

**Pun U Association Wah Yan Primary School
Parents Teachers Association
March 2005**

**OUR VIEWS &
SUMMARY OF CONCERNS
On**

**Consultation Document
“Review of Medium of Instruction (MOI)
for Secondary Schools and Secondary
Schools Places Allocation”**

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OUR VIEWS ON MOI PROPOSAL

1. The Consultation Paper is not a “Review” of MOI, as the title suggests, but continuation of policy expanding the use of Chinese as MOI.

In addition to MOI, many other factors surely contribute to the achievement of educational objectives, both short term and long term, and for the learning student and the community at large.

Since the implementation of the Medium of Instruction Guidance for Secondary Schools (“Guidance”) in 1998, the use of Chinese as MOI has been continuously promoted as the panacea for all our educational concerns.

This consultation paper is no exception. It seems to be the continuation of the policy to expand the use of Chinese as MOI at the expense of English. Since the six years of implementation of the Guidance, we have yet to see a comprehensive and impartial evaluation of its consequences, both negative and positive, short term and long term, for students and the community at large.

2. Some obvious consequences of Government’s proposal

a) Polarisation of our educational institutes

The Government is **openly discriminating EMI (English Medium of Instruction) schools by pouring in resources to ‘reward’ CMI (Chinese Medium of Instruction) schools for their co-operation.** The subsequent improvement in the performance of these CMI school students is being attributed to the use of mother tongue.

Ironically, the continuation of this policy only further widens the existing gap between the perceived added value of EMI schools in contrast to CMI schools because (according to the research cited by the Working Group “WG”) **only the top (Band-1) students are qualified for EMI teaching** (i.e. those who fall inside the top 40% category in the Internal Assessment). **The stigmatization deepens that mother tongue or CMI schools are for the less competent.**

The discrimination and constant changes in the criteria to reduce the number of schools eligible to teach in English **are creating unhealthy and unnecessary pressures on parents and students** to struggle for admission into EMI schools as their first choice.

The constantly changing methods to fix a criterion of student ability (40%) and the arbitrary figure (85%) of student intake are confusing and frustrating parents who feel helpless against what seems to be a concerted attempt by Government to meddle in the educational aspirations of their children.

b) Ability of intakes vs. performance of graduates

By using the ability of its intakes (S1) instead of performance of its graduates (HKCEE) as criterion of a school's eligibility to operate as EMI, the WG is quite literally saying that these schools' efforts to deliver a competent product amount to nothing. Many of these schools have been intimately connected with the growth of HK and producing some of its finest citizens, professionals, and leaders. These schools have demonstrated that they are capable of turning in a competent product. Parents and students recognise that such schools are good for them because they offer something that other schools do not or cannot. **Requiring such schools to conform to the dubious notion of student ability as a criterion of eligibility for doing what they are already doing well is an unnecessary interference in a school's established good practices**, autocratic, and detrimental to the interest of students and the community at large.

3. Review the implementation of the Guidance

It has been six years since the Guidance was implemented. Parents are at a loss to understand why the Government has not done a comprehensive and impartial review of its effects but instead has chosen to further expand the use of Chinese as MOI.

If the WG's references are to be believed, **only 40% of Hong Kong's young students are proficient in English. Isn't this fact alone sufficiently alarming for Government and the community at large to urgently rectify this deficiency?** What does it say about our primary school and pre-school education? Would this "below average" (40%) English standard in S1 students reflects the urgent need to improve the English foundation in the primary and pre-school education?

It is not unreasonable to assume that this sad decline is the result of the Government's policy of implementing the mother tongue because there is no longer the pressure or incentive on teachers to improve their ability to teach in English. If this trend continues, the standard of English in Hong Kong will continue to decline, and perhaps with it, HK's position as one of the top international financial centres, not to mention HK's status as Asia's World City.

In addition to the impact on HK as a whole, students and parents, and schools, are also affected by this single-minded but misdirected pursuit of Chinese as MOI. We have noted the pressures on them to struggle for EMI schools as their 1st choice; we have noted the unnecessary interference with good schools' established good practices, etc.

Surely, now is time to evaluate comprehensively and impartially the effects of implementing the Guidance since 1998. **We urge the Government to defer any further expansion of mother tongue as MOI** until the community has been presented with an accurate evaluation of its effects to date.

SUMMARY OF CONCERNS

1. We are not advocating elitism, nor are we blind to the benefits of mother tongue teaching. As parents, **we acknowledge the importance and benefits of English training as a practical and indispensable tool for long term learning and meeting the challenges of the future.**
2. **The education issues that our policy makers are here addressing are too diverse and too complex to be resolved by implementing mother tongue teaching alone.**
3. We believe that the Government must **integrate into its education policy some autonomy to schools to operate** rather than forcing them to conform to arbitrary directives. **A school must deliver results in terms of educational outcomes.** Schools that perform well will have better prospects in terms of student intake and the support from parents and the public.
4. **The public consultation period is too short and recommended to be extended for at least four more months** to allow parents, schools, higher institutions, the business community, and ethnic minorities more time to understand and comment on the proposal. The Government should take a more active role to facilitate a community-wide response.
5. Although we agree with some of their proposals by **the WG**, such as the need for improving the quality of our teachers, we think that its output in general **fails to convince on many counts.** We think this is because **the starting point of its enquiry has been narrow and more in the interest of furthering a specific cause.** The prescribed criterion of student ability is given disproportionately more importance than other issues such as teacher capability or how to attract, train and retain talents in the profession.
6. **We reiterate the urgency of a comprehensive and impartial review on the effects of implementing the Guidance since 1998 as more important and more urgent than the proposals of this consultation document.**

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