

致：教育事務委員會融合教育小組委員會

有關有特殊教育需要學生入讀主流學校的機制 及融合教育資助模式的建議

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1. 引言

和全世界特殊教育趨勢相似，香港已有越來越多有特殊教育需要的學生融入主流。家長讓孩子就讀主流學校，希望子女可以接受主流課程，得到與一般學童同等的教育機會。以往只有較輕度特殊需要的學生入讀主流學校，隨著早期診斷、早期介入的推行，許多過去我們認為必須入讀特殊學校的學生，近年都已入讀主流學校。既然這趨勢已是不可逆轉，而且越來越多家長傾向選擇讓子女在主流學校就讀，在融合教育環境下的**支援服務就不能停留在舊有模式，而是需要較全面的規劃，讓這些有較嚴重障礙的學生都能在主流學校得到適當的支援**。除考慮家長的需求之外，政府亦需考慮學校實際面對的困難。雖然教育局正推行「全校參與」模式的融合教育計劃，但若學校缺乏足夠資源，仍然無法提供有效的支援，如：手語支援、較完整的課程調適、凸字書的編寫、持續的心理治療等。

根據聯合國的建議，香港政府應「劃撥更多的資源用於向殘疾兒童提供服務，從而**確保他們可以充分發揮自己的潛力**」(United Nations, 2012, 頁9)，以往放在特殊教育的資源進行重新調配，讓主流學校得到足夠的人手配套，以期照顧有不同特殊教育需要的學生。同時，若有特殊需要兒童擁有個人特長，或資優的才能，我們也應該提供足夠的支援，建立一個無障礙的學習環境，幫助他們達到應有的卓越表現 (Ziegler and Baker, 2013) 。

2. 中小學融合教育新資助模式的資助額

教育局 1999 年開始在主流學校推展「全校參與」模式的融合教育計劃，為學校提供「學習支援津貼」，為每名學生每年提供一萬元資助予學校，若學生需較緊密的支援，學校可以作額外申請，為每名學生提供每年二萬元的資助。此資助模式已沿用十多年，教育局曾對津貼模式作出過修訂，但十多年來，**每位學生一萬元/二萬元這單位資助額一直未有調整過**。雖然教育局計劃由 2013/14 學年開始，提高每所學校可得的「學習支援津貼」上限，由每年 100 萬元提升至 150

萬元。但在此措施下，只有取錄較多有特殊教育需要學生的學校才可得到較充裕的資源，對大部分學校來說根本沒有任何幫助。就此資助模式，本中心有以下建議：

- i) **成立獨立專家小組檢討資助模式**：政府應成立獨立專家小組，根據不同殘疾兒童的特殊需要，重檢現時提供的服務模式，老師的專業培訓，以及「學習支援津貼」的資助額。除了為現時就讀的中小學提供資助外，政府亦應為現時有特殊需要學生就讀的幼稚園或幼兒中心提供額外津貼，讓他們可以在兒童發展黃金期得到適當的照顧。
- ii) **重檢現行資助模式**：這個已沿用多年的資助模式，一直存在許多問題，為人詬病。根據平等機會委員會的研究顯示，成效並不理想。現時主流學校和特殊學校對特殊需要學生的資源分配仍然有很大的差別，而且現行資助模式之單位資助額下一直未有作出調整。可是，在十多年來通脹嚴重的情況下，教師及專業人員的薪酬已大幅增加，學校在資源如此緊縮的情況下，可以聘請的人手，提供的支援都只能無奈縮減。現時資助計算方式只切合較輕微特殊需要學生的情況，對於有嚴重特殊教育需要或較嚴重障礙的學生，學校需要採用更加適當的方法及提供足夠的資源去支援他們，才能真正消除他們的學習障礙。所以，政府應**按通脹調整新資助模式的資助額**，亦應給予學校更清晰的指引及監察。
- iii) **政府需另設資源為聾童在主流學校提供手語支援**：根據〈聯合國殘疾人權利公約〉第二十四條(2b)及(3c)，所有聾童跟其他人一樣，有權接受共融、有質素及免費的小學及中學教育。他們應享有「以個人最合適的語言及溝通渠道」接受教育的權利 (United Nations 2006)。為回應聯合國提出的建議，香港政府應立即採取行動，在主流學校的教育中向所需聾童提供手語支援。事實上，正如教育局自1986年以來一直提供額外資助為視障學生提供點字服務，讓他們可以透過一個「沒有障礙」的媒介學習；同樣地，**需要手語的聾童也應可透過其他資源得到手語支援，以減少他們課堂溝通的障礙**。安排手語支援在先進國家已是一項常設的服務，如：提供手語傳譯，安排懂手語的助教老師等等。現時香港教育學院及職業訓練局專業教育學院亦已開始為聾生提供手語翻譯服務，成效顯著。只是，在中小學階段，政府仍然未有為聾童設立有系統性，長遠計劃性的手語支援服務。政府應為聾童提供手語支援，這才符合香港平等機會委員會在《殘疾歧視條例教育實務守則》第16章中向教育服務提供者提出，「**需要確保有適當的溝通媒體，如電子郵件或手語**」的要求 (Equal Opportunities Commission 2008)。隨函亦附上一份有關手語對聾人重要性的新聞報導以供參考。

3. 有特殊教育需要的學生入讀主流中小學的機制

現時許多家長都希望知道哪些學校較有經驗照顧某類有特殊教育需要的學生，好讓他們在選校時有多些資料可供參考。當然，每一位家長都希望可以把孩子送到一些有專業能力教導其子女的學校。目前，有一些學校因已取錄了較多某類特殊需要學生，在教導這些學生方面已掌握一定教學經驗及技巧，亦發展了一定的資源配套。教育局應善用這些學校的經驗，若這些學校願意繼續取錄一些有某類特殊需要的學生，政府應加以鼓勵，並提供實質上的支援，讓學校及老師可以在某些特殊教育領域發展專業師資培訓，亦讓家長可以有一些較理想的選擇。按本中心經驗，如果某類特殊需要學生人數較多，老師亦較願意在這方面多加進修，學習某類特殊需要的教學技巧，發展有關資源配套。只要政府給予它們一些額外資源以作實質鼓勵，這些學校亦會在自願情況下發展成為一些特色學校，除可更有效地幫助校內有特殊需要學生外，他們的實戰經驗，也可以成為其他主流學校的參考，讓整體主流學校有一個較全面的教學專業提升，相信家長對這方面的安排亦會表示歡迎。

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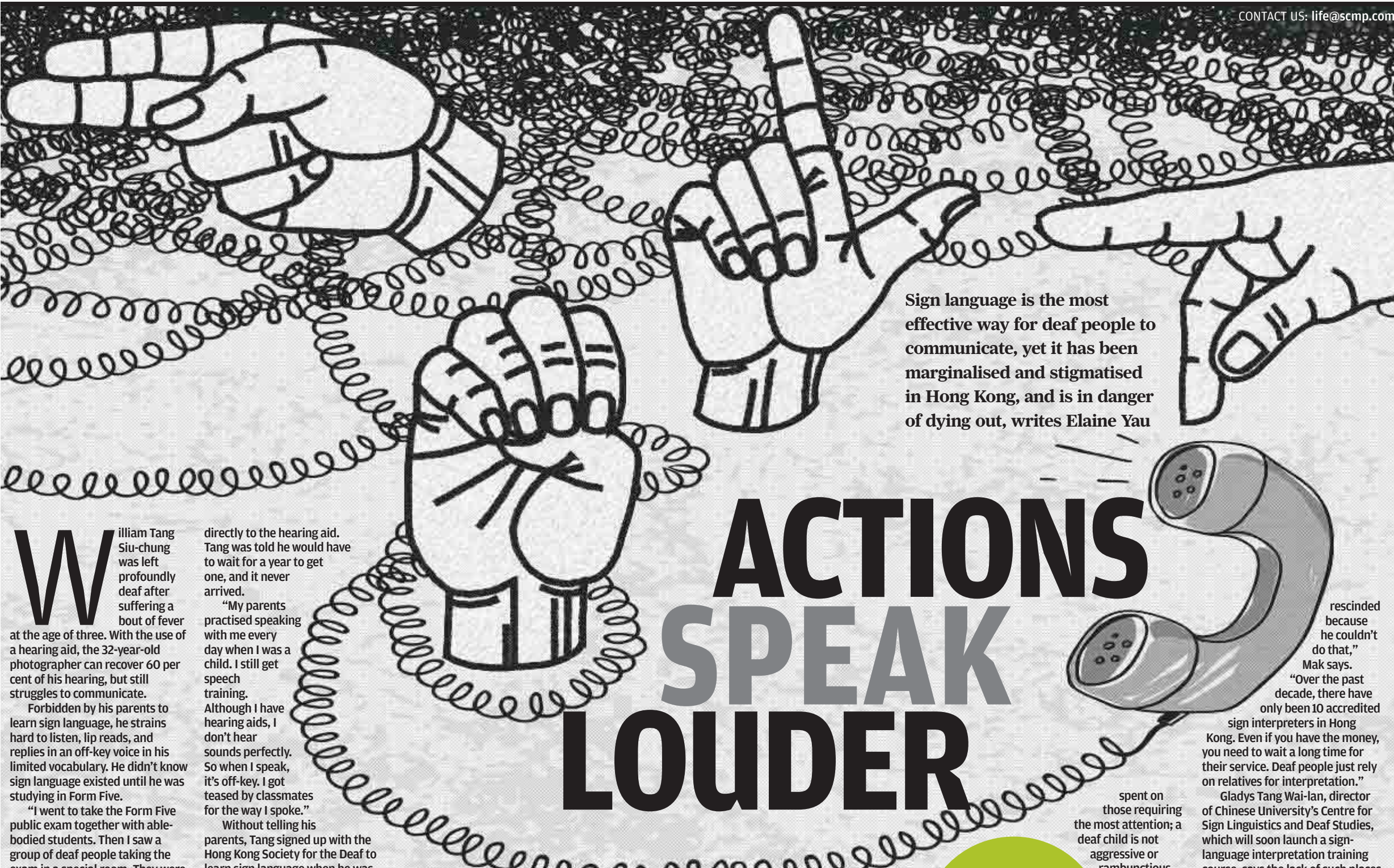


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Sign language is the most effective way for deaf people to communicate, yet it has been marginalised and stigmatised in Hong Kong, and is in danger of dying out, writes Elaine Yau

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER

William Tang Siu-chung was left profoundly deaf after suffering a bout of fever at the age of three. With the use of a hearing aid, the 32-year-old photographer can recover 60 per cent of his hearing, but still struggles to communicate.

Forbidden by his parents to learn sign language, he strains hard to listen, lip reads, and replies in an off-key voice in his limited vocabulary. He didn't know sign language existed until he was studying in Form Five.

"I went to take the Form Five public exam together with able-bodied students. Then I saw a group of deaf people taking the exam in a special room. They were communicating in sign language. That was when I learned that there was a deaf community," he says.

It's not unusual for Hong Kong's hearing-impaired population to be non-conversant in sign language. The situation stems from a misconception that learning sign language discourages hard-of-hearing children from speaking, and a government policy to integrate these children into mainstream schools that do not provide sign-language education.

Tang feels this led to wasted school years. "At school, I had to follow the teacher with my eyes because I had to read his lips. But once his back was facing the class, I had difficulty understanding."

Tang dropped out of an accounting diploma programme offered by the Vocational Training Council after only three months because he was unable to learn without additional support. He was the only hearing-impaired student in class throughout his years of study. "People think a hearing aid is a panacea for us. But it's far from that," he says.

For deaf students with hearing aids to learn effectively, the teacher needs to be wearing a so-called FM machine, which transmits the speaker's voice

directly to the hearing aid. Tang was told he would have to wait for a year to get one, and it never arrived.

"My parents practised speaking with me every day when I was a child. I still get speech training. Although I have hearing aids, I don't hear sounds perfectly. So when I speak, it's off-key. I got teased by classmates for the way I spoke."

Without telling his parents, Tang signed up with the Hong Kong Society for the Deaf to learn sign language when he was 20. When his parents found out, a year later, they were angry. But he insisted on sticking with it and has since made friends among the deaf community.

"Since I didn't learn sign language as a child, it is just passable. But I prefer using sign language to verbal communication because when I just listen, I miss words," Tang says through a sign interpreter.

Of the 100,000 hearing-impaired people in

Hong Kong, 9,000 are profoundly deaf. While the latter are mostly

I had to follow the teacher with my eyes because I had to read his lips

WILLIAM TANG (ABOVE)

adept in sign language, many others with varying degrees of hearing impairment know only rudimentary or no sign language, say organisations dedicated to the welfare of the deaf and sign-language interpreters.

The only school in Hong Kong for the deaf - the Lutheran School for the Deaf - didn't formally use sign language as a medium of instruction until 2008. Its principal, Ng Yuk-chun, says the school previously used only oral instruction.

"We tried our best not to use sign language. Most of our teachers are able-bodied and didn't have to know sign language in the past. [People thought that] as long as the hearing-impaired can speak, there's no problem."

Ng also says the government has imposed strict entry requirements on the school. "Only those with severe to profound hearing loss can enter now. Our student body has dropped from 200 in the 1990s to only 72. The government has rejected the transfer to us of a boy who is completely deaf in one ear but has medium hearing loss in another."

Chan Yi-hin, a sign interpreter who recently published a book on

deaf culture, *My Deaf Friends*, which traces the origin and development of sign language in Hong Kong, says there used to be more schools for the deaf, and these also banned the use of sign language. "The deaf only communicate in sign language secretly on campus, like in toilets and canteens," she says.

Medical advances in assisted hearing technology are another reason for the push to learn oral communication at the expense of sign language. Hearing aids and artificial cochlea can restore hearing for many.

But Chan says they don't work for everyone. "People sing the praise of those devices but ignore their shortcomings. Sounds are metallic for those with artificial cochlea," she says.

Tang, meanwhile, says free hearing aids provided by the

government are substandard. "A good one can cost HK\$100,000. The ones provided by the government can't cut out background noise."

Chan says the misconception about the importance of speaking to the deaf dates back to 1880, when education experts convened a meeting in Milan and declared that encouraging speech was the best way to help the deaf integrate into society: "Since then, the mother tongue of the deaf, sign language, has been marginalised."

The launch of integrated education in 1997, which removed segregation of students into mainstream and specialist schools, dealt a further blow to sign language in Hong Kong. Today, about 6,000 hearing-impaired children study in mainstream schools alongside other special-needs children, with autism or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Mak Hoi-wah, president of the Association of the Deaf, says that although schools that admit special-needs children receive extra funding, the money is often

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The number of accredited sign interpreters working in Hong Kong over the past decade

spent on those requiring the most attention; a deaf child is not aggressive or rambunctious.

The worst-case scenario is that a deaf child just sits silently in the classroom without learning anything.

"Having to rely on listening and speaking, deaf children learn much more slowly than other children," Mak says. "Their language ability is also poorer. Language skills help develop a child's logical thinking, which means deaf children miss out on the opportunity to broaden their thinking skills."

The lack of support means that only a handful of deaf students can attend university. Records show that each local tertiary institution admits only a handful of hearing-impaired students each year. Polytechnic University has taken in 18 such students during the past three years. "Three years ago, a deaf student was admitted to a photography programme run by the Institute of Vocational Education. But the institute made the offer on the condition that he arrange his own sign interpretation service. His admission was finally

rescinded because he couldn't do that," Mak says. "Over the past decade, there have only been 10 accredited

sign interpreters in Hong Kong. Even if you have the money, you need to wait a long time for their service. Deaf people just rely on relatives for interpretation."

Gladys Tang Wai-lan, director of Chinese University's Centre for Sign Linguistics and Deaf Studies, which will soon launch a sign-language interpretation training course, says the lack of such places is proof of the marginal status of sign language in Hong Kong.

"No tertiary institutes provide formal training in this area now. Only non-governmental organisations for the deaf provide some training," Tang says. "Overseas universities offer degrees in this field. The Education Bureau does not encourage such degrees. If this trend continues, sign language will be on the road to extinction in Hong Kong."

Principal Ng says the school takes a bilingual approach, with teachers using sign language and speech simultaneously in lessons. "For students who need to rely more on sign language, one teacher and one sign interpreter are present in the classroom."

A Social Welfare Department spokesman says the Labour and Welfare Bureau formed a working group promoting sign language to advise the government in 2010.

"The Civil Service Training and Development Institute has been organising sign language training courses jointly with the rehabilitation sector since July 2011 for frontline [government] staff," says the spokesman. elaine.yau@scmp.com

Some signs of improvement

The deaf have fought to preserve sign language in the past. Fifty deaf students protested a ban on sign language with a strike in 1973 at the Hong Kong School for the Deaf, the first such school in Hong Kong, established in 1935. The students boycotted classes, but to no avail.

The second such school was set up in 1948 by a deaf couple from Shanghai, and introduced Shanghaiese-style sign language to Hong Kong. The school closed in 1976. In 2004, the Hong Kong School for the Deaf became a school for able-bodied children, and was renamed Chun Tok School.

Chan Yi-hin, author of *My Deaf Friends*, says it originates from two streams. "One is the Shanghai stream. Another was developed by deaf students in secret in schools that ban the use of sign language. That's why there are no uniform expressions in Hong Kong sign language, with several signs for words like 'Tuen Mun', 'Kwun Tong' and 'green'."

Gladys Tang Wai-lan, director of Chinese University's Centre for Sign Linguistics and Deaf Studies, says there's no need for a uniform standard. "Cantonese also has different expressions. Once you look for a uniform standard, you need to categorise some expressions as right and others as wrong."

But both the centre and the Lutheran School for the Deaf - the only such school in the city today - are developing databases of sign language for better reference for the deaf. Chinese University's centre recently received funding of HK\$216,000 from the Labour and Welfare Bureau to develop an online sign language database. It has compiled more than 1,100 signs.

The Lutheran School for the Deaf received almost HK\$3 million in funding from the Quality Education Fund last year to start a three-year project to develop an online video sign-language dictionary aimed at the senior secondary students.

The school's principal, Ng Yuk-chun, says the lack of uniform expressions could hinder academic studies. "Different teachers have different signs for specific words. The video dictionary will have 6,000 words in common usage in the curriculum. It will be ready for use in 2015. Students and teachers can look up specific words and terms, like 'liberal studies' and 'domino effect'." Elaine Yau



Sign interpreter Chan Yi-hin and William Tang. Photo: Jonathan Wong