

**FY 2008 Committee of Supply Debate  
6<sup>th</sup> Reply by Minister of State Mr Gan Kim Yong  
on Languages and Special Education**

**PROGRESS OF CL REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION**

1. I thank Mr Yeo for his interest in and comments on the Review of Chinese Language. The CL Review recommended a flexible curriculum to enthuse learners of different backgrounds and abilities as well as help them achieve their fullest potential in CL.

2. MOE developed and piloted the new Primary CL curriculum at Primary 1 and Primary 2 levels in 2006, and at Primary 3 level last year. The surveys conducted during pilot implementation yielded encouraging results. They indicated that the new curriculum, with its modular approach and active-learning pedagogy, provided students with greater flexibility to meet their diverse CL learning needs.

3. The modular curriculum is now being implemented in all schools at P1 to P4 levels. This will be followed by P5 next year and P6 in 2010. Structured training was provided to CL teachers to ensure that they can implement the new curriculum well. In addition, a 70-strong team, comprising Master Teachers, curriculum planning officers and teachers from the pilot schools provided curriculum support to the non-pilot schools. Resources such as teaching guides, assessment guidelines and digital resources were also provided. To implement the modular CL curriculum, all primary schools were given one more CL teacher last year. A second additional CL teacher will be given to primary schools by June this year.

4. MOE announced recently that a learning roadmap for all Mother Tongue Language (MTL) teachers would be drawn up to guide them in their professional development. We will provide more development opportunities for our MTL teachers. These include courses on action research, pedagogy and assessment.

5. To continually enhance the CL learning opportunities in schools, a new subject, 'O' level Literature in Chinese as part of the Combined Humanities, was offered in secondary schools from 2006. New 'A' level subjects, namely, H1 and H2 China Studies in Chinese, were also made available to all JC students from last year. In addition, the Chinese Language Elective Programme was extended to Jurong Junior College from 2006 and Dunman High School this year.

6. Since 2005, we implemented the Bicultural Studies Programme (Chinese) [BSP(C)] to nurture a core group of Singaporean students who are able to effectively engage China as well as the West. Students in this programme can now look forward to an extended immersion, up to 6 months in China at the Hwa Chong Institution's satellite campus at Beijing. The response to BSP(C) has been encouraging. The enrolment has increased from about 290 (293) in 2005 to about 350 (354) in 2007.

7. Just last month, MOE announced that the Special Assistance Plan or SAP schools will be introducing programme enhancements to deepen students' learning of Chinese Language and culture. For instance, some SAP Primary Schools will teach subjects like Music, Art, Physical Education and Social Studies in Chinese. Two secondary SAP schools will be offering Media

Studies in Chinese at the 'O' Levels from 2010. This new CL subject will be extended to other schools if there is demand.

8. MOE has also set up the Committee to Promote Chinese Language Learning to garner community support for promoting the use of CL beyond schools. The committee comprises Members of Parliament, educators, publishers and representatives from CL Community Organisations and professional bodies. Mr Yeo is a member of this committee. Over the past years, the Committee has actively facilitated reading programmes, events targeted at Pre-School children and other initiatives to promote the use of CL beyond schools.

#### **SINGAPORE AS A HUB FOR CL TEACHING & LEARNING**

9. Mr Yeo also spoke on developing Singapore into a CL hub. I, too, strongly believe in Singapore's potential to become a centre of excellence for the teaching and learning of CL. In particular, our unique bilingual environment offers conducive conditions and gives Singapore a competitive advantage in teaching and learning CL as a second language. We will explore ways to leverage on the strong foundation we have built.

#### **LEARNING OF MULTI-CULTURAL HERITAGE**

10. Mr Baey Yam Keng suggested introducing a new syllabus module on Singapore's multi-cultural aspects. MOE consciously exposes our students to Singapore's multicultural heritage through subjects such as Mother Tongue Languages as well as Civics and Moral Education. For example, in the

Chinese Language curriculum, students are exposed not only to Chinese but also Malay and Indian traditions and customs. Through Civics and Moral Education, students gain insights on harmonious living in a multi-racial society.

11. Mr Baey will be glad to know that some of our schools also provide activities that are related to ethnic culture. Poi Ching Primary School, for example, has Teochew Opera classes for its students, and Chung Cheng High School offers Nanying, a special musical instrument of Chinese ethnic origin. Students also get to explore and experience various cultures at first-hand, including ethnic cuisines, through learning journeys to Chinatown, Malay Village and Little India.

12. These curriculum and school activities help strengthen students' awareness and appreciation of Singapore's vibrant cultural diversity. Learning about each other's cultures helps connect students of different backgrounds and nurture their respect for each others' traditions and beliefs.

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## **SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS**

13. Ms Denise Phua spoke about children with special needs earlier. MOE shares her vision of helping special needs children to realise their potential to the fullest.

14. Ms Phua suggested a shared services model for special education schools. I agree that this is a useful approach in optimising resources and enhancing professionalism. MOE will study this further.

15. Ms Phua also asked if MOE could send good officers for attachment in special education schools. I am glad to inform her that MOE officers may request for secondment to special education schools, and that such requests are usually supported. Last year, there were 30 MOE officers on secondment to special education schools, including 3 Principals. MOE officers may also seek to be attached to special education schools under the work attachment programme for a shorter period, and 10 officers have done so last year.

16. We are also developing a Quality Assurance Framework for special education schools and we will take Ms Phua's feedback into account. I would like to reaffirm that MOE and NCSS are committed to continually improve support for education for children with special needs.

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