools' capacity in the teaching and learning of English and enhance students' English proficiency, on the premise that schools will continue to be classified into schools using Chinese as the medium of instruction (CMI schools) and schools using English as the medium of instruction (EMI schools). A total of \$880 million was earmarked for schools to apply through four batches between 2006 and 2007 to implement school-based English enhancement measures. For budgetary purposes, the ceiling for CMI schools was set at \$3 million while that for EMI schools was \$0.5 million. The actual amount of funding for each school depended on individual schools' application proposals. A total of 439 schools participated in the scheme, of which 310 were CMI schools and 129 were EMI schools. The amount of funding approved was \$728 million with another estimated sum of \$55 million earmarked for schools whose measures are subject to review.

/English

- **English Enhancement Grant Scheme for Primary Schools** – the objective of the Scheme is to provide additional resources (a maximum of \$500,000 per school) to primary schools to help develop school-based English enhancement measures to strengthen the learning and teaching of English. A total of \$270 million has been allocated for the Scheme. The Scheme is open for applications in 2010, 2011 and 2012. About 260 schools have submitted their applications for implementing school-based programmes starting from the 2010/11 school year.

(IV) Creating a Facilitating Language Learning Environment

- **Promotion of Putonghua in schools** – since 2005, SCOLAR has been launching the annual Putonghua promotion, under which various language activities such as Putonghua public speaking competition, Putonghua student tourism ambassadors programme, and Putonghua Radio Drama Training and Competition were organised by various educational bodies/media.
- **“Drama-in-education English Alliance”** – the project was launched in the 2007/08 school year to replace the English Festival. Under the project, primary schools were encouraged to introduce drama activities into their English teaching to arouse students’ interest and to develop their language skills.
- **Promotion of Reading via Reading Ambassador and Reading Contract Project** – the project was launched in the 2004/05 school year, under which secondary students and parents of primary students are trained as Reading Ambassadors to promote reading in schools.

(V) Raising Workplace Language Proficiency of Hong Kong’s Workforce

- **Publicity and Public Education Programme on Putonghua** – under the annual Putonghua promotion, SCOLAR has been promoting Putonghua in collaboration with the media, for example, via production of Putonghua radio segment series and Putonghua publicity programmes.
- **Workplace English Campaign** – the Campaign, launched in 2000, aims to heighten public awareness of the importance of having a good command of English in a workplace environment and to improve the knowledge of English among the working population in Hong Kong. Public education and publicity efforts, including seminars, educational TV programmes, and TV and radio Announcements in Public Interest, are being sustained to encourage our workforce to enhance their English proficiency.

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(VI) Research and Development

- **Research on factors affecting the use of Putonghua to teach Chinese Language in primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong** – the research aimed to identify the conditions necessary for schools to make a successful switch to Putonghua and prevent possible negative outcomes. From the case studies of the 20 participating schools, six factors were indentified to be conducive to the implementation of using Putonghua to teach Chinese Language, i.e. (a) capacity of teachers; (b) attitudes and strategies of the school management; (c) language environment; (d) students’ learning ability; (e) arrangements on curriculum, teaching methods, and teaching materials; and (f) support for teaching and learning. The research findings were submitted to the Legislative Council Panel on Education in July 2008 and are available online for reference by schools and members of the public. The findings of the research provide school management with examples of good practices for adoption in implementing the use of Putonghua to teach Chinese Language. They also inform the design of the above-mentioned “Scheme to Support Schools in Using Putonghua to Teach Chinese Language Subject” which seeks to help participating schools create favourable conditions for the use of Putonghua to teach Chinese Language.
- **Research on the Putonghua proficiency of Hong Kong students** – the research, which is being carried out by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, consists of a 3-year study at Primary 3, Primary 6 and Secondary 3 levels from 2008 to mid-2011. It is expected that the research would generate useful information on the Putonghua proficiency of Hong Kong students and valuable feedbacks on the effectiveness of Putonghua programmes. It would also pave the way for the development of a local Putonghua proficiency scale and a Putonghua test for members of the public, which would provide a useful framework for reference by employers and facilitate working adults to set their own goals in Putonghua learning against a particular level of proficiency in the scale. A total of \$21 million has been allocated for the project.
