

## Section 3 : Language Education

### Target

The language policy of the Government is to enable students and the working population to be biliterate (in written Chinese and English) and trilingual (in Cantonese, Putonghua and English).

### (1) Building up a Professional Language Teaching Force

#### Progress and Tasks Ahead

- As recommended by the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) in 2003, the academic qualifications required for new language teachers<sup>3</sup> have been enforced since the 2004/05 school year. To provide incentives for more serving language teachers to pursue further studies in the relevant language subject(s) that they teach, SCOLAR has allocated an additional \$300 million from the Language Fund into the Professional Development Incentive Grant Scheme for Language Teachers in April 2005. Since the commencement of the Scheme, over 8 000 applications for grants have already been received, involving funding of about \$200 million.
- In the 2006/07 school year, SCOLAR has launched a scheme to support English teachers in primary schools to attend overseas immersion study programmes in English-speaking countries for professional development in the teaching of English as a foreign language and an eye-opening experience on the new and different teaching methods and pedagogy. A total of 150 primary teachers from over 100 primary schools have participated in the scheme in the 2006/07 school year. In view of the encouraging response of teachers in the scheme, we would aim to continue the initiative in and beyond the 2007/08 school year, including consideration to extend it to English teachers in secondary schools as well.

3 Starting from the 2004/05 school year, new language teachers are required to be holders of a Bachelor of Education degree majoring in the relevant language subject or both a first degree and a Postgraduate Diploma or Certificate in Education majoring in that language subject. Those who do not possess the specified qualifications are required to acquire them within three to five years after their entry into the profession.

- To enhance the Putonghua proficiency of Chinese Language teachers, SCOLAR has been supporting serving Chinese Language teachers to attend four-week Putonghua immersion courses in the Mainland during the summer holidays. Up to the end of 2006, the initiative has already provided subsidies to about 1 100 teachers, involving study grants of over \$7.1 million.
- In the 2005/06 school year, SCOLAR launched a pilot scheme to provide training and support to kindergarten teachers responsible for conducting English lessons/activities. The pilot scheme has been a success – teachers taken part agreed that it has helped improve the quality of their English lessons/activities, as well as increase students' interests in the English language. In view of the positive results yielded, SCOLAR has allocated \$37 million from the Language Fund to extend the efforts by setting up a dedicated team for providing training and support in English education to around 150 to 200 kindergartens starting from the 2007/08 school year.

## **(2) Creating a More Motivating Language Learning Environment**

### **Progress and Tasks Ahead**

- Since the Task Force on Language Support was established in the 2003/04 school year, it has been expanding its support services. To meet with the demand of schools in support services in language education, the Task Force has been growing gradually. As at September 2006, it comprised 100 professional staff including officers openly recruited, teachers seconded from schools and Chinese language experts from the Mainland. The number of primary and secondary schools receiving intensive support in both Chinese and English languages has increased from just over 150 in 2004 to almost 350 in the 2006/07 school year. In the 2005/06 school year, the Task Force conducted over 200 professional development activities. According to schools' self-evaluation and an external review conducted by the Chinese University of Hong Kong, teachers considered the support services very effective in enhancing their knowledge about the language KLAs and the language-related curricula initiatives. They also thought that the support

services had a significant positive impact on the development of learning and teaching strategies, curriculum, the culture of reflection and collaboration and curriculum leadership.

- The importance of core teachers as change agents is being realized in the expanding use of networks to share experiences and learning materials. In particular, networks for Chinese debating and writing, English language arts and the teaching of Chinese language to non-Chinese speaking children are having encouraging results. To disseminate good practices to as many teachers as possible, the Task Force has delivered annual sharing events for both English and Chinese languages, produced four compendiums of exemplars of good practice, three CD-ROMs containing lesson plans, teaching materials and strategies, four newsletters containing strategies for teaching, as well as several smaller scale publications. These materials are also available on the website of the Task Force.
- To ensure the sustainability of the support measures, the Task Force has placed increased emphasis on curriculum leadership in 2006. This strategy aims to ensure that the reform measures are incorporated into the holistic planning of the school curriculum. In addition, the Task Force will continue to provide support in areas such as assessment for learning, the design of NSS curriculum for language subjects and the promotion of Putonghua. It will extend its scope of work to help individual schools improve their teachers' knowledge and skills required for implementing the curriculum reform. The Task Force will also further facilitate the teaching of Putonghua in schools, by assisting schools in the design of school-based Putonghua curriculum and creation of a diverse Putonghua-rich environment with a view to encouraging the use of Putonghua and enhancing competency.
- All public sector primary and secondary schools have participated in the Native-speaking English Teachers (NETs) Scheme. NETs are responsible for organizing and conducting activities in English and cultivating a reading culture among students. Moreover, they assist in the professional development of teachers in the schools. Separately, in the light of practical needs of some schools, schools have been provided with greater flexibility in terms of recruitment and deployment of teachers to further promote English language teaching.

- Through the use of the Language Fund, SCOLAR has been organizing or sponsoring a variety of co-curricular and community-wide language activities such as the English Festival, Putonghua Festival and the annual Hong Kong News Awards. The Committee also partnered with the mass media, say, to produce television programmes on language education, in order to better support language learning in schools and enrich the language learning environment outside schools. SCOLAR will continue its efforts to raise the motivation of students and public in language education through various co-curricular and community-wide language activities.
- SCOLAR will complete a research on conditions necessary for schools to make a successful switch to using Putonghua to teach the Chinese Language subject in 2007 and to implement measures to support schools interested in making such a switch.
- SCOLAR organized a debating competition for junior secondary students in the 2005/06 school year for the first time to raise their motivation for language learning, better train their skills of language usage (in particular in listening and speaking), sharpen their logical thinking capability and organization skills, as well as help them build up their self-confidence and a sense of team work. The competition allowed participation of students of S1 to S3 in large-scale debating activities. Workshops have also been provided for teachers for enhancing their skills in making use of debating activities in language education. Over 100 secondary schools applied to participate in it. In the 2006/07 school year, SCOLAR will continue to provide training and support to more schools interested in strengthening their language education through debating activities as well as to organize achievements sharing activities (e.g. debating camp, inter-school competition, etc.)

### (3) Promotion of Reading

#### Progress and Tasks Ahead

- To promote reading to learn, which is one of the four key tasks in curriculum reform, the EMB has been supporting schools to align the promotion of reading with the strategic planning of schools' development. Focused school-based

support on reading to learn in curriculum planning and language teaching has been provided to schools in need. A promotion website, known as "Book Works", has been launched for all primary schools in Hong Kong. Talks on promotion of book reading in family had been organized.

- A two-year pilot project called Primary Literacy Programme – Reading for Key Stage 1 (PLP-R, KS1) was launched by the EMB in 104 primary schools on voluntary basis from the 2004/05 school year. The aim of the project was to foster the English language proficiency of students through a suitable literacy programme with a focus on reading, harnessing the experience and expertise of NETs in primary schools. The programme also supported parents in encouraging students to read at home. Building on the success of the pilot project, the EMB has extended the programme to another 67 primary schools on voluntary basis in the 2006/07 school year.
- Separately, SCOLAR has continued to support the Reading Ambassador and Reading Contract project organized by the HKEdCity since 2004. As at June 2006, 2 500 Reading Ambassadors have been trained to read and share with students of over 150 secondary and primary schools. About 1 500 of these Ambassadors are parents and 900 of them are students from tertiary institutions and secondary schools. The rest include some teachers-to-be and community leaders. The number of participating students in the Reading Contract project, under which they commit to reading at least ten books during summer holidays, has increased drastically from 43 000 in 2004 to over 300 000 in 2005.

## (4) Medium of Instruction

### Progress and Tasks Ahead

- The EC has completed the review on the MOI arrangements for secondary schools and its recommendations were accepted by the EMB in December 2005.
- The Government has injected \$900 million into the Language Fund to implement an English Enhancement Scheme in schools using Chinese as the MOI and a Support Scheme in schools using English as the MOI with a view to assisting them in raising students' English proficiency.

- Moreover, starting from the 2006/07 school year, schools using Chinese as the MOI may conduct extended learning activities in English at the junior secondary levels to provide students with the opportunities to use English as a learning tool.
- A study on extended learning activities conducted in English will be carried out to explore how these activities can be conducted effectively.

## (5) Language Standards of Students

- Data collected in recent years indicate that the language proficiencies of Hong Kong students are gradually improving. Test results across key stages of education indicate the following –
  - In the TSA implemented in P3 and P6 respectively since 2004 and 2005, the percentages of students achieving basic competency in Chinese Language and English Language have been increasing continuously. As regards Chinese Language, the percentage of P3 students achieving basic competency has increased from 82.7% in 2004 to 85.2% in 2006; whereas that of P6 students has increased from 75.8% in 2005 to 76.5% in 2006. As regards English Language, the percentage of P3 students achieving basic competency has increased from 75.9% in 2004 to 79.4% in 2006; whereas that of P6 students has increased from 70.5% in 2005 to 71.3% in 2006;
  - The average score in Chinese Language of the Pre-S1 Attainment Test (i.e. attainment test for P6 students as they enter S1) has risen each year from 53.7 in 2001 to 60.3 in 2005. The average score in English Language has risen from 50.6 to 56.6 during the same period;
  - The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2003 shows that 15 year-old Hong Kong students are among the best learners in the world. In reading results for the mother tongue, only four countries and regions were statistically ahead of Hong Kong and that we were among a second group of 14 countries and regions where statistical difference is not significant; and

- Among all university graduates who have taken part in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) on a voluntary basis, their average score has been assessed at above Level 6 (Competent Users) and on the rise in the past few years. Meanwhile, according to an employer survey conducted by the Hong Kong Policy Research Institute on SCOLAR's commission, the expectation of the English competency of local graduates by a majority of employers in Hong Kong was below Level 6 or between Levels 6 and 7 at IELTS. It shows that most of the local graduates are on average meeting employers' expectation in their English proficiency.