

For information

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Implementation of Various Initiatives of the Language Fund

Purpose

This paper reports on the implementation of various initiatives funded by the Language Fund.

Background

2. The Language Fund was set up in 1994 with a view to enhancing the Chinese and English language proficiency of the Hong Kong population. In 2014, the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council approved the injection of \$5 billion into the Language Fund in the form of seed capital to provide a stable stream of funding to facilitate the longer term strategic planning and development of language education.

3. Established in 1996 to advise the Government on language education issues in general, the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) has, through the use of the Language Fund, complemented the efforts of the Government, other advisory bodies and stakeholders by implementing research and development projects on language learning and language education issues, enhancing professional development of Chinese Language and English Language teachers, providing school-based support on language education, and creating and nurturing a facilitating language learning environment for our students as well as the community.

Progress Update

4. With a vision to further enhancing the Chinese (including Putonghua) and English language proficiency of our students and the workforce, SCOLAR and its respective working groups have been planning and implementing various initiatives under the following six strategic areas

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- (a) facilitating effective language education policy formulation and implementation through initiating research studies, including longitudinal research and comparative studies in local and international settings;
- (b) strengthening support of language learning in Chinese and English language to children in early years;
- (c) enhancing professional preparation and continuing development of language teachers;
- (d) catering for learner diversity, including the needs of non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students;
- (e) creating a facilitating language learning environment for students in and beyond school settings through partnership with relevant stakeholders, in particular, the community; and
- (f) raising language proficiency of Hong Kong's workforce in response to the changing language landscape.

5. A summary of the latest progress of the initiatives under the six strategic areas is set out in the ensuing paragraphs whilst further details are appended at the Annex.

- (a) ***Facilitating effective language education policy formulation and implementation through initiating research studies, including longitudinal research and comparative studies in local and international settings***

Research studies of tertiary institutions and professional bodies

6. With a view to further facilitating effective formulation and implementation of language education policies, SCOLAR has been inviting scholars and researchers of local tertiary institutions and professional bodies to submit proposals of research and development projects on priority themes since December 2015. Upon the completion of the first batch of over twenty bottom-up research and development projects in mid-2018, SCOLAR organised the Research and Development Project Dissemination Conference under the theme of “Advancing Excellence in Language Education: From Research and Development to Innovation Practice” in mid-2019 to share the findings and deliverables with academics and researchers of tertiary institutions, professional organisations, as well as principals and teachers of local kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. Invitation of proposals on a wider scope of priority themes for research and development projects was further conducted in March 2017. A total of seventeen approved projects are anticipated for completion in 2020 and 2021.

Thematic Household Survey by the Census and Statistics Department

7. SCOLAR investigated through the Thematic Household Survey the language use of the people of Hong Kong in 2012 and 2015 respectively. To further track the changes of the language landscape of Hong Kong, SCOLAR commissioned the Census and Statistics Department to further investigate the language use of the people of Hong Kong through the Thematic Household Survey in 2018. The survey was completed and the findings were published in June 2019¹.

Other studies

8. Meanwhile, taking into account the importance of English in the workplace of Hong Kong, SCOLAR completed a study focusing on examining the English language competency of the workforce². The Working Group under SCOLAR is deliberating the relevant research findings in consideration of the way forward. In the coming years, in view of the changing social, demographic and education contexts, relevant research studies on areas including (i) early language and literacy development in Chinese and English language; (ii) study of Chinese language learning of NCS students; and (iii) further studies on language proficiency of working adults will be conducted.

(b) *Strengthening support of language learning in Chinese and English language to children in early years*

(c) *Enhancing professional preparation and continuing development of language teachers*

9. Since the 2015/16 school year, SCOLAR has been implementing the “Scheme on Early Language and Literacy Development in Chinese and

¹ Results of the survey showed that Chinese language (including Putonghua) and English language are the most common languages used by Hong Kong people in their daily life and work. In the workplace, the importance of English language (both spoken and written) and Putonghua has been increasing. Whilst a majority of people in Hong Kong perceived that their language competency can meet the requirement of their jobs, they still wanted to spare time to enhance their language proficiency. In addition, parents in general considered the development of their young children's language proficiency, especially the English proficiency, very important. The relevant survey report has been uploaded onto the following website (<https://www.statistics.gov.hk/pub/B11302662019XXXXB0100.pdf>).

² This study was conducted in 2017-19 to assess the gap between the requirements / expectations of employers in Hong Kong and their local employees' self-perception in terms of English language competency. The first and second phases of the study which included surveys, interviews and focused group interviews were completed. The study showed that employers in general were satisfied with the English language competency of their employees although there was room for improvement. Employers also indicated that their employees were generally better at writing and weaker in listening and speaking. The study also showed that while employers put more focus on writing skills, employees perceived that listening skills were more important. The relevant study report has been uploaded onto the SCOLAR website (<https://scolarhk.edb.hkedcity.net/en/project/completed/language-landscape-studies>).

English Language of Young Children” to strengthen the support to young children on Chinese and English language development. Through co-planning of lessons, sharing activities as well as workshops/seminars for parents, SCOLAR collaborates with kindergartens of different backgrounds to explore effective strategies to facilitate the language development of young children with schools and parents. The Scheme will be continued till the 2022/23 school year to serve more kindergartens and teachers. Moreover, SCOLAR launched the “Chinese and English Language Enhancement Programme for Kindergarten Teachers” in the 2017/18 school year aiming at enhancing kindergarten teachers’ competence in language and teaching of specific subjects, with a view to implementing the Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide (2017) smoothly. Relevant short courses are offered for in-service kindergarten teachers by tertiary or education institutions which offer early childhood education (teacher training) programmes.

10. SCOLAR will continue to engage the Task Force on Language Support to provide customised on-site or networked professional support services to primary and secondary schools to enhance effective language learning and teaching, as well as whole-school language curriculum planning.

11. SCOLAR has put in place the “Grant Scheme on Promoting Effective English Language Learning in Primary Schools” since the 2017/18 school year, with a view to further promoting effective English language learning and teaching in primary schools. The last batch of approved schools just commenced their school-based curriculum initiatives in the 2020/21 school year. It is envisaged that the scheme will be completed in 2023. SCOLAR will also continue to encourage eligible Chinese Language and English Language teachers to participate in the “Professional Development Incentive Grant Scheme for Language Teachers” by subsidising them to pursue recognised study programmes, with a view to enhancing their subject knowledge and teaching capabilities. As at October 2020, over 8 000 language teachers have received the subsidy.

(d) *Catering for learner diversity, including the needs of non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students*

12. Over the years, SCOLAR has been collaborating with non-government organisations (NGOs) in organising district-based programmes for NCS children (aged 3 to 9) to motivate them to learn Chinese language through fun activities. Quality Chinese language learning and teaching resources, such as mobile applications and corpora, have been developed for non-Chinese speakers since the first half of 2017. Efforts will continue to be made, through partnership with NGOs and other stakeholders, to encourage and support NCS students to learn Chinese language, especially during their

early childhood and schooling period. Through the “Professional Enhancement Grant Scheme for Chinese Language Teachers (Teaching Chinese as a Second Language)”, we will continue to encourage Chinese Language teachers to pursue structured part-time programmes to enhance their pedagogical knowledge and skills in teaching Chinese language to NCS students.

(e) Creating and nurturing a facilitating language learning environment for students in and beyond school settings through partnership with relevant stakeholders, in particular, the community

13. SCOLAR has organised various creative and interesting Chinese (including Putonghua) and English language activities and programmes in schools/communities in order to nurture a facilitating language learning environment for students. For example, “Rugby English Active Learning” and “Putonghua Radio Drama Competition” which were well received by primary school students; “Young Writers Training Programme” which aimed to enhance secondary and primary school students’ Chinese writing skills and arouse their interests in reading; tailor-made programmes for secondary schools students namely “From Page to Stage® for Secondary Schools” which was an English drama learning and experience programme; “Literary Walks for Secondary School Students” which promoted Chinese language and “Drama Dreams Taking Off Student Training Programme for Putonghua Drama Ambassadors”, etc.

(f) Raising language proficiency of Hong Kong’s workforce in response to the changing language landscape

14. Vocational Chinese language courses recognised under the Qualifications Framework for NCS school leavers have been launched by SCOLAR since 2016 through tertiary institutions. More courses sponsored by SCOLAR will continue to be developed by tertiary institutions/training centres in the coming school years to meet the needs of NCS school leavers. Furthermore, under the Workplace English Campaign, publicity and public education programmes will be planned to raise public awareness of the importance of English in the workplace.

15. Members of SCOLAR, comprising renowned language/language education academics, experienced principals and teachers, personalities from business, industrial and professional sectors as well as parents, will from time to time look into the changing language needs of students and the workforce, closely monitor the implementation of various initiatives, provide constructive feedback, review the impacts of the initiatives and launch new

initiatives to meet the current needs of the society in a timely manner. SCOLAR will also regularly review new circumstances and findings for deliberating strategic directions.

16. As at end August 2020, the usable balance of the Language Fund was around \$825 million³.

Advice Sought

17. Members are invited to note the progress of the various initiatives funded by the Language Fund.

Education Bureau
December 2020

³ Excluding the \$5 billion seed capital and \$80 million placement with the Hong Kong Monetary Authority to earn investment return that is linked to the performance of the Hong Kong Exchange Fund.

Various Initiatives Implemented by SCOLAR and its Respective Working Groups under the Strategic Areas

Strategic Area (a): Facilitating effective language education policy formulation and implementation through initiating research studies, including longitudinal research and comparative studies in local and international settings

Initiatives	Objective(s)	Target Group(s)	Progress	Impact
(1) Research and development projects	To encourage and fund more research and development projects, including literature review and comparative studies, by tertiary institutions and professional bodies on Chinese and English language learning/development, diversified pedagogy and assessment that cater for learner diversity of achieving particular language goals	Students and adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The first round of 23 projects on three priority themes were completed in late 2018. A conference on dissemination of findings and deliverables of the projects was organised in May 2019. The second round of 17 projects on five priority themes are expected to be completed in 2020 and 2021. - The third round of applications for subsidy was concluded in June 2020. Vetting of proposals was underway. Approved projects are anticipated to commence in 2021. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 40 bottom-up research and development projects have been carried out since December 2015. - To generate new knowledge or fill the gaps of pedagogical applications in local context to support the implementation of various initiatives on language education. - Research and Development Project Dissemination Conference was held in May 2019 to disseminate the findings and deliverables of the projects to academics and researchers of tertiary institutions, professional organisations, and principals and teachers of local kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. Possible ways of enhancing language education were also explored⁴.

⁴ Through discussions and exchanging views on different topics, including teaching strategies on biliteracy and trilingualism, language challenges and teaching strategies for using a second

Strategic Area (a): Facilitating effective language education policy formulation and implementation through initiating research studies, including longitudinal research and comparative studies in local and international settings

Initiatives	Objective(s)	Target Group(s)	Progress	Impact
(2) Language Landscape Studies – Thematic Household Survey 2018	To continue to study the use of Chinese language (including Putonghua) and English language, and the needs and practice of bilingualism of people of Hong Kong in different contexts	Students and adults	- Findings of the Study conducted by the Census & Statistics Department were published in June 2019. SCOLAR is studying the findings. SCOLAR will consider commissioning the Census & Statistics Department to conduct the next round of study in 2021 subject to the discussion of the working group on the details.	- To track changes of the language landscape of Hong Kong and identify the trends, patterns or gaps in language competencies of different age groups to better inform SCOLAR in formulating measures for enhancing the language proficiency of people of Hong Kong.

language to acquire subject knowledge, learning difficulties of NCS children in learning Chinese language, use of information technology for supporting Chinese language learning of NCS children, and early language and literacy development of young children, conference participants explored new ideas/initiatives from research findings on language learning and teaching which were applicable in local school context. Academics were encouraged to build on the findings of the different studies to conduct more in-depth research. Front-line educators were also encouraged to make use of the research results to refine and enhance their language learning and teaching pedagogy.

Strategic Area (a): Facilitating effective language education policy formulation and implementation through initiating research studies, including longitudinal research and comparative studies in local and international settings

Initiatives	Objective(s)	Target Group(s)	Progress	Impact
(3) Studies on early language and literacy development in Chinese and English language	Through longitudinal studies, to track the Chinese and English language and literacy development of young children at different stages	Young children to junior primary students (aged 3 – 9)	- Three bottom-up research and development projects under the priority theme of “Chinese language learning or English language exposure of learners in early years” were approved in 2018. Further study/studies will commence soon.	- The three research and development projects, namely “Improving children’s language literacy performance by developing an educational computer game for training morphological skills”, “The use of perceptual training in a mobile application to improve Chinese reading performance in children with dyslexia” and “Children’s Literature in English Language Teaching for Primary Students in Hong Kong” are underway.

Strategic Area (a): Facilitating effective language education policy formulation and implementation through initiating research studies, including longitudinal research and comparative studies in local and international settings

Initiatives	Objective(s)	Target Group(s)	Progress	Impact
(4) Study of Chinese language learning of NCS students	To continue to research on how NCS students learn Chinese language in the classrooms and what they learn	Young children to junior primary students (aged 3 – 9)	- Five bottom-up research and development projects under the priority theme of “Learning of Chinese language of NCS learners” were approved in 2018. SCOLAR will explore the need to conduct other relevant studies.	- The five projects, namely “An Action Research on Learning Patterns & Strategies of Chinese Characters for NCS Students in Hong Kong”, “The Acquisition of Cantonese Tones and Initials by Hindi-Urdu Students at Hong Kong Primary and Secondary Schools”, “Foundational Chinese Literacy Skills for NCS Students – An Intervention Research Supporting Ethnic Minority Students”, “Chinese Language Learning through Enhancing Extramural Chinese Social Media Use” and “Speaking Your Language - An Investigation of Cantonese Child Directed Speech by South Asian, Immigrant Chinese, and Local Hong Kong Mothers” are underway.

Strategic Area (a): Facilitating effective language education policy formulation and implementation through initiating research studies, including longitudinal research and comparative studies in local and international settings

Initiatives	Objective(s)	Target Group(s)	Progress	Impact
(5) Study on language proficiency of working adults	To examine the language proficiency (including spoken and written Chinese and English language) of the workforce of Hong Kong	Working adults of different ages and professions	- A study on English language competency of employees aged 20-29 was completed in late 2018. Findings revealed that employers of the five targeted industry sectors were generally satisfied with the English competency of employees, whilst different training needs of employees were identified with different industry sectors. SCOLAR will explore initiatives to meet the language needs of employees.	- To identify the gaps between self-perceived English language competency of employees aged 20-29 and the actual workplace requirements, as well as the related language training needs.

Strategic Areas (b): Strengthening support of language learning in Chinese and English language to children in early years; and
(c): Enhancing professional preparation and continuing development of language teachers

Initiatives	Objective(s)	Target Group(s)	Progress	Impact
(1) Support scheme on early language and literacy development in Chinese and English language of young children	To provide professional support services to kindergartens and focused training and tailor-made learning/teaching resources (e.g. storybooks) to kindergarten teachers on Chinese and English language education in early years	Pre-primary students (aged 3–6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launched since the 2015/16 school year - To be continued till the 2022/23 school year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To build a professional teaching force and facilitate knowledge exchange in the kindergarten sector for smooth implementation of the Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide 2017 - To develop more effective language learning/teaching strategies to meet children’s diverse needs, abilities and interest - To develop quality resources on Chinese/English language learning/teaching

Strategic Areas (b): Strengthening support of language learning in Chinese and English language to children in early years; and
(c): Enhancing professional preparation and continuing development of language teachers

Initiatives	Objective(s)	Target Group(s)	Progress	Impact
(2) Task Force on Language Support	To continue to provide kindergartens, primary and secondary schools with customised on-site or networked professional support services to enhance effective language learning and teaching, whole-school language curriculum planning, smooth interface between different stages of schooling (especially the interface between kindergarten and primary one) as well as learning of Chinese for NCS students	Kindergartens, primary and secondary schools	- To continue to provide support services to schools	- In 2019/20, 256 schools benefitted from on-site support, and 70 schools participated in different learning communities. Evaluation results consistently affirm that the participating schools were satisfied with the support services and considered them effective in enhancing holistic curriculum planning, learning and teaching effectiveness and assessment literacy.

Strategic Areas (b): Strengthening support of language learning in Chinese and English language to children in early years; and
(c): Enhancing professional preparation and continuing development of language teachers

Initiatives	Objective(s)	Target Group(s)	Progress	Impact
(3) Tailor-made training for Chinese and English Language teachers	To offer quality professional development programme(s) for Chinese and English Language teachers in primary and secondary schools	Primary and secondary school teachers	- “Professional Development Incentive Grant Scheme for Language Teachers” is open for application by eligible teachers (subsidy revised upward to a maximum of \$62,500 from September 2017) to pursue recognised programmes. As at October 2020, 8 285 language teachers have received the subsidy.	- To continue to encourage eligible teachers to pursue programmes to enhance their subject knowledge and pedagogy
(4) Enhancing the teaching of Chinese Language Subject	To continue to consolidate experience, disseminate good practices and formulate initiatives conducive to the teaching of Chinese (including Putonghua)	Primary and secondary students	- Ongoing	- To further enhance the Chinese (including Putonghua) language proficiency of students

Strategic Areas (b): Strengthening support of language learning in Chinese and English language to children in early years; and
(c): Enhancing professional preparation and continuing development of language teachers

Initiatives	Objective(s)	Target Group(s)	Progress	Impact
(5) Chinese and English Language Enhancement Programme for Kindergarten Teachers	To enhance kindergarten teachers' language competencies and subject/pedagogical knowledge and skills for implementing the Kindergarten Curriculum Guide 2017	Kindergarten teachers	- Tertiary institutions which currently offer early childhood education (teacher training) programmes have organised 47 short courses for 1 000 kindergarten teachers and principals during 2017/18 to 2019/20 school years. Short courses will continue to be offered to kindergarten teachers and principals in 2020/21 school year.	- To strengthen kindergarten teachers' language proficiency and to enhance their pedagogical effectiveness

Strategic Areas (b): Strengthening support of language learning in Chinese and English language to children in early years; and
(c): Enhancing professional preparation and continuing development of language teachers

Initiatives	Objective(s)	Target Group(s)	Progress	Impact
(6) Grant Scheme on Promoting Effective English Language Learning in Primary Schools	Providing a grant for primary schools to develop their school-based curriculum initiatives to further strengthen the learning and teaching of English Language and to achieve sustainable effects after completion of the Scheme	Primary schools	- Schools approved in the first to fourth rounds have commenced their school-based curriculum initiatives starting from 2017/18 (second term) by phases. In particular, schools approved in the fourth round (the last round) have commenced related initiatives in the 2020/21 school year. It is envisaged that the scheme will be completed in 2023.	- 405 primary schools are expected to enhance the effectiveness of English language learning and teaching with sustainable effects.

Strategic Area (d): Catering for learner diversity, including the needs of NCS students

Initiatives	Objective(s)	Target Group(s)	Progress	Impact
(1) Development and promotion of learning and teaching materials for NCS students learning Chinese	To develop and promote suitable learning aids (e.g. multi-media/web-based materials, e-packages) and Chinese readers	Students	- The projects were launched in 2016. There are five ongoing projects in the 2019/20 to 2020/21 school year.	- As at July 2020, learning and teaching materials developed in four completed projects were disseminated. Materials developed in other four projects will be disseminated from 2021 to mid-2022 for public use.
(2) Development of community projects for NCS children in early years	To continue to organise fun and educational programmes in the community to motivate and support NCS children to learn Chinese language in their early years	Young children to primary students (aged 3–12)	- Projects have been launched since 2012/13 school year. - One project is ongoing in the 2019/20 to 2020/21 school year.	- The ongoing project aims at enhancing students' ability in reading and writing Chinese. It is anticipated that there will be about 300 beneficiaries in two school years.

Strategic Area (e): Creating and nurturing a facilitating language learning environment for students in and beyond school settings through partnership with relevant stakeholders, in particular, the community

Initiatives	Objective(s)	Target Group(s)	Progress	Impact
Promotion of Chinese (including Putonghua) and English language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To continue to implement Chinese (including Putonghua) and English language school-based or community projects/programmes - To encourage/sponsor bottom-up initiatives promoting the importance of reading, language learning and language use in Chinese and English language, with a view to fostering an environment conducive to language learning 	Students and general public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To continue to organise activities/programmes in schools/communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 32 Chinese (including Putonghua) and English language projects/programmes are underway.

Strategic Area (f): Raising language proficiency of Hong Kong's workforce in response to the changing language landscape

Initiatives	Objective(s)	Target Group(s)	Progress	Impact
(1) Development of vocational Chinese language programmes for NCS school leavers	To provide vocational Chinese language courses (pegged to Qualification Framework Level 1 or Level 2) to NCS school leavers to enhance their Chinese language proficiency and employability	NCS school leavers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The programmes have been launched since the 2015/16 school year. - From the 2019/20 to 2020/21 school year, there are three organisations launching courses recognised under the Qualifications Framework Level 1/Level 2. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Since the commencement of the programmes, Level 1 and Level 2 courses have been launched successfully every year. Students who completed the courses and obtained the recognised qualification can apply what they learnt in daily life and at the workplace.
(2) Workplace Language Campaign: Workplace English Campaign	To continue to promote vocational English to the workforce to raise their awareness on the importance of English language at workplace	Working adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To continue to organise publicity and community education programmes, including the development and launching of an enhanced/ upgraded version of an existing mobile application on workplace English. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Over 24 300 downloads of a mobile application on workplace English on Android and iOS platforms were recorded in the last two years.

Strategic Area (f): Raising language proficiency of Hong Kong’s workforce in response to the changing language landscape

Initiatives	Objective(s)	Target Group(s)	Progress	Impact
<p>(3) Customised support to schools for effective language learning and teaching</p>	<p>To provide funding for schools to enrol students on a locally accredited vocational English course to develop their English proficiency, enhance their confidence and interest in learning English and prepare them for vocational education and work</p>	<p>Secondary schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vocational English courses were offered by three post-secondary institutes and recognised under the Qualifications Framework. 36 schools have been provided with subsidies of \$200,000 for arranging students to pursue the vocational English courses and students of 22 schools have completed the courses. - Owing to the outbreak of COVID-19 and class suspension, the deadline for completion of the courses has been extended. Participating schools may complete the courses by 31 December 2020. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - About 720 students who are prepared to pursue vocational and professional education and training or to work right after leaving secondary school will benefit from the programme.