

**For information**

## **Legislative Council Panel on Education**

### **Grant to the Language Fund**

At the Panel meeting on 20 January 2003, Members were briefed on the findings and recommendations of the language education review conducted by the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR). The Panel supported SCOLAR's recommendations. Members were also informed about our intention to seek an injection into the Language Fund to support implementation of SCOLAR's recommendations.

2. We plan to submit the injection proposal to the Finance Committee (FC) for consideration on 21 February 2003. Justification for the proposal is set out in the attached draft FC paper for Members' information.

Education and Manpower Bureau  
February 2003

**DRAFT**

**For discussion  
on 21 February 2003**

**FCR(2002-03)XX**

**ITEM FOR FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**HEAD 146 - GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT:  
EDUCATION AND MANPOWER BUREAU AND  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND LABOUR BUREAU  
(LABOUR)**

**Subhead 700 General other non-recurrent  
New Item "Grant to the Language Fund"**

Members are invited to approve a new commitment of \$400 million for injection into the Language Fund.

**PROBLEM**

We need to raise language standards in Hong Kong to meet the current and future needs of the society.

**PROPOSAL**

2. The Secretary for Education and Manpower proposes to make an injection of \$400 million into the Language Fund to support initiatives aimed at enhancing language proficiency of the local population, including implementation of recommendations arising from a review of language education conducted by the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR).

**JUSTIFICATION**

3. SCOLAR conducted a comprehensive review of language education in Hong Kong at the invitation of the Secretary for Education and Manpower in 2001-02. The review examined a host of issues related to language education, including language standards, language teachers,

curriculum and pedagogy, students' attitude and motivation, and the role of the school management, parents and the wider community in promoting language learning.

4. As part of the review, SCOLAR engaged in in-depth discussions with front-line teachers, school principals, kindergarten operators and academics from tertiary institutions. It also consulted representatives of the educational bodies listed in Enclosure 1. With widespread support for its findings and recommendations, SCOLAR released a public consultation document on 2 January 2003. An executive summary of the recommendations is at Enclosure 2.

[Enclosure 2 was issued vide LegCo Brief (File Ref : EMB/SSU/CR 6/2041/96) on 2 January 2003]

5. SCOLAR focused on two major issues in its review – specifying the language competencies expected of students and working adults, and creating a more motivating language learning environment. To address the latter issue, SCOLAR recommended -

- (a) upgrading the curriculum development and pedagogical capability, as well as subject knowledge, of language teachers;
- (b) strengthening the administrative and professional support from the school management for language teaching and learning;
- (c) educating and encouraging parents to play a more active role in their children's language learning; and
- (d) promoting more effective use of the resources available in the community, such as the mass media, to support language learning.

6. The consultation period will end on 28 February 2003. So far, public reactions have been positive and the education sector, in particular, welcomes SCOLAR's recommendations. Having regard to public views collected, SCOLAR may refine some of its recommendations, while upholding the general direction of change it advocates.

7. While the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority are expected to implement most of the review recommendations with their own recurrent resources, SCOLAR also plans to carry out a number of new non-recurrent initiatives with the support of the Language Fund from 2003 onwards. A list of these initiatives is at Enclosure 3. Together, they are estimated to require about \$580 million over the next five years.

8. As at 31 December 2002, the Language Fund has an uncommitted

balance of \$282.8 million<sup>1</sup>. The Administration sees a need to invest further in language education, and proposes to inject \$400 million into the Fund, taking into account funding requirements of the initiatives being planned by SCOLAR and other proposals from interested parties in the community. The lump sum injection will provide the Trustee of the Language Fund with flexibility in the disbursement of funding on the advice of SCOLAR on worthy causes including -

- (a) Setting up district-based task forces of teaching consultants – SCOLAR recommended training and engaging experienced teachers (serving or recently retired) with outstanding teaching practice to assist individual schools in renewing and enhancing the teaching approaches of their language subject panels. EMB estimated that about \$300 million would be required to cover the following -
  - (i) Engagement of experienced teachers as teaching consultants – The initial target is to engage 180 serving or recently retired teachers as teaching consultants on a full-time basis for three years. If full-time engagement is not possible, an equivalent number of teachers will be engaged on a part-time basis. Funding would be required for the provision of supply teachers as relief for serving teachers and remuneration for retired teachers engaged as teaching consultants; and
  - (ii) Project fees for a consortium comprising teacher training experts and tertiary institution(s) working in partnership with SCOLAR to design training programme for the teaching consultants and implement the project.
- (b) Incentive grants for serving Chinese and English Language teachers – SCOLAR plans to set aside \$200 million in the Language Fund to provide incentive grants for serving language teachers to upgrade their subject knowledge and pedagogy. Each eligible serving teacher may apply for a grant covering 50% of course fee, subject to a maximum of \$30,000. Priority will be given to those Chinese and English Language teachers who do not have any post-secondary education or teacher training in the language subject they teach.

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<sup>1</sup> This includes a total interest income of \$141.6 million that the Fund has accrued over the years. After taking into account the total grants approved for the projects (\$352.5 million) and other miscellaneous expenses (\$6.3 million), there was an uncommitted balance of \$282.8 million left in the Fund as at 31 December 2002.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

9. If Members approve the proposal, we will make the injection in 2002-03, and will offset the additional expenditure of \$400 million by reserving \$300 million provisionally earmarked for supporting initiatives on language education under Head 106 Miscellaneous Services Subhead 251 Additional commitments and \$100 million under Head 40 Education Department.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **The Language Fund**

10. On 25 February 1994, the Finance Committee approved vide FCR(93-94)141 the establishment of the Language Fund with an initial allocation of \$300 million from Government held in trust under the Director of Education Incorporation Ordinance (Cap. 1098). It provides financial support for projects and activities aimed at improving Hong Kong people's proficiency in Chinese (including Putonghua) and English. The objects and disbursement principles of the Fund are at Enclosure 4. Its annual audited accounts are tabled before the Legislative Council.

11. SCOLAR, established in 1996 to advise 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. The terms of reference of SCOLAR are at Enclosure 5.

12. On 23 February 2001, the Finance Committee approved another grant of \$200 million to the Language Fund so that the latter can continue to support research and development projects aimed at raising local language standards.

### **Projects sponsored by the Language Fund**

13. The approved projects, spanning a wide variety of language education and research activities, are conducted by a range of organizations including local tertiary institutions, post-secondary colleges, schools, educational and professional bodies, and government departments. Some of the projects are led by SCOLAR itself. Complementing the Administration's efforts, these projects have helped to foster language teaching and learning. A summary of the Fund's notable recently completed

or on-going projects is at Enclosure 6.

14. By the end of December 2002, there were a total of 266 approved projects, with grants disbursed and to be disbursed amounting to \$352.5million<sup>2</sup>. A table showing a breakdown of the projects by language and project type is at Enclosure 7.

### **Consultation with Legislative Council Panel**

15. We consulted the Legislative Council Panel on Education on the review recommendations of SCOLAR on 20 January 2003. The Panel supported SCOLAR's recommendations and noted EMB's intention to seek injection into the Language Fund to implement the recommendations. We provided an information note to the Panel on 6 February 2003 on our plan to seek the Finance Committee's approval for an injection of \$400 million into the Language Fund.

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Education and Manpower Bureau  
February 2003

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<sup>2</sup> This includes grants that have been disbursed on completed projects and on-going projects as well as grants earmarked for but yet to be disbursed on on-going projects.

## **Enclosure 1 to FCR(2002-03)**

### **LIST OF EDUCATIONAL BODIES CONSULTED ON SCOLAR'S REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Education Commission
- Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications
- Curriculum Development Council
- Council of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority
  
- Education Convergence
- Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers
- Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union
  
- Association of Principals of Government Secondary Schools
- Caput Schools Council
- Grants Schools Council
- Hong Kong Council of Early Childhood Education & Services
- Hong Kong Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools Council
- Hong Kong Private Schools Association
- Hong Kong Special Schools Council
- Hong Kong Subsidized Secondary Schools Council
- Subsidized Primary Schools Council
- Union of Government Primary School Headmasters & Headmistresses
  
- Business Coalition on Education
- Committee on Home-School Co-operation
  
- Local teacher education providers

**New Non-recurrent Initiatives Being Planned by SCOLAR**

	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Estimated Funding Commitment (\$M)</b>
1.	Setting up <b>district-based task forces of teaching consultants</b> to assist individual schools to enhance the teaching approaches of their language panels (training and engaging 180 experienced teachers for three years)	300
2.	<b>Incentive grants for serving language teachers</b> to upgrade their subject knowledge and pedagogy (covering 50% of the course fees, subject to a maximum of \$30,000)	200
3.	<b>Pilot projects on new and effective Chinese and English teaching approaches</b>	50
4.	<b>Putonghua Summer Immersion Course Subsidy Scheme</b> for eligible Chinese Language teachers to attend immersion course in the mainland (maximum grant at \$10,000)	20
5.	Development of a <b>Putonghua proficiency scale</b> to help working adults plan and assess their Putonghua learning	2
6.	<b>Further research on using Putonghua to teach Chinese Language</b> to better understand conditions necessary for successful switch from using Cantonese to using Putonghua to teach Chinese Language	2
7.	<b>Promoting the use of television programmes in the teaching and learning of English</b>	2
8.	<b>Research on pre-primary language education</b>	1
9.	<b>Sponsoring the Annual Hong Kong News Awards</b> for three years to recognise high language standard in Chinese and English news and headline writing	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>578</b>



**Objects and Disbursement Principles of the Language Fund**

**Objects**

The Trustee shall hold the capital and income of the Language Fund upon trust to apply the income and all or such part or parts of the capital at such time, in such manner, to such extent and subject to such conditions as the Trustee may (after considering the advice of SCOLAR) determine for any one or all of the following purposes -

- (a) to support, directly and indirectly, proficiency in the use of the Chinese (including Putonghua) and English languages by the people of Hong Kong; and
- (b) to fund programmes, projects, research, textbooks, reference materials, teaching aids, language teachers, language experts, educationalists, education and training institutions, courses, training, publications and publicity directed towards the enhancement in the use of the Chinese (including Putonghua) and English language by the people of Hong Kong.

**Disbursement Principles**

The following broad principles shall be observed in the disbursements from the Language Fund -

- (a) equal importance should be given to improving proficiency in Chinese and English;
- (b) a balance should be maintained between meeting the specific needs of schools and those of the community at large;
- (c) for school children, emphasis should be put on increasing opportunities for language learning, in particular through extra-curricular activities;
- (d) innovative ideas and learner-friendly, pragmatic approaches should be encouraged; and
- (e) a positive attitude towards learning and acquiring proficiency in the languages should be cultivated.

**Terms of Reference of  
the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research  
(SCOLAR)**

To advise the Government on language education issues in general,  
and in particular -

- (a) to advise on the overall policy on language education, including the medium of instruction;
- (b) to advise on the setting of language standards, including general goals for language learning at different levels of education and specific language attainment targets at each stage of education;
- (c) to advise on measures to be adopted to attain the standards mentioned in (b) above;
- (d) to identify research and development projects which are necessary for the enhancement of language proficiency and language in education, and to implement or oversee the satisfactory completion of such projects;
- (e) to co-ordinate all research and development activities relating to language proficiency by relevant agencies; monitor their progress, evaluate their effectiveness, and make recommendations to the government accordingly;
- (f) to develop and promote a public education and information programme in respect of language proficiency issues; and
- (g) to advise the Trustee of the Language Fund on policies and procedures governing the operation of the Language Fund, and to provide such assistance as the Trustee may require to support, directly or indirectly, the enhancement of the language proficiency of the community.

## Notable Recently Completed/On-going Language Fund Projects

### *(I) Language Learning Activities*

So far, 122 projects have been organised by schools and various educational bodies, with total funding disbursed/to be disbursed amounting to \$117.1 million. Notable recently completed projects include -

- **Moving Poetry** – This project of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) aimed to showcase the creativity and talents of young people, and develop a stimulating and expressive culture both in school and in society. Over 150 Primary 4 to Secondary 3 students from ten primary and nine secondary schools participated in a series of creative English writing workshops conducted in April and May 2001 by local and international poets, teachers and senior students of the HKU English Department. Selected poems have been published in the form of a book and presented on the Internet.
- **English Language Camps** – The project was initiated by SCOLAR and organised by the Education Department. About 280 teachers and 2 500 Secondary 3 to 6 students from 62 secondary schools hosted two English day camps with fun-filled and language-rich activities in their schools for about 8 200 Primary 4 students from 75 primary schools across the territory on 2 and 9 March 2002. About 420 secondary students from 11 English School Foundation schools, international schools and two universities also took part in the camps as camp helpers. Evaluation reveals that these activities have been useful in enhancing the interest and confidence of primary school students in using English and in developing leadership among secondary school students. With resources from the Language Fund, the Education and Manpower Bureau will continue to provide support to schools interested in organising English language camps in the form of training, design of camp materials as well as financial assistance.

### *(II) Public Education Programmes*

Public education programmes are effective means of raising public awareness of the need for better language standards. To date, there are 29 such projects with funding disbursed/to be disbursed totalling \$102.7 million. Notable examples are -

- **Funding Scheme for Workplace English Training** – \$50 million has been set aside for the Scheme to promote the importance of English in the community and improve the English standard of the workforce in Hong

Kong. The Scheme subsidizes individual employees to attend training and professional and trade organizations to develop Workplace English courses to meet the training needs of particular professions and trades. As of 31 December 2002, the Fund received a total of 36,706 applications for training subsidy, and committed \$37.5 million for 22,099 approved applications. As for course development, around \$1.3 million has been earmarked for 17 training courses. The trades and professions involved include taxi, import/export, legal and accounting services.

- **Putonghua Month** – \$8 million has been set aside for promoting the learning and use of Putonghua in Hong Kong. Territory-wide Putonghua promotional programmes and large-scale publicity campaign through the mass media were conducted during Putonghua Month 2002 in mid-September to mid-October 2002. There were a variety of programmes targeted at schools and the entire community. Community programmes include the Putonghua singing contest, ‘Putonghua Proficiency Test for Fun’, and video/radio programmes entitled ‘One Minute Putonghua’ and ‘Interview with Celebrities on Putonghua’. School programmes include ‘Putonghua DJ Training Class for Secondary Students’, ‘Best Student Award for Progress in Putonghua’, and ‘Best Teacher Award for Promoting Putonghua’. The nominees of the ‘Best Student Award for Progress in Putonghua’ have also been invited to take part in the ‘Putonghua Student Ambassadors Training Scheme’, which started in January 2003. In addition, Putonghua drama performances will be held in both primary and secondary schools during the second half of the 2002/03 school year.

### ***(III) Production of Teaching and Learning Packages***

A total of 39 projects, involving \$36.9 million in funding disbursed/to be disbursed, have been/are being carried out to produce various types of teaching and learning materials in the form of, e.g. VCDs, CDs, cassette tapes, video tapes, CD-ROMs and booklets. These projects provide quality resources for language teaching and learning and opportunities for school-based activities and research on language teaching methods. One recent example is -

- **Using Literature in English as a Way to Enhance Creativity and Language Learning in Hong Kong** – The project involves a series of six related research studies on the use of literature in English learning and teaching in both Chinese-medium and English-medium secondary schools to produce a body of teaching materials and strategies appropriate to local secondary school students at all levels of ability.

### ***(IV) Teacher Training***

To encourage and support continuous professional development among

language teachers, 25 projects involving \$48.2 million in funding disbursed/to be disbursed have been/are being carried out to provide various types of grants and training programmes. Notable examples are -

- **Immersion Programmes for Language Teacher Training** – To enhance the language proficiency of pre-service English Language teachers, \$9.7 million has been earmarked for subsidizing optional four to ten-week overseas immersion for full-time English major students admitted to or studying in the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) (and equivalent), Bachelor of Education (BEd) and Bachelor of Arts in English Language Teaching (BAELT) programmes in the 2001/02 academic year. The subsidy will benefit a total of 90 PGDE and 139 BEd and BAELT students from five local tertiary institutions. [Note : From the 2002/03 academic year onward, the Government has provided funding for compulsory immersion for both English and Putonghua full-time teacher training programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.]
- **Putonghua Summer Immersion Course Subsidy Scheme** – To enhance teachers' Putonghua proficiency, \$4.32 million was allocated to sponsoring pre-service and in-service teachers to take part in four-week Putonghua summer immersion courses in the mainland. Since 2000, a total of 425 pre-service and in-service teachers have benefited from the Scheme. SCOLAR plans to continue with this Scheme to help Chinese Language teachers enhance their Putonghua proficiency.

(V) ***Research on Language Teaching and Learning***

51 research projects, involving \$47.6 million in funding disbursed/to be disbursed, have been supported by the Language Fund. Notable examples are -

- **Using Putonghua to teach Chinese Language** – Two research studies on using Putonghua to teach the Chinese Language subject have been conducted. The study conducted by the Chinese University of Hong Kong investigated the effects of using Putonghua to teach Chinese Language to secondary students. Students' writing skills, reading comprehension and cultural knowledge in Chinese were assessed. The other research study initiated by SCOLAR examined whether primary students' Chinese language ability was affected by the use of Putonghua as the medium of instruction for the Chinese Language subject. These studies provide initial findings for the reference of the Government as well as individual schools interested in using Putonghua to teach Chinese Language.

- **The Development of Secondary Students' Competence in English Listening and Grammar in Hong Kong: A Longitudinal Study** – The project is a longitudinal research study over three years on the development of listening skills and grammatical competence in the English Language among students in English-medium and Chinese-medium secondary schools. The study will be completed in mid-2004.

**Enclosure 7 to FCR(2002-2003)**

**Number of Language Fund Projects by Language and Project Type**

<b>Language Group</b>	<b>Number of Projects</b>	<b>Grant Disbursed/ To be Disbursed (\$ million)</b>
English	104	242.8
Chinese	104	58.9
Putonghua	31	25.2
Chinese and Putonghua	5	6.6
Cross-language	22	19.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>352.5</b>

<b>Project Type</b>	<b>Number of Projects</b>	<b>Grant Disbursed/ To be Disbursed (\$ million)</b>
Language Learning Activities	122	117.1
Public Education Programmes	29	102.7
Production of Teaching and Learning Packages	39	36.9
Teacher Training	25	48.2
Research on Language Teaching and Learning	51	47.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>352.5</b>