

# Report on Review of Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools and Secondary School Places Allocation

December 2005



## Foreword

To keep up with the development of Hong Kong into a knowledge-based economy for the 21st century, the Education Commission (EC) recommended an Education Reform package in 2000 with a view to establishing an educational system conducive to life-long learning and whole-person development. With the concerted efforts of the community, the various Education Reform initiatives have gradually been put in place and started to bear fruit.

The Education Reform, which is student-focused, aims to develop each student in an all-round manner so that he/she is capable of life-long learning, critical and exploratory thinking, of being innovative and adaptable to changes. This goal has guided each and every aspect of the Education Reform, including the medium of instruction (MOI) arrangements for secondary schools and Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) mechanism.

The MOI policy for secondary schools and the SSPA mechanism have far-reaching implications on the overall development of school education, as well as on the future development of Hong Kong as a whole. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the different sectors of the community for their valuable views during the public consultation period. After carefully studying these views and concerns, the Working Group has reviewed and adapted the original proposals where appropriate. It is fundamental to keep the interest of students as our primary concern, while the issues are examined from a wider perspective of school education. We

need to take into account both the educational considerations and practical needs of the society. We are very conscious that we should maintain stability and consistency in our school education.

This Report sets out the long-term arrangements for the MOI for secondary schools and the SSPA mechanism as recommended by the EC to the Government. In the light of increasing evidence proving the effectiveness of mother-tongue teaching, we affirm in the Report that the direction of the MOI policy should be “to uphold mother-tongue teaching and enhance English proficiency concurrently”. We have no objection to allowing some schools to adopt English-medium teaching, subject to their fulfillment of the prescribed criteria so as to assure quality. With a view to nurturing students’ proficiency in both Chinese and English, we also set out a series of measures on how to enhance the teaching and learning of English while promoting mother-tongue teaching. Separately, the proposed changes to the SSPA mechanism aim to provide parents with more school choices, encourage diversified development of schools and students, and promote mixed ability teaching.

It is our sincere intention that the recommendations in this Report would take us forward in our pursuit of quality education. Although some recommendations may inevitably entail changes which may have some knock-on effect on some stakeholders, they are basically in line with the overall spirit of the Education Reform. I appeal to the Government, the education sector, parents and the public at large to make concerted efforts in implementing the recommendations. I firmly believe that should we unite and join hands, with the interest of students as our primary concern,

we can create a better future for the next generation in Hong Kong.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rosanna Wong Yick-ming', written in a cursive style.

(Rosanna WONG Yick-ming)  
Chairman,  
Education Commission

The primary function of school education is to help each and every student pursue all-round development so as to enhance his/her personal qualities and nurture multifarious talents for the community. Hence, schools should provide a conducive learning environment to cater for the different abilities and aptitudes of students so that they can develop to their fullest potentials and attain all-round development. Whereas the MOI is a highly significant tool for learning, the SSPA mechanism would surely affect the teaching ecology of primary and secondary schools. There are inextricable links between the two issues, which have far-reaching implications on the multi-faceted and inter-related aspects of school education in Hong Kong.

The EC set up the Working Group on Review of SSPA and MOI for Secondary Schools in July 2003. The Working Group members and I realize that underlying these two issues are a host of complicated factors comprising complex ideas, history, values, interests, habits and inclinations. That explains why these two issues have all along been a matter of public concern and a subject of controversy.

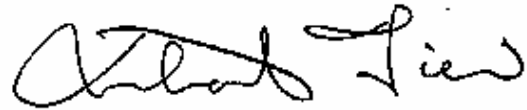
We have formulated our recommendations all through the review with the interest of students as our primary concern. Attaining the aims of basic education guided our deliberation on how we could make steady improvements on the basis of current achievements. The *Consultation Document* published by the Working Group in February 2005 has aroused wide public discussion. We attended more than 60 consultation sessions for discussion with major stakeholders including school principals, teachers, parents and students.

We are grateful to all sectors of the community for their enthusiastic feedback, valuable views as well as their patience throughout the discussion. Some have even proactively attempted to explore other options for our consideration.

We received about 3 200 submissions during the consultation period. The views received generally concur with the overall direction of the *Consultation Document*, though there are diverse views on the implementation details. Given that different stakeholders have different issues of concern and aspirations, it would not be possible to arrive at a proposal which can please all. Nevertheless, we have studied in depth the views collected as well as the alternatives proposed by different parties, and duly reviewed each and every proposal contained in the *Consultation Document*. I have to emphasize that when we set our minds on the interest of students as our primary concern, other considerations would pale by comparison. Taking this as our fundamental guiding principle, we have adapted the original proposals as appropriate.

The recommendations made in this Report may not be “ideal” to some people. However, we have tried our best to strike a balance between educational considerations and practical realities, while ensuring the feasibility of implementation in arriving at our proposals. The overall direction for the MOI policy for secondary schools is “to uphold mother-tongue teaching and enhance English proficiency concurrently”. The SSPA mechanism aims to provide parents/students with more school choices, avoid increasing the pressure of examinations on students, and contain the within-school diversity at a level manageable by schools and teachers so as to ensure teaching effectiveness. We sincerely hope that the public at large

would read this Report carefully, and come to realize the rationale and considerations behind the various recommendations. As a further step, we hope that the community would render support for the recommendations and participate in realizing them.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Tien". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Tien".

(Michael TIEN)  
Chairman,  
Working Group on Review of  
Secondary School Places Allocation and  
Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools

## Acronyms

AAT	Academic Aptitude Test
CA	Central Allocation
CDI	Curriculum Development Institute
CMI	Chinese-medium instruction
DP	Discretionary Places
DSS	Direct Subsidy Scheme
EC	Education Commission
EMB	Education and Manpower Bureau
EMI	English-medium instruction
HKALE	Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination
HKCEE	Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination
HKHLE	Hong Kong Higher Level Examination
IA	Internal assessment
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
MIGA	Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment
MIL	Membership of the Institute of Linguists
MOI	Medium of instruction
NET	Native-speaking English Teacher
P1/3/5/6	Primary 1/3/5/6
Pre-S1 HKAT	Pre-Secondary 1 Hong Kong Attainment Test
S1/2/3/4/5/6/7	Secondary 1/2/3/4/5/6/7
SCOLAR	Standing Committee on Language Education and Research
SSPA	Secondary School Places Allocation
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
TSA	Territory-wide System Assessment



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# Chapter 1 Introduction

## Background

1.1 In 2000, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region accepted the Education Reform proposals<sup>1</sup> recommended by the Education Commission (EC), including the reform of the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) mechanism. The Government started to implement the short-term SSPA mechanism in 2000, and undertook to review arrangements in the 2003/04 school year. Separately, the existing medium of instruction (MOI) arrangements for secondary schools, as embodied in the *Medium of Instruction Guidance for Secondary Schools (Guidance)* which has been implemented since 1998, was also pending a review. The SSPA mechanism and MOI arrangements are two important education issues that affect the school learning environment. Given their inextricable links, the EC set up the Working Group on Review of SSPA and MOI for Secondary Schools (Working Group) in July 2003 to take forward the review of the two issues at the same time. The terms of reference of the Working Group are as follows:

- (a) to provide advice to the EC on issues pertaining to the review of the SSPA mechanism and the MOI policy for secondary schools and associated arrangement; and
- (b) to recommend to the EC the long-term SSPA mechanism and MOI arrangements for secondary schools and the related implementation measures.

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<sup>1</sup> See the *Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong* published by the Education Commission in September 2000.

Membership of the Working Group is at Annex 1.

## **Public Consultation**

1.2 The *Review of Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools and Secondary School Places Allocation – Consultation Document (Consultation Document)* was published by the Working Group on 3 February 2005 for public consultation which ended on 2 July 2005.

1.3 The Working Group adopted a multi-pronged approach in launching the consultation. Publications, announcements of public interest on the radio/television, roadshow films and VCDs were produced, and similar information was provided on the Internet. Media interviews and promotional activities were arranged. The Working Group attended interactive activities such as consultation sessions, forums and meetings to collect views from different sectors of the community. Relevant materials were also uploaded onto the EC website. During the five months of consultation, more than 100 000 copies of the *Consultation Document* and its executive summary and over 1.2 million leaflets were distributed to the education sector, parents and other members of the community. The Working Group also attended a number of radio and television programmes to brief the public on the conceptual framework and the direction of the proposals. A VCD entitled *Conversation between Mr Michael Tien and Parents* was produced to answer parents' most frequently asked questions.

1.4 The Working Group members attended over 60 consultative functions including briefing sessions for school principals, teachers and parents, as well as consultation sessions organized by the Legislative Council, District Councils, parent-teacher associations, educational bodies, business community, etc. The Chairman and members of the Working Group also reached out to seek direct dialogue with parents of the 18 districts as well as teachers and students from Secondary (S) 1 to university levels.

1.5 About 3 200 submissions from various sectors were received via mail, e-mail and fax during the consultation period. These submissions came mainly from the educational bodies, teachers, parents, students, as well as the business sector, professional bodies, voluntary organizations and other members of the public. Different sectors of the community also expressed their views via telephone and radio programmes. Besides, the Working Group collected more than 200 featured articles from the newspapers.

1.6 During the consultation, some respondents are of the view that the Working Group should not confine the scope of review to secondary schools and that the MOI issue should be addressed comprehensively from primary to university levels. However, most people understand that the terms of reference of the Working Group are to review the existing MOI policy for secondary schools and the SSPA mechanism and they do not see the need for the Working Group to extend the scope of review, given the complexities of these two issues and the controversy involved.

1.7 Some feel that being part of China, the “mother tongue” of people in Hong Kong should be Putonghua. However, we define the “mother tongue” in the present context as the medium through which teachers and students can freely and effectively communicate their views in their daily life. For the majority of people in Hong Kong, they speak and communicate most effectively in the Cantonese dialect, while the official Chinese is used as a written tool.

1.8 We would like to thank members from different sectors of the community for their valuable views in regard to the proposals of the *Consultation Document*. We are grateful to those educational bodies which proactively attempted to explore other options for the Working Group’s consideration. The Working Group has carefully examined the views collected from different sectors of the community, and where appropriate, adapted the original proposals contained in the *Consultation Document*.

1.9 In formulating education policies, we must look back and learn from past experiences; build on the present and take into account the actual circumstances; and also look forward and work steadily in pursuit of quality education. In order to help the public better understand the development of the MOI policy and SSPA mechanism, we shall first give an account of the background and the progress of implementation in the relevant chapters in this Report before going into our proposals.

## Chapter 2 Current Medium of Instruction Policy in Secondary Schools

### Background

2.1 Language is a medium through which we acquire knowledge, analyze issues, think and express opinions. Most people think in their mother tongue. Expression through a second language involves a “translation” process. Many studies indicate that students learn best in their mother tongue. To learn effectively through a second language (i.e. English for the majority of students in Hong Kong), students need to have a high proficiency in both their first and second languages, as well as a strong motivation for learning and the ability to overcome the language barriers. In general, the overall academic performance can be used to gauge learning motivation and ability. If students are not competent enough to learn through the medium of English, not only will their learning effectiveness be undermined, their English proficiency may not be enhanced. Findings of the relevant studies are summarized at [Annex 2](#).

2.2 As a matter of fact, most countries use their mother tongues as the MOI. In some bilingual and multilingual countries in Europe, like Norway, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, etc., mother-tongue teaching is practised predominantly at the stage of basic education in mainstream schools. English and/or other foreign languages are usually taught as a subject.

2.3 In Hong Kong, as early as 1982, an International Visiting Panel suggested in

its report *A Perspective on Education in Hong Kong* that given the provision of universal education, students should be allowed to use the “language of the heart” (i.e. Cantonese) to complete their nine years of basic education. Subsequently the EC recommended repeatedly in its *EC Reports Nos. 1, 2, 4 and 6*, published in 1984, 1986, 1990 and 1996 respectively that the Government should actively promote mother-tongue teaching. In *EC Report No. 6*, the EC even urged the Government to strengthen its efforts and give specific directions to individual schools as to the appropriate MOI that ought to be adopted. The EC also recommended that there should be clear directives on how the relevant policy would be implemented. In March 1997, the Government published a consultation document on the MOI for secondary schools. After several months of extensive consultation, the Government formally promulgated the *Guidance* in September 1997 for enforcement as from the 1998/99 school year.

2.4 Before the implementation of the *Guidance*, the Government adopted the policy of actively encouraging secondary schools to use Chinese as the MOI. Nevertheless, individual schools were allowed to decide on their own MOI arrangements. In consequence, most of the schools still opted for using English as the MOI (EMI), and many students encountered difficulties in learning. As a result, many schools resorted to the mixed-code teaching (e.g. English was used in textbooks, assignments and examinations while lessons were taught in a mixed code of Chinese and English). This had not only failed to enhance students’ English proficiency, but



also compromised the learning effectiveness of the content subjects<sup>2</sup>. Many students were inclined to learn through rote memorization, with their development of higher-order thinking skills being hampered. Some students even lost their interest in learning.

2.5 The *Guidance* has been enforced as from the 1998/99 school year. Schools wishing to use English as the MOI must demonstrate their fulfillment of the three prescribed criteria, namely student ability<sup>3</sup>, teacher capability<sup>4</sup> and support measures<sup>5</sup>. As a result, 112 public-sector secondary schools have been allowed to use English as their MOI (EMI schools) while some 300 schools have used Chinese as their MOI (CMI schools) at the junior secondary levels. This situation has remained until now. According to the *Guidance*, schools adopting mother-tongue teaching at junior secondary levels may choose to switch to EMI teaching for certain subjects in some classes at senior secondary levels, provided that they satisfy the three prescribed criteria of student ability, teacher capability and support measures. At present, around half of the CMI schools continue to adopt Chinese as the MOI at S4 and S5 levels while the rest use English in teaching some subjects or classes to various extents. Details of the development of the MOI policy in Hong Kong are at [Annex 3](#).

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<sup>2</sup> Please refer to [Annex 2](#) for the relevant studies.

<sup>3</sup> Student ability is judged by an average percentage of not less than 85% of the S1 intake belonging to Group I and Group III under the Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment in the 1995/96, 1996/97 and 1997/98 school years (Group I: able to learn effectively in either Chinese or English; Group II: able to learn more effectively in Chinese; Group III: able to learn better in Chinese but may also learn effectively in English).

<sup>4</sup> Based on the school principal's own assessment criteria and certification of whether the teachers are capable of teaching through English.

<sup>5</sup> Schools are expected to provide students with adequate school-based support such as bridging courses.

## Effectiveness of Mother-tongue Teaching

2.6 Results of the various studies/surveys<sup>6</sup> conducted by the Government and universities, quality assurance inspections and focus inspections conducted by the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) after the implementation of the *Guidance*, school visits by the Working Group, and analyses of the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) results of the last three years (2003, 2004 and 2005) all show that **mother-tongue teaching is bearing fruit**. The benefits are summarized below:

### Teaching and Learning Process

2.7 Teachers can teach more effectively and in greater depth. They can adopt diversified teaching strategies more flexibly to cater for the diverse needs of students. Students can comprehend their lessons and learning materials more easily. They can also participate more actively in class discussions and different learning activities (e.g. debates and group activities), thus enhancing their analytical power, problem-solving skills as well as exploratory, abstract and high-order thinking.

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<sup>6</sup> These studies/surveys include:

- (a) “Survey on Medium of Instruction in Schools” by the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research in 1999.
- (b) “Evaluation on the Implementation of MOI Guidance for Secondary Schools: 1999-2002” commissioned by the Education and Manpower Bureau to the Hong Kong Institute of Education Research of The Chinese University of Hong Kong.
- (c) “Questionnaire Survey on the Implementation of Chinese MOI in Schools” conducted in 2002 by the Support Centre for Teachers Using Chinese as the Medium of Instruction, Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong.
- (d) “The Effects of Medium of Instruction on Students’ Motivation and Learning” published in 2005 by The University of Hong Kong.

## **Personal Growth and Learning Attitudes of Students**

2.8 Since students find it easier to acquire subject knowledge through mother-tongue teaching, they have a stronger sense of achievement. They therefore develop greater confidence, interest and motivation in learning, which in turn may help them develop a positive self-image. Moreover, as mother-tongue teaching can embrace more abstract, complex, ethical and affective elements, it can thus better facilitate the personal growth of students.

## **Academic Performance**

2.9 The findings of a research study<sup>7</sup> indicate that, as compared with EMI students of comparable ability, CMI students can attain a greater value-addedness in performance in both science and social subjects. However, their interest, motivation and confidence in learning English are relatively weaker, and so is their performance in this subject.

2.10 Another research study<sup>8</sup> has found that mother-tongue teaching can effectively enhance the motivation of students in learning. More importantly, CMI students can more effectively deploy different learning strategies (e.g. thinking, elaboration, etc.) as compared with EMI students who are better in academic achievement. Compared with EMI students of comparable ability, CMI students are

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<sup>7</sup> Findings of the “Evaluation on the Implementation of the MOI Guidance for Secondary Schools: 1999-2002” indicate that, when compared with EMI schools, CMI schools on average can enhance students’ achievement in science subjects by 30 percentiles and in social subjects by 20 percentiles.

<sup>8</sup> The study on “The Effects of Medium of Instruction on Students’ Motivation and Learning” published by The University of Hong Kong in 2005.

more confident in learning (including learning a second language). Their intrinsic motivation to learn is greater and they perceive learning more positively. Their self-efficacy in respect of learning History (a language-loaded subject) is also greater.

## **HKCEE Results**

2.11 Since the introduction of the *Guidance* in 1998, we have gathered the data of three years of HKCEE results of students affected by the *Guidance*. These data provide important reference for evaluating the effectiveness of mother-tongue teaching. However, we must stress that it is inappropriate to rely solely on the HKCEE results for the evaluation. The first three cohorts of students affected by the *Guidance* took part in the HKCEE in 2003, 2004 and 2005 respectively. Compared to the performance of those of comparable ability who sat for the HKCEE in 2002 (i.e. the last cohort of students before the implementation of the *Guidance*), our analyses show that:

### Overall Performance

- (a) There is a notable and continuous increase in the percentage of CMI students of comparable ability obtaining five passes or more (including Chinese Language and English Language), with the most significant rise in 2005.
- (b) Similarly, the percentage of CMI students of comparable ability obtaining a total score of 14 points or above in the six best-performed subjects (including passes in Chinese Language and English Language) in 2003, 2004 and 2005 is also on the rise. Improvement is most

significant in 2005 with students of the higher and medium ability groups having the best results.

#### Performance in Academic Subjects

- (c) There is a sustained increase in the pass rates of CMI students in nearly all major academic subjects and the pass rates have exceeded those in 2002. The rises in 2005 are also greater in magnitude than those in 2003 and 2004. It is even more encouraging to note that there are significant rises in the credit rates of many subjects, in particular the language-loaded ones (such as Geography, History, Economics and Biology) as compared to those in 2002. Judging from the trend of CMI students' performance in these three years, we can reaffirm that mother-tongue teaching can enhance our students' acquisition of subject knowledge.
- (d) Regarding English Language (Syllabus A or Syllabus B), there has been a sustained increase in the pass rates in the last three years. Although English Language (Syllabus A) is relatively less demanding than English Language (Syllabus B), there has been a perceptible increase in the credit rate of those CMI students who sat for English Language (Syllabus A). This shows that many secondary schools, while using Chinese as the MOI during these years, are also committed to adopting different strategies to bring up their students' English standard.

Detailed analyses of the HKCEE results are provided at Annex 4. Overall, the performance of CMI schools in the majority of subjects has been on the rise over the three years and, in some subjects, it has exceeded that of 2002. Such improvement in performance reaffirms the effectiveness of mother-tongue teaching. What is especially noteworthy is that these data echo the findings of the relevant studies on MOI.

2.12 We note that in the discussion about the HKCEE results, the public is very much concerned about CMI students' performance in English Language. Some people even tend to evaluate the success or otherwise of mother-tongue teaching categorically on the basis of the results of English Language. We would like to reiterate that one should not focus only on the HKCEE results of English Language in **evaluating the MOI policy**. While it is important for our students to be proficient in English, it is equally important to achieve the objective of mother-tongue teaching, which is to enhance students' mastery of concepts and knowledge in content subjects and development of thinking skills. We **should therefore look at the overall academic performance of students**. **Enhancing students' English proficiency is certainly not the only objective of basic education**. **The basic education also aims to promote whole-person development of students, as well as to develop their positive attitudes and values, motivation in learning and innovative thinking**.

2.13 Some people consider that since EMI teaching is widely practised in the tertiary education in Hong Kong, switching to EMI teaching as early as at the

secondary education stage would give students an advantage in seeking admission to universities and in adapting to university education. However, as a matter of fact, the key criterion for admission to non-language faculties of local universities is students' performance in the relevant academic subjects, irrespective of whether they have learned in Chinese or English. The edge of using CMI to learn academic subjects helps make CMI students more competitive in seeking admission to universities. As for adaptation to EMI teaching in universities, we should take note of the fact that students being admitted by the universities should normally have met the basic language requirement and are more able to learn independently. The university students we have met during consultation express that they can normally adapt to the EMI teaching at university in two or three months. They have not encountered much difficulty in this respect.

2.14 Some parents have the perception that good English proficiency would guarantee better career prospect. While this view of the parents is understandable, we wish to point out that employers in Hong Kong tend to attach greater importance to work attitude and interpersonal skills though English proficiency is also considered an important attribute. Positive work attitude and good interpersonal skills stem from inner personal qualities such as positive life values and strong sense of responsibility. These personal qualities are normally nurtured through self-reflections and deep thinking during the process of their personal growth and learning. In this respect, mother-tongue learning would better facilitate students to develop these qualities.

## Chapter 3 Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools: The Way Forward

### Guiding Principles

3.1 Based on the feedback received during the consultation, the public generally appreciates that mother-tongue teaching helps enhance learning effectiveness, but considers it essential to ensure that our students would be proficient in English as well while learning through the mother tongue. Public discussion focuses on how the Government should promote mother-tongue teaching and concurrently enhance students' English proficiency, as well as the extent of flexibility to be allowed in the implementation of the MOI policy.

3.2 We reaffirm that **the way forward for the MOI policy** for secondary schools should be **“to uphold mother-tongue teaching and enhance English proficiency concurrently”**. The following sets out some **guiding principles** for devising the specific arrangements under this broad policy direction:

(a) **The arrangements should be built upon educational considerations and the existing policy, with the overall interest of students as the primary concern.**

(b) **The mother tongue is the most effective MOI for all students.** Learning through a second language inevitably creates language barriers, the extent of which may vary from student to student. For most students, such barriers may reduce their interest, confidence and



effectiveness in learning.

- (c) Schools and students **choosing to use a second language for teaching and learning must fulfill certain prescribed criteria** in order to minimize language barriers and ensure the effectiveness of teaching and learning.
- (d) **The MOI policy should focus on its application to the basic education.** This is to ensure that students can, through learning in the most appropriate MOI, master the concepts of the content subjects thoroughly and develop high-order thinking effectively at the earlier stages of education. It is during the stage of basic education that our students **establish a solid foundation of knowledge and develop a positive learning attitude.** At senior secondary levels when schools are preparing students for making subject choices and for further study, **schools may be given more flexibility in applying the MOI arrangements.** They should **take into consideration their own circumstances** when making use of such flexibility.
- (e) **Irrespective of the MOI, schools should endeavour to enhance students' language proficiency (both Chinese and English) and subject knowledge,** which are fundamental for life-long learning. Students should also put in more effort in this regard.

## MOI Arrangements at Junior Secondary Levels

### Basic Stand

#### Original Proposal

3.3 The basic stand proposed by the Working Group is as follows:

**In principle, all secondary schools should adopt mother-tongue teaching at junior secondary levels and endeavour to raise students' English proficiency at the same time. There is no objection to individual schools choosing English as the MOI if they fully meet the prescribed criteria. These schools should also enhance their language education, both in Chinese and English.**

#### Public Concerns

3.4 Some respondents consider that since the Government has affirmed the benefits of mother-tongue teaching, it **should require all secondary schools to adopt mother-tongue teaching at junior secondary levels.** Some even criticize the Working Group for lacking the courage to rectify the present situation. If mother-tongue teaching is made mandatory, it would no longer be relevant to dwell on questions over the prescribed criteria for EMI teaching and the labelling effect. We note the criticisms but would like to point out that **in designing any new policy, we must not ignore the present circumstances and historical development** at the risk of triggering off adverse ramifications across the society.

3.5 As a matter of principle, making mother-tongue teaching mandatory across

all public-sector secondary schools (including the hundred odd existing EMI schools) is an option fully justified on education grounds. One should bear in mind, however, that EMI teaching has all along existed in the education system of Hong Kong. As a matter of fact, some traditional EMI schools with a long history have performed outstandingly and nurtured many talents who are proficient in both Chinese and English. We also believe that some of our students who are capable and hardworking may learn through English effectively if their families and schools can provide the necessary support, such as a rich English environment and learning support. On balance, **there is no apparent need to require a change in the MOI for these EMI schools.**

3.6 Moreover, we envisage that if public-sector schools are denied the choice of adopting English as the MOI, some qualified secondary schools may turn private while some parents who favour EMI teaching may be prompted to send their children to private or international schools. This would in turn reduce the accessibility of those students who are less affluent to afford EMI teaching.

### The Way Forward

3.7 In view of the above considerations, we maintain the original basic stand and recommend that the Government should **uphold the mother tongue as the mainstream MOI. However, there is no objection to schools choosing to adopt EMI teaching provided that they meet the prescribed criteria.**

## **Prescribed Criteria for EMI Teaching**

### Original Proposal

3.8 In the *Consultation Document*, the Working Group has proposed that **secondary schools adopting EMI teaching must fulfill the three prescribed criteria of student ability, teacher capability and support measures, and that the assessment standards should be objective and clearly spelt out.**

### Public Concerns

3.9 The public in general agrees to the above overall framework. **There are diverse views, however, on how to determine and enforce the criteria, in particular the one on student ability.** Some respondents contend that in view of the unique circumstances in individual schools, the Government should not rigidly apply the detailed requirements for each of the prescribed criteria but should allow schools to make school-based judgment on the question of compliance, e.g. a school not fulfilling the student ability criterion may still be allowed to use EMI so long as it has strengthened its support measures (e.g. the provision of after-school tutorials, bridging courses, etc.) for helping students who cannot cope with EMI teaching. Those who are in support of this approach also argue that with the emphasis on transparent accountability framework nowadays, schools are held responsible for their teaching effectiveness and it is unlikely that they can simply claim to be an EMI school without actually practising EMI teaching. There is also a view that parents should have the right to choose the MOI for their children and hence it is not necessary to have a pre-determined student ability criterion.

3.10 Many respondents from the education sector, however, recognize that when compared to the time before the implementation of the *Guidance*, the present circumstances are even more unfavourable for schools to determine their own criteria. Given the decline in student population, the deep-rooted bias towards EMI teaching among some parents and parents' focus on public examination results, schools would be under increasing pressure to acquire the "EMI status" as they compete for students and try to attract the best. As such, schools may be caught between educational beliefs and practical considerations, and some may reluctantly have to go for MOI decisions which are not educationally sound. This would mean **a reversion to the pre-1998 scenario when many secondary schools claimed to adopt EMI teaching but actually practised otherwise.** Besides, the education sector generally believes that, in general, our Primary (P) 6 graduates are not yet fully prepared for EMI teaching given their standard of English including the breadth of their vocabulary. If schools further relax the student ability criterion, it would mean that some students learning through EMI may not be ready. It would likely dampen their interest and confidence in learning and compromise the learning effectiveness. Indeed, individual school principals have frankly admitted that practical considerations over student admissions could take precedence over their professional judgment. They have also forewarned that so long as a small number of secondary schools have chosen to be led by practical considerations, other schools may follow suit without giving due regard to the student ability criterion.

3.11 The students whom we have come across expressly request the Government to lay down a clear and objective student ability criterion that would forestall schools from indiscriminately adopting EMI teaching under the pressure of parents. Some EMI students admit that they need to put in tremendous efforts in learning through EMI, and agree that practically not all students are able to cope with the stress.

### The Way Forward

3.12 We agree that **it is not desirable for schools to determine their own MOI criteria under the present circumstances. If a school chooses to adopt EMI teaching, it must fulfill the three prescribed criteria of student ability, teacher capability and support measures.** There must also be some objective and clear standards for enforcing these prescribed criteria.

### **Student Ability**

#### Original Proposal

3.13 Making reference to research findings, the Working Group has assessed that currently, **at most about 40% of S1 students are able to learn through EMI.** The Working Group suggests that these 40% students can be identified on the basis of students' internal assessment (IA) results (including the second term of P5 and the first and second terms of P6) as scaled by the existing **pre-Secondary 1 Hong Kong Attainment Test** (pre-S1 HKAT)<sup>9</sup>. Specifically, **samples of the** pre-S1 HKAT

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<sup>9</sup> The pre-S1 HKAT is conducted in all secondary schools in July every year to assess the performance of students newly admitted to S1 in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. It also facilitates schools' design of teaching strategy, remedial teaching and support measures to cater for the needs of students. Some secondary schools also use the test as reference for streaming and group teaching purposes.

**results will be collected biennially, and the average of the results of the two most recently sampled pre-S1 HKATs will be taken to scale the overall IA results of the coming cohort of students in the primary schools who are proceeding to S1. The scaled scores should sufficiently reflect students' learning motivation and ability as well as their language proficiency. The scaled results of all students proceeding to S1 will be put into a pecking order. The top 40% of the students will be taken as having the ability to learn through English. A school wishing to adopt EMI teaching must have no less than 85% of its S1 intake belonging to the top 40% group.**

### Public Concerns

#### *Issue (1): 40% and 85% thresholds*

3.14 Views are diverse on the thresholds of 40% (i.e. currently at most 40% of S1 students are able to learn through English) and 85% (i.e. a school should have no less than 85% EMI-capable S1 students before it can adopt EMI teaching). Some respondents consider that the threshold of 40% (of S1 students being EMI-capable) is too lax. They prefer a more stringent standard so as to ensure learning effectiveness. Some others criticize this threshold as being arbitrary in nature and that it unnecessarily labels students at their tender age. Some other respondents query the rationale for pitching at 40%.

3.15 In proposing the 40% threshold, the Working Group has made reference to

the standard adopted by the Government under the *Guidance*<sup>10</sup>, and the study commissioned by the EMB and conducted by local academics with expertise in educational measurement in 2004 (see Annex 5). The study reveals that currently about 32% - 40% of S1 students in Hong Kong are able to learn through English. Having carefully studied the comments received, **we consider that there is research backing for the 40% threshold and that a more lenient approach in setting the threshold is warranted given the present circumstances in Hong Kong.** It is noteworthy that the 40% threshold is mainly used to determine a school's MOI at junior secondary levels. A higher percentage of students may be able to learn through English at senior secondary levels after having built up a solid foundation in English and in other content subjects at junior secondary levels.

3.16 During the consultation period, some have pointed out that there should be an adequate supply of EMI schools to cater to the needs of the EMI-capable students, i.e. students within the 40% threshold. We would like to stress that the mother tongue is the most effective MOI for students, including those who are capable to learn through English. EMI-capable students could also capitalize on the benefits of mother-tongue teaching and further enhance their learning effectiveness. As a matter of fact, some EMI-capable students have actually opted for schools adopting mother-tongue teaching while some schools fulfilling the prescribed criteria for EMI

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<sup>10</sup> In the implementation of the *Guidance* in 1998, the assessment of student ability to learn through English was based on the Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment (MIGA). According to the results of MIGA, about 32.5% of the S1 students in Hong Kong were assessed to be able to learn through Chinese or English (Group I) and another 7.5% were considered to learn better through Chinese but they could also learn in English (Group III). When selecting a threshold for determining EMI-capable students, the Government adopted a lenient approach by counting not only Group I but also Group III students.



teaching have chosen to uphold mother-tongue teaching in pursuit of their education philosophy. Seen from another angle, the changes which we have proposed for the SSPA mechanism (*viz.* increasing the percentage of discretionary places (DP) and providing some school choices unrestricted by school nets during the central allocation (CA) stage) would provide parents/students with more school choices (see paragraphs 6.9 and 6.22) and increase the opportunities for students to get into schools of their preference, including the EMI schools.

3.17 As for the labelling effect on students, we must recognize that students who are capable of learning through English at junior secondary levels are generally those with stronger learning motivation and better academic performance, but there are some such students who opt for schools adopting mother-tongue teaching. It is not appropriate to label our students since all should be able to learn well provided that they are taught through an appropriate MOI. Moreover, students develop at different pace and hence it is important for schools to provide students with a conducive learning environment so that each student can develop to his/her fullest potentials. Some CMI students we have met have suggested that the “labels” originate from the subjective values of the adults. The labelling effect is in fact not felt strongly by themselves. Some CMI students have admitted that the pressure of labelling was stronger upon their entry at S1, but the pressure soon faded away as they started to enjoy their school life.

3.18 **Regarding the 85% threshold, the public generally finds it acceptable.**

Some respondents, however, consider the requirement too lax and suggest a higher threshold of 90% or above in order to reduce student diversity and strengthen EMI teaching. However, some parents call for a lower threshold so as to allow more students the chance to learn through English.

**3.19 Having drawn reference from the experience of EMI schools in the past seven years and the views gathered by the Working Group from the education sector, we consider the 85% threshold acceptable. We also believe that schools have generally managed the student diversity permitted under this threshold.**

We note the different demands from different parties: those in favour of a higher threshold percentage would like to reduce the within-school student diversity in EMI schools; those arguing for a relaxation of the 85% requirement wish to have more EMI schools to satisfy the parents' wish. While a higher threshold percentage would lead to a drop in the number of EMI schools and go against the aspirations of the society, a lower threshold percentage would make EMI teaching difficult and undermine its effectiveness, especially for students not competent enough to learn through English.

**In the absence of any other justifiable alternative thresholds, we propose to maintain the 85% threshold for the sake of stability and continuity.**

*Issue (2): Arrangement for “through-train”<sup>11</sup> schools*

3.20 There is a general concern in the education sector and among some parents over the impact of the 85% threshold on EMI schools intending to form “through-trains”. As a “through-train” secondary school has to admit all the P6 graduates of its linked primary school, it has lesser control over its S1 intake and would therefore have greater difficulties ensuring that 85% of its S1 intake are among the top 40% group. This predicament would pose a threat to the school’s EMI status and dampen its intention to form a “through-train” with the primary school concerned. Furthermore, feeder/nominated schools would like to be given a longer time before they are asked to make their decisions on forming “through-trains”<sup>12</sup>, since the decisions would have far reaching implications on school development. If given a longer option period, they would be able to collect more data on their student ability profiles under the revised SSPA mechanism taking effect only from 2007 onwards (see paragraph 6.43) before making their decisions.

**3.21 We consider that the “through-train” policy is based on sound**

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<sup>11</sup> Primary and secondary schools wishing to form “through-train” schools have to comply with the following three principles:

- the primary and secondary schools should have the same philosophy and aspiration for education and must strive to enhance continuity in primary and secondary education in terms of curriculum design, teaching strategies, student learning and development;
- the number of S1 places in the secondary school must exceed the number of P6 graduates of the linked primary schools while 15% of the S1 places should be reserved for P6 leavers of other primary schools for admission during the DP or CA stage; and
- the primary and secondary schools must have the same finance mode to ensure consistency in respect of the criteria in student admission.

<sup>12</sup> • Under the existing system, feeder/nominated secondary schools can reserve up to 85%/25% of their S1 places for their feeder/nominated primary schools after the deduction of places for repeaters and discretionary places. If the schools decide to form “through-trains”, they have to admit all graduates from their linked primary schools.

- According to the existing arrangement, feeder/nominated schools complying with the “through-train” principles should determine whether or not to form “through-trains” by 31 May 2006.

**educational philosophy.** The spirit is to encourage the primary and secondary schools forming into one entity in order to provide students with a coherent learning experience. **“Through-train” schools wishing to adopt English as the MOI are also required to fulfill the prescribed criteria. The primary objective of the MOI policy is to ensure learning effectiveness. This objective in itself does not conflict with the “through-train” concept.** That said, we need to carefully handle the possible impact of the MOI policy on the implementation of the “through-train” policy.

3.22 We fully understand the concerns of feeder/nominated and “through-train” schools. Since the **primary and secondary schools in a “through train” should work in collaboration as one entity**, it should be easier for the students from the linked primary school to adapt to the learning environment in the linked secondary school when they proceed to S1. Teachers in the linked secondary school should also have better knowledge of how and what these S1 students have learned in the linked primary school. The **“through-train” secondary and primary schools have the benefit of having a more coherent curriculum**, meaning that they are better placed to cater for the diverse learning and developmental needs of students in a timely manner at any stage during their whole primary and secondary education. Taking all these into account, there should be some room for suitably relaxing the requirement on student ability for application to “through-train” secondary schools wishing to adopt EMI teaching. It is also justifiable to allow feeder/nominated schools to have a better grasp of their student ability profiles under the revised SSPA mechanism before they

decide whether or not to form “through-trains”.

3.23 Having considered the views of the schools concerned, we agree that the 85% threshold on EMI-capable students can be flexibly lowered for “through-train” secondary schools wishing to adopt EMI teaching. Specifically, we **recommend**:

- (a) **To lower the threshold percentage of EMI-capable students to 75% for S1 entrants from the linked primary schools. As for S1 entrants from other primary schools, the threshold percentage should be maintained at 85%**<sup>13</sup>.
- (b) **To defer the deadline for feeder/nominated secondary schools complying with the “through-train” principles to decide whether to form “through-trains” to 31 May 2012.** (If a secondary school and its feeder/nominated primary schools decide to form a “through-train” on this date, they must start operating in the “through-train” mode starting from the P1 classes in the 2013/14 school year at the latest. If the school chooses to adopt EMI teaching, the 75% threshold would apply to this cohort of students when they progress to S1 in the linked secondary school in September 2019.)

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<sup>13</sup> The proportion of S1 entrants from the linked primary schools is different for each “through-train” secondary school (some have a relatively smaller proportion of S1 entrants from the linked primary schools while some with nearly all their S1 places taken up by students from their linked primary schools). We recommend that a weighted average methodology be used to calculate the threshold percentage required for individual schools according to the proportion of S1 entrants from the linked primary schools and that from other primary schools (the average of the proportions in the fifth and sixth year in each review cycle will be taken; see paragraph 3.56). The threshold percentages of 75% and 85% will be used respectively for calculation. For example, if 70% of the S1 intake of a “through-train” secondary school come from its linked primary school while the remaining 30% come from other primary schools, then the school will need to have at least 78% ( $0.7 \times 75\% + 0.3 \times 85\%$ ) EMI-capable students in order to satisfy the student ability criterion for EMI teaching.

*Issue (3): Assessment of student ability*

3.24 There are diverse views as to how one should assess whether a student is able to learn through English. Some are of the view that students' performance in English Language only, rather than their overall academic performance, should be taken into account. Some respondents from the education sector and also some parents contend that the student ability criterion as proposed in the *Consultation Document* only takes into consideration students' ability when they enter S1, i.e. the "input factor", but unfairly ignores the learning outcome (e.g. HKCEE results), i.e. the "output factor". Hence, there is a suggestion of using the HKCEE results as an instrument to assess students' ability.

3.25 We understand that, intuitively, it may seem reasonable to base the assessment of a student's EMI-capability on his/her English proficiency. Some studies reveal, however, that students should have attained a certain level of proficiency in their first language before they can learn through a second language. Moreover, **the ability of a student to overcome the language barriers when learning through a second language usually depends on his/her motivation and ability in learning, and students with these attributes usually perform better in terms of overall academic achievements.** We are also concerned that, in the circumstances of Hong Kong, **an attempt to assess EMI-capability solely on the basis of English proficiency would very likely lead to over-emphasis on the subject of English Language by our primary schools and by parents, hence**

**resulting in a lopsided development of the primary school curriculum.**

3.26 Those in support of using a school's "output factor" in assessing student ability take the view that the performance of EMI schools in the HKCEE should be sufficient to prove the effectiveness of their EMI teaching, thus obviating the need to take into account their "input factor". The Working Group has also carefully examined the feasibility of this option and consulted some stakeholders on how the standards of the "output factor" should be set. There are no definite answers to questions like whether the pass rate or credit rate in the public examinations or the value-addedness should be counted. If only the pass rate or the credit rate is counted, some would consider this unfair to those schools with relatively less able students but high value-addedness. If value-addedness is considered, it is possible that a top school may fail to meet the requirement since it is more difficult for the school to add value significantly, whereas a school with relatively less able students may find it easier to meet the requirement even though their HKCEE results are not impressive. Focusing on value-addedness would go against the original intent of having a student ability criterion. Besides, there are divergent views on how many of the best-performed subjects should be counted and whether one should count only the academic subjects when making the assessment on output.

3.27 To further complicate the issue, the HKCEE results of schools currently adopting mother-tongue teaching only serve to indicate their output under mother-tongue teaching. Could we then infer that CMI schools performing well in

the HKCEE would be capable of adopting EMI teaching? Furthermore, we are concerned that reference to the HKCEE results would lead to over-emphasis of examination results **at the expense of a balanced development of the curriculum and the whole-person development of students.**

3.28 There is also some controversy over the proposed scaling mechanism involving the use of the two most recently sampled pre-S1 HKATs to scale the primary schools' IA results of students proceeding to S1. Some consider such an approach unfair. Since we are also recommending the same scaling mechanism for SSPA, we shall discuss this issue in detail in Chapter 6.

### The Way Forward

3.29 **To conclude, we recommend to:**

- (a) **maintain the 40% and 85% thresholds for the student ability criterion but allow flexible arrangement to be made for “through-train” schools. The recommended flexible arrangement has been set out in paragraph 3.23.**
- (b) **maintain the Working Group’s original proposal on the mechanism to assess a student’s ability to learn in EMI (see paragraph 3.13).**



## Teacher Capability

### Original Proposal

3.30 In assessing whether teachers are capable to teach through English, the **basic requirement is that “teachers should be able to communicate the subject content to students intelligibly in English and that their use of English should have no adverse impact on students’ acquisition of the English language”**. The specific requirements are:

#### *Basic requirement*

- (a) **Grade C or above in English Language (Syllabus B) of the HKCEE or other recognized qualifications<sup>14</sup>, e.g. Band 6 or above in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) (academic domain).**
- (b) **Serving EMI teachers who have not attained the recognized qualifications may opt for classroom observation by subject experts and language experts.**

#### *Continuous professional development*

- (c) **Teachers should attend a minimum of 15 hours of EMI-related continuous professional development activities every three years.**

### Public Concerns

3.31 **There is general support for the above proposal. The public generally**

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<sup>14</sup> Recognized qualifications refer to qualifications which have been formally assessed by the authority concerned and confirmed by the EMB to have met the above requirement for EMI teachers.

**agrees that for quality assurance purpose, teachers should demonstrate their attainment of the prescribed level of English proficiency before they may teach in EMI.** Some ask for the setting of higher standards in order to enhance the public's confidence in our teachers. On the other hand, some teacher associations do not see the need for specifying separate MOI-related requirements since most serving secondary school teachers already possess degrees and professional qualifications as well as teaching experience. Others suggest that additional avenues should be provided for teachers to meet the requirement. There is also a suggestion that teachers should be allowed to meet the requirement by attending training sessions.

3.32 We would like to reiterate that apart from having professional knowledge in content subjects and good teaching pedagogy, EMI teachers must be proficient in English in order to communicate the subject contents effectively. Although most teachers have received teacher training and are basically equipped with professional knowledge and teaching pedagogies, they have not been assessed on their ability to teach in English in their teacher training programmes, as confirmed by the relevant teacher education institutions. As such, we need to lay down some basic requirements to ensure that teachers teaching in EMI are sufficiently proficient in English to communicate the subject contents effectively.

3.33 Using a Grade C or above in English Language (Syllabus B) of the HKCEE or other recognized qualifications as the starting point for the required English proficiency of EMI content subject teachers would **help alleviate undue pressure on**

**our teachers, as it is generally accepted that the HKCEE is a widely recognized public examination and that most of our teachers have sat for this examination.**

We note that after the release of the *Consultation Document*, some content subject teachers have attempted the IELTS. According to these teachers, the Working Group's proposed minimum standard would not pose any threat to them; rather it has made them more sensitive to the language aspect of their teaching.

3.34 Regarding the suggestion that teachers should be allowed to meet the requirement through training, the Working Group has consulted some course providers of teacher training and note that **the courses on offer carry no assessment or requirement on teachers' capability for EMI teaching, both upon student admission and in the end-of-course assessment.** It would therefore be difficult to determine whether EMI teachers, on completion of such courses, have met the requirement of being "able to communicate intelligibly in English and their use of English should have no adverse impact on students' acquisition of the English language". Even if new courses are to be developed for the purpose, we could hardly do away with the requirement for an assessment of English proficiency (pitched at a standard comparable to the recognized qualifications) upon completion of the courses. Seen in this light, the option of training would not really replace the need for some kind of formal testing, and teachers may as well sit for the tests which we have recommended. They may also prepare for the tests/examinations through attending language courses currently available.

## The Way Forward

3.35 The Working Group has refined the original proposal in the *Consultation Document*, including the recommendation that a larger number of recognized qualifications should be accepted for the purpose of the teacher capability requirement.

The revised recommendations are summarized below:

- (a) Specifically, **a Grade C or above in English Language (Syllabus B) of the HKCEE is taken as the basic requirement.**
- (b) **Teachers holding any one of the following qualifications<sup>15</sup> will also be regarded as having the ability to teach in English:**
  - (i) **Band 6 or above obtained in the IELTS (academic domain);**
  - (ii) **Grade D or above in Use of English obtained in the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE), or Grade D or above in Use of English obtained in the defunct University of Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination;**
  - (iii) **Grade C or above in English Language obtained in the defunct Hong Kong Higher Level Examination (HKHLE), or Grade C or above in English Language obtained in the defunct Chinese University of Hong Kong Matriculation Examination;**
  - (iv) **a pass or above in English of the General Certificate of Ordinary Level (Overseas) Examination;**
  - (v) **a pass or above in English of the General Certificate of**

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<sup>15</sup> Some of the qualifications have a validity period. However, we consider that the qualification should continue to be recognized even after its expiry date and teachers need not re-sit the test regularly.

**Examinations (London Examinations);**

- (vi) **a pass or above in English (First/Second) Language of the International General Certificate of Secondary Education Examination;**
- (vii) **a score of 210 (computer-based) or 550 (paper-based) or above in the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL);**
- (viii) **having met the Language Proficiency Requirements (English) (only the four parts on reading, writing, listening and speaking are required); or**
- (ix) **possessing Membership of the Institute of Linguists (MIL) (having studied in courses related to the English language).**

It is noted that some of the qualifications above (e.g. items (iv) to (vii)) do not carry any oral assessment. As the oral skill of teachers is crucial to their teaching through English, we consider that **qualifications which do not contain an element of oral assessment should not be applicable to new teachers or teachers switching to teach through English. This restriction, however, does not apply to serving EMI teachers<sup>16</sup> who already have considerable experience in teaching through English.**

- (c) **Serving EMI teachers, who do not possess any one of the above qualifications, can opt for classroom observation by subject experts and language experts. We recommend that the EMB should set**

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<sup>16</sup> Referring to teachers who have used English as the MOI to teach one or more subjects in not less than two school years between September 1998 and August 2006.

**up an expert panel to work out the operational details and assessment criteria, and to monitor the implementation.** Members of the panel should include language experts, subject experts, school principals, teachers, and Government officials, etc. If everything goes well, we hope to start inviting applications for classroom observation beginning from the 2006/07 school year and to complete the observation of all applications received by the end of the 2008/09 school year.

- (d) Teachers should **attend a minimum of 15 hours of EMI-related continuous professional development activities every three years.**

## **Support Measures**

### Original Proposal

3.36 Schools using English as the MOI should **purposefully and strategically provide a language environment conducive to learning English.** They should set out the related support strategies and specific measures in their school development plans and annual reports. The related strategies include:

- (a) **strengthening the teaching and learning of English as a subject** with a view to enhancing students' English proficiency, and in so doing better facilitate their learning of the other subjects through English;
- (b) **creating an English-rich environment** to increase students' exposure to English inside and outside the classroom; and
- (c) **devising well-designed bridging programmes** to help S1 students

switch from CMI to EMI learning.

The EMB would assess and monitor the implementation of the support measures under the existing framework of quality assurance and schools' self-evaluation.

### Public Concerns

3.37 **The public in general supports the above proposal.** In consideration of the fact that individual schools vary in terms of background, student profiles, development directions and strategies for resources deployment, the Working Group proposes that there should not be a one-size-fits-all approach to assessing the adequacy of the support strategies and measures proposed by a school adopting EMI teaching. The education sector responds positively to this suggestion.

3.38 There is a general consensus in the education sector that promoting language-across-the-curriculum would help enhance the effectiveness of EMI learning and that there is considerable room for existing EMI schools to strengthen their efforts in this regard. There are some concerns that individual EMI schools are not really providing an English immersion environment for their students, in that they only use EMI in teaching the academic subjects (e.g. History, Geography, Biology, Chemistry, etc.) as required under the MOI policy, while making excessive use of the discretion allowed under the policy to use Chinese in teaching many of the non-academic subjects (e.g. Music, Physical Education, Visual Arts, Religious Studies, etc.) and also in conducting school activities (e.g. weekly assembly, school announcements, etc.). Critics believe that these schools have only carried the name of "EMI schools" without

making genuine efforts to achieve the objectives of EMI teaching.

3.39 We share the view that **learning of English through language-across-the-curriculum and the provision of a total immersion environment are important support measures for EMI teaching. These measures give students extensive exposure to English and in so doing help them master the content subject knowledge and raise their English proficiency concurrently.**

#### The Way Forward

3.40 In view of the above considerations, we recommend, in addition to the Working Group's originally proposed strategies (see paragraph 3.36), that EMI schools should also:

- (a) **strengthen the learning of English through language-across-the-curriculum** by promoting collaboration between English Language teachers and content subject teachers, so that students can master the vocabulary, terms and expressions in each subject to support their learning through English; and
- (b) **adopt English as the MOI in non-academic subjects as far as possible.**



## **MOI Arrangements at School Level**

### **Streaming Arrangement**

#### Original Proposal

3.41 In the *Consultation Document*, the Working Group proposes that for the MOI arrangements at school level, **the between-school streaming approach should be maintained at junior secondary levels. Under this approach, the majority of our secondary schools would adopt mother tongue as the mainstream MOI. There is no objection to some schools choosing to adopt English as the MOI if they fulfill the prescribed criteria. In other words, the within-school approach (i.e. adopting EMI teaching by class or by subject) should not be adopted in the schools concerned at junior secondary levels.**

#### Public Concerns

3.42 During the consultation period, there were diverse views and wide discussion about the streaming arrangement. Other options for MOI streaming have been suggested by different groups of respondents, which can be summarized as follows:

- Option (1) Subject to the prescribed objective criteria being met, schools can adopt Chinese or English as the MOI by class according to the ability of students.
- Option (2) The requirement on student ability should be raised such that

only a very small number of secondary schools which can really provide a total English immersion environment can become EMI schools. All other secondary schools may adopt “bilingual teaching” under which Chinese will be the principal MOI, with a certain percentage of the lesson time devoted to EMI teaching. On top of English Language lessons, the percentage can be increased gradually from S1 to S3, up to not more than 30% of the total lesson time. Within the maximum percentage, schools can adopt EMI teaching by subject or by module.

Option (3) The percentage of lesson time allowed for EMI teaching for individual schools can be increased according to the proportion of EMI-capable students. For example, a school is allowed to allocate, on top of English Language lessons, 15% of the total lesson time for EMI teaching if 25% of its students are EMI-capable. The corresponding percentages can be increased to 25%, 45% or 65% if the proportion of EMI-capable students is 50%, 85% or 100% respectively.

Option (4) The between-school streaming approach proposed by the Working Group is supported, but the percentage of lesson time allowed for extended learning conducted in EMI should be increased.

Option (5) The between-school streaming approach proposed by the

Working Group is supported, but more resources should be provided for schools adopting mother-tongue teaching so as to attain the goal of “upholding mother-tongue teaching and enhancing English proficiency concurrently”.

3.43 We have kept an open mind in assessing the feasibility of the above options. **A fundamental principle is that the option to be selected must be consistent with our promotion of mother-tongue teaching and our mission to facilitate all-round development of students, and should build on the present circumstances.** Our analyses of the above options are given in the following paragraphs.

*Option (1): Adopting EMI teaching by class according to student ability*

3.44 This is a **within-school streaming approach** under which schools choosing to adopt EMI teaching are still subject to prescribed criteria and requirement. Detailed analysis of this approach has already been set out in the *Consultation Document*. In brief, schools fulfilling the prescribed criteria described in paragraphs 3.29, 3.35 and 3.40 may adopt Chinese or English as the MOI by class, the latter subject to the proportion of their EMI-capable students. Theoretically, this can better cater for the diverse needs and abilities of students. However, in practice, it will aggravate the **labelling effect and competition among schools**. Since the number of EMI classes operated in a school would be seen as a reflection of the academic standing of its S1 intake, it would be conveniently used as an “indicator” of how “good” a school is. Quite undesirably, schools with full adoption of EMI may be

taken as grade one schools, and the grade drops in tandem with the decreasing number or proportion of EMI classes, with eventually, schools fully adopting mother-tongue teaching being misinterpreted as the bottom grade schools. It would, in effect, create multiple labelling among schools. Some people are of the view that such labelling pressure can be a driving force for schools to make improvement. That said, should the so-called “improvement” be oriented towards the pursuit of more EMI classes? Would the educational objective be distorted and would the all-round development of students be sacrificed when schools concentrate on pursuing such biased “improvement”? As the number of EMI classes that can be operated by a school at S1 may vary across years according to the academic standards of student intake, would this option cause administrative chaos and long-term instability in the teaching environment?

3.45 During the consultation period, some students whom the Working Group has consulted specifically objected to MOI streaming by class. They point out that such an arrangement would subject students to **within-school labelling** in their everyday school life. Moreover, students are worried that if they are studying in CMI classes in one year, their parents may exert pressure on them to switch to EMI classes in the following year. Some educators point out that while students are building up self-image during their junior secondary education, the within-school labelling of students may have adverse impact on them. Separately, if schools conduct annual assessments to determine students’ suitability for switch between EMI and CMI classes when they proceed to a higher level, this will **distort the junior secondary**

**curriculum and oblige some students to face repeated switches between EMI and CMI teaching during the three years of junior secondary education.** Not only would this exert unnecessary pressure on students, it would also adversely affect their learning effectiveness.

3.46 Some teacher associations have expressed concern about the possible **heavy workload and pressure brought about by the within-school streaming by class.** They anticipate a significant increase in teachers' workload as they will be required to prepare teaching materials and examination papers in both Chinese and English and to devise different teaching pedagogies and support measures for different MOI classes. Moreover, teacher associations are worried that there may be a demarcation between teachers teaching classes of different MOI, thereby causing unnecessary hurdles in their collaboration.

3.47 We share the above concerns. There is strong support for setting prescribed criteria for EMI teaching. However, for **so long as we apply the prescribed criteria to students or schools, there must be some who can meet the criteria and some who do not. This will, inevitably, give rise to the so-called "labelling effect", if there is any.** In fact, labelling originates from social values which would change over time. We believe that if the Government and schools can strengthen their efforts in **further enhancing the effectiveness of mother-tongue teaching, the labelling effect should diminish over time.** This is reflected from the tendency that more and more parents opt for quality CMI schools. Besides, for **as**

**long as there are criteria** and objective standards, there will be, **unavoidably, “marginal” cases. The crux of the issue is that mother-tongue teaching is based on sound education philosophy and can enhance learning effectiveness.** Therefore, even if a school has admitted many EMI-capable students, it is still in the interest of students to adopt mother-tongue teaching.

3.48 We are aware of the limitations of the between-school streaming approach. In spite of this, we appreciate that it has attracted considerable support. Based on the views received, we have summarized the merits of this approach as follows:

- (a) **It helps consolidate the mother-tongue teaching policy which has begun to bear fruit.** As public-sector secondary schools will continue to be predominantly CMI schools, they, with the same MOI, will have a “fair competition” and can develop their own characteristics. Schools can also capitalize on the relatively greater space for school development, and deploy their energy and efforts for the realization of their education philosophy.
- (b) Parents will have a clear expectation of a school’s MOI when making school choices for their children, and would hence avoid having any “false hope”. The **labelling effect** associated with the between-school streaming approach is unlikely to fade away in the short term, but the effect is at least **less** than that to be brought about by the within-school streaming approach. The between-school streaming approach can also avoid possible arguments between schools and parents on

placement of students to different MOI classes. On the whole, it **helps minimize the unhealthy comparison between students within a school as well as the within-school labelling, and helps foster a school culture marked by unity and harmony.**

- (c) **Teachers** need not prepare bilingual versions of teaching materials and examination papers for classes of different MOIs. They would therefore **have more time to cater for the other learning needs of the students, pursue professional development and enhance teaching effectiveness.**
- (d) Without prejudice to students' learning of content subjects, CMI schools may, having regard to the ability of students, **adopt a progressive approach to increase their students' exposure to subject-related English** through extended learning activities (see paragraphs 4.10 - 4.15). **This may also help students adapt to possible switch to EMI teaching at senior secondary or university levels.**
- (e) **Under a more stable teaching environment, secondary schools can focus more on language education,** development of quality teaching contents and effective strategies, as well as enhancement of students' biliteracy and trilingualism. In time, this would help reduce the labelling effect arising from the different MOIs adopted by schools.

*Option (2): Tightening the requirement for EMI teaching and allowing more lesson time for EMI teaching in CMI schools*

3.49 The education body putting forward this option agrees in principle to the between-school streaming approach. To minimize the labelling effect arising from this approach, they propose to raise the requirement on student ability for EMI teaching with a view to **substantially reducing the number of schools adopting English as the MOI**. We are concerned, however, that this suggestion, similar to the other suggestion of requiring all secondary schools to adopt mother-tongue teaching (see paragraphs 3.4 - 3.6 above), would **go against the aspiration of the society**.

3.50 We support in principle the suggestion to increase the lesson time for EMI teaching in CMI schools. We note that students who are learning through the mother tongue generally wish to have more exposure to subject-related English vocabulary and reading materials. This would help brush up their English and facilitate their smooth transition to EMI learning in future if necessary. **The amount of lesson time that may possibly be allocated for EMI teaching** must take into account the actual circumstances and **must not undermine students' learning of the content subjects**.

3.51 Some have suggested that so long as a school does not go beyond the permitted lesson time for EMI teaching, it should be given the flexibility to adopt EMI teaching by subject. In this regard, the Working Group has sounded out many school principals and teachers on their choice of subjects for EMI teaching if such a "by subject" arrangement is allowed. Most have indicated that they would then go for



EMI teaching in Science subjects and in Mathematics, as these subjects are not language-loaded. Ironically, some others point out that the mother tongue should be the best MOI for learning these subjects which involve relatively more abstract concepts. If these subjects are taught through English, students would have to cope with double language barriers of learning given the special terminologies and language systems. We are of the view that **if schools are to adopt EMI teaching only for subjects which are less language-loaded, there would only be minimal impact on enhancing students' English proficiency. For students not competent enough to learn through English, the arrangement may even have an adverse effect on their interest in, and their learning of, the relevant content subjects.** As a result, the learning of both the content subjects and of English would be compromised.

*Option (3): Increasing the lesson time for EMI teaching according to student ability*

3.52 This option would tempt people to devise a more elaborate school labelling schema by drawing up a “league table” of schools according to the proportion of lesson time they can allocate for EMI teaching. This again would create **multiple labelling** among schools. Moreover, a high percentage of EMI lesson time **would in practice involve EMI teaching on a “by subject” basis**, the problems of which have already been mentioned in paragraph 3.51 above.

*Option (4) Increasing the lesson time allowed for English-medium extended learning activities in CMI schools while implementing the between-school streaming*

3.53 CMI schools and their students are concerned about the transition to EMI learning at senior secondary levels. The education sector (including students) generally agrees that schools intending to switch to EMI teaching at S4 need to progressively put in place adequate bridging and support measures for their junior secondary students, including the introduction of subject-related English vocabulary and text types starting from S1. For students not switching to EMI learning at S4 or above, they regard that extended learning in EMI will also have positive effects on their learning of English. We shall address this issue in greater details in paragraph 3.55 below.

*Option (5) Providing additional resources for CMI schools while implementing the between-school streaming*

3.54 This option is along the line of the Working Group's thinking. Basically, we agree to the suggestion and have given further thoughts to the subject in the past few months. We shall address this subject in greater details in paragraph 3.55 below.

### The Way Forward

3.55 Having considered the pros and cons of the various options and the issues involved, we **recommend** that:

- (a) **With students' effective learning and whole-person development as**

**the overriding concern, the Government should uphold the current between-school streaming at junior secondary levels, with mother-tongue teaching being practised by the majority of secondary schools. This will help consolidate the development of mother-tongue teaching which has begun to bear fruit. A school should adopt the same MOI in all junior secondary classes.**

- (b) For schools adopting mother-tongue teaching, the core contents of each non-language subject should be taught in the mother tongue to ensure learning effectiveness. However, **without prejudice to the learning of non-language subjects, schools may allocate, systematically and strategically, some lesson time for extended learning activities conducted in English<sup>17</sup>** and the proportion of lesson time allocated for the purpose can be increased gradually from S1 to S3. **The lesson time allocated for extended learning activities should not exceed 15%, 20% and 25% of the total lesson time at S1, S2 and S3 respectively.** However, we must stress that this is not “bilingual teaching”<sup>18</sup> as some people have suggested since the core contents of

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<sup>17</sup> The traditional learning in the subject of English Language focuses on the use and structure of the language, including grammatical rules, skills of usage, etc. In the present proposal, the focus is on enhancing students’ use of English as a learning tool. Since students have mastered the core elements of the subject content and relevant concepts, they would be able to be engaged in extended learning with the use of English in subject or cross-curricular contents.

<sup>18</sup> In fact, there is no consistent definition for bilingual teaching among the various sectors of the community. Some consider it as using a second language to teach all subjects; some consider it as using a second language to teach some subjects or some themes; some consider it as emphasizing on learning the first and second languages at the same time.

each non-language subject should still be taught in the mother tongue (see paragraphs 4.10 - 4.16 for the strategies for conducting extended learning activities).

- (c) The Government should **provide more additional resources for schools adopting mother-tongue teaching** to strengthen the teaching and learning of English (see paragraphs 4.18 - 4.21).

## **Review Mechanism**

### Original Proposal

3.56 **The Working Group proposes in the *Consultation Document* that:**

- (a) **A six-year review mechanism be introduced for examining whether schools adopting English as the MOI still fulfill the prescribed criteria. For the sake of fairness, other schools fulfilling the prescribed criteria are also allowed to switch to EMI teaching.**
- (b) **The EMB should assess the percentage of S1 EMI-capable students in each secondary school annually on the basis of the method described in paragraph 3.13 above. The percentages obtained in the first to fourth years of the six-year review cycle will be used for the secondary school's reference only, whereas the average percentage of the fifth and sixth years will be used to decide whether the school has satisfied the criterion on student ability for EMI teaching.** As for the other two criteria, namely teacher capability

and support measures, schools intending to adopt English as the MOI should demonstrate that the two criteria have been met when submitting an application to the EMB.

- (c) Schools **changing their MOI status should announce their arrangements one year before implementation** in order to dovetail with the SSPA application procedures. Any changes **should start with the S1 classes** and progress each year to a higher grade level. The MOI that is being adopted by other grade levels will remain unchanged.

### Public Concerns

3.57 Overall speaking, the public **accepts the introduction of a review mechanism** and considers it a reasonable and positive approach to safeguard the quality of EMI teaching. There are diverse views, however, over the implementation details. While it is generally considered appropriate to conduct the review every six years, some are of the view that the interval should be shortened. Some suggest that the first review should not take place too soon in order to allow sufficient time for schools to get prepared.

3.58 There are also diverse views regarding the schools that should be subject to review. Some consider that the review should only apply to existing EMI schools so that any EMI school not meeting the prescribed criteria would be required to switch to mother-tongue teaching. They are of the view that a review would not be necessary

in the case of CMI schools, as these schools should continue to practise mother tongue teaching which is considered the most effective MOI. On the other hand, some parents and schools argue that those schools which have all along been using English as the MOI should be allowed to retain their tradition, and be exempted from any review which would unnecessarily create instability and bring about undue pressure and anxiety to schools.

3.59 We are of the view that for so long as secondary schools are required to meet the prescribed criteria before they can adopt English as the MOI, it is **necessary to put in place a regular review mechanism for quality assurance purpose. Exempting individual schools from the review would neither be fair to other schools nor beneficial to students.** Although CMI schools fulfilling the prescribed criteria for EMI teaching may choose to change their MOI, we would urge them to uphold their education philosophy and the current MOI. Afterall, these well-performing and popular secondary schools can best demonstrate the benefits of mother-tongue teaching. With the implementation of the English-medium extended learning activities (see paragraph 3.55) and other strategies for enhancing students' English proficiency as suggested in Chapter 4, these schools would be able to capitalize on mother-tongue teaching and attain high level of English proficiency at the same time. Hopefully, these measures would convince the schools that they could do equally well in promoting English proficiency without switching to EMI teaching.

## The Way Forward

3.60 We **recommend maintaining the original proposal on the six-year review cycle** (see paragraph 3.56) so that schools can develop their teaching and learning in a relatively more stable MOI environment.

## **Implementation Date**

### Original Proposal

3.61 The new MOI arrangements for secondary schools can be **implemented** starting with the S1 classes **from September 2008** at the earliest.

### Public Concerns

3.62 Some consider that there is no imminent need for making revisions to the existing MOI arrangements, and that any changes to the MOI policy and the SSPA mechanism should be implemented at different times. This would help reduce the pressure on schools as they adapt to the changes involved.

3.63 We agree that if the revised SSPA mechanism and MOI arrangements for secondary schools are implemented at more or less the same time (in 2007 and 2008 respectively as in the original proposal), some schools may have to prepare for the changes concurrently. Having regard also to the preparation work for the new senior secondary academic structure to be implemented in 2009, schools may find it difficult to manage all the changes. Moreover, **deferring the implementation of the revised MOI arrangements would allow schools** (in particular the feeder/nominated schools

and schools intending to form “through-trains”) **to have a better grasp of the ability profiles of a few more S1 cohorts under the revised SSPA mechanism, which would in turn help the schools get better prepared** for the implementation of the revised MOI arrangements. In addition, since the students proceeding to S1 in September 2009 will be the **first cohort of students whose IA results would be scaled by the results of two pre-S1 HKATs (i.e. 2006 and 2008), it is fairer to take into account the ability of this cohort of students** in reviewing whether a school meets the student ability criterion.

### The Way Forward

3.64 Having carefully considered the implementation timetables of various important education initiatives and the views of different parties, we **recommend that the revised MOI arrangements for secondary schools be implemented starting from the 2010/2011 school year**, i.e. if a school changes its MOI status as a result of the review, the change will apply to the students proceeding to S1 in the 2010/11 school year and progress each year to a higher grade level.

3.65 Schools wishing to adopt English as the MOI starting from the 2010/11 school year should demonstrate to the EMB that they have satisfied the two criteria on teacher capability and support measures before the end of the 2008/09 school year. The ability of the S1 intake in 2008 and 2009 will be taken into account in determining whether a school has met the student ability criterion (i.e. whether the average of the proportion of EMI-capable S1 students in these two years has reached 85%). The



EMB will notify the schools of their application results by the end of 2009 (i.e. before the DP process for the S1 intake of the following school year commences). In order to give secondary schools an idea of the ability of their S1 intake as early as possible, the EMB may consider providing schools with information on the ability of their S1 intake<sup>19</sup> according to the SSPA results on a yearly basis. Existing EMI schools may switch to mother-tongue teaching even before the review mechanism takes effect, and should announce their decisions before the admission process of S1 students for the following school year commences.

## **MOI Arrangements at Senior Secondary Levels**

### Original Proposal

3.66 The Working Group recommends in the *Consultation Document* that secondary schools adopting mother-tongue teaching at junior secondary levels **may adopt English as the MOI for certain subjects in some classes at senior secondary levels, subject to the fulfillment of the prescribed criteria of student ability, teacher capability and support measures.**

### Public Concerns

3.67 **The public generally supports the Working Group's proposed MOI arrangements at senior secondary levels, under which schools adopting**

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<sup>19</sup> Since the new scaling mechanism will take effect from 2007 onwards, the EMB may then provide secondary schools with information on their S1 intake on a yearly basis as from 2007. The average of the results of the pre-S1 HKAT to be conducted in July 2006 and the results of the last AAT will be used to scale the primary schools' IA results of students proceeding to S1 in 2007 and 2008. Starting from 2009, the average of the results of the two most recently sampled pre-S1 HKATs will be used to scale the primary schools' IA results of students proceeding to S1 (e.g. the sampled results in 2006 and 2008 can be used for scaling in 2009).

mother-tongue teaching are allowed the flexibility to use English as the MOI for certain subjects in some classes. Some are concerned, however, that such flexibility may cause adaptation problems for students. The education sector and students have also expressed concern over the transition. On the other hand, some schools adopting English as the MOI are concerned about how the new subject of Liberal Studies, which is a compulsory subject under the new academic structure for senior secondary education, could be taught effectively through English.

3.68 We note the growth potential of students, particularly at junior secondary levels. Having built a foundation in content subject learning and English language after the nine-year basic education, students should have registered an enhancement in overall performance and in English proficiency, and hence may be better prepared to learn through English at senior secondary levels. Separately, in order to better prepare senior secondary students to meet future academic and career challenges, schools are expected to offer a diversified curriculum for these students so that they can opt for their own learning path according to their ability and development. As such, there is a practical need to allow some flexibility in the MOI arrangements at senior secondary levels.

3.69 That said, we concur with the proposal in the *Consultation Document* that schools should still be required to satisfy the three prescribed criteria of student ability, teacher capability and school support measures before they can switch to EMI teaching at senior secondary levels. In respect of student ability, we fully agree that it is

undesirable to introduce any new external assessment. The existing internal assessment tools of schools (such as examinations conducted as a normal part of the curriculum) should be used instead so as to avoid creating any additional and unnecessary pressure on students. Students' learning attitude and ability can also be assessed by making reference to their performance inside and outside the classroom. Since schools should have a clear idea of their students' ability by then, they should be able to make professional judgment on the choice of MOI for their senior secondary students. Moreover, we believe that the imminence of public examinations at the end of senior secondary education would induce schools, parents and students to make pragmatic and realistic choices of MOI.

3.70 Teachers using EMI at senior secondary levels should also meet the teacher capability criterion as stipulated in paragraph 3.35 above. Schools are also required to fulfill the criterion on support measures as stipulated in paragraph 3.40. Our recommendations on extended learning activities and the use of learning materials in both Chinese and English by teachers and students as stipulated in paragraphs 3.55 and 4.17 respectively can also help facilitate a smoother transition to EMI learning at senior secondary levels. Besides, with the implementation of the new academic structure for senior secondary education, students should have more time to adapt to and master the learning in English during the three years of senior secondary education.

3.71 We note that Liberal Studies aims at encouraging students to apply and

consolidate what they have learned from different disciplines, explore and analyze into discussion topics and modules, form their own opinions and develop critical thinking. Students who are able to learn other content subjects in English should be able to learn Liberal Studies in English as well. Nevertheless, some schools are concerned that the teaching materials for some of the core modules in Liberal Studies, in particular those themes involving Chinese culture, are mainly sourced from newspapers, magazines and website in the Chinese medium. They believe that students would better comprehend and understand the relevant themes if the teaching and discussion for these modules are conducted in Chinese. Moreover, the schools are unsure as to whether teachers and students could adapt to the learning of Chinese culture through English and through the use of teaching materials translated into English.

### The Way Forward

3.72 We recommend that **schools intending to switch to EMI teaching for certain subjects or in some classes at senior secondary levels should be required to include in their school development plans and annual reports details of their MOI arrangements as endorsed by the School Management Committee, including ways for assessing students' ability to learn effectively through EMI and whether the criteria of teacher capability and support measures have been met.** The EMB should, where necessary, **conduct focus inspections to assess the appropriateness of the MOI arrangements adopted by schools.**

3.73 For **schools adopting English as the MOI at junior secondary levels,**

**they should continue with EMI teaching at senior secondary levels and maintain an English immersion environment. In principle, schools adopting EMI teaching should teach Liberal Studies through English. However, the EMB may make reference to the following principles in determining which modules/themes in Liberal Studies may be allowed to be taught in Chinese by schools adopting English as the MOI :**

- (a) **The modules concerned involve Chinese culture and the key teaching materials are available in Chinese only** (to be recommended by the Curriculum Development Council); and
- (b) **Students are given the option to answer the questions related to those modules in public examinations in Chinese or English** (the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority to render support when developing the public examinations concerned).

### **MOI Arrangements for Schools Joining the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS)**

#### Original Proposal

3.74 The Working Group proposes in the *Consultation Document* that **DSS schools would also have to meet the prescribed criteria of student ability, teacher capability and support measures if they are to adopt English as the MOI.** Under this guiding principle, DSS schools may maintain the current flexibility<sup>20</sup> in that they may adopt EMI teaching by class. However, since an immersion mode is more effective in overcoming the barriers of learning through a second language, the

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<sup>20</sup> For details, see Circular Memorandum No. 532/99 issued by the EMB on 22 September 1999.

Working Group **does not recommend that DSS schools adopt different MOI for different subjects.**

### Public Concerns

3.75 DSS secondary schools and some respondents agree that there should be more flexibility for DSS schools in respect of the MOI arrangements. There are views, however, that the MOI arrangements for public-sector secondary schools should also apply to DSS schools, since DSS schools are after all receiving subsidies from the Government.

3.76 Some other respondents argue that in considering the MOI arrangements for DSS schools, the concept and rationale of DSS and the ways in which DSS schools operate should be taken into account. The DSS aims to promote diversity in the education system and provide parents with more choices.

3.77 Some DSS schools have pointed out that since they recruit students from all over the territory and from different sources, there may be greater cross-year fluctuations in student intake in both number and quality. DSS schools are also highly diversified. For instance, some admit students of various ethnic origins; some are senior secondary schools; some offer non-traditional subjects. They have to respond promptly through curriculum adaptation, changes in teaching strategies and MOI arrangements in order to cater for the diverse learning needs of students. As such, they need to flexibly apply the MOI arrangements so that they are allowed to

adopt different MOI for different classes according to the student ability. This, however, does not imply that DSS schools can abuse such flexibility. The EMB has an established and effective assessment and monitoring mechanism for DSS schools. Past experiences show that should a school adopt any MOI practices which are inconsistent with its professed education philosophy, the EMB would take appropriate measures and would require the school to rectify the situation as and when necessary.

### The Way Forward

**3.78 We uphold the Working Group’s proposal that DSS secondary schools should meet the prescribed criteria of student ability, teacher capability and support measures if they choose to adopt English as the MOI. However, they should not be allowed to use different MOI for different subjects at junior secondary levels.** For the criteria on teacher capability and support measures, the requirements as stipulated in paragraphs 3.35 and 3.40 should be met. DSS schools which adopt mother-tongue teaching may also conduct extended learning in English under the same arrangement proposed for public-sector secondary schools.

**3.79 DSS schools are also required to enhance transparency and accountability. Apart from the EMB’s monitoring mechanism, DSS schools should set out in their school development plans and annual reports the MOI arrangements and the supporting educational considerations, implementation strategies and their readiness for EMI teaching** (e.g. details on the present situation and future development of student ability, teacher capability and support measures as

well as their assessment on the effectiveness of the MOI adopted).



## Chapter 4      **Enhancing English Proficiency while Capitalizing on Mother-tongue Teaching**

### **Background**

4.1            Hong Kong is part of China as well as an international city where the East meets the West. Against this background, we need to train up our younger generation to become biliterate and trilingual. Since our students do not have much exposure to English in their daily life, and given the fact that the language structure of English is fundamentally different from that of Chinese, we do have to put in greater efforts to increase the English proficiency of our students. Over the past years, the Government has invested significant resources in schools for enhancing students' English proficiency (see [Annex 6](#)) and with good results. Although there have been concerns that mother-tongue teaching will reduce exposure to English, we are convinced that there are many more effective ways to enhance students' English proficiency. In the following paragraphs, we shall set out our recommendations on how schools may further enhance students' English proficiency while practising mother-tongue teaching.

### **Key to Enhancing English Proficiency**

4.2            We would like to reiterate that **using English as the MOI and learning English are two different issues**. Using English as the MOI in learning content subjects will not automatically enhance students' English proficiency. By strengthening English language education and enriching the English environment on

campus, our schools can indeed enhance English proficiency while practising mother-tongue teaching.

4.3 The EMB earlier commissioned The University of Hong Kong to conduct a study on “Good Practices in Secondary Schools for Enhancing Students’ English Learning Proficiency” during 2003 and 2004. The study has concluded that the following good practices adopted by schools will effectively enhance students’ English proficiency:

- (a) Schools have maximized resources and opportunities for students to engage in the meaningful use of English (e.g. schools have effectively deployed manpower resources by including students, parents, alumni, Native-speaking English Teachers (NETs) and native-speaking English students from international schools; schools have also made good use of learning materials available on the Internet, television programmes, movies and newspapers);
- (b) Apart from the English Language teachers, other subject teachers, library teachers and non-teaching staff, etc. are involved in the promotion of English language learning. Parents and non-English subject teachers are also made aware that they play an important role in enhancing students’ English proficiency;
- (c) Teachers have a thorough understanding of the curriculum design and teaching resources, the basic principles for English learning and the relevant teaching pedagogy. Moreover, they are allowed enough

flexibility in curriculum tailoring to address the particular needs of their students;

- (d) The formal and informal curricula have been integrated so that students are given sufficient opportunities in applying and brushing up their English in an authentic language environment outside the classroom;
- (e) Teachers have provided students with the necessary scaffolding (e.g. guidelines, samples, etc.) to perform activities or tasks in English; and
- (f) A school culture that is positive, non-threatening and collaborative is created so that students are encouraged to take risks with the use of English through mutual support and encouragement. Professional collaboration such as collaborative lesson planning and peer classroom observation is also strengthened with a view to sustaining the effectiveness of English teaching.

4.4 The study has reaffirmed that **the above good practices for learning English can be adopted irrespective of a school's MOI. Not only can the good practices be carried out under the formal curriculum, they can also be applied outside the classroom in the form of extended learning activities.** We are also of the view that language learning hinges on the learning attitude, determination and perseverance of students. It is therefore important to develop students' initiative, motivation, interest and confidence in learning.

4.5 In fact, a considerable number of schools adopting Chinese as the MOI have

already deployed different strategies to raise students' interest in learning English. Some students learning through the mother tongue have also taken the initiative to pursue high standards in English. Some of these successful cases have been documented in the *Booklet on Good Practices in English Language Education* published in January 2005 and uploaded onto the EMB website. The exemplary schools have encouraged students to make reference to English learning materials as much as possible (such as web-based resources and publications) while learning the content subjects through the mother tongue. They are also keen in creating an English-rich environment, and in promoting reading and writing as well as applying English in school activities and daily life. It is noted that, in general, individuals who have successfully acquired good English have made use of every opportunity in everyday life to expose themselves to English, e.g. by reading English newspapers, magazines, notices and even the directions on food products and other goods, and by listening to radio/television programmes, etc.

#### Original Proposal

4.6 In the *Consultation Document*, the Working Group has proposed the following:

- (a) Schools adopting Chinese as the MOI may **allocate, on top of English Language lessons, not more than 15% of the total lesson time in S1 - S3 for extended learning activities conducted in English.**
- (b) The Government should continue to provide additional resources for

schools adopting Chinese as the MOI<sup>21</sup>, and should enhance the flexibility for resources deployment by **giving these schools the option of a cash grant in lieu of part or all of such additional teaching posts.**

- (c) **Irrespective of the MOI adopted, students should make good use of learning materials written in both Chinese and English.**

### Public Concerns

4.7 The **direction** proposed by the Working Group **has received general support from the community and the education sector.** There is also a **strong consensus** in the community **that more resources should be made available for schools adopting mother-tongue teaching to strengthen their efforts in “upholding mother-tongue teaching and enhancing English proficiency concurrently”.** Furthermore, the school sector and many of the students we have met during consultation wish that the time allocated for English-medium extended learning should increase incrementally as students progress to a higher grade level so as to increase students’ exposure to English and to better prepare for possible transition to EMI

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<sup>21</sup> According to the Code of Aid for Secondary Schools, schools in which Chinese is fully used as the MOI in S1 to S3 are provided with additional English teachers. The number of such teachers is assessed on the basis of the number of classes in S1 to S3: one additional teacher for schools with 14 or below classes, two for 15 to 23 classes, three for 24 to 29 classes and four for 30 to 35 classes.

For schools continuing to use Chinese as the MOI in S4 and S5, they will be provided with another additional English teacher according to the total number of classes at these two levels and their percentage of CMI teaching (Remarks: Schools with a total of four or more S4 and S5 classes and the CMI teaching percentage is equal to 25% or more; or schools with less than four S4 and S5 classes in total and their CMI teaching percentage is 50% or more).

learning at senior secondary or tertiary levels.

4.8 The EMB has looked into individual cases to see how schools adopting mother-tongue teaching deploy their existing additional resources for enhancing students' English proficiency. The case studies have indicated that most schools deploy the additional English teachers for split-class teaching. In some cases the additional teachers provide relief for existing teachers who may then spend more time in leading English learning activities. In other cases the additional teachers are deployed to run additional English lessons for students. Many schools adopting mother-tongue teaching consider that they would require additional resources to enhance students' English proficiency.

#### The Way Forward

4.9 Having considered the views from all quarters, the Working Group **recommends the following support measures for schools adopting mother-tongue teaching for the purpose of enhancing students' English proficiency:**

- (a) **Facilitate schools to conduct EMI extended learning activities;**
- (b) **Encourage schools to maximize the use of Chinese and English teaching resources;**
- (c) **Provide additional resources;**
- (d) **Encourage the creation of an English-rich environment; and**
- (e) **Help schools enhance the teaching effectiveness of English Language.**

## **Strategies for Schools Adopting Mother-Tongue Teaching to Enhance English Proficiency**

### **Strategy (1) EMI extended learning activities**

4.10 We have set out our proposal on English-medium extended learning activities in paragraph 3.55. Having considered the views of schools and students, **we recommend that schools adopting Chinese as the MOI at junior secondary levels may, on top of language lessons, choose to allocate not more than 15%, 20% and 25% of the total lesson time at S1, S2 and S3 respectively in a progressive manner for conducting extended learning activities in English.** Within these upper limits, schools should adjust the percentage of lesson time concerned according to the ability and needs of students. **If extended learning activities are conducted at the subject level, the lesson time should also be capped at the above respective percentages, i.e. not more than 15% (at S1), 20% (at S2) and 25% (at S3) of the total lesson time of the subject.**

4.11 The EMI extended learning activities aims to give CMI students of different abilities more opportunities to use English as a learning tool. The depth and breadth of the extended learning contents should be designed flexibly to suit the different abilities and aptitudes of the students. **Since the core contents of the subjects will continue to be taught through the mother tongue, the normal progress and effectiveness of teaching should not be affected by the extended learning activities.** **The EMI-capability requirement of students participating in EMI extended learning may be applied flexibly.** Schools may allocate an appropriate percentage

of lesson time and design suitable extended learning activities according to students' ability and progress in learning the content subjects.

4.12 As teachers' ability directly affects teaching effectiveness, **teachers who will be conducting EMI extended learning activities are also required to meet the same requirement for EMI teachers as set out in paragraph 3.35.**

4.13 **To facilitate self-evaluation, schools offering EMI extended learning activities should work out a holistic strategy and the detailed arrangement for inclusion in their school development plans and annual school reports.** Since extended learning involves the learning of both the content subjects and the English Language subject, English Language teachers should work in close collaboration with content subject teachers to systematically expose students to the use of English in the context of the relevant subjects.

4.14 It is worth exploring how the time allocated for extended learning can be utilized effectively without prejudice to students' learning of content subjects. We understand that the effectiveness of extended learning hinges on how the extended learning activities are conducted. As rightly pointed out by the education sector, by making use of the extended learning time in a flexible and creative manner and integrating the extended learning activities with other learning activities, schools will be in a better position to capitalize on mother-tongue teaching while enhancing students' English proficiency. **We recommend that the EMB should conduct a**



**study** on extended learning in English with a view to collecting information on local and overseas experiences, developing effective learning models, trying out the models in some selected schools, providing professional support and conducting in-depth case studies. The objectives are to identify good practices and develop the necessary teaching materials for dissemination to schools.

4.15 Currently, we envisage that the extended learning activities may take one or more of the following forms:

- (a) Content subject teachers and English Language teachers may collaborate with one another and allocate a certain number of lessons per week cycle for conducting extended learning activities in the form of cross-curricular English enrichment programmes. They may draw reference from the EMB-commissioned English enrichment programme developed by The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology in 2001. Already tried out in 14 schools, the programme consists of 60 modules suitable for CMI students at S2 - S3 levels. The EMB has organized experience sharing sessions for other schools and uploaded the modules onto the EMB website.
- (b) Teachers may allocate some of the lesson time for individual content subjects or cross-curricular subjects during which they would use EMI to go through the relevant subject concepts and contents that have already been taught through the mother tongue. The revision can also be supplemented with a variety of illustrations or other learning

activities.

- (c) Teachers may spare some time during each lesson of the content subjects concerned for teaching the English vocabulary related to that lesson or for concluding the lesson/conducting discussion in English.
- (d) Teachers may, according to the curriculum contents, add on individual modules or themes to be taught in English.
- (e) Teachers may consider teaching certain subject content in English depending on the nature of the learning materials (e.g. when the materials obtained from the Internet are written in English).
- (f) Schools may strengthen the bridging programmes to facilitate a smooth transition for students who choose to switch to EMI learning at senior secondary levels.

4.16 Certainly schools may, having regard to their own characteristics and the needs of students, choose to conduct the extended learning activities in the mother tongue, thus enabling a deeper and broader treatment of the curriculum. Teachers may, for instance, conduct diversified learning activities which seek to explore daily life issues or socially controversial topics so as to sharpen students' capacity for creative and analytical thinking as well as decision-making – attributes which facilitate students to construct knowledge on their own.

### **Strategy (2) Chinese and English learning resources**

4.17 Chinese and English learning resources abound in the electronic age.

**Irrespective of the MOI, teachers should try to expose students to learning materials written in both Chinese and English.** Mother-tongue teaching does not imply that CMI students should confine themselves to Chinese resources; students should also make reference to materials expressed in English. Similarly, EMI students should also draw reference from Chinese materials to enrich their learning experience. As English is an international language, plenty of reference materials, such as books, magazines, websites, textbooks and programmes communicated by the electronic media are available in English. **Students should not regard English just as a language subject; they should also regard English as a learning tool for direct access to, and comprehension of, information and the latest knowledge worldwide.** Teachers teaching through the mother tongue should encourage students to make reference to first-hand learning materials written in English.

### **Strategy (3) Provision of additional resources**

#### Enhancing deployment flexibility of existing resources

4.18 We recommend that the Government should continue to provide the existing additional resources, including the additional English teachers (see Annex 6). Moreover, the Government should provide schools with greater flexibility in the deployment of such resources by allowing existing schools the option of a **cash grant in lieu of part or all of such additional teaching posts.**

#### Allocating additional resources to set up an English enhancement scheme

4.19 Making reference to the EMB-commissioned research study conducted by

The University of Hong Kong (see paragraph 4.3) and some successful cases (see paragraph 4.5), we recommend that **extra resources should be provided to promote the teaching measures which are proven to be feasible and effective, to encourage schools to attach greater importance to the undertaking of enhancing students' English proficiency, and to help teachers adjust their teaching strategies.** Having examined the deployment of existing resources, we would like to stress that in providing additional resources, the Government must ensure that **the resources would be used strategically and assess the effectiveness of the strategies introduced by measuring their impact on students' English proficiency.**

4.20 The Government has undertaken in the Policy Address to top up the Language Fund for strengthening language education. There is a consensus in the community that the Government should provide more resources for schools which adopt mother-tongue teaching to strengthen their teaching and learning of English. Therefore, we recommend allocating a substantial portion of the top-up fund for **setting up an English enhancement scheme** for these schools. The initial framework we have in mind is as follows:

- (a) **In principle, the scheme is open to all schools adopting Chinese as the MOI.**
- (b) Successful applicant-schools will be given non-recurrent additional resources for building up their capacity for promoting the teaching and learning of English within an agreed timeframe (e.g. six years). **The amount of grant will depend on individual school's proposal and**

**implementation strategies, but there should be an upper limit.**

- (c) Participating schools are required to enter into a performance contract with the Government in which they undertake to build up their capacity for effective teaching of English and to enhance the English proficiency of students. The performance targets cover capacity building and academic attainment of students. **The indicators for the performance targets on capacity building may be categorized into the following five areas:**

- (i) Development of a professional teaching team, such as creating more room for teachers to undertake relevant courses in order to acquire the qualifications recommended by the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR)<sup>22</sup>;
- (ii) Creation of an English-rich environment in school, such as developing a culture of using English for day-to-day communication;
- (iii) Effective deployment of English Language teachers, such as practising specialized teaching;
- (iv) Development of a holistic curriculum plan, such as formulating a

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<sup>22</sup> In 2003, the Government accepted the recommendations contained in the *Action Plan to Raise Language Standards in Hong Kong* published by SCOLAR. Starting from the 2004/05 school year, new language teachers should hold a Bachelor of Education degree majoring in the relevant language subject, or both a first degree majoring in the relevant language subject and a Postgraduate Diploma or Certificate in Education majoring in the relevant language subject. Teachers without the above qualifications should acquire them within three to five years of their entry into the profession.

coherent curriculum plan having regard to the teaching focus at different grade levels; and

- (v) Commitment to building up a collaborative and reflective teaching culture in the English Panel, such as arranging collaborative lesson planning and peer classroom observations.

For the **performance targets on academic attainment of students, participating schools should undertake to attain an improvement target within an agreed timeframe.** We propose that the EMB should give further consideration to the specific targets to be set and other implementation details.

- (d) Applicant-schools will submit a holistic implementation plan to the EMB which should appoint professionals to provide advice on the feasibility and appropriateness of the proposal.
- (e) The implementation plans and annual evaluation reports should be endorsed by the School Management Committee for inclusion in annual school plans and school reports. The EMB would also conduct an interim review of the schools' progress in implementing the plans.
- (f) Since the objective of the scheme is to enhance students' English proficiency in a CMI setting, the participating schools should not change their MOI status during the specified timeframe of the scheme. Nor should they withdraw from the scheme unilaterally for no good reason.

4.21 We hope that schools would, through entering into a performance contract with the Government, consciously and systematically deliver what they have undertaken. Our vision is to bring about a new landscape in enhancing students' English proficiency through collective efforts in the school sector.

#### **Strategy (4) English-rich environment**

4.22 Schools should create an English-rich environment outside the classroom with a view to enhancing students' exposure to English. Multifarious English activities outside the classroom can arouse students' interest in learning English, which is crucial to enhancing English proficiency. The study by The University of Hong Kong (see paragraph 4.3) reveals that a whole-school approach should be adopted for creating an English-rich environment in school. **We recommend that schools consider adopting the following specific measures:**

- (a) **Creating a culture of using English for day-to-day communication** – Students should use English in real-life context. In order to provide more opportunities for students to be exposed to and apply English, English Language teachers and EMI teachers should as far as possible converse with students in English. By providing students with a risk-free environment in which no assessment is involved, the arrangement can help boost students' interest and confidence in the learning of English.
- (b) **Making effective use of NETs** – NETs can provide an authentic

English environment inside and outside the classroom and promote an atmosphere conducive to the learning of English<sup>23</sup>.

- (c) **Nurturing students' reading habits** – Most schools should have already put in place some form of reading schemes. A comprehensive strategy is required, however, if schools are to motivate students to read independently. For example, students should be taught the reading skills; teachers should act as role models and share their reading experiences with students; reading should be integrated with other activities to foster an atmosphere for reading and discussion.
- (d) **Conducting multifarious English activities** – Students should be encouraged to participate in a variety of activities to widen their exposure to English, e.g. debates, public speaking, drama, announcements/broadcasts in English, fun fairs, etc. English notices and assignments/projects of the students can be posted on campus. English Day/English Week as well as English Camp can be held. Schools can also arrange student exchanges with local international schools and overseas schools.

### **Strategy (5) Teaching effectiveness of English Language**

4.23 At present, schools adopting mother-tongue teaching are generally entitled to two to three additional English Language teachers. Schools may flexibly deploy

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<sup>23</sup> For details, see Circular Memorandum No. 205/2005 “Enhanced Native-speaking English Teacher (NET) Scheme in Secondary Schools --- Guidelines for Planning and Reporting NET Deployment” issued by the EMB.



these additional teachers for practising group teaching in English according to the needs of the schools. The curriculum should also be adapted to suit the needs and ability of students. The teaching pedagogy should be student-oriented. Teachers should also make use of real-life examples as well as design multifarious assignments and activities to arouse students' interest in learning English.

4.24 Teachers' professionalism is the key to enhancing students' English proficiency. Hence, **schools should facilitate teachers' professional development when deploying manpower and other resources.** Specifically, schools should:

- (a) arrange collaborative lesson planning and peer classroom observation for sustained self-improvement;
- (b) strengthen the collaboration between NETs and local teachers to facilitate the sharing of good teaching experiences from overseas and the building up of resources for the teaching and learning of English;
- (c) encourage teachers to conduct action research with a view to making improvement in curriculum design and teaching pedagogy;
- (d) actively promote assessment for learning by making effective use of various assessment tools (including the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) and school-based assessments), and devise a school-based self-evaluation mechanism to monitor and review the adaptation made to the curriculum and the pedagogy applied;
- (e) strengthen the collaboration between English Language teachers of different grade levels with the aims of formulating an overall and

coherent curriculum plan with clear focus of learning at different stages;  
and

- (f) formulate a professional development plan for teachers according to their positions and needs. Teachers should be encouraged to participate in relevant workshops, seminars, etc. with a view to learning from the experiences of other schools, strengthening inter-school collaboration and promoting resources sharing.

### **Expectation on and Support for Schools Adopting English as the MOI**

4.25 We would like to emphasize that irrespective of the MOI, schools should endeavour to help students enhance their English proficiency. Schools adopting EMI teaching should also have the room to **further raise their students' English standard.** We recommend that the EMB should, in the light of the circumstances of individual schools, consider how to assist EMI schools to further enhance the quality of EMI teaching.

## **Chapter 5 Existing Mechanism of Secondary School Places Allocation**

### **Underpinning Principles and Objectives**

5.1 Student learning is affected by factors such as aptitude, self-concept, learning attitude, life experiences and socio-economic background. Grouping students of different backgrounds and abilities together can help foster a society marked by patience and harmony. With proper guidance, students with different strengths and aptitudes (e.g. different linguistic, interpersonal, thinking and leadership skills as well as creativity) may benefit from cooperative and collaborative learning. Through mutual stimulation, they can complement and enhance each other's overall development through broadening one another's knowledge base and horizon. We therefore share the view practised in other developed countries that, insofar as the stage of basic education is concerned, we should not rely too heavily on academic results to assess students' ability or to select students. Instead, schools should be encouraged to adopt an open attitude with regard to admitting students of different abilities and backgrounds.

5.2 Based on the rationale just described, we proposed in the Education Reform proposals published in 2000 the following long-term goals in reforming the SSPA mechanism:

- (a) The nine-year basic education will become a coherent stage (a through road) during which pupils will no longer be required to take any high-stake public examination; and

- (b) The allocation bands will be eliminated gradually to remove the labelling effect on schools and pupils.

## **Transitional Measures**

5.3 At that time, we did not favour immediate implementation of these long-term goals. Instead, we recommended a transitional phase during which the short-term SSPA mechanism should be put in place. The Government started to implement the short-term SSPA mechanism as from the 2000/01 school year in accordance with our recommended blueprint. Details are as follows:

### **Discretionary Places (DP)<sup>24</sup>**

5.4 Starting from 2001, the percentage of DP places for secondary schools has increased from 10% to 20%. Secondary schools can, according to their own education philosophy and characteristics, decide on the admission criteria, which have to be made public beforehand. They may arrange selection interviews but no written test is allowed. Past data indicate that both parents and schools have made good use of the increased DP quota to increase students' chance of getting admission to their preferred secondary schools<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> The DP stage takes place before the CA stage. At the DP stage, parents may apply to any one secondary school. If a student has secured a school place at the DP stage, he/she will be automatically allocated that place.

<sup>25</sup> From 2001 to 2005, the number of students securing a place at the DP stage accounted for 13.9%, 15.2%, 15.9%, 16.8% and 18.8% respectively of the total number of students participating in the allocation.

## **Central Allocation (CA)<sup>26</sup>**

5.5 Starting from 2001, the number of allocation bands has been reduced from five to three with a view to reducing the labelling effect. Some people consider the increased randomization in school places allocation being unfair to students. Since a natural corollary of the reduction of allocation bands from five to three is the increased number of students within the same band, and it is possible that because of their random number, top students' school choices may not be handled first.

5.6 Some schools also indicate that the reduction of allocation bands has widened the within-school diversity in student ability. The EMB has analyzed the SSPA results from 2001 to 2005 (i.e. after the implementation of the short-term mechanism) and those in 2000 (i.e. before the implementation of the short-term mechanism). When compared with the results in 2000, the diversity in the ability of the S1 intake in about 40% of the secondary schools has in fact reduced or remained the same in 2001. The percentage has gradually increased to more than 50% in 2005. The number of schools that have admitted S1 students with relatively greater diversity in ability in 2005 has reduced by 10% when compared to that in 2001. On addressing the problem of student diversity, many secondary schools have actively made use of

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<sup>26</sup> The CA operates on the basis of school nets. Within the same net, S1 places are allocated by allocation band, parental choice and random number. Currently, there are 18 school nets. Students participating in the SSPA belong to the net in which their primary school is situated.

the resources<sup>27</sup> provided by the Government to adjust the teaching strategies and cater for student diversity. Some have achieved notable results while others are still at the adaptation or exploratory stage and will need more time to consolidate experiences.

5.7 The EMB notes from school inspections that whether a school can cope with student diversity hinges mainly on whether the school can effectively enhance students' motivation and interest in learning, and help them learn how to learn. In addition, equally crucial are the vision and leadership of the principal, the shared mission and morale of the staff, the flexibility and attitude of the school in resource deployment as well as parental support, which are also the very factors that help make a school a highly effective learning community. A study conducted by The Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2003 indicates that those secondary schools that pay greater attention to the issue of student diversity are more likely to be able to address it.

### **Scaling Mechanism**

5.8 Upon the abolition of the Academic Aptitude Test (AAT) by the EMB in 2000, students entering secondary schools have their school IA results (i.e. the second term of P5 and the first and second terms of P6) scaled by the average of their primary schools' AAT results in the 1997/98, 1998/99 and 1999/2000 school years for

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<sup>27</sup> The resources include: providing additional teachers and recurrent grants to schools with greater intake of academically low achievers for strengthening remedial teaching, introducing the School-based Curriculum Development Scheme, providing the Capacity Enhancement Grant to allow teachers to concentrate more on the diverse needs of students, etc. At the initial stage of implementing the reduction of allocation bands, the EMB arranged a number of seminars and workshops and visited schools with greater intake of low achievers to brief them on the related support measures. Additional support measures have also been introduced in cooperation with other departments (such as the Social Welfare Department and the Hong Kong Police Force).

determining their allocation bands.

5.9 Parents and primary schools welcomed the abolition of the AAT in 2000, which has created more room for primary schools to organize different learning activities such as project learning, reading schemes as well as extra-curricular and life-wide learning activities so as to widen and diversify the learning experience of their students. However, the education sector generally considers it unsatisfactory to use the AAT results of many years ago for determining the allocation bands of students. They point out that the Government should formulate a long-term and fairer scaling mechanism.

5.10 When the interim SSPA mechanism was implemented in 2000, the Government undertook to conduct a review in the 2003/04 school year with a view to assessing whether the pre-conditions for implementing the “post-transition SSPA mechanism”<sup>28</sup> as recommended by the EC in 2000 were in place. Hence, the Working Group has taken the “post-transition SSPA mechanism” as the starting point of its review.

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<sup>28</sup> DP:

- To increase the DP percentage from 20% to 30%;
- To allow each student to apply to two secondary schools.

CA:

- To maintain the three-band system. Students in each primary school who have not secured an S1 place during the DP stage will be divided into three allocation bands according to their school IA results;
- To allocate school places according to the school nets, allocation bands and school choices of parents/students.

## Chapter 6 Secondary School Places Allocation Mechanism: The Way Forward

### Guiding Principles

6.1 To address the questions of parental choices, student diversity, randomization in the allocation of school places and “appropriate” mixed ability teaching, we need to strike the right balance in designing the various arrangements under the DP and CA stages. Our considerations of the future SSPA mechanism are premised on the following guiding principles:

- (a) Students should be provided with a coherent, comprehensive and balanced learning experience at the **basic education stage**. Therefore, **we should as far as possible avoid using any assessment tool that directly affects students’ school places allocation results and hampers the learning of basic academic subjects.**
- (b) Students have multiple intelligence and abilities for continuous improvement. At the time of admission to secondary schools, their intellectual abilities are still developing. **Premature and precise labelling of students according to their abilities not only goes against the worldwide trend of education but also affects students’ self-image and stifles development of their potentials.**
- (c) Students’ abilities are domain-specific. **“Appropriate” mixed ability teaching** enables students to complement and learn from one another, thus encouraging their **diversified development and fostering their**



**self-confidence, tolerance and ability to work in groups. By “appropriate”, we mean diversity in student ability at a level manageable by schools and teachers under the present circumstances and conditions** so that both the high and low achievers are adequately taken care of and are helped to develop.

- (d) The SSPA mechanism should, as far as possible, **respect parents’ and students’ school choices** by providing them with more opportunities to directly select their preferred schools. Secondary schools may also have a greater scope in admitting students in accordance with their own education philosophy and characteristics.

6.2 Most of the recommendations on the SSPA mechanism in the *Consultation Document* have received general support from the public. In particular, the education sector and parents concur with the direction of the recommendations, viz. providing more parental choices, promoting the diversified development of schools and students, reducing the pressure of examinations on students and striking a balance between the pursuit of mixed ability teaching and the need to ensure that student diversity is kept at a level manageable by our secondary schools. However, when it comes to the details, the views expressed by the education sector and parents are quite diverse. In the following paragraphs, we shall set out the major concerns expressed by the public and the considerations behind our final recommendations.

## **DP Stage**

6.3 Our objectives are to **provide parents/students with more choices and promote diversified development of schools and students.**

## **DP Quota**

### Original Proposal

6.4 **The DP quota for each secondary school should be increased from 20% to 30%.**

### Public Concerns

6.5 The public and the education sector generally welcome the proposal to increase the DP quota to 30%. A small number of schools and parents suggest further increasing the percentage to 40% or even 50% in order to provide more parental choices and opportunities for schools to select students, while a considerable number of secondary schools wish to maintain the existing 20% so as to reduce students' mobility across districts. However, **overall speaking, the majority views consider a 30% DP quota more reasonable.**

6.6 Besides, **some parents wish that the EMB could release the DP results once available**, rather than announcing the results together with the CA results. They hope that early release of the DP results could save their efforts in making school choices at the CA stage.

6.7 We wish to point out that at present, the utilization rate of the DP quota varies among schools, with some receiving applications far exceeding the quota and some being unable to fully utilize the quota. Substantially increasing the percentage would aggravate the difference in utilization rate among schools, which may in turn create a labelling effect on schools. Nevertheless, the present DP percentage could not satisfy the demand from most schools and parents. We believe **increasing the DP percentage to 30% will strike the right balance. On the one hand, this will provide parents/students with more school choices and allow schools a greater scope to admit students according to their education philosophy and characteristics. On the other hand, it would avoid aggravating the difference in the utilization of the DP quota, which would give rise to an undesirable labelling effect.**

6.8 As for the early release of DP results, primary schools generally object to this suggestion which, in their opinion, may unnecessarily bring about problems in teaching and learning. They are particularly concerned about **the impact on the overall learning atmosphere if some students within a class know the DP application results “in advance”**. As a matter of fact, the existing arrangement of announcing the DP and CA results concurrently is well-established and has been implemented smoothly for years. During the consultation sessions, the Working Group explained to parents the concerns of schools. Many parents showed understanding and agreed that the effectiveness of teaching and learning should override their personal conveniences.

## The Way Forward

6.9 We maintain the original proposal to **increase the DP quota to 30%**.

### **Number of School Choices**

#### Original Proposal

6.10 **Parents/students may apply to two secondary schools during the DP stage.** As regards how they should indicate the order of preference, three options have been put forth for consultation:

Option (1) Parents must indicate their order of preference to schools;

Option (2) Parents indicate their order of preference to the EMB only; or

Option (3) Parents indicate their order of preference to the EMB only, and schools may declare in advance that second-choice applications would not be considered.

#### Public Concerns

6.11 Parents **in general welcome** the proposal of **allowing students to apply to two secondary schools during the DP stage**, but **strongly wish that they only need to indicate the order of preference to the EMB** so as to alleviate their apprehension that a school may give preference to those students selecting the school as their first choice. On the other hand, secondary schools, in particular the popular ones, are concerned about the heavy workload arising from a larger number of applications. They prefer to maintain the current arrangement of allowing students to apply to one

secondary school only. Some schools consider that even if students are allowed to apply to two secondary schools, parents should indicate their order of preference to the schools so that the school management could take this into account when short-listing applicants for interview and admission. Otherwise, they may have to arrange interviews for a larger number of applicants and to prepare a longer waiting list lest those students selecting the school as their second choice do not show up eventually in favour of offers by their first-choice schools.

6.12 We consider that allowing parents/students the choice of two secondary schools during the DP stage is consistent with the spirit of our other proposals (e.g. the increase in DP quota to 30%). We share the concerns of parents and note that if too many schools declare in advance that they will not consider second-choice applications (i.e. Option (3) in paragraph 6.10 above), it would in effect restrict the choices of parents.

#### The Way Forward

6.13 **We recommend that parents/students may apply to two secondary schools during the DP stage and shall only be required to indicate their order of preference to the EMB.**

## **Rank Order List<sup>29</sup>**

### Original Proposal

6.14 **The EMB should cease providing the “rank order list” to secondary schools.**

### Public Concerns

6.15 Many primary schools support the proposal as it would encourage secondary schools to take into account the overall performance of students during the DP stage and in turn **enable primary schools and parents to focus more on the all-round development of students.** Secondary schools, however, would like the EMB to **keep the current practice,** saying that **the “rank order list” provides a more objective assessment of the applicants’ ability.** They indicate that most of the schools receiving a large number of applications during the DP stage have been making reference to the “rank order list” when short-listing applicants for interview. **If the “rank order list” is no longer provided, the schools would have to cope with a heavier workload in student admission.**

6.16 We recognize the worry of secondary schools. We also understand that in practice many schools do take into account both the academic and non-academic attainments of students in the selection process. Since no written test is allowed in

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<sup>29</sup> At the DP stage, the EMB will provide individual secondary schools with a “rank order list” of their DP applicants for reference purpose. The list ranks the applicant-students according to their scaled IA results and sets out their name, sex, student number and the name of their primary school.

the process, **some secondary schools may be prompted to ask for other objective and reliable academic credentials** (e.g. results in other open examinations in the market) if the “rank order list” is no longer provided. This will inevitably **increase the pressure on students and primary schools**. Alternatively, secondary schools may assess the applicants’ ability based on their perception of the primary schools in which the applicants are studying. This may be **unfair to those relatively new or progressing primary schools** which have yet to build up their reputation. Besides, following the increase in the DP quota, the increase in school choices to two and our recommendation in paragraph 6.13 that parents are only required to indicate the order of preference in school choices to the EMB, the number of applications that have to be handled by the more popular schools may increase substantially. Such being the case, the “rank order list” should help reduce the workload of schools in student selection.

### The Way Forward

6.17 Having regard to the above considerations, we have revised our original proposal. **We do not object to the EMB keeping its current practice of providing the “rank order list” to secondary schools, but schools must not separately request students to produce results of open examinations available in the market for reference during the selection process.**

### **CA Stage**

6.18 **Our objectives are to encourage “appropriate” mixed ability teaching, alleviate labelling effects, provide parents/students with more choices and reduce**

**the pressure of examinations.**

## **Unrestricted CA Places**

### Original Proposal

6.19 **Each secondary school should set aside 10% of the CA places as “unrestricted places”. Parents/students may select a designated number of secondary schools (say, not more than three) from any school nets at the CA stage.** The computerized allocation mechanism will process the school choices for “unrestricted places” first, to be followed by the choices that are subject to net restriction.

### Public Concerns

6.20 Parents and primary schools generally welcome the setting aside of 10% of CA places in each secondary school as places unrestricted by school nets. Some even consider that the percentage can be further increased. **Some secondary schools, however, express reservation about this proposal.** They are of the view that with the increase of DP quota to 30%, students already have sufficient opportunity to apply to schools outside their school nets. Hence, they do not see a need to set aside “unrestricted places” at the CA stage. They are also **worried that such an arrangement may induce students to compete for popular secondary schools, thus aggravating the competition among schools.**

6.21 Since the types and number of schools in different school nets may vary, the



“unrestricted places” would **further increase the school choices for parents/students and better cater to students’ needs.** That said, having regard to the **principle of vicinity under the school netting arrangement,** we consider it inappropriate to set aside too high a percentage of CA places for “unrestricted” choices as this may reduce the chances for students to be allocated places within their school nets.

### The Way Forward

6.22 We **maintain the original proposal in the *Consultation Document*, i.e. setting aside 10% of CA places in each secondary school for allocation “unrestricted” by school nets and allowing parents/students to select a designated number of secondary schools (say, not more than three) from any school nets.**

### **Scaling Mechanism**

#### Original Proposal

6.23 **Some form of mechanism for scaling primary schools’ IA results for banding purpose should be retained. In this regard, two options have been put forward:**

Option (1) Maintaining the current scaling mechanism (i.e. using the AAT results in the 1997/98, 1998/99 and 1999/2000 school years as the scaling instrument); or

Option (2) Using the existing pre-S1 HKAT as the scaling instrument (i.e. the same instrument for scaling students’ IA results for the purpose of identifying students capable of learning through

English). Samples of the pre-S1 HKAT results will be collected biennially and the average of the results of the two most recently sampled pre-S1 HKATs will be used to scale the primary schools' IA results of the coming cohort of P6 students proceeding to S1. The scaled results for students within a school net will be used to determine the allocation bands for that school net.

6.24 In the *Consultation Document*, the Working Group **has proposed to adopt Option (2)** which meets the following requirements:

- (a) valid, reliable and fair on the whole;
- (b) easily understood and administered;
- (c) preferably curriculum-based and relevant to the teaching and learning in primary schools; and
- (d) preferably reduce the incentive for drilling and the pressure of examinations.

### Public Concerns

6.25 The scaling mechanism is a relatively more controversial issue among the SSPA proposals. Some respondents from the education sector are of the view that the long-term goal of “no banding and no scaling” in the SSPA mechanism should be realized as early as possible, and that the Government should do away with the scaling mechanism. In the long run, school places should also be allocated randomly based

on the principle of vicinity instead of students' academic performance. On the other hand, **a widely held view in the school sector and among parents is that there is still a need to retain some form of scaling mechanism, although the mechanism should be updated in order to fairly reflect the latest performance of primary schools and their students and to reduce the within-school student diversity.**

6.26 As for the scaling instrument, there is a public consensus that the existing instrument based on past AAT results since 2001 (see paragraph 5.8) should be replaced. With the abolition of the AAT so many years ago, the validity of the past AAT results has been diminishing with the lapse of time. **As regards the scaling mechanism recommended by the Working Group,** there has been extensive discussion among parents and the education sector. **Many from the education sector are generally in support of the mechanism since it would obviate an “extra” assessment for students and help reduce the incentive for drilling. This is in line with the whole-person development of students.**

6.27 **Quite a number of respondents, however, intuitively feel uneasy about the concept of indirect scaling,** i.e. using the performance of students of the previous cohorts to scale the performance of the coming cohort. They consider it more acceptable if the performance of the current cohort is used for scaling. Some contend that even with indirect scaling, primary schools would still drill their students for the pre-S1 HKAT since their results would affect the allocation results of the coming cohort. Moreover, parents of the coming cohort may exert pressure on schools to

drill the current cohort of students for the test. Some primary schools and parents are also worried that students who are already aware of their allocation results may not be serious about the pre-S1 HKAT.

6.28 During the consultation, some respondents have proposed other options:

- (a) To re-introduce some kind of public examination similar to the former “Secondary School Entrance Examination”, the results of which would directly determine the allocation of secondary places for the students concerned;
- (b) To merge the P6 TSA<sup>30</sup> with the pre-S1 HKAT to form a new scaling instrument; and
- (c) To administer the pre-S1 HKAT in primary schools and use the results of the current cohort to scale their own IA results.

6.29 We have studied the above options carefully. We are mindful of any allocation assessment similar to the former “Secondary Schools Entrance Examination”, which would certainly become **very high-stake and consequentially**

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<sup>30</sup> The EC recommended in the Education Reform proposals that a centrally administered assessment (currently known as TSA) be introduced at P3, P6 and S3 levels. It serves to provide information on whether schools have attained the basic standards in key learning areas. This would help schools formulate plans to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning on the basis of the assessment data and their own development needs. The Government has gradually implemented the above recommendations. The TSA for P3 and P6 levels are being conducted at the end of each school year (around June each year) starting from 2004 and 2005 respectively.

**put primary school students under undue pressure.** It would result in schools/students having to give up diversified learning opportunities in order to prepare for the examination. This would hamper the all-round development of students and also go against the Education Reform.

6.30 As for the proposal of merging **the P6 TSA with the pre-S1 HKAT**, we would like to clarify that the pre-S1 HKAT is a centrally-administered assessment conducted in secondary schools annually after the announcement of the SSPA results. It allows secondary schools to assess the performance of their S1 intake in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. Some secondary schools use the test as reference for streaming and planning enhancement/support measures. Hence, the assessment is for differentiating the ability of students and hence a wide range of test items with different levels of difficulty would be set. The function of the TSA is quite different in that it serves to provide information to schools on whether their students have attained the basic competency in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics at the end of a certain key learning stage. It thus has a wide scope of assessment but test items are of a narrower range of difficulty levels. Given **the difference in objectives and functions of the two tests, the design of the test items would be quite different.** Even if the two tests are merged, its content could not be substantially reduced. As such, the feasibility of a “combined test” is in doubt and even if it is feasible, the pressure on students cannot be alleviated.

6.31 We have also given careful consideration to the suggestion of administering

the pre-S1 HKAT in primary schools. The suggested arrangement implies that the timing of the test would have to be advanced and that the results of the current cohort of P6 students would be used to scale their own IA results. **Since the test results would have a direct bearing on the allocation results of the students taking the test, the pre-S1 HKAT would then become a high-stake examination which would inevitably induce drilling and undermine the all-round development of students.**

6.32 We conducted simulation runs to compare the banding results obtained under two approaches: the first one using the sampled pre-S1 HKAT results for the current year to scale the IA results of the current cohort of students; the second using the sampled pre-S1 HKAT results in previous years to scale the IA results of the current cohort (i.e. indirect scaling). Our findings reveal that over 90% of the students obtain the same banding results under the two approaches. For the remaining 10% of students, half of them (i.e. 5%) are placed in one band higher while the other half (i.e. 5%) in one band lower. In other words, for a class with 32 students, less than one student on average may have his/her banding result lowered from Band 1 to Band 2 and, similarly, less than one student from Band 2 to Band 3. However, since we are proposing to use the average results of two sampled pre-S1 HKATs for scaling, such discrepancy may even be further reduced. It is also worth noting that even if a student were to attend the same assessment twice, his/her results for the two sittings could be different, which would in turn mean that there could be discrepancy if the two results were to be used for scaling purpose. If such incidences of normal discrepancy in assessment are discounted and the average of the sampled results of

two pre-S1 HKATs is used, **the new scaling mechanism should be highly reliable.** It does not appear worthwhile re-introducing a high-stake assessment for the sake of removing the small discrepancy.

6.33 **We consider that any test that has a direct bearing on the allocation results for the students concerned will likely induce drilling.** Our proposed option has the following merits:

- (a) The pre-S1 HKAT is curriculum-based. Even if some schools would, due to the impact of test results on their allocation results, strengthen their teaching of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics, it would probably not result in drilling on meaningless subject matter.
- (b) Since students will have been allocated S1 school places when they take the pre-S1 HKAT, the test results will not have any bearing on their own allocation results. This can reduce the incentive for drilling.
- (c) The pre-S1 HKAT is a well-established assessment used by secondary schools. Schools are familiar with its nature and administration details. Its existing mode of operation will remain unchanged even if it is also used for scaling purpose. It would not entail additional workload for primary and secondary schools. It is also not necessary to introduce an “extra assessment” for students.
- (d) The scaled IA results, apart from being used for banding purpose,

would also be used for assessing the EMI-capability of students (see paragraph 3.13), thus obviating the need for an “extra” assessment for students.

6.34 During the parent consultation sessions, many parents initially cast doubt on the fairness of such an indirect scaling mechanism. After listening to the elaboration by the Working Group members on the education principles, operational details and the data analyses, a large proportion of parents present were persuaded.

6.35 Regarding the worry that students who have prior knowledge of their allocation results may not be serious about the pre-S1 HKAT, the Working Group sought the views of students during the consultation. The students indicated that although they would not bother to drill particularly for the test, they would nevertheless attempt the test seriously. This is the effect that we would wish to achieve – reducing the possible pressure brought about by the scaling instrument on students. The pre-S1 HKAT has all along been a low-stake assessment and it should remain so. **Since the test results are used by most secondary schools as reference for streaming students, we are confident that most students would attempt the test seriously.**

6.36 We would like to stress that the scaling mechanism is used to scale the IA results of students among primary schools for fair comparison. Students still need to work hard in order to obtain good IA results on which their banding results are based.



Besides, the DP admission would also hinge on their own performance. In other words, **students' efforts are duly recognized** under the recommended SSPA mechanism.

### The Way Forward

6.37 **We maintain our original proposal of using the existing pre-S1 HKAT as the scaling instrument. Samples of the pre-S1 HKAT results will be collected biennially and the average of the results of the two most recently sampled pre-S1 HKATs will be used to scale the IA results of the coming cohort of P6 students proceeding to S1.**

### **Number of Allocation Bands**

#### Original Proposal

6.38 **The existing three-band system should be maintained.**

#### Public Concerns

6.39 The public **in general supports the existing three-band system. Some from the school sector would like to restore the five-band system** so as to reduce the within-school diversity in student ability. On the other hand, **some consider** that further steps should be taken to **gradually eliminate the allocation bands altogether** in pursuit of the EC's long-term goals (see paragraph 5.2).

6.40 The finer the system of allocation banding, the greater would be the

labelling effect on students and this would in turn undermine self-confidence. With this consideration in mind, the EC proposed in 2000 to progressively reduce the allocation bands and, as the first step, to reduce the number of bands from five to three. We agree that, under the **education philosophy of mixed ability teaching**, schools and teachers would need to provide support and enrichment measures on the basis of students' abilities and needs, with a view to enhancing their learning effectiveness. Of course, schools and teachers need to **accumulate and consolidate their experience in handling student diversity** before they can improve in this area.

6.41 During the consultation period, some parents cast doubt on the fairness of using random number in the SSPA mechanism as students with better results may not be able to have priority in the allocation process. In this connection, we would like to clarify that the allocation bands and the “random number” complement each other. When students within the same allocation band indicate the same order of preference for schools and the demand of school places of the selected schools exceeds the supply, the random number will be used to determine the order in which the relevant school places will be allocated to students of the same band<sup>31</sup>. **Abolition of the “random**

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<sup>31</sup> At the CA stage, allocation of school places is on a net basis. The computer will first allocate school places for Band 1 students according to their school choices. The process is: the computer will go over the first choices of students. After going over the first choices of all Band 1 students, the computer will go over the second choices of those students who have not been allocated school places and so on, until the computer has gone over each of the school choices in this allocation band. If the demand for school places of a certain secondary school exceeds the supply, students possessing smaller random numbers within the same band will be allocated a place first. After all the students of Band 1 have been allocated school places, the computer will proceed to allocate Band 2 students in the same way, and then Band 3 students.

**number” would in effect mean that the allocation bands would also be abandoned. This would mean that the allocation of school places has to be made according to the ranking of all students based on their academic results. This would go against the principles and objectives of the SSPA mechanism (see paragraph 5.1).**

### The Way Forward

6.42 As many reform initiatives are still underway, we consider it **inappropriate to further reduce the number of allocation bands at this stage.** This is to avoid increasing the burden of secondary schools in handling student diversity. We therefore **recommend to maintain the three-band system.**

### **Implementation Timetable**

6.43 In response to the call from the school sector, we recommend that the **revised SSPA mechanism should be implemented from the 2006/07 school year onwards (applicable to the cohort of students proceeding to S1 in September 2007 and thereafter).** Students studying in P5 in the 2005/06 school year will be the first cohort of students participating in the revised SSPA mechanism. The average of the sampled results of the pre-S1 HKAT to be conducted in July 2006 and the results of the last AAT will be used to scale the primary schools’ IA results of students proceeding to S1 in 2007 and 2008. Starting from 2009, the average of the results of the two most recently sampled pre-S1 HKATs will be used to scale the primary schools’ IA results of students proceeding to S1 (e.g. the sampled results in 2006 and 2008 can be used for scaling in 2009).

## **Chapter 7 Major Recommendations and Implementation Timetable**

7.1 This chapter summarizes our recommendations on the long-term arrangements for the MOI for secondary schools and SSPA mechanism.

### **The MOI Policy for Secondary Schools – Upholding Mother-tongue Teaching and Enhancing English Proficiency Concurrently**

7.2 In principle, all secondary schools should adopt mother-tongue teaching at junior secondary levels. There is no objection to individual schools choosing to adopt English as the MOI if they fully meet the three prescribed criteria of student ability, teacher capability and support measures. All secondary schools (including schools adopting mother-tongue teaching) should endeavour to enhance students' proficiency in both Chinese and English (see paragraphs 3.3 and 3.7).

#### **Prescribed Criteria for EMI Teaching**

7.3 Schools adopting English as the MOI must fulfill the following prescribed criteria:

##### **Student Ability**

- (a) Students' IA results in primary schools, as scaled by the existing pre-S1 HKAT, will be used to identify the EMI-capable students. Samples of the pre-S1 HKAT results will be collected biennially. The average of the results of the two most recently sampled pre-S1 HKATs will be used to scale the primary schools' IA results of the

coming cohort of P6 students proceeding to S1. The scaled IA scores of all P6 students will be put into a pecking order. The top 40% of students will be taken as having the ability to learn through English (see paragraph 3.13).

- (b) For a school to meet the student ability criterion for EMI teaching, it must have at least 85% of its S1 intake being capable to learn through English (see paragraph 3.13).
- (c) For “through-train” secondary schools intending to adopt English as the MOI, the threshold percentage of EMI-capable S1 intake can be flexibly lowered to 75%, but this percentage only applies to S1 entrants from the linked primary schools. As for S1 intake from other primary schools, the threshold percentage should be maintained at 85%. Since the proportion of S1 entrants from the linked primary schools is different for each “through-train” secondary school, a weighted average methodology should be used to calculate the threshold percentage required for individual “through-train” secondary schools (see paragraph 3.23).
- (d) The deadline for feeder/nominated schools complying with the “through-train” principles to decide whether or not to form “through-trains” should be deferred to 31 May 2012 (see paragraph 3.23).

### **Teacher Capability**

- (e) In principle, all teachers teaching through English must be “able to

communicate the subject content to students intelligibly in English and that their use of English should have no adverse impact on students' acquisition of the English language". The specific requirement is anchored at Grade C or above in English Language (Syllabus B) of the HKCEE or its equivalent. Those possessing any one of the following qualifications will also be regarded as having the ability to teach in English (see paragraph 3.35):

- (i) Band 6 or above obtained in the IELTS (academic domain);
- (ii) Grade D or above in Use of English obtained in the HKALE, or Grade D or above in Use of English obtained in the defunct University of Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination;
- (iii) Grade C or above in English Language obtained in the defunct HKHLE, or Grade C or above in English Language obtained in the defunct Chinese University of Hong Kong Matriculation Examination;
- (iv) a pass or above in English of the General Certificate of Ordinary Level (Overseas) Examination;
- (v) a pass or above in English of the General Certificate of Examinations (London Examinations);
- (vi) a pass or above in English (First/Second) Language of the International General Certificate of Secondary Education Examination;
- (vii) a score of 210 (computer-based) or 550 (paper-based) or above

- in the TOEFL;
- (viii) having met the Language Proficiency Requirements (English) (only the four parts on reading, writing, listening and speaking are required); or
- (ix) possessing MIL (having studied in courses related to the English language).
- (f) Serving EMI teachers who do not possess any of the qualifications set out in paragraph (e) above can opt for classroom observation by subject experts and language experts. The EMB will set up an expert panel to work out the operational details (see paragraph 3.35).
- (g) EMI teachers should attend a minimum of 15 hours of EMI-related continuous professional development activities every three years (see paragraph 3.35).

### **Support Measures**

- (h) Schools using English as the MOI should purposefully and strategically devise school-based measures for supporting EMI teaching and should set out the related strategies and measures in their school development plans and annual reports. The EMB should assess and monitor the implementation of the support measures under the existing framework of quality assurance and schools' self-evaluation. The related strategies include (see paragraphs 3.36 and 3.40):
- (i) strengthening the teaching and learning of English as a subject;

- (ii) creating an English-rich environment;
- (iii) devising well-designed bridging programmes;
- (iv) strengthening the learning of English through language-across-the-curriculum; and
- (v) adopting English as the MOI in non-academic subjects as far as possible.

## **MOI Arrangements at School Level**

### **Junior Secondary Levels**

7.4 The mother tongue should be the principal MOI for secondary schools and the between-school streaming arrangement should be maintained. A school should adopt the same MOI in all junior secondary classes (see paragraphs 3.41 and 3.55). If individual schools choose to adopt English as the MOI, they have to meet the three prescribed criteria of student ability, teacher capability and support measures. The choice of EMI for these schools should be subject to a review every six years for quality assurance (see paragraphs 3.56 and 3.60).

7.5 Schools changing their MOI status should announce their arrangements one year before implementation. Any changes should start with the S1 classes and progress each year to a higher grade level (see paragraphs 3.56 and 3.60).

7.6 The Government should continue to provide the existing additional resources for schools adopting mother-tongue teaching and enhance the flexibility in



the deployment of these resources. Moreover, further additional resources should be provided for these schools to enhance students' English proficiency (see paragraphs 3.55 and 4.18 - 4.21).

### **Senior Secondary Levels**

7.7 Subject to the fulfillment of the criteria on teacher capability and support measures, secondary schools adopting mother-tongue teaching at junior secondary levels may, in consideration of the student ability, choose to adopt EMI teaching at senior secondary levels for certain subjects in some classes. In making this choice, they are required to:

- (a) put in place well-designed bridging programmes and support measures systematically and strategically at junior secondary levels so as to help students get prepared; and
- (b) meet the same criteria on teacher capability and support measures as prescribed for EMI teaching at junior secondary levels.

Schools are required to include in their school development plans and annual reports the relevant information (see paragraphs 3.68 - 3.70).

7.8 Schools adopting EMI teaching at junior secondary levels should continue to adopt English as the MOI at senior secondary levels. They should, in principle, also use English to teach Liberal Studies under the new academic structure for senior secondary education. The EMB may, however, determine which modules/themes under Liberal Studies may be allowed to be taught in Chinese by these schools with

reference to the following principles (see paragraph 3.73):

- (a) The modules concerned involve Chinese culture and the key teaching materials are available in Chinese only; and
- (b) Students are given the option to answer the questions related to those modules in public examinations in Chinese or English.

### **MOI Arrangements for DSS Schools**

7.9 DSS secondary schools may basically maintain the existing flexibility in MOI arrangements, including the following:

- (a) They have to meet the prescribed criteria of student ability, teacher capability and support measures if they choose to adopt EMI teaching. For teacher capability and support measures, the requirements stipulated in paragraphs 3.35 and 3.40 also apply.
- (b) They may adopt different MOI by class according to students' ability. However, they are not allowed to adopt different MOI by subject at junior secondary levels (see paragraphs 3.74 and 3.78).
- (c) They should set out in their school development plans and annual reports the supporting educational considerations, implementation strategies and their readiness for EMI teaching (see paragraph 3.79).

### **Enhancing Students' English Proficiency**

7.10 With “upholding mother-tongue teaching and enhancing English

proficiency concurrently” as the direction of the MOI policy, schools adopting mother-tongue teaching should endeavour to enhance their students’ English proficiency. We recommend the following strategies:

**Strategy (1): EMI extended learning activities**

7.11 Schools may allocate, on top of English Language lessons, not more than 15%, 20% and 25% of the total lesson time at S1, S2 and S3 respectively for extended learning activities conducted in English with a view to increasing students’ exposure to English. The teacher capability requirement for EMI teachers will also apply to teachers conducting EMI extended learning activities. In order to help schools utilize the lesson time for extended learning effectively, the EMB should conduct a study with a view to collecting information on local and overseas experiences, developing effective models for dissemination to schools and providing professional support (see paragraphs 4.10 - 4.15).

**Strategy (2): Chinese and English learning resources**

7.12 Irrespective of the MOI, teachers should make good use of learning materials in both Chinese and English in order to enrich the source of teaching materials and students’ learning experiences (see paragraph 4.17).

**Strategy (3): Provision of additional resources**

7.13 The Government should continue to provide schools with the existing additional resources and to allow them the option of a cash grant in lieu of part or all

of the additional teaching posts (see paragraph 4.18).

7.14 The Government should earmark funding for setting up an English enhancement scheme for schools adopting mother-tongue teaching. Participating schools will be provided with non-recurrent additional grants. They should undertake to attain agreed performance targets on capacity building for effective teaching of English and on students' academic attainment in English (see paragraphs 4.19 - 4.20).

#### **Strategy (4): English-rich environment**

7.15 Schools should endeavour to create an English-rich environment outside the classroom. Measures may include (see paragraph 4.22):

- (a) promoting a culture of using English for day-to-day communication;
- (b) making effective use of NETs;
- (c) nurturing students' reading habits; and
- (d) conducting multifarious English activities.

#### **Strategy (5): Teaching effectiveness of English Language**

7.16 Schools should enhance the teaching effectiveness of English by making effective deployment of manpower resources as well as improving the quality of curriculum design, teaching pedagogy, assessment for learning, etc. In particular, schools should facilitate teachers' professional development when deploying resources (see paragraphs 4.23 and 4.24).

7.17 We recommend that the Government should, in the light of the circumstances of individual schools, consider how to assist EMI schools to further enhance the quality of EMI teaching (see paragraph 4.25).

## **The SSPA Mechanism**

7.18 **DP Stage** – To provide parents/students with more choices and promote the diversified development of schools and students through:

- (a) increasing the DP quota for each secondary school from the existing 20% to 30% (see paragraph 6.9).
- (b) allowing parents/students to apply to two secondary schools at the DP stage. Parents/students are only required to indicate their order of preference to the EMB (see paragraph 6.13). The EMB will continue to provide secondary schools with the “rank order list” (see paragraph 6.17).

7.19 **CA Stage** – To provide parents/students with more choices and reduce examination pressure through:

- (a) assigning 10% of the CA places of every secondary school for allocation “unrestricted” by school nets (see paragraph 6.22).
- (b) updating the scaling mechanism by using the existing pre-S1 HKAT as a scaling instrument. Samples of the pre-S1 HKAT results will be collected biennially. The average of the results of the two most

recently sampled pre-S1 HKATs will be used to scale the primary schools' IA results of the coming cohort of P6 students proceeding to S1. The students will then be divided into allocation bands according to the scaled results (see paragraph 6.37).

(c) maintaining the existing three-band arrangement (see paragraph 6.42).

## **Implementation Timetable**

### **The SSPA Mechanism**

7.20 The revised SSPA mechanism will apply to the cohort of students proceeding to S1 in September 2007 and thereafter. The sampled results of the pre-S1 HKAT in July 2006 will, for the first time, be used to scale the primary schools' IA results of P6 students proceeding to S1 (see paragraph 6.43).

### **The MOI Arrangements**

7.21 The revised MOI arrangements for secondary schools will be implemented with effect from September 2010, starting with S1 classes and progressing each year to a higher grade level (see paragraph 3.64). Schools wishing to adopt English as the MOI should demonstrate to the EMB that they have satisfied the two criteria on teacher capability and support measures when they submit their applications in the 2008/09 school year. The ability of S1 intake in September 2008 and September 2009 will be taken into account in determining whether a school has met the student ability criterion. The EMB will notify the schools of their application results by the end of 2009 (i.e. before the DP process for the S1 intake of the following school year

commences) (see paragraph 3.65).

7.22 The various measures to enhance students' English proficiency can be implemented starting from the 2006/07 school year.

**Working Group on Review of Secondary School Places Allocation  
and Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools -  
Membership List**

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Members: Dr Anissa CHAN WONG Lai-kuen  
Mr CHAN Wing-kwong  
Dr CHEUNG Kwok-wah  
Mr FUNG Ka-ching  
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Mrs Fanny LAM FAN Kit-fong  
Mrs LEE SHEK Yuk-yu  
Professor LEE Wing-on (until June 2005)  
Mr LIN Man-sheung  
Ms Bernadette LINN (from April 2005 onwards)  
Mr PANG Yiu-kai  
Mr TAI Hay-lap  
Mrs Cherry TSE LING Kit-ching (until April 2005)  
Sr WONG May-may  
Rev YUEN Tin-yau  
(Listed according to the alphabetical order of last name)



## MOI-Related Research Studies

### (I) Studies Conducted Prior to the Implementation of the *Guidance*

#### 1. The Effects of the Medium of Instruction on Student Cognitive Development and Academic Achievement (1979) (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

##### Content of Study

- To investigate through tests, questionnaires and classroom observations the effect of MOI on the cognitive development and the linguistic competency (Chinese and English) of students when studying World History, Mathematics and Science subjects under different MOI environments.

##### Findings

- For students with moderate and weaker academic performance, teaching through English dampened their cognitive and linguistic (Chinese and English) development.
- For high performers, although EMI teaching did affect their cognitive development, their competency in English and Chinese remained at a high level.
- There was less student participation in EMI teaching classroom. Teachers were also inclined to adopt unidirectional teaching with fewer analytical questions raised.

**2. An Investigation of the Effectiveness of Various Language Modes of Presentation, Spoken and Written, in S3 in Hong Kong Anglo-Chinese Secondary Schools (1985)** (Former Education Department and The University of Hong Kong)

**Content of Study**

- Over 1 200 S3 students from ten secondary schools participated in this study. Lesson materials were given in the form of Chinese or English videotapes or printed texts, and tests were given after the lessons.

**Findings**

- About 30% of the students who attempted the test in English had good performance. Another 30% of the students encountered severe difficulty. The remainders were somewhat in between.
- The majority of the students who had encountered severe difficulty preferred to learn in the mother tongue.

**3. The Effects of the Medium of Instruction on the Achievement of S2 Students in Hong Kong Secondary Schools (1985)** (Former Education Department and The University of Hong Kong)

**Content of Study**

- 29 schools experimented using Chinese or English as the MOI in History and Science in S2 classes.

**Findings**

- English proficiency was the main determinant of whether a student had the

ability to learn through English.

- There was a high correlation between students' proficiency in English and Chinese, i.e. students with high proficiency in English were normally also highly proficient in Chinese and vice versa.
- 30% of students with the highest proficiency in English could learn through English effectively.
- Notwithstanding additional explanation in Chinese, EMI teaching still posed an obstacle to learning for the rest of the students (about 70%).

#### **4. Studies on the Modes of Language of Instruction at Junior Secondary Levels in Anglo-Chinese Secondary Schools (1985)** (Former Education Department)

##### **Content of Study**

- A two-year study was conducted in S1 to S3 classes of 15 Anglo-Chinese secondary schools. During the study period, students' proficiency in Chinese and English as well as performance in Mathematics, Science and History was assessed regularly through Chinese, English and bilingual test papers. Teacher and student questionnaire surveys were also conducted.

##### **Findings**

- There was greater use of mother-tongue teaching than before. The subjects involved, in descending order of the frequency of the use of the mother tongue, were Mathematics, Science and History.
- Students with a lower English standard indicated that they understood less than half of the lesson conducted in English.

- If the English standard of the students was divided into 14 levels (level 1 being the highest), then full EMI teaching to students at or below level 5 (i.e. levels 5 to 14) was rare. The study also indicated that only 10%, 21% and 28% of the students in S1, S2 and S3 respectively were at level 4 or above.

**5. A Comparison of Academic Performance of Junior Secondary Students in Anglo-Chinese and Chinese Middle Schools (1985)** (Former Education Department)

**Content of Study**

- A comparison was made between S1 - S3 students in Anglo-Chinese secondary schools and their peers in Chinese Middle schools in their performance in Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics, Science and History.

**Findings**

- The students in Anglo-Chinese secondary schools performed better in English Language while the students in Chinese Middle schools performed better in Chinese Language and History.
- As to the performance in Mathematics and Science, the difference between the two groups of students was not significant, though students of Chinese Middle schools performed slightly better.

**6. A Study on the Relation between Initial Language Proficiency at Secondary 1 Level and Subsequent HKCEE Performance for MOI Grouping (1992)**

(Former Education Department)

**Content of Study**

- A correlation analysis was conducted between the performance of a cohort of S5 students in the 1990 HKCEE and their P6 IA results in English Language and Chinese Language as scaled by the AAT under SSPA in 1985.

**Findings**

- There was a high correlation between the SSPA scaled score in Chinese Language and English Language and performance in the HKCEE.
- For students who obtained 14 points or above in the HKCEE and who were studying in Anglo-Chinese schools that used English as the sole MOI, their abilities in English and Chinese were mostly above the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile.
- Students taught solely through one language (either English or the mother tongue) performed better in the HKCEE than those taught through a mixed code of English and Chinese.

**7. A Comparison of Pupils' HKCEE Results between Schools Using Chinese as MOI in All Subjects and Schools Using Chinese/English as the MOI by Subject (1994)** (Former Education Department)

**Content of Study**

- To examine the difference in the 1993 HKCEE results between these two groups of schools.

## **Findings**

- For students of comparable abilities, the overall average performance of students from schools using Chinese as the MOI in all subjects was higher than those from schools using Chinese or English as the MOI in different subjects. Such observation was especially apparent in Chinese Language, English Language (Syllabus B) and language-loaded subjects such as Geography, History and Economics.
- There was no significant difference in the performance in science subjects between these two groups of students.

## **8. Research on Change of MOI in Secondary Schools (1994)** (Former Education Department)

### **Content of Study**

- The experimental group comprised 11 Anglo-Chinese schools with over 50% of the subjects switched to mother-tongue teaching. The control group was another 11 schools. An index of levels 1-5 was used to represent the language environment in schools (level 1 for a school language environment being mainly English, levels 2-4 representing varying degrees of English environment in descending order, with level 5 being mainly Chinese).

### **Findings**

- Students in a relatively predominant English environment performed better in English Language while students in a relatively predominant Chinese environment performed better in Chinese Language, Science, History and

Geography.

- More frequent use of mother-tongue teaching was conducive to inducing students' learning motivation and adoption of higher-level cognitive strategy of learning.
- Schools were advised to adopt a single MOI.

## **9. Educational and Social Determinants of Language Education Policy (1995)**

(The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

### **Content of Study**

- Students were examined to see whether they had the basic level of language proficiency for bilingual learning.

### **Findings**

- If obtaining 14 points or above in the HKCEE was used as the criterion, the following groups of students could benefit from bilingual learning: (a) those with a high standard in both Chinese and English; (b) those with a high standard in Chinese and a moderate standard in English; and (c) those with a high standard in English and a moderate standard in Chinese.
- If having five or more subjects passed in HKCEE was used as the criterion, apart from the above three groups, students with a moderate standard in both Chinese and English could also benefit from bilingual learning.

**10. Evaluation Study on the Implementation of MOI Grouping in Secondary Schools: 1994/95-1996/97 school years (1998) (Former Education Department)**

**Content of Study**

- Performance under different modes of teaching medium (English, Chinese and varying degrees of mixed mode in English and Chinese) of S1 entrants of 56 schools were tracked over three years.
- Assessments on Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics, Science, Geography and History were conducted annually.

**Findings**

- Mother-tongue teaching helped students achieve value-added performance. For students of comparable abilities, students taught in the mother tongue performed better than those learning through other modes of MOI.
- There was no evidence suggesting that EMI teaching could raise the English standard of students.
- Generally speaking, students taught in English (especially those studying in schools which ignored the former Education Department's advice on the adoption of mother-tongue teaching) had encountered some language impediments to learning, particularly in language-loaded subjects such as History.



**11. Late Immersion and Language of Instruction in Hong Kong High Schools: Achievement Growth in Language and Non-language subjects (2000)<sup>32</sup>**

(Herbert W. Marsh, Hau Kit-tai and Kong Chit-kwong)

**Content of study**

- The study aims at evaluating the effects of mother-tongue teaching and EMI teaching on the effectiveness of learning by assessing the performance of more than 12 700 S1 students from 56 Chinese and Anglo-Chinese secondary schools. Assessment was based on standardized tests administered to the students in S1 to S3 and their achievement test results in P6 for placement to S1.

**Findings**

- Performance of EMI students lagged far behind their CMI counterparts of comparable ability in History, Geography and Science.
- As compared to EMI students, CMI students with comparable abilities performed better in non-language subjects, while their performance in language subjects was slightly disadvantaged.
- The extent of negative effect of EMI teaching was not reduced even for students with better academic performance, but students with better English experienced less disadvantages in EMI learning.

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<sup>32</sup> The study was conducted before the implementation of the *Guidance* and the findings were reported in 2000.

**(II) Studies Conducted after the Implementation of the *Guidance***

**12. Survey on Medium of Instruction in Schools (1999) (SCOLAR)**

**Content of Study**

- Principals, teachers, students and parents from 80 secondary schools were asked to complete questionnaires which surveyed their experiences and views regarding the *Guidance* one year after its implementation.

**Findings**

- Mother-tongue teaching had enabled more diversified modes of teaching, greater student participation and more in-depth discussion in class. It also promoted better teacher-student relationship. Such improvements were also common in CMI schools with lower student ability.
- The majority of school principals or teachers, be they from CMI schools or EMI schools, believed that only a minority of students could learn effectively through English.
- Half of the parents believed that it was more important to perform better in English than in other academic subjects.
- Most teachers agreed that EMI teaching was not the only way to improve the English proficiency of students.
- Most school principals, teachers and parents agreed that the English proficiency of teachers was a pre-requisite to teaching through English.
- Most of the principals of EMI schools considered parents as the major source of obstacle in promoting mother-tongue teaching.

**13. English Language Critical Literature Review: First and/or Second Language as a Medium of Instruction (1999) (SCOLAR)**

- Overseas experience of bilingual education had been drawn in the review of the MOI arrangements in Hong Kong. The study concluded that the following conditions were important for students to benefit from bilingual or second language education:
  - Socio-linguistic environment: the first language had an important status and was widely used;
  - Family factor: students obtained care and support from their families which provided rich resources such as books and magazines to help students in their learning; and
  - School education: both language and content subject teachers had adequate proficiency in both languages, and were professionally knowledgeable in teaching pedagogy and curriculum development, so that they could help their students enhance their motivation in learning a second language, and provide more opportunities for them to use the second language.

**14. Questionnaire Survey on the Implementation of CMI-Teaching in Schools (2002) (Support Centre for Teachers Using Chinese as the Medium of Instruction, Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong)**

**Content of Study**

- Views were collected through questionnaire surveys and panel discussions with academics, principals and teachers.

## **Findings**

### Effectiveness of mother-tongue teaching at junior secondary levels

- There was improvement in students' performance in learning (including self-confidence, motivation and academic achievement, etc.).
- Teachers could deliver their lessons in a more in-depth manner, improve their teaching pedagogies and encourage more active participation of the students in lessons. To achieve higher-level learning goals, teachers looked forward to reforms in the curriculum, teaching pedagogies and assessment.

### Implementation of MOI at senior secondary levels

- The majority of schools adopted both Chinese and English as the MOI at senior secondary levels. The mother tongue was more frequently used as the MOI in humanities subjects than in science subjects.
- Schools in general considered that the nature of the subjects, the learning ability and language proficiency of students were important factors in determining the MOI.
- However, many schools believed that a diversified MOI arrangement would cause much difficulty to schools.
- Most of the schools and teachers hoped for policy consistency and a stable environment to enable consolidation of the benefits of mother-tongue teaching at junior secondary levels. As for support, teachers desired improvements in the quality and quantity of teaching materials as well as enhanced training for, and opportunity for sharing and collaboration among, teachers engaged in mother-tongue teaching.

**15. Evaluation on the Implementation of the MOI Guidance for Secondary Schools: 1999-2002 (2004)** (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

**Content of Study**

- 100 secondary schools were chosen by stratified random sampling to participate in the research. They included EMI schools (25 schools) and CMI schools (which were divided into three groups of high, mid and low levels according to the academic achievement of their students, and each group consisted of 25 schools).
- To study, from the perspectives of students' background, their learning habit and learning environments (including classroom, school and socio-cultural dimensions), the effect of CMI or EMI teaching on the learning and psychosocial development of students.

**Findings**

Academic achievement

- CMI teaching was more effective than EMI teaching in enhancing students' academic performance in science and social subjects.
- The difference in performance in science subjects could be attributed to both the language used in classroom teaching and assessment, whereas for social studies, it was mainly due to the language used in assessment.
- Compared with CMI schools, EMI schools were more capable in enhancing students' performance in English Language.
- There was no significant difference between EMI and CMI schools in student performance in Chinese Language and Mathematics.

Personal development

- Students in EMI schools were more confident in their proficiency in English, and they had greater interest and motivation in learning English.
- Students in EMI schools found learning through English less effective but believed that EMI teaching would bring about a better prospect. In contrast, students of CMI schools found learning through the mother tongue more effective but felt that mother-tongue teaching would be disadvantageous to their future development.

Teaching and learning process

- Through mother-tongue teaching, teachers could more effectively explain abstract scientific concepts and complicated social issues. They could also integrate better daily life examples with conceptual exposition. Students participated actively in class. They were more ready to ask questions, express their views, give examples and engage in group discussions and class debates. Teachers of EMI schools admitted that teaching through English reduced the extent of student participation in class.
- Students found the terminology and inquiry methods in Science unfamiliar when they first encountered the subject. These constituted barriers to learning even if they learned through the mother tongue. There would be additional hindrance if students learned through English.

**16. The Study of Good Practices in Secondary Schools for Enhancing Students' English Language Proficiency (2004) (The University of Hong Kong)**

**Content of Study**

- The research team adopted a case study approach to identify the good practices in the teaching of English (i.e. practices that could help promote the learning of English, including practices that could enhance students' English proficiency and teaching pedagogy that could develop students' positive attitude towards learning English) and investigate conditions that could best enhance English language learning. A total of 12 secondary schools (8 CMI schools and 4 EMI schools) were selected for the study.

**Findings**

- From the cross-case analysis, a great amount of work and improvement measures introduced by schools or teachers were found in the following dimensions:
  - promotion of reading;
  - promotion of writing;
  - adaptation of curriculum materials;
  - catering for students of lower academic ability;
  - a whole-school approach to English enhancement; and
  - building confidence through student empowerment and engagement with the language.
- Schools which had been successful in enhancing students' English proficiency had managed to achieve one or more of the following:

- maximizing resources and opportunities for students to engage in the meaningful use of English language in both the formal and informal curricula;
  - involving all stakeholders and making the most of teachers’ know-how in the promotion of English language learning;
  - allowing enough flexibility in the curriculum to enable teachers to address the particular needs of their students;
  - integrating successfully the formal and informal curricula so that students were given sufficient opportunities in applying and using English;
  - providing necessary scaffolding by teachers for students, guiding them to perform activities or tasks in English; and
  - creating a school culture that was positive, non-threatening and collaborative so that students were ready to take risks with the use of English, and teachers had ample opportunities for professional collaboration.
- The study findings also showed that the related good practices could be implemented in all schools regardless of their MOI.
  - There is a misconception that adopting English as the MOI is the most effective means to enhance students’ English proficiency. However, the study findings revealed that students whose English proficiency had not reached the threshold level for using it as the medium for learning content subjects would achieve notable improvement in the learning of English through good practices in English language teaching which addressed their particular needs in specific



contexts.

**17. Development of Support Measures for Student Adaptation in English-medium Schools (2004)** (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

**Content of Study**

- The Chinese University of Hong Kong was commissioned by the EMB in 2001 to develop a package of support measures for trying out in selected English-medium schools to help S1 students adapt to EMI learning environment.

**Findings**

School support

- A language-across-the-curriculum approach would effectively help S1 students adapt better to EMI teaching.
- A whole-school approach was essential in creating an English-rich environment, as it would enable teachers and students to understand better how language worked in both the formal and informal curriculum and beyond the classroom.
- To facilitate students to adapt to EMI teaching, schools should have a clear language policy for the use of English, e.g. in assemblies, meetings, extra-curricular activities, etc. Insistence and persistence in implementing the policy would be necessary.

Teacher support

- Content subject teachers had a positive role to play in language development,

while language teachers should have better understanding of EMI demands and the English requirements of different subjects.

- Collaboration between language and content subject teachers was helpful and deliberate effort should be made to allow for time and opportunities for collaboration.

#### **Student support**

- Bridging programmes would effectively help students adapt to EMI teaching. However, it would be necessary to clearly identify the gaps for bridging – between primary and secondary education, between the English subject and other content subjects, between the concepts expressed and the language used. The nature of the materials and delivery of the bridging programmes needed to be carefully considered.
- Bridging between learning in mother tongue in primary school and learning in English in secondary school needed to focus on developing students' academic language proficiency, and not just daily conversational fluency. Curriculum materials needed to better reflect the integration between language and content in different subject areas.

### **18. Study on an English Enrichment Programme in Chinese-medium Schools**

**(2005)** (The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, The Hong Kong Institute of Education)

#### **Content of Study**

- The EMB commissioned The Hong Kong University of Science and

Technology in 2001 to develop a set of Enrichment Programme (EP) for schools adopting Chinese as the MOI. It was tried out in 14 schools. The Hong Kong Institute of Education was commissioned to conduct a three-year longitudinal study to assess the effectiveness of the EP in these 14 schools.

### **Findings**

- Overall, the EP provided students with increased opportunities of exposure to and use of the English language (especially in writing) and enhanced students' motivation in learning English. However, there were insufficient opportunities provided in the EP for the development of speaking and extended writing skills.
- Students participating in EP showed significantly greater improvement in academic subject-related English than non-EP students. Although more EP modules were related to the Social Science subjects, this did not necessarily imply that EP-students possessed the English proficiency to cope with English-medium learning in Social Science subjects.
- When compared with the high ability students, medium ability students tended to benefit more from the EP as shown by their more notable improvement.
- EP students showed better Science-related and Geography-related English skills than their non-EP counterparts when they proceeded to S4. However, the impact of the EP on students' high order thinking was not significant.

## **19. The Effects of Medium of Instruction on Students' Motivation and Learning**

(2005) (The University of Hong Kong)

### **Content of Study**

- It was a longitudinal study over a period of three years. A total of 2 547 students from both CMI and EMI schools participated in the study. Their differences in self-efficacy, motivational and goal orientation and the learning strategies being adopted were compared. The scope of the study was mainly on Chinese Language, English Language and History.

### **Findings**

- EMI students performed better in Chinese Language and English Language than CMI students. However, CMI students performed better than EMI students of comparable ability in adopting different learning strategies (e.g. critical thinking, elaboration, etc.) by using a familiar language in learning.
- Self-efficacy in learning English for EMI students declined significantly at S3, except for students of high academic ability. This reflected that despite more exposure to English, the difficulty caused by learning through a second language undermined the students' confidence in learning. Conversely, CMI students of comparable ability had significant improvement in self-efficacy and confidence in learning Chinese and English. This reflected that the negative impact on self-image caused by the stigma of studying in CMI schools diminished gradually once the CMI students got adjusted to the school life. On the contrary, the positive effect increased progressively.
- CMI students were more intrinsically motivated in learning and they attached

more importance to the task value of their study. They were more confident in subject learning and had a lower level of test anxiety. This was more obvious in the learning of more language-loaded subjects (e.g. History).

- Generally speaking, students with higher attainment scores and self-efficacy in learning English wished to learn through EMI, while those with higher attainment scores and self-efficacy in learning Chinese wished to learn through the mother tongue. At S3 level, some CMI students wished to switch to EMI learning at the next stage, and some chose to continue to learn through the mother tongue. The latter were of the view that learning through the mother tongue could better enable them to comprehend texts and express their thinking, thus leading to more efficient learning. The former considered that learning through English would help enhance their English proficiency and facilitate their further study and career development in the future.

## **Development of MOI Policy in Secondary Schools in Hong Kong**

Before the introduction of universal secondary education in Hong Kong, English was the main MOI in secondary schools. In 1978, the Government introduced nine-year compulsory education from primary to junior secondary levels. Students who previously did not have access to secondary education could receive education up to the junior secondary levels. However, since many students did not possess the necessary English proficiency to learn through English, mixed-code teaching was common in secondary schools with many of the class hours spent on translating English texts and terms into Chinese. This not only affected the progress and effectiveness of teaching but might not help enhance the Chinese and English proficiency of students. Many students thus lost their interest and confidence in learning. Those who could barely manage were inclined to learn through rote memorization.

2. In 1982, an International Visiting Panel, after reviewing the education system in Hong Kong, pointed out in its report *A Perspective on Education in Hong Kong* that the measures concerning the use of English as the MOI “do not confront the basic issue of whether it is possible to use a second language successfully as the vehicle for providing universal (compulsory) education”. The Panel suggested imposing “Cantonese as the medium of instruction in Form 1-3” so that students could use the “language of the heart” to complete the nine years of basic education.

3. The EC recommended in its *Report No. 1* in 1984 that Chinese should be extensively used as the MOI in secondary schools. The Report also suggested that the Government should provide additional support to secondary schools using Chinese as the MOI for strengthening the teaching of English as a subject, so as to avoid a decline in students' English standard due to reduced exposure to English. This policy direction was reaffirmed in the *EC Report No. 2* in 1986. In implementing the MOI policy since 1986, the Government provided additional support for schools using the mother tongue as the MOI but schools were not compelled to adopt mother-tongue teaching. Instead, schools were allowed to decide their own MOI arrangements according to the needs and abilities of their students.

4. Nevertheless, under the policy of promoting mother-tongue teaching while allowing school-based decision on MOI arrangements, the majority of the secondary schools continued to profess the adoption of English as the MOI. In practice, however, it was common for EMI schools to actually use Chinese in teaching.

5. The EC suggested some adjustments to the MOI policy in its *Report No. 4* in 1990. The major recommendations included:

- (a) to develop objective assessment instruments to distinguish students into those who could receive EMI education and those, CMI education;
- (b) based on objective assessment results, to provide secondary schools

with information on the Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment (MIGA) to assist them in choosing their MOI and to assist the parents in selecting schools for their children;

- (c) to conduct regular reviews to monitor the progress in the adoption of mother-tongue teaching as well as to consider whether measures should be strengthened to achieve the objectives of encouraging schools to adopt mother-tongue teaching and minimizing mixed-code teaching; and
- (d) to provide bridging courses at different learning stages (e.g. S1, S4 and S6) to facilitate the transition and adjustment to EMI learning of those students who had to switch their MOI from Chinese to English.

6. Since 1994, the Government had started to provide schools with MIGA information which informed them of the overall suitability of their students for EMI/CMI teaching. However, many schools did not make changes to their MOI according to the MIGA information. It was still common for schools claiming to be EMI but actually using Chinese in teaching.

7. In its *Report No. 6* published in 1996, the EC stated that the Government should publicly indicate the appropriate MOI that each school should adopt. It also recommended promulgating clearly the sanctions for non-compliance. After extensive consultation, the Government published the *Guidance* in September 1997, reiterating its MOI policy and explaining the related philosophy and arrangement. According to the



*Guidance,*

- (a) Schools should adopt mother-tongue teaching in all academic subjects starting from S1 in the 1998/99 school year, and in each subsequent year, mother-tongue teaching should be extended to the next higher level in the secondary education. Those wishing to use English as the MOI must demonstrate that they have satisfied the three prescribed criteria of student ability, teacher capability and support strategies and measures.
- (b) For schools adopting mother-tongue teaching at S1 to S3 levels, if they wish to switch to EMI teaching for certain subjects in some classes at S4 and S5, they must demonstrate that they have satisfied the three prescribed criteria of student ability, teacher capability and support strategies and measures.
- (c) For S6 and S7, schools may decide their MOI to be adopted, taking into account the circumstances and needs of their students.

8. Upon the implementation of the *Guidance*, of the 400-odd public sector secondary schools, 112 were permitted to adopt English as the MOI (the so-called EMI schools) while the rest, comprising over 300 schools, were required to use Chinese as the MOI in non-language subjects (the so-called CMI schools). Around half of the CMI schools continued to use Chinese as the MOI in most of the non-language subjects at S4 and S5 levels while the rest used English in some subjects or classes to various degrees. As for the S6 and S7 levels, most schools still used English as the MOI.

9. In 2000, the joint working group established under the former Board of Education and the SCOLAR conducted a review and considered that mother-tongue teaching had started to bear fruit and more time should be allowed for steady development of the policy. In addition, the EC was at that time conducting an overall review of the education system of Hong Kong, the recommendations on which might affect the MOI policy. Against this backdrop, the joint working group recommended the continuation of the arrangement under the *Guidance* until the 2003/04 school year when the MOI policy would be reviewed alongside the review of the SSPA mechanism to be conducted by the EC.

## **Analysis of the HKCEE Results**

Since the implementation of the *Guidance* in 1998, the first three cohorts of students sat for the HKCEE in 2003, 2004 and 2005 respectively. Their performance and that of the 2002 HKCEE candidates (i.e. the last pre-*Guidance* cohort of students) were analyzed. As EMI schools have not changed their teaching medium, their performance in HKCEE is less likely to be affected by the *Guidance*. Therefore, we only set out the analyses of the HKCEE results of CMI schools as follows (may also refer to the chart attached):

(a) Overall performance

- (i) There was a sustained increase in the proportion of students obtaining 5 or more subject passes (including Chinese Language and English Language). Overall speaking, the proportion of CMI students obtaining 5 or more subject passes (including Chinese Language and English Language) increased by 5.6% in 2005 as compared with that in 2002. If students were divided into high, mid and low ability groups according to their ability during the SSPA, the proportion of students obtaining 5 or more subject passes (including Chinese Language and English Language) in 2005 rose significantly when compared to those in the last three years. When comparing with 2002, the increase was 7.4% for the high ability group, 9.0% for the mid ability group and 3.0% for the low ability group.

- (ii) When compared with that in 2002, the proportion of CMI students obtaining a total score of 14 points or above in the six best-performed subjects (including a Grade E or above in Chinese Language and English Language) increased by 2.8% in 2005. For the high, mid and low ability groups, there were also sustained rises. When comparing with 2002, the increases were 7.7%, 3.9% and 0.9% respectively.

The above showed that students could obtain better results through mother-tongue teaching, especially for the high and mid ability groups.

(b) Performance in major academic subjects

- (i) In 2005, the pass rates in nearly all major subjects for the high ability group of CMI students exceeded those in 2002 significantly, with the highest increase at 15.6% (in Geography). Notable improvement in performance was also made by the mid ability group in all major subjects with the exception of Physics, with rises in pass rates ranging from 2.9% in Mathematics to 14.8% in Geography. The rises in almost all the subjects (except for Economics) were greater than those in 2003 and 2004.
- (ii) The pass rates of the high and mid ability groups of CMI students rose significantly in Geography and History which were language-loaded subjects in these three years. The rises in 2005 were more significant than those in 2003 and 2004. This

indicated that mother-tongue teaching helped students learn better in language-loaded subjects as well.

- (iii) Even though the overall performance of EMI students in Physics, Chemistry and Biology was less satisfactory than that of 2002 over the past three years, the high and mid ability groups of CMI students in general managed to attain a continuous rise in the pass rates in Chemistry and Biology. When the performance in 2005 was compared with that in 2002, the increase for Chemistry was 5.4% and 4.1% respectively while the increase for Biology was 4.1% and 6.0% respectively. In Physics, the pass rate for the CMI high ability group increased by 2.3% and continuous improvement in the pass rate was noted for the mid ability group, with the pass rate coming closer to the level obtained in 2002.
- (iv) As for the students of the low ability group, their performance may be affected by other factors (such as learning motivation) rather than the MOI. Notwithstanding this, their pass rates in Chinese Language, English Language (Syllabus A or Syllabus B), Mathematics and Geography in 2005 exceeded the levels obtained in 2002.
- (v) It is noteworthy that there was a remarkable increase in the credit rates gained by CMI students in many subjects (e.g. Mathematics, Biology, History, Geography, etc.). When the performance in 2005 was compared with that in 2002, the highest increase in credit rate for the high ability group was 19.2% in Geography,

with 13.6% in History as the next highest. There were also significant increases in credit rates of these two subjects for the mid ability group. The increases were 10.0% and 5.9% respectively.

(c) Performance in English Language

- (i) There were sustained rises in the pass rates in English Language (Syllabus A or Syllabus B) for all ability groups of CMI students over the past three years. This reflected that the overall English language standard of CMI students was on a steady rise.
- (ii) More and more CMI schools had their pass rates in English Language exceeding the level obtained in 2002. This showed that some CMI schools had adopted effective teaching strategies in English Language and achieved improved outcomes.

## Comparison of the results of different student ability groups in EMI schools and CMI schools \*

Comparison of the pass rates in EMI schools (112 schools)

Comparison of the pass rates in CMI schools (about 300 schools)

Student Ability	High			Mid			Low	Student Ability	High			Mid			Low		
	As compared with 2002	2003	2004	2005	2003	2004			2005	As compared with 2002	2003	2004	2005	2003	2004	2005	2003
Obtaining 5 or more passes (including Chinese and English)	♦	-0.9 ↓	♦	♦	-2.1 ↓	♦	♦	Obtaining 5 or more passes (including Chinese and English)	♦	♦	7.4 ↑	♦	2.4 ↑	9.0 ↑	♦	2.1 ↑	3.0 ↑
Obtaining 14+ in Best 6 Subjects with Passes in Chinese and English	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	Obtaining 14+ in Best 6 Subjects with Passes in Chinese and English	♦	4.9 ↑	7.7 ↑	1.2 ↑	2.5 ↑	3.9 ↑	♦	0.6 ↑	0.9 ↑
Chinese Language	♦	♦	♦	♦	-2.3 ↓	♦	♦	Chinese Language	4.3 ↑	4.8 ↑	6.9 ↑	2.4 ↑	2.8 ↑	7.2 ↑	1.2 ↑	2.3 ↑	4.7 ↑
English Language (Syllabus B)	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	English Language (Syllabus B)	-6.3 ↓	-4.3 ↓	2.8 ↑	-5.1 ↓	♦	8.1 ↑	-4.8 ↓	♦	2.3 ↑
English Language (Syllabus A) Grade C or above	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	English Language (Syllabus A) Grade C or above	♦	♦	♦	2.9 ↑	2.1 ↑	5.9 ↑	♦	0.8 ↑	1.8 ↑
English Language (Syllabus A) Grade E or above	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	English Language (Syllabus A) Grade E or above	♦	♦	6.9 ↑	3.4 ↑	♦	7.1 ↑	♦	♦	4.0 ↑
Mathematics	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	-1.1 ↓	♦	Mathematics	1.7 ↑	2.0 ↑	1.9 ↑	1.5 ↑	1.1 ↑	2.9 ↑	1.6 ↑	♦	1.5 ↑
Geography	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	Geography	8.1 ↑	11.8 ↑	15.6 ↑	11.2 ↑	9.7 ↑	14.8 ↑	6.6 ↑	♦	4.1 ↑
History	♦	2.4 ↑	♦	♦	♦	4.6 ↑	♦	History	7.0 ↑	9.6 ↑	10.7 ↑	5.9 ↑	6.2 ↑	7.3 ↑	7.6 ↑	♦	♦
Chinese History	♦	-1.1 ↓	♦	♦	♦	-3.7 ↓	♦	Chinese History	♦	4.4 ↑	8.4 ↑	♦	♦	4.0 ↑	-4.0 ↓	-5.2 ↓	-2.9 ↓
Economics	♦	♦	♦	♦	-3.2 ↓	♦	♦	Economics	2.9 ↑	10.7 ↑	9.1 ↑	♦	7.9 ↑	4.9 ↑	-9.2 ↓	♦	-5.8 ↓
Physics	-1.0 ↓	-1.6 ↓	-1.5 ↓	♦	♦	-3.3 ↓	♦	Physics	♦	♦	2.3 ↑	-4.4 ↓	-4.2 ↓	-1.7 ↓	-5.3 ↓	-7.2 ↓	-7.5 ↓
Chemistry	-0.8 ↓	-1.5 ↓	-0.9 ↓	♦	♦	-4.3 ↓	♦	Chemistry	3.0 ↑	3.4 ↑	5.4 ↑	♦	♦	4.1 ↑	♦	-6.1 ↓	-3.6 ↓
Biology	-1.7 ↓	-1.7 ↓	-1.9 ↓	♦	♦	♦	♦	Biology	♦	4.6 ↑	4.1 ↑	♦	4.6 ↑	6.0 ↑	-5.0 ↓	♦	-3.7 ↓

N.A.

\* The figures show only the rise or drop in pass rates greater than 0.5 percentage point and statistically significant  
N.A. - Not applicable

♦ - rise or drop is not statistically significant    ↑ - rise is statistically significant    ↓ - drop is statistically significant  
The small, mid and large arrows show the rise or drop of the pass rates from greater than 0.5 to 2.0, greater than 2.0 to 5.0 and greater than 5.0 percentage points respectively

## **Assessment of Student Ability**

### **(I) Conducting the Research Study**

In 2004, the EMB commissioned a research team from The Chinese University of Hong Kong to conduct studies to assess the percentage of S1 students in Hong Kong capable to learn through the English medium.

2. The research team employed a widely adopted standard setting procedure – the Angoff method – to analyze the ability required for S1 students to learn through EMI. Two other standard setting methods, namely the Bookmark method and the Contrasting Groups method, were used to triangulate the Angoff method.

3. The Angoff method

(a) By examining videotapes of lessons conducted in EMI for S1 classes, scrutinizing textbooks adopted by EMI schools and conducting group discussions, judges<sup>33</sup> deliberated on the minimum English competence

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<sup>33</sup> The Chinese University of Hong Kong used the Angoff method to conduct two studies. The panel of judges in the first study comprised 34 teachers and parents (12 teachers of English Language, seven of Science/Mathematics and six of Social/Cultural subjects – all teachers had at least five years of teaching experience, of which at least two years were at junior secondary levels; three EMB education officers – majoring in English, Science/Mathematics and Social/Cultural subjects respectively; six parents – all had tertiary education qualifications. About one half of the members of the panel came from EMI schools and the other half from CMI schools). The composition of judges in the extension study comprised 30 teachers and parents (eight teachers in English Language, eight in Science/Mathematics and eight in Social/Cultural subjects, plus six parents).



required of S1 students to learn various subjects through English.

- (b) Through repeated discussion and examination of each question item in the English Language test of the pre-S1 HKAT, the judges assessed the probability that a student at the “minimum level of English competence for EMI teaching” (“minimally competent student”) answered the item correctly.
- (c) Finally, the judges arrived at a cutoff score for the whole test that a minimally competent student was expected to obtain. From the known territory-wide distribution of pre-S1 HKAT results, the percentage of S1 students in Hong Kong reaching the minimum standard required for EMI learning could be deduced from the cutoff score.

#### 4. Results

- (a) Using the Angoff method and gauging by the total score obtained in the pre-S1 HKAT test, about 32% - 40% of S1 students in Hong Kong were estimated to be able to learn through the English medium. This percentage was very close to that obtained by the Contrasting Groups method (40%); however, the Bookmark method gave a lower percentage (28%).
- (b) Statistical analysis showed that during the standard setting process, the standards set by the judges were not significantly related to their background (e.g. gender, education, subjects taught, teaching at

EMI/CMI schools, ability level of students taught, teaching experience, etc.). Moreover, the analysis also indicated a high reliability of ratings by the judges and that they were sensitive to the item content and difficulty<sup>34</sup>.

## **(II) Application of the Results**

5. The above study was conducted on the basis of the question items and distribution of results of the English Language paper of the pre-S1 HKAT. As a matter of fact, for determining the EMI-capable students, we could use the results of the English Language paper of the pre-S1 HKAT to scale the primary school IA results. However, this may induce schools, parents and students to put an undue emphasis on English Language, thus prejudicing a balanced pursuit of the curriculum.

6. Data analysis suggests a high correlation in results between the adoption of the English Language paper only of the pre-S1 HKAT and the adoption of the overall results in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics papers in the pre-S1 HKAT as an instrument to scale the IA results of P6 students. Therefore, the Working Group favours deriving the scale from the overall results in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics in the pre-S1 HKAT, since so doing would not entail any substantial impact on the scaled results, and could help ensure a balanced development of the primary school curriculum.

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<sup>34</sup> In the Angoff method, reliabilities were 0.8 for scales with six indicators and they increased to above 0.9 when the scales consisted of more than ten indicators. Mean correlation between judges' ratings and item difficulty was above 0.7.

## **Support Measures to Promote English Proficiency**

(a) **Additional teachers**

- (i) Each secondary school using Chinese as the MOI may have one to four additional English Language teachers for its S1 to S3 classes (with the number of additional English Language teachers dependent on the number of classes at these levels).
- (ii) After the introduction of the *Guidance*, schools which continue to adopt mother-tongue teaching at S4 and S5 may have one additional teacher to strengthen the teaching and learning of English, depending on the total number of classes at these two levels and their percentage of CMI teaching.

(b) **Provision of grants**

- (i) Schools which adopt mother-tongue teaching are provided with additional recurrent grants for the purchase of teaching aids and library books, the precise amount of which depends on the number of S1 to S3 classes.
- (ii) Additional recurrent grants are provided to schools which continue to adopt mother-tongue teaching in most subjects/classes at S4 and S5.
- (iii) Schools which adopt mother-tongue teaching for the first time are provided with a one-off grant for recruiting clerical staff and purchasing equipment, etc. for the production of teaching materials.
- (iv) Starting from the 2000/01 school year, schools are provided with the Capacity Enhancement Grant and Operating Expenses Block Grant to

enhance flexibility in resource deployment and to relieve teachers from non-teaching duties. Teachers can then focus more on teaching, tackling the diverse learning needs of students and enhancing students' language proficiency.

- (v) In the 1998/99 school year, the Language Fund provided a one-off grant for schools to set up "English Corners". Currently, the Fund also provides funding for schools to organize English enhancement camps and other language activities.

(c) Native-speaking English Teacher (NET) Scheme

- (i) The NET Scheme was first introduced to secondary schools in 1997 and was extended to primary schools in 2002. The Scheme aims to provide an authentic environment for students to learn English and to develop their confidence in using English. The Scheme also provides an opportunity for NETs and local teachers to share successful experiences.
- (ii) Currently, each secondary school has one NET. To strengthen the teaching of English, schools using Chinese as the MOI may employ additional English Language teachers and one of them may be a NET.

(d) Professional support

- (i) Language education is an important part of the curriculum reform. The Curriculum Development Institute (CDI) has been actively promoting

related Collaborative Research and Development Projects (Seed Projects)<sup>35</sup> since 2001. In addition, the CDI has also held “Knowledge Fairs” to enable participating schools and teachers to share among themselves and with others the results of the Seed Projects.

- (ii) The CDI also set up a Task Force of Teaching Consultants in the 2003/04 school year. About \$280 million has been allocated to provide on-site support for at least five years to help schools carry out the curriculum reforms. Key areas include the enhancement of the panel chairs’ ability in leadership, development and management of curriculum, sharing of new teaching pedagogy and skills with language teachers, and creating an environment conducive to language learning inside and outside the classroom. Seminars, workshops, homepage, publications and thematic (e.g. language arts) networking activities have facilitated professional exchanges between language teachers as well as the sharing among them of school-based experiences, good teaching practices and resources.
- (iii) The EMB has introduced the School-based Professional Support Programmes in the 2004/05 school year to provide schools with appropriate professional support according to the needs of individual schools. The scope of support covers Partnership for Improvement of Learning and Teaching Project, Variation for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning

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<sup>35</sup> Two Seed Projects, *viz.* “The Learning and Teaching of Language Arts at Secondary Level” and “Self-Access Language Learning (SALL) in Hong Kong Secondary Schools” were implemented from 2001 to 2003 to assist teachers in the acquisition of professional support in English teaching.

Project, Language Learning Support Service, etc.

- (iv) The Quality Education Fund, for the first time, organized the Chief Executive's Award for Teaching Excellence in September 2004. It identified and gave recognition to good language teaching practices. It also financed awardees' participation in local or overseas professional development activities and sharing of school experiences. The awardees will also form a "quality circle" to promote good teaching practices to other language teachers so as to facilitate the professional development of language teaching.
  
- (e) Encouraging teachers to strengthen professional development
  - (i) To help serving language teachers meet the Language Proficiency Requirement within the specified timeframe, the EMB provides English Language teachers with subsidy up to a maximum of \$13,000 for their taking of recognized language training courses.
  
  - (ii) To encourage more serving language teachers (in particular those who have not obtained a bachelor degree in the language they teach or those who have not received any relevant teacher training) to upgrade their qualifications and pursue professional development so as to attain the specialized teaching standard, \$225 million was allocated from the Language Fund for setting up the Professional Development Incentive Grant Scheme in 2004. The Scheme provides subsidy to serving Chinese and English Language teachers for taking approved courses to upgrade their qualifications. Upon

satisfactory completion of the courses, they will be reimbursed 50% of the tuition fee or a maximum of \$30,000. Teachers who have not obtained a bachelor degree in the language they teach or who have not received any relevant teacher training have the priority to be granted the subsidy.

- (iii) The Government has injected \$500 million into the Language Fund in 2005 in which \$300 million is allocated for the Professional Development Incentive Grant Scheme so that more teachers can benefit from the Scheme.
  - (iv) The Government will continue to operate relevant courses on language teaching for serving language teachers and encourage them to upgrade their qualifications and pursue professional exchanges and development.
- (f) Development of resource packages and teaching kits
- (i) The EMB has developed various support programmes and materials for English learning in order to help enhance students' motivation and effectiveness in learning English, as well as to assist those switching to EMI learning at senior secondary levels.
  - (ii) The support programmes/materials include the Language Enrichment Programme for junior secondary levels in CMI schools, booklets on assisting S4 students in switching to EMI learning and related teaching strategies, as well as programmes to assist S6 students in learning English effectively, etc. The relevant information has been uploaded onto the EMB homepage. Schools may adapt the materials to cater for the needs of their students.

- (iii) Other online resources include the Quality Education Fund Cyber Resource Centre and the Hong Kong Education City which contain valuable information, materials and project products on language teaching for teachers' reference.



