CIRCULAR MEMORANDUM NO. 120/2001

From :   Director of Education

Ref   :   ED(ERS) 13/2/87/1410/00

Tel   :   2892 6633

Date :   19 April 2001

To :   Heads of all Secondary Schools Adopting English as the Medium of Instruction (excluding schools under the English Schools Foundation)

Survey on Support Measures for Student Adaptation in English-medium Schools

Summary

This circular memorandum invites secondary schools which use English as the medium of instruction (MOI) to complete a questionnaire on their support measures to help Secondary 1 entrants adapt to an English-medium learning environment.

Background

2. The survey forms part of a research study first recommended by the Working Group on Medium of Instruction (the WG) jointly set up by the Board of Education and the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research in 1998. The WG was tasked to review and recommend to the Government the arrangements on MOI after the 2001/02 school year, as well as other issues relevant to the policy on MOI in secondary schools.

3. The WG recommended in September 2000 that the current MOI arrangements for Secondary 1 to 3 should remain unchanged until September 2004 while the long term arrangements after 2004 should be considered in conjunction with the review of the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) system to be conducted by the Education Commission (EC). It also suggested that the Education Department (ED) should research further into the desirability of "two-mode" teaching for the EC's reference in the review.

4. The Government accepted the WG's recommendations and a Steering Committee, comprising academics, school principals and ED's representatives, was subsequently set up in December 2000 to work out the details of the research study and to monitor the progress.

The Study

5.	The study is designed with the clear understanding that the Government is committed to fully implementing the MOI policy which emphasizes mother-tongue teaching, i.e. to ensure that students acquire subject knowledge and develop high order thinking in an environment with the least language barriers, and that a multi-pronged approach should be adopted to create a favourable learning environment to enable students to become biliterate and trilingual.

6.	The Steering Committee has held a series of meetings to deliberate on the research design framework and various approaches, and resolved that the study should aim to address the following issues:

> i.	Adaptation in English-medium (EMI) schools – The study should explore effective support measures to help Secondary 1 students adapt to the English-medium learning environment.

> ii.	Enrichment and transition in Chinese-medium (CMI) schools – The study should explore the effectiveness of an enrichment programme in helping students increase their exposure to English while they continue to learn in the mother tongue; and smoothen the transition from Chinese-medium to English-medium in case some schools use English to teach certain subjects at Secondary 4 and above.

7.	To more accurately reflect the above objectives of the study, the Steering Committee has agreed that the study, formerly known as "Study on Two-Mode Instruction in Secondary Schools", should be more appropriately named as **"Study on Enrichment of Language Learning Environment"**. Details of the study are given in Appendix I.

The Questionnaire Survey

8.	As far as EMI schools are concerned, a questionnaire survey would first be conducted in order to get an overall picture of the kind of support measures presently provided by EMI schools to help their Secondary 1 students adapt to the English-medium learning environment. All EMI schools are invited to complete the attached questionnaire at Appendix II and return it to the Educational Research Section, Education Department, Room 1138, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wanchai, HK **on or before Friday, 18 May 2001**. Schools interested in participating in the next stage of the study for development and tryout of support programmes are also required to indicate their interest in Question No. 24 of the questionnaire.

9.	To enable schools to better understand the study, a briefing on the study will be held **at 9:30 am on Saturday, 28 April 2001 in the Theatre, Ngau Chi Wan Civic Centre, 3/F, Ngau Chi**

Wan Complex, 11 Clearwater Bay Road, Kowloon (Choi Hung MTR Station – Exit B). If you wish to attend the briefing, please fill in and return the attached reply slip at Appendix III by 25 April 2001.

10.   Further information related to the study can be found in the Education Department Homepage under the web-site http://www.ed.gov.hk. For enquiries concerning the study, please contact Mr P.K. CHIU, Senior Education Officer (Educational Research), at 2892 6602.

(Mrs. LAM FAN Kit-fong)
for Director of Education

c.c. Heads of Sections - for information

Study on Enrichment of Language Learning Environment

Background

The Working Group on Medium of Instruction (the WG), jointly set up by the Board of Education and the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research in 1998, recommended in September 2000 that the current arrangements for the medium of instruction (MOI) policy for Secondary 1 to 3 should remain unchanged until September 2004 while the longer term arrangements after 2004 should be considered in conjunction with the review of the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) system to be conducted by the Education Commission (EC). It has recognised that the new SSPA mechanism, namely, the reduction of allocation bands from 5 to 3 and in the long term the use of internal assessments only to determine the banding of students, would result in greater diversity of students' language ability in secondary schools. There is a need to address how this phenomenon might impact on schools' MOI. The WG could not reach any consensus on whether schools should have the option to adopt different modes of teaching medium in certain subjects or classes at S1 to S3. However, it suggested that the Education Department (ED) should research further into the desirability of 'two-mode' teaching for reference by the EC in its review of the SSPA system in 2003.

2. The Government has accepted the WG's recommendation and included in the Policy Objective Booklet accompanying the 2000 Policy Address an initiative to conduct a longitudinal study on the effectiveness of 'two-mode' teaching in junior secondary classes and to identify the necessary support services to make it work.

3. A Steering Committee, chaired by the Assistant Director of Education (Planning and Research) and comprising academics, school principals, and representatives from school councils, was subsequently set up in December 2000 to work out the details of the research design and to monitor the progress of the study.

Objectives of the Study

4. The Steering Committee has held a series of meetings to deliberate on the research framework and the possible approaches, and resolved that the study should aim to address the following issues :

(a) Enrichment and transition in CMI schools – The study would explore the effectiveness of an enrichment programme in helping students increase their exposure to English while they continue to learn in the mother tongue to ensure

effective subject content learning and high order cognitive development. Moreover, as a number of CMI schools may use English as the teaching medium for some subjects in Secondary 4 classes in the 2001/02 school year and onwards, the study would also aim to explore whether the enrichment programme can help students smoothen the transition from Chinese-medium to English-medium at Secondary 4 and above.

(b) Adaptation in EMI schools – The diversity of ability of students admitted to a secondary school may widen as a result of the reform of the SSPA system. It would be difficult to ensure that each and every student allocated to an EMI secondary school is capable of learning effectively through the English medium, particularly in the first year of secondary education. The study would explore effective support measures to help students adapt to the English-medium learning environment

5.   To more accurately reflect the above objectives of the study and to avoid misinterpretation, the Steering Committee has agreed that the study, formerly known as "Study on Two-Mode Instruction in Secondary Schools", be more appropriately named as **"Study on Enrichment of Language Learning Environment"**.

Research Design Framework

Guiding principles

6.   In designing the research framework, the Steering Committee has taken into consideration the following guiding principles:-

- The Government is committed to fully implementing the existing MOI policy. The objective is to ensure that students can learn in an environment with the least language barriers. Hence, the use of the mother tongue as the principal language in teaching is to be upheld;

- Students' acquisition of subject knowledge and learning effectiveness would not be affected; and

- Favourable learning environment should be created to enable students to become biliterate and trilingual.

7.   The Steering Committee has made reference to various studies that were conducted on the issue of MOI over the past two decades.

8.   It should also be noted that since the implementation of the *Medium of Instruction*

Guidance for Secondary Schools (the Guidance) in September 1998, ED has continued to conduct studies to evaluate its effects. In 1999, the Chinese University of Hong Kong was commissioned to conduct a 3-year longitudinal study to evaluate the implementation of *the Guidance* in 100 secondary schools. The study covers two cohorts of students, namely Secondary 1 and 2 of the 1999/2000 school year and is expected to be completed in early 2003. It is planned to extend the study to cover the academic achievements and personal development of these students until they complete Secondary 5 in the 2002/03 and 2003/04 school years respectively.

Student Adaptation in EMI Schools

9.　　　　When *the Guidance* was introduced in September 1998, 112 secondary schools were approved to adopt English as the teaching medium, on the strengths of students' ability, teachers' ability as well as the support strategies and measures of the schools. However, under the SSPA mechanism, it cannot be guaranteed that all the students allocated to these schools can meet the basic requirements to learn in English. It is noted that some EMI schools have been providing various remedial and support measures for the weaker students.

10.　　　　To get an overall picture of the kind of support provided by EMI schools to help their students who do not have the adequate language ability to learn effectively through the English medium, a survey would be conducted. The survey will cover all the 112 EMI schools. Good and effective practices in addressing the diversity of students' ability will be identified.

11.　　　　EMI schools would be invited to try out the good practices to help the weaker students catch up. A sample of three to five interested schools would be given assistance in developing a more structured support programme for Secondary 1 students in the 2001/02 school year. The programme would be further developed for tryout on Secondary 1 students in the 2002/03 school year. The two cohorts of Secondary 1 students of the participating schools in the 2001/02 and 2002/03 school years would be followed longitudinally as they move up to higher forms. The process and effects of the support programmes will be studied in depth, using a qualitative approach. The support programmes, if proved effective, would be disseminated to other EMI schools.

Enrichment in CMI Schools

12.　　　The Steering Committee has explored many ways of enriching English learning in CMI schools, particularly the following approaches:

- 'By class' approach (i.e. all non-language subjects are taught in English for some classes);

- 'By subject' approach (i.e. some subjects are taught in English);

- Modular approach (i.e. certain modules or topics of a subject are taught in English while the remaining ones are taught in Chinese);

- Two-track approach (i.e. one example of this approach is that certain topics of a subject may be taught in Chinese first and then in English again while the remaining ones are taught in Chinese only); or

- Cross-curricular thematic approach (i.e. some cross-curricular modules or themes are developed and taught in English while the other subjects remain to be taught in Chinese).

13.　　　The 'by class' and 'by subject' approaches have not been favoured as it is not in line with the guiding principles in paragraph 6. Regarding the two-track approach, there is the concern about the time constraint factor. It is considered that the cross-curricular thematic and the modular approaches are the more practicable options. Besides, the cross-curricular thematic approach is in line with the direction of the proposed curriculum reform.

14.　　　The Steering Committee has finally recommended that an enrichment programme should be developed at Secondary 2 and 3 levels respectively to increase students' exposure to English learning. The main body of the programme would be a series of teaching modules written and taught in English on cross-curricular themes or selected topics from some key learning areas. About 30 teaching modules would be developed at each of the Secondary 2 and 3 levels. Each module should be intended for three to four teaching periods, and schools may select to teach about 25 modules to suit the needs of their students.

15.　　　Due to manpower consideration, about 10-15 schools would participate in the study. They would take part in programme development and tryout. These schools would be requested to set aside a certain percentage of the teaching time, say 5% at Secondary 2 and 7% at Secondary 3, for teaching the modules. They would have to design their own school-based implementation plan including time scheduling, manpower deployment and support strategies.

16.　　　In order not to burden Secondary 1 students with adjustment problems, the Steering Committee considers it inappropriate to introduce the enrichment programme at Secondary 1. To study the effects on students at different levels, the enrichment programme would be introduced concurrently to the cohorts of students at Secondary 2 and 3 in the 2001/02 school year. These students would be followed longitudinally as they proceed to higher forms so as to gauge the full effect of the programme.

17.　　　All CMI schools would be invited to apply to take part in the study. Participating schools are expected to:

- Ensure that the target student group(s) would be able to benefit from the programme;

- Ensure that teachers involved are capable of teaching effectively in English and willing to work in collaboration;

- Devise a plan for implementing the programme with adequate support measures in place;

- Take an active role in programme development and tryout process. Each participating school would have to contribute one teaching module on a selected topic by the end of the 2001/02 school year. These modules would be posted onto the ED website for the reference of other schools; and

- Allow researchers to conduct standardized tests, questionnaire surveys, classroom observations, and interviews, etc. to collect information in connection with the evaluation of the programme.

18.　　　The Steering Committee would consider whether an applicant school is suitable to take part in the study based on the following criteria:

- Whether the target student group(s) would be able to benefit from the programme, having regard to their language ability;

- Merits of the school's proposed implementation plan;

- Teachers' capability;

- Adequacy of the support strategies/measures;

- School's commitment to programme development and tryout.

19.　　　In case of over-subscription, a random sample of 10-15 schools would be selected for the study by the Steering Committee. If the teaching modules are proved to be effective after the tryout, they would be disseminated to all schools.

Monitoring and Assessment

20. Participating EMI and CMI schools would be visited by research teams regularly to ensure that the respective programmes are implemented properly and no mixed-code (i.e. a mixed use of Chinese and English) is used in learning and teaching.

21. In-depth qualitative study will be conducted to collect information on the implementation process and the impact on students' learning process. Achievement tests will be conducted on the students under study in the participating EMI or CMI schools respectively to assess the effects of the programmes. To gauge other effects, questionnaires on self-concept, perception of school life, classroom interactions etc. will also be administered.

22. To study the effects of the programmes on students' English learning, students' results in the Hong Kong Attainment Tests on English proficiency at Secondary 1, 2 and 3 levels will be sampled each year from the participating CMI schools, comparable CMI schools and all EMI schools.

Implementation

23. The first and second reports will be completed in October 2002 and September 2003 respectively. They would provide useful and adequate findings for reference by the EC in its review on the SSPA System in the 2003/04 school year. The study will continue until December 2005 when the two cohorts of students covered in the study would have completed their Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examinations in 2004 and 2005. The Steering Committee will continue to steer the conduct of the Study and work out further details of the implementation.

Education Department
19 April 2001

**Survey on Support Measures
for Student Adaptation in English-medium (EMI) Schools
(Questionnaire for English-medium Schools)**

(English version only)

Notes:

➢ This questionnaire forms part of a *Study on Enrichment of Language Learning Environment*. It aims to get an overall picture of the kind of support provided by EMI schools to help their S1 students who may not have the adequate language ability to learn effectively through the English medium.

➢ School principals are requested to complete this questionnaire or appoint a suitable teacher to complete it.

➢ Please put a "✓" in the appropriate box(es) and provide the necessary information in the space(s) provided. Use separate sheets of paper if necessary.

➢ You may tick more than one box to indicate multiple choices in all of the following questions except Q22 and Q24.

➢ **Data collected will be used exclusively for the study. Information on individual schools will not be disclosed.**

The objective of this questionnaire is to collect data on EMI schools' support measures to help Secondary 1 (S1) entrants adapt to an English learning environment. Please provide information on the support measures adopted in your school (Measures) by answering the following questions:

Objectives

Q1:   What are the objectives of your Measures?

☐ To boost students' confidence in communicating in English

☐ To familiarize the students with the English terms used in certain subjects

☐ To accustom the students to classroom instructions given in English

☐ Others (please specify): _____

_____

Q2:   What skills do you want your S1 entrants to develop through your Measures?

☐ Dictionary skills

☐ Library skills

☐ Enquiry skills

☐ Independent learning skills

☐ Oral skills

☐ Others (please specify) _____

_____

_____

Target Group & Subject

Q3:   What is the target group of the Measures?

☐   Some S1 students

☐   Some S1 classes

☐   All S1 classes (If you choose this option, please skip Q4)

☐   Others (please specify) _____

Q4:   What are the selection criteria (e.g. English proficiency)?

_____

_____

_____

Q5:   What is/are the target subject(s)?

☐   English Language only

☐   Some English-loaded subjects (please specify)   _____

          _____

☐   Some cross-curricular tasks / projects / modules / themes (please specify)

          _____

          _____

☐   Others (please specify)   _____

          _____

          _____

Mode of Operation

Q6:   Please provide some basic information on the timing of the Measures:

	During Vacations	On School Days
Operational time (within / outside normal lessons)		
Duration of each session (in hours)		
Frequency (e.g. no. of sessions per 6-day cycle)		
Total no. of sessions required		
Starting Date		
Ending Date		

Q7:   Is grouping of your target students necessary (e.g. streaming or split classes)? What is your grouping method?

_____

_____

_____

Q8:   Which groups of teachers participate in the Measures?

☐   S1 class masters / mistresses

☐   English language teachers

☐   Relevant subject panels

☐   Others (please specify) _____

_____

Q9:   Are there any teaching plans or language plans for the Measures? If yes, please elaborate.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q10:   Please give a brief description of the Measures:

(i)   e.g. Classroom language*   _____

_____

_____

_____

(ii)   e.g. Curriculum tailoring*   _____

_____

_____

_____

* You may delete this term and use your own one to suit the Measure.

(iii)   Learning materials

☐   Textbooks

☐   Teaching materials

☐   Reference materials

☐   Others (please specify) _____

_____

_____

_____

Q11:   What are the teaching aids required?

☐   English newspapers

☐   Discs & tapes

☐   Games & computer

☐   Others (please specify) _____

_____

Q12:   What are the teaching strategies?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q13:   What are the teaching activities involved?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q14:   How are the Measures financed?

☐   Charging the students

☐   School Fund

☐   Quality Education Fund

☐   Others (please specify) _____

_____

Monitoring Mechanism

Q15:   Please give some details regarding the monitoring mechanism, including the frequency of each
of the following activities:

(i)   Assignments_____

_____

_____

(ii)   Assessments (by stages and at course-end) (monitored by teachers or students)

_____

_____

_____

(iii)   Any other quality assurance mechanisms

☐   Teachers' observation

☐   Students' self-evaluation

☐   Panels' classroom observation

☐   Others (please specify) _____

_____

_____

(iv)   Any follow-up mechanism if certain students are found not yet up to school's requirement after receiving the Measures?

_____

_____

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_____

_____

_____

_____

Support

Q16:   Is there any training for the teachers concerned in respect of the Measures? Please give details.

☐   Through courses

☐   Through seminars

☐   Through staff development days

☐   Others (please specify) _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q17:   Are there any supporting extra-curricular activities organized by the English Club or clubs of EMI subjects? Please rate the effectiveness of the activities in promoting the use of English in school by putting the number "1" against the box for the most effective activity, "2" for the next effective, and so on.

☐   Video or film shows

☐   Debates

☐   Drama

☐   English Day / Week

☐   English oral sessions at recess / lunch time

☐   Recitals

☐   Writing competitions

☐   Reading schemes

☐   Book report competitions

☐   Others (please specify) _____

_____

_____

Q18: Is English used in the following communication channels in your school for enhancing the English language environment? If yes, please rate the effectiveness of each by putting the number "1" against the box for the most effective, "2" for the next effective, and so on.

- [ ] Through notices
- [ ] Through announcement
- [ ] Through posters
- [ ] Through school magazine
- [ ] Others (please specify) _____

_____

_____

_____

Q19: Is there any parental support for the Measures (e.g. as tutor at school or as facilitator at home in promoting English reading habit, etc.)? In what form?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Others

Q20: (a) How would you rate the overall effectiveness of the Measures adopted in your school?

- [ ] Very Effective
- [ ] Effective
- [ ] Marginal
- [ ] Not Effective

(b) What is the major strength of the Measures adopted in your school? Please describe the most important features leading to its success.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q21: Other relevant information or remarks on the survey subject which are not covered by Q1 to Q20.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q22: After collecting information from this survey, good and effective practices in addressing the diversity of students' ability will be identified and if possible, disseminated. Would you be interested in taking part in the dissemination?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q23: **Optional**

To help us obtain a better picture of the Measures adopted in your school, please also attach relevant materials such as timetable, teaching material, and training packages used, etc. All these materials will be for reference of the Education Department only, and will not be published or used without your consent.

The following materials are forwarded for reference.

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(d) _____

Q24: In the next stage of the study, experts might be hired to develop, on the basis of the information gathered and in collaboration with schools and teachers concerned, a more structured support programme for tryout on S1 entrants in EMI schools in the 2001/02 and 2002/03 school years. Would your school be interested to participate in the programme?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Signature of Principal : _____ Date: _____

Name of Principal : _____ Tel. No.: _____

Name of School : _____

Name of Contact Teacher : _____ Tel. No.: _____

– End of Questionnaire –

Thank You Very Much for Your Support!

Please return the completed questionnaire to:

> The Director of Education
> Attn.: SEO(ER)1
> Educational Research Section
> Education Department
> Room 1138, 11/F, Wu Chung House
> 213 Queen's Road East
> Wanchai, Hong Kong

Reply Slip

To: The Director of Education
            (Attn. SEO(ER)1)
            Education Department
            11/F., Wu Chung House,
            213, Queen's Road East,
            Wanchai, HK.

            (Fax No: 2574 0340)

**Briefing Session on the Study on
Enrichment of Language Learning Environment**

The following member(s) of my staff will attend the briefing session to be held in the Theatre, Ngau Chi Wan Civic Centre, 3/F, Ngau Chi Wan Complex, 11 Clearwater Bay Road, Kowloon (Choi Hung MTR Station – Exit B) at 9:30 am on 28 April 2001:-

Name of the Participant(s)

Signature : _____

Name of Principal : _____

Name of School : _____

MOI Used in Junior Secondary Classes: _____ CMI / EMI * _____

Contact Tel. No. : _____

Date : _____

* Please delete where inappropriate