

For discussion  
on 8 January 2007

## **Legislative Council Panel on Education**

### **Establishing the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education**

#### **Purpose**

In his Policy Address delivered in October 2006, the Chief Executive announced the establishment of an 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. The Legislative Council Panel on Education discussed on 16 November 2006 the Administration's proposal to provide \$100 million to support the setting up of the Academy to complement a donation of an equal amount by Sir Joseph Hotung [LC Paper No. CB(2)344/06-07(01)]. This paper provides further information, as Members requested, on the organisational and financing framework, as well as service coverage of the Academy and related matters.

#### **Positioning of the Academy**

2. We propose to set up the Academy, to be operated independent of the Government machinery, to provide more structured educational services for the exceptionally gifted students as well as to support teachers, parents and academics in the endeavour.

3. The Academy will target at providing learning opportunities for gifted youths from 10 to 18 to enable them to stretch their potential in a wide range of specialist areas, leadership, creativity, personal-social competence, and to promote whole-person development as well as to develop their confidence in pursuit of excellence and commitment to serving the community.

4. At present, the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) promotes gifted education through a three-tier implementation framework. Details on the current provision of gifted education are set out in **Annex A**.

5. There is a growing demand for gifted education services, which calls for an early establishment of the Academy. The present proposal to establish an Academy for Gifted Education will be very welcome and warmly supported by parents and the education sector. The Academy will allow us 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 is suitably nurtured and stretched.

6. The Academy will focus on services for the exceptionally gifted students by offering and co-ordinating services outside the school setting to ensure that expertise and resources could be strategically and effectively used. Its close partners will include local and overseas universities, professional organisations, government and non-government organisations, and individuals who have the expertise and experiences to provide programmes, mentorship, selection 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 (including counselling for high achieving and underachieved gifted students). The Academy will also conduct research and development conducive to a sustainable growth and advancement of knowledge in gifted education in Hong Kong.

7. It is envisaged 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, mentorships etc. in different domains. The Academy is expected to cover 10 000 - 12 000 students during the period of 2007-2010, or about 3 000 students each year.
- b. For teachers - Diversified training opportunities in specialist areas will be provided to teachers to enhance their capability in nurturing gifted students in schools. Training programmes may include structured courses, short thematic courses, seminars and talks. It is expected that around 600 teachers would be served each year.
- c. For parents - Parental education will be provided on a range of

subjects including the identification and nurturing of gifted children. Workshops, seminars and support groups would be held. It is expected that around 5 000 parents could be served each year.

- d. For the 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, effective pedagogy, and government policy conducive to a sustainable growth and advancement of knowledge in gifted education in Hong Kong.

8. The above development will enable EMB to concentrate its efforts 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). EMB will continue to offer relevant professional development programmes for in-service teachers and may provide some of these programmes in collaboration with the Academy. This will ensure a 'seamless' development of gifted students across learning contexts inside and outside schools.

9. Fung Hon Chu Gifted Education Centre, currently 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.

### **Institutional Framework**

10. To enable the Academy to function effectively, 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 and the Board of Directors will effectively be appointed by the Government. The Academy will be non-profit making and not be allowed to distribute dividends.

11. It is considered important for various stakeholders interested in the development of gifted education to be involved in the management of the Academy. We therefore propose that the Academy would be governed by a Board comprising 8-10 directors drawn from a broad base 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 Government officers would also serve on the Board to provide a formal link between the Academy and EMB in pursuit of gifted education. Consistent with good corporate governance, the Board may establish functional committees to support such areas of its work as investment, audit and corporate strategy.

12. 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 local universities, professional bodies, social service agencies, 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.

### **Preparatory Committee**

13. A Preparatory Committee has been established to prepare the ground for the establishment of the Academy, and to assist in the selection of its Executive Director. The terms of reference and membership of the Preparatory Committee are at **Annex B**. The Committee has met twice since November 2006.

### **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 would 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 to complement the donation of the same amount by Sir Joseph Hotung. With a start-up funding of \$200 million, we expect the Academy to deploy investment income and draw from the fund as needed to support its operating costs, primarily 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 (see **Annex C** for a breakdown of major expenditure items). We anticipate that the Academy would build up over time its financial strength through further donations, sponsorships, course fees and partnership contributions from universities, professional service providers as well as individuals who share the same mission of developing the talent pool in Hong Kong. The start-up funding should have provided sufficient financial certainty for not less than 10 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 Academy's future funding requirements with more detailed analysis and assessment of the educational needs of gifted students, as well as the future growth of the Academy. As a statutory requirement under the Companies Ordinance (Cap. 32), the Academy will have to prepare annual audited accounts. These accounts will be submitted to EMB for financial control purposes.

## **Identification of Gifted Students and Selection Criteria**

16. 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 is recommended to adopt a more liberal approach to its selection or nomination procedures, and a comprehensive and inclusive admission policy. It will admit students based on performance and potential. Reference to student's Intelligence Quotient

(IQ) test score is not a must.

17. At present, gifted students admitted to Level 3 programmes are nominated by schools annually. Award winners in open competitions will also be invited. For nomination made by schools, students are selected by school teachers based on the listed criteria and behavioural checklist provided by EMB. In addition, screening tests such as group interviews or performance tasks would be administered.

18. Recognising that some students with similar abilities of students taking part in Level 3 programmes may not be nominated through the school route, the Academy will explore other channels of nomination, such as direct nomination by parents, self or peer nomination to ensure that exceptionally gifted children will not be overlooked. The Academy is expected to devise a clear set of admission criteria, plus any necessary screening tests.

### **Service and Programme Evaluation**

19. 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, including end-of-programme, post-programme questionnaires and focus group discussions. The Academy will develop a mechanism to monitor the implementation of the programmes to ensure that these meet the requirements. In addition, longitudinal studies should be administered to evaluate the impact of the support services provided for gifted students.

### **Way Forward**

20. EMB will work closely with the Preparatory Committee to set up the Academy and launch an international recruitment for the Executive Director of the Academy. It is important that the Executive Director should take the lead in the planning and development of the Academy. The aim is to have the Academy up and running from the 2007/08 school year, or as soon as practicable. Our present priorities are to expand the expertise on gifted education and build capacity among frontline educators and parents to identify and nurture talents in various domains, thereby extending the ambit of gifted education. This will help raise the profile of gifted education and galvanise community efforts in nurturing talents for Hong Kong.

21. Subject to Members' view on our proposal, we will submit to the Finance Committee the proposal for the funding provision of \$100 million to the proposed Academy.

**Education and Manpower Bureau**  
**January 2007**

## **Gifted Education in Hong Kong**

### **Current Situation**

#### **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 broad definition using multiple intelligences (versus results of Intelligence Quotient (IQ) test being used by some countries) should be adopted ;
- ✧ Nurturing multiple intelligences is a fundamental goal of quality basic education and should be the mission of ALL schools; and
- ✧ 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.

- 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.
- Level 2 - It operates through pull-out programmes within the school in specific areas (e.g. Mathematics, Science, languages,

creativity and leadership etc.) outside the regular classroom to allow systematic training for students with outstanding performance.

- 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) of the HKSAR 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 high level of measured intelligence;
- specific academic aptitude in a subject area;
- creative thinking;
- superior talent in visual and performing arts;
- leadership; and
- 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, 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, for example, 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, learning interest questionnaires and behavioural characteristics have been developed by EMB for reference by schools and parents. (Details are 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" (the 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 the 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 the 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-government 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/>)

### **The 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, 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 of 2001-2006, 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, mentorship to credit-bearing courses. Some students had benefited from training programmes related to preparation for and participation in international competitions such as Maths and Physics Olympiad 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.

**Terms of Reference and Membership of the Preparatory Committee  
for the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education**

**Terms of Reference**

- To assist in the selection of the Executive Director for the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education through worldwide search
- To prepare the ground for establishing the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education and ensure a smooth transition to setting up the governing board of the Academy.

**Membership**

- Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower (Chairman)
- Mrs Lisa Hotung, representative of Donor, Sir Joseph Hotung
- Mrs Julia Fung, trustee of the Fung Hon Chu Trust Fund
- Prof Cheng Shiu-yuen, Dean of Science, HKUST
- Dr Carol K K Chan, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, HKU
- Prof David Chan, Professor, Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling, CUHK
- Mr Irving Koo, Chairman of the Hong Kong Art School Council, Hong Kong Arts Centre
- Prof Eleanor Wong, Senior Lecturer, School of Music, the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts
- Mr Lau Hor-keung, Principal, Shatin Methodist College/ member of Curriculum Development Council Committee on Gifted Education
- Ms Tsui Kwai-king, teacher, PLK Chee Jing Yin Primary School, member of Curriculum Development Council Committee on Gifted Education

- Ms Margaret Chiu, Senior Vice President and Regional Human Resources Director of American International Group
- Dr Lily Chiang, Chairman of Eco-Tek Holdings Ltd.
- Prof Martha Stone Wiske, Harvard University, Leader of Project Zero
- Mr Fred Lam Yun-fu, Chairman of the Hong Kong Association for Parents of Gifted Children
- Ms Pinky Siu King-ha, former Chairlady of the Federation for the Exceptionally Gifted and student beneficiary of the *Support Measures for Exceptionally Gifted Students Scheme*
- a teacher/school head of an overseas gifted school to be nominated by the Donor
- Chief Curriculum Development Officer (Gifted Education) (Secretary)

## Annex C

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

Estimated Annual Expenditure	<i>Explanatory Notes</i>	\$ million
Staff costs	<i>A</i>	6.5
Operating costs	<i>B</i>	2.0
Student programmes and services	<i>C</i>	7.0
Parent education	<i>D</i>	1.0
Professional development for Teachers	<i>E</i>	1.5
Research and development	<i>F</i>	1.0
Total		19.0

#### Explanatory Notes

A. This is based on the assumption of a core team of about 15 staff, inclusive of an Executive Director, 3 professional officers, 3 project officers and other administrative, financial and supporting personnel. Exact staffing requirements may vary in the light of operational needs.

B. Operating costs may include hire of venues, postage, stationery and other general expenditure.

C. Student programmes may include workshops, master classes, weekend courses, exchange programmes, mentorship etc. in different domains. The Academy is expected to cover 10 000 - 12 000 students during the period of 2007-2010, or about 3 000 students each year.

D. Parent education may include workshops, seminars, 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. It is expected to provide service to around 5 000 parents each year.

E. Teacher education includes structured courses (foundation, advanced, lasting for 30 plus hours), short thematic courses, seminars and talks. It is expected to 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.