

ITEM FOR FINANCE COMMITTEE

**HEAD 156 – GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT :
EDUCATION AND MANPOWER BUREAU
Subhead 700 General non-recurrent
New Item “Grant to the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education”**

Members are invited to approve a new commitment of \$100 million for supporting the establishment of the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education.

PROBLEM

We need to expand the scope of learning opportunities for students with exceptional talent to stretch their potential.

PROPOSAL

2. The Secretary for Education and Manpower proposes to provide a one-off grant of \$100 million to support the setting up of the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education (the Academy) to provide more structured, articulated and challenging off-site programmes for students with exceptional talent, and to promote the concepts and practices of gifted education.

JUSTIFICATION

Need for the Academy

3. At present, the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) promotes gifted education through a three-tier implementation framework, which was first recommended by the Education Commission in its Report No. 4 (1990). Level 1 services are provided at the classroom level for all students. Level 2 services are provided in the form of pull-out programmes outside regular classes but still within schools. Level 3 services are provided in the form of off-site programmes in collaboration with universities and professional bodies. Details on the current provision of gifted education are set out at Enclosure 1.

4. There is a growing demand for gifted education services, particularly Level 3 services, which calls for an early establishment of a dedicated organisation for the purpose. To meet this growing service demand, we propose to establish an Academy for Gifted Education to strengthen services for the exceptionally gifted students by broadening the range of gifted education programmes offered to them. It will provide off-site programmes and learning opportunities not available in schools to ensure that students' potential will be suitably nurtured and stretched.

5. The Academy will provide more structured educational services for the exceptionally gifted students and will support teachers, parents and academics in the endeavour. It will provide learning opportunities for gifted youths aged 10 to 18, enabling them to stretch their potential in a wide range of specialist areas, in leadership, creativity, as well as personal-social competence. The Academy will also promote gifted students' whole-person development, build up their confidence in the pursuit of excellence and encourage them to serve the community.

6. The Academy will offer and co-ordinate services outside the school, to ensure that expertise and resources could be strategically and effectively used. Its close partners will include local and overseas universities, professional organisations, government departments and non-governmental organisations, and individuals who have the expertise and experiences to provide programmes, mentorship and counselling services relevant to the diverse potential and needs of gifted students. It will also help to provide guidance to parents of gifted students, as well as training courses for teachers in specialist areas. The Academy will also conduct research conducive to the sustainable growth and advancement of knowledge in gifted education in Hong Kong. In the long run, the Academy can be developed into a platform for international exchanges as well as research and development in gifted education.

7. We envisage that the service coverage of the Academy will include –

(a) for students – the Academy will provide off-site programmes and learning opportunities not available in schools to ensure that the gifted students' potential will be suitably nurtured and stretched. Such programmes may include workshops, master classes, weekend courses, exchange programmes, mentorship, etc. in different domains. We expect that the Academy will provide services to about 10 000 to 12 000 students during the period from 2007 to 2010 (or about 3 000 students each year);

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- (b) for teachers – the Academy will provide diversified training opportunities in specialist areas to teachers to enhance their capability in nurturing gifted students in schools. Training programmes may include structured courses, short thematic courses, seminars and talks. We expect that the Academy will serve about 600 teachers each year;
- (c) for parents – the Academy will provide parent education in a range of subjects including the identification and nurturing of gifted children. It will hold workshops, seminars and support groups. We expect that the Academy will serve around 5 000 parents each year; and
- (d) for academics and professionals – the Academy aims to partner closely with local and overseas universities in offering programmes and to set up a network of mentors comprising different expertise to support the development of gifted students in Hong Kong. It will also initiate and conduct research to provide evidence-based advice on services for the gifted and effective pedagogy, and offer recommendations on government policy which are conducive to the sustainable growth and advancement of knowledge in gifted education in Hong Kong.

8. The above proposal will enable EMB to concentrate its efforts and resources on collaborating with schools to promote effective learning and teaching practices in the classroom (Level 1) and provide support to pull-out programmes inside schools (Level 2). The Academy and EMB will organise professional development programmes that complement each other to enhance the capacity of front line teachers. The existing Fung Hon Chu Gifted Education Centre (managed by EMB) will continue to serve as a resource centre for promoting general gifted education in Hong Kong with an emphasis on Levels 1 and 2. It may also collaborate with the Academy to run courses for teachers and parents.

Selection criteria of gifted students

9. In recent years it has become clear from research evidence that there is no single measure of ‘giftedness’ that can be applied equally to all students. The Academy will adopt a more liberal approach in its selection or nomination procedures, and a comprehensive and inclusive admission policy. It will admit students based on performance and potential. Reference to students’ Intelligence Quotient test score is not a must.

10. At present, gifted students admitted to Level 3 programmes are nominated by schools annually. Students are selected by school teachers based on the listed criteria and behavioural checklist provided by EMB. The nominees will be invited to attend screening activities, which may include written tests or group interviews. In addition, award winners in open competitions are also invited to join Level 3 programmes. In future, in addition to school nominations and other existing avenues, the Academy will explore alternative channels such as direct nomination by parents, self or peer nomination to ensure that no exceptionally gifted children will be overlooked. The Academy is expected to devise a clear set of admission criteria, plus any necessary screening tests.

Institutional Framework

11. The Academy should be operated independent of the government machinery for greater operational effectiveness. It should have a high degree of independence and flexibility in planning and operating its services as well as in managing its human and financial resources. We therefore propose to set up the Academy as a limited company under the Companies Ordinance (Cap. 32). The objectives of the Academy will be clearly set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association. As a non-profit-making entity, the Academy will not be allowed to distribute dividends.

12. We consider it important for various stakeholders interested in the development of gifted education in Hong Kong to be involved in the management of the Academy. We therefore propose that the Academy should be governed by a Board comprising about eight to ten directors to be effectively appointed by the Government and drawn from different sectors of the community (including prominent academics, professionals, experts in gifted education, school heads and teachers, parents and other members of the community who are committed to and have the capacity to contribute towards gifted education). A small number of officers from EMB will also serve on the Board to provide a formal link between the Academy and EMB. Consistent with good corporate governance practices, the Board may establish functional committees to support specific areas of its work such as investment and audit.

13. The Academy is expected to assume the role of a central co-ordinator and lead collaborator to develop and monitor the scope and quality of the services, partly to be conducted by its staff, and partly to be contracted out to potential course providers (such as universities, professional bodies, non-governmental organisations or individuals with expertise in a particular field). We expect that the bulk of the education programmes and activities will take place at the venues of the course providers, similar to the existing arrangements for Level 3 programmes. This mode of operation without a purpose-built premises for the academy itself is being implemented elsewhere (e.g. in the United Kingdom).

/Staffing

Staffing

14. The Academy will start with a strategic and core team of about 15 staff, to be headed by an Executive Director, to plan, lead and implement gifted education related programmes for students, teachers and parents within the broad framework of the Government's gifted education policy, and to advise on its future direction. As the Executive Director is expected to have extensive experience, proven track record and good overseas connections in the field of gifted education, a worldwide search for the Executive Director of the Academy will be conducted. The Executive Director will be supported by a small team of professional officers and other technical and administrative staff. They will help co-ordinate the services to be delivered by universities and other partners as well as to deliver some services directly.

Financial framework

15. We propose to provide a one-off grant of \$100 million to the Academy. Together with the donation of \$100 million by Sir Joseph Hotung, the Academy will have a total start-up funding of \$200 million. With this, we expect the Academy to deploy investment income and draw from the fund as needed to support its operating costs, primarily being staff salaries and costs for commissioning programmes or contracted services, estimated at about \$19 million per annum in the initial years based on the average costs of current services. A breakdown of major expenditure items is at Enclosure 2. A functional committee will be set up under the Board to manage the monies vested in, or received by, the Academy, and to set policies for, and monitor, the investment of such monies.

16. We anticipate that the Academy could build up over time its financial strength through further donations, sponsorships and course fees. The start-up funding should have provided sufficient financial certainty for not less than ten years for the Academy to develop the best financing model to suit its operation. We are prepared to review in tandem, in the light of experience, the best institutional framework for the Academy to support its longer-term development, and to consider the future funding requirements and growth of the Academy, based on more detailed analysis and assessment of the educational needs of gifted students. It is a statutory requirement under the Companies Ordinance (Cap. 32) that the Academy has to prepare annual audited accounts. These accounts will be submitted to EMB for financial control purposes.

/Service

Service and Programme Evaluation

17. As is the current practice with EMB-commissioned activities on gifted education, programmes to be commissioned by the Academy will be subject to evaluation by the participants. The Academy will develop a mechanism to monitor the implementation of the programmes to ensure compliance with the requirements. In addition, longitudinal studies will be administered to evaluate the impact of the support services provided for gifted students.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

18. Subject to Members' approval, we will make a one-off grant of \$100 million into the Academy in 2006-07. We have earmarked the funding required for the purpose under Head 156 Government Secretariat: Education and Manpower Bureau Subhead 000 Operational expenses.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

19. In October and November 2006, EMB briefed members of the Committee on Gifted Education of the Curriculum Development Council and the Committee of the Fung Hon Chu Trust Fund respectively on the proposal of setting up the Academy. The two committees supported the proposal and recommended that close partnership amongst EMB, the Academy and the Fung Hon Chu Gifted Education Centre should be built up. They also agreed that the existing Fung Hon Chu Gifted Education Centre should continue to serve as a resource centre for promoting gifted education in Hong Kong, a venue for in-service teacher programmes and dissemination of good practices of gifted education in schools.

20. We consulted the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Education at its meeting on 16 November 2006. Members supported the direction of enhancing the provision of gifted education, and requested the Administration to provide more information on the organisation, financial framework as well as service coverage of the Academy.

21. We presented further information about the proposal to the LegCo Panel on Education at its meeting on 8 January 2007. After discussion, Members indicated support for the proposed one-off grant.

BACKGROUND

22. The Chief Executive announced, in his 2006-07 Policy Address, the establishment of an Academy for Gifted Education to provide more structured, articulated and challenging off-site programmes for students with exceptional talent, and to promote the concepts and practices of gifted education. Sir Joseph Hotung has made a donation of \$100 million for the purpose.

Education and Manpower Bureau
January 2007

Current Situation of Gifted Education in Hong Kong

Background

The policy on gifted education for schools in Hong Kong was first recommended by the Education Commission in its Report No. 4 (1990). The mission of gifted education is to fully explore and develop the potential of gifted students systematically and strategically by providing them with opportunities to receive education at appropriate levels in a flexible teaching and learning environment.

2. The following are some basic guiding principles for gifted education in Hong Kong –

- (a) a broad definition using multiple intelligences (versus results of Intelligence Quotient (IQ) test being used by some countries) should be adopted;
- (b) nurturing multiple intelligences is a fundamental goal of quality basic education and should be the mission of ALL schools; and
- (c) the needs of gifted students should basically be met in their own school. And schools should provide sequential and multiple educational activities to gifted students at different levels.

3. Based on the above guiding principles, a three-tier gifted education framework was piloted in the 1990s and adopted in 2000 –

- (a) Level 1 – it operates at the classroom level. The objectives are to immerse the core elements advocated in gifted education (i.e. high-order thinking skills, creativity and personal-social competence) in the curriculum for all students and to differentiate teaching with enrichment and extension of curriculum across all subjects;
- (b) Level 2 – it operates through pull-out programmes within the school in specific areas (e.g. Mathematics, Science, Languages, Creativity and Leadership, etc.) outside regular classes to allow systematic training for students with outstanding performance; and

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- (c) Level 3 – it caters for the exceptionally gifted students by providing tailor-made off-site programmes in collaboration with universities and professional bodies.

Definition of Giftedness

4. While there is no clear consensus, there is an emerging view that giftedness should be defined using multiple criteria. In line with these international trends, the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) adopts a broad definition of giftedness and recognises that gifted children have exceptional achievement or potential in one or more of the following domains –

- (a) a high level of measured intelligence;
- (b) specific academic aptitude in a subject area;
- (c) creative thinking;
- (d) superior talent in visual and performing arts;
- (e) leadership; and
- (f) psychomotor ability – outstanding performance or ingenuity in athletics, mechanical skills or other areas requiring gross or fine motor coordination.

Selection of Students for Gifted Education Programmes

5. Gifted children may show their extraordinary performance in different aspects, for example, in cognitive domains, leadership, arts and sports. Therefore, gifted children are best identified using multiple methods, such as behavioural checklists, standardised tests and IQ tests, performance in school and the community, assessment of their work as well as multiple nomination process which may involve teacher, parent, peer, self nomination and interviews.

6. The characteristics of gifted children vary according to the aspects where talent is being observed. For example, the intellectually gifted students possess higher abilities in applying the lexis of a language than the children of their age, are perceptive in causal-relationship and can comprehend and synthesise complex issues, etc. Students gifted in creativity have an acute sense of beauty,

enjoy risk-taking, are able to generate alternative means to solve complicated problems, have a delicate sense of humour and are flexible, etc. Students gifted in leadership are responsible, can be entrusted with tasks and projects, have good communication skills, are competent in organisation, and are eloquent. Generally, most gifted children are adept at thinking, reading, understanding and retrieving what they have learned. They tend to be more mature and are more capable of handling challenges than children of their own age.

7. Making reference to the characteristics of gifted children, EMB has developed learning interest questionnaires and behavioural characteristics for reference by schools and parents. (Details can be found at <http://www.emb.gov.hk/index.aspx?langno=1&nodeID=3612>)

8. In considering gifted education programmes for students, schools are also reminded not to neglect minority groups, such as new immigrants, disabled or poor students, who display outstanding performance. Nor should intelligent students who have failed to display good performance be overlooked.

9. Schools implementing pull-out school-based gifted development programmes for the first time are encouraged to set up a selection committee to conduct preliminary selection for the talent pool during the last term of the academic year before the programmes are implemented and arrange interviews in determining the enrolment list.

10. Traditionally, students who have an IQ score of over 130 are regarded as gifted students and those having reached 150 are considered to be exceptionally gifted. Given the multi-faceted definitions of giftedness, identification and admission of students to EMB's "Support Measures for the Exceptionally Gifted Students Scheme" are not confined to those with an IQ over 130. EMB would issue a school circular each year to invite nomination of students from all local secondary schools to join this Scheme. Teachers wishing to nominate students should obtain comprehensive and accurate information in consultation with parents and other teachers and make reference to the "Behavioural Checklist for Gifted Students". After initial examination, the nominees would be invited to attend screening activities, which may include written tests or group interviews. Students who are exceptionally gifted will also be selected via territory-wide competitions.

11. Parents who think that their children may be gifted and talented but are not nominated by their children's school may contact their school teachers or social workers for assistance. Students who are interested but not admitted to the programmes may discuss with their parents, school teachers or social workers for further understanding of their own learning needs and strengths, and thus be able to explore the most appropriate support and channel for developing their talents. There are non-governmental education institutions or community service organisations that provide training programmes for the gifted and talented students. (Details can be found at <http://gifted.hkedcity.net/>)

Current Position of Implementation

12. The conditions required for successful implementation of gifted education include development of curriculum resources, training for school heads and teachers, networking various stakeholders, as well as development of assessment guidelines and tools for use by teachers and professionals.

13. We have established solid ground work to embark on a new phase of development. A wide range of web-based curriculum resources including exemplars and teacher training packages for School-based Gifted Programmes on Mathematics Education, Creative Thinking, Science Education, Affective Education and Language Education have been developed to provide support for teachers. Guidelines on School-based Gifted Development Programmes have also been compiled based on experiences accumulated.

14. Regular briefings and experience sharing sessions have been, and will continue to be, organised to disseminate curriculum resources in gifted education. Teacher development events such as training talks, seminars and workshops are being organised. EMB is stepping up support through teacher training, school-based support and networking with the help of local professionals.

15. Since 2000, for the exceptionally gifted whose needs cannot be met by school-based programmes, EMB has been providing off-site support in partnership with tertiary institutions. These enhancement programmes include university-based credit-bearing courses, university-based study projects, thematic Olympiad training, mentoring programmes, leadership training cum social services, etc. Since 2004, the scope of these programmes has been broadened to include the domain of Humanities in addition to Leadership, Science and Mathematics.

16. During the period from 2001 to 2006, about 5 000 students had enrolled in “Support Measures for the Exceptionally Gifted Students Scheme” at Level 3, and there were about 1 000 newly enrolled students each year. There is a wide range of programmes held in the weekends or long vacations in the Mathematics, Science, Leadership and Humanities domains. They range from workshops, study camps, research projects, and mentorship to credit-bearing courses. Some students had benefited from training programmes related to the preparation for, and participation in, international competitions such as the Mathematics and Physics Olympiads and cross-territory exchange. An internal review conducted in 2005 through questionnaires, case studies and interviews showed that the programmes enhanced students’ academic knowledge, self-confidence and learning ability as well as broadened their horizon. Besides, there were special aspects gained by participants that are unique to each domain. For example, in Mathematics, students and their teachers reported an enhancement in critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, analytical power and self-learning capabilities, while in Humanities, there was improvement in creativity, appreciation of literature and investigation of social problems.

17. Over the years, EMB has been forging partnership with local tertiary institutions and professional bodies in providing professional training courses for in-service teachers and training events for parents of gifted children.

Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education
Major expenditure items in the initial years of operation

Items	Explanatory Notes	Estimated Annual Expenditure (\$ million)
Staff costs	A	6.5
Operating costs	B	2.0
Student programmes and services	C	7.0
Parent education	D	1.0
Professional development for teachers	E	1.5
Research and development	F	1.0
	Total	19.0

Explanatory Notes –

- A. This is based on the assumption of a core team of about 15 staff (comprising an Executive Director, three professional officers, three project officers and other administrative, financial and supporting personnel). Staffing requirements will be kept under review in the light of operational needs.
- B. Operating costs include hire of venues, postage, stationery and other general expenses.
- C. Student programmes include workshops, master classes, weekend courses, exchange programmes, mentorship, etc. in different domains. We expect that the Academy will provide services to about 10 000 to 12 000 students during the period from 2007 to 2010 (or about 3 000 students each year).
- D. Parent education programmes include workshops, seminars and support groups (ranging from identification, catering for the emotional and social needs of the exceptionally gifted and the roles that can be played by parents in nurturing gifted children). We expect that the Academy can provide service to around 5 000 parents each year.

/E.

- E. Teacher education programmes include structured courses (both foundation and advanced courses lasting for more than 30 hours each), short thematic courses, seminars and talks. We expect that the Academy can offer training to around 600 teachers each year.

- F. The Academy will network with local and overseas institutions on gifted education to pool together expertise and for sharing experience, and to collaborate in generating the knowledge base through research and development projects suited for the intellectual and practical needs of Hong Kong students and the future development of gifted education in Hong Kong.
