

Executive Summary

Factors Affecting the Use of Putonghua to Teach Chinese Language in Hong Kong Primary and Secondary Schools

Standing Committee on Language Education and Research

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1. Preamble

The Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (“SCOLAR”) launched a study on the “Factors Affecting the Use of Putonghua to Teach Chinese Language in Hong Kong Primary and Secondary Schools” in the second term of the 2003/04 school year. The Study was carried out in twenty primary and secondary schools which used Putonghua (“PTH”) to teach Chinese Language subject (“PMIC”²). The focus of the Study was to examine the factors affecting the implementation of PMIC for reference of schools which intended to implement PMIC and other interested parties.

2. Research Methodology

The Study adopted a qualitative approach in its research. Its findings were mainly presented in a descriptive and explanatory manner. Through school visits, interviews, questionnaires and lesson observation, the Study looked into the situation of implementing PMIC in the twenty participating primary and secondary schools (eleven primary schools and nine secondary schools) and compiled case reports for the schools. In short, the Study examined the factors affecting the implementation of PMIC in secondary and primary schools through case studies.

3. Findings of the Study

3.1 From the case studies of the twenty participating schools, the Study Group identified six factors which were conducive to the implementation of PMIC. They were: (1) capacity of teachers; (2) attitudes and strategies of the school management; (3) language environment; (4) students’ learning ability; (5) arrangements for curriculum, teaching methods and teaching materials; and (6) support for teaching and learning. Their order of importance as indicated by the twenty participating schools is as follows:

(1) Capacity of Teachers

3.2 As pointed out by five secondary schools and four primary schools, the number and quality of available teachers were the prerequisites for using PTH to teach CLS. Schools which planned to implement PMIC should first build up a pool of competent teachers. These teachers were required to be proficient in PTH and being confident in using PTH as MOI. The participating schools also pointed out that while they expected PMIC teachers to attain a higher level of PTH proficiency, they attached greater importance to their mastery of the Chinese Language.

² There is no single concept and definition of “PMIC”. In this study, “PMIC” means using Putonghua as the main medium of instruction (“MOI”) for the Chinese Language subject (“CLS”), with over 50% of the lessons conducted in PTH.

3.3 PMIC teachers in six secondary schools and nine primary schools fully satisfied the qualification requirements for PMIC teachers as recommended by the SCOLAR³. Competent teachers not only could act as a facilitator in the creation of a rich PTH environment, but also could serve as a language model for students to emulate to enhance their PTH proficiency.

3.4 Furthermore, teachers' confidence in PMIC had a direct bearing on its implementation. While most participating teachers were confident of their PTH proficiency, some of them said that they were not as eloquent in teaching in PTH as in Cantonese. They had difficulties and lacked confidence in conveying a large amount of information in PTH - they worried that their presentation was not natural and vivid enough to capture the interest and attention of their students; or their vocabulary was insufficient for them to express accurately.

3.5 As on the supply of teaching staff, individual participating schools were unable to implement PMIC in all the classes as planned due to a lack of qualified teachers. Owing to insufficient qualified teachers, some participating schools could only run PMIC classes at junior primary or secondary levels, or reduce the number of such classes. The progress in some schools was even hampered by the resignation of teachers. As a result, some students had to learn in PMIC classes for one year and then revert to the classes which used Cantonese to teach CLS ("CMIC") in the next school year. The lack of qualified teachers not only hindered the full implementation of PMIC in schools, but also affected the learning process of students.

3.6 The participating schools suggested a number of viable measures to build up a pool of qualified teachers and develop their confidence in teaching in PTH for reference. They included:

- (i) Building up a pool of competent PMIC teachers in a well-planned manner. For example, schools should try to appoint teachers who were proficient in PTH in their recruitment for CLS teachers. Another example was to encourage and sponsor teachers in their schools to take training to enhance their PTH proficiency.
- (ii) Implementing the use of PTH to teach CLS progressively by increasing PMIC levels on a one-level-per-year basis to facilitate the adaptation of teachers.
- (iii) Deploying teachers to implement PMIC in a well-planned manner. For instance, competent teachers were arranged to teach CLS in PTH first and those who lacked confidence would join in after completing courses on PTH or on PMIC.

³ The SCOLAR in its "Action Plan to Raise Language Standards in Hong Kong – Final Report" issued in June 2003 recommended that Chinese Language teachers teaching the subject in PTH must satisfy the Language Proficiency Requirement for PTH teachers in speaking and classroom language.

- (iv) Fostering professional development. Activities such as collaborative teaching, peer lesson preparation and lesson observation were organised for CLS teachers to facilitate sharing of teaching experience.
- (v) Organising visits to the Mainland. For example, visits to schools in Guangzhou and Shanghai were arranged to draw on their experience in PMIC.
- (vi) Providing professional support for teachers. For instance, to strengthen their confidence in PMIC, local and Mainland experts were invited to provide on-site assistance to teachers in Hanyu Pinyin (PTH phonetics) and the pedagogy of PMIC. Mainland language teachers were also invited to schools to share and exchange experience with teachers through lesson observation and demonstration to strengthen the professional knowledge of teachers.

(2) Attitudes and Strategies of the School Management

3.7 The participating primary schools believed that the attitudes and strategies of the school management is the most importance factor in the implementation of PMIC. The school management refers to sponsoring bodies, management committees, supervisors and school heads. The management's attitudes referred to their vision of and support for PMIC, as well as their leadership in the course of its implementation. The management of the participating schools were of the view that PMIC could help enhance students' competencies in Chinese and PTH and hence supported implementation of PMIC in their schools.

3.8 Among the participating schools, some had striven to use PTH to teach CLS ever since their establishment. For some schools, the sponsoring bodies had already put in place the policy of implementing PMIC, while for others, the sponsoring bodies merely encouraged them to do so without formulating a firm policy on it. These schools could decide on their own whether or not to adopt PMIC in the light of their own circumstances.

3.9 The attitudes of the school management were of great importance to the implementation of PMIC. If the management supported its implementation, schools could adopt a holistic approach with regard to teacher enhancement, creation of a language environment, change in curriculum and the provision of support for learning and teaching. With the support of the management, schools could more effectively set a clear direction and draw up detailed methods and steps for the implementation of PMIC to rally teachers' support, gain parents' confidence and facilitate students' adaptation.

3.10 Although all participating schools supported PMIC, they adopted approaches having regards to their own circumstances, some being the same while others differed. In summary, four

approaches were commonly adopted by the participating schools. While some schools adopted one of them, others used a combination of them. The four approaches are as below:

(i) Implementation starting at junior forms

All participating schools were in favour of starting implementation PMIC at junior levels, but no conclusion had yet been reached on the most suitable level. Nine primary schools were of the view that starting at Primary One (“P.1”) was more desirable as students were more ready to adapt to and accept this mode of teaching. Two primary schools considered that it was more preferable to start at P.2 since P.1 students had to adapt to the new learning environment, learn classroom regulations and establish rapport with teachers. They considered that students might find it more difficult to adapt to the new learning environment if the MOI for CLS was PTH at P.1.

At the secondary level, most participating schools started PMIC at Secondary One (“S.1”). One school screened students who were more competent in both Chinese and PTH at S.1 level and started PMIC at S.2 for these students. According to the Study, five participating schools operated such classes only at junior levels for two reasons. First, students taking public examinations in PTH might perform less satisfactorily in speaking and listening when compared with students whose mother tongue was PTH. Second, as CLS teachers of senior secondary level had to prepare for the new senior secondary curriculum, they were not yet fully ready for PMIC.

(ii) Progressive Approach

According to the participating schools, it was essential for the school management to adopt a progressive approach in the implementation of PMIC. In the actual arrangement for its implementation, different modes were adopted, such as on a level-by-level basis or certain-classes-at-one-level basis, etc. Some participating schools started PMIC at P.1 and increase the number of PMIC classes and levels progressively to P.6, while some started such classes across two levels within one school year. During the implementation, five primary schools continued to offer CMIC classes in addition to PMIC classes and gradually increased the number of PMIC classes⁴. At the secondary level, most participating schools started PMIC from S.1 and increased the number of PMIC classes and levels to S.3 level. During the initial period of implementation, five participating schools continued to offer some CMIC classes. One of them switched to PMIC in

⁴ Among the five primary schools which continued to offer CMIC classes, three gradually switched to PMIC in all classes after the 2005/06 school year.

all junior classes in 2004/05. Another three indicated that they would implement PMIC in all junior classes⁵.

The management of different schools made different arrangements for teachers. Specifically, teachers were arranged to attend PTH courses in batches and some CLS teachers had to start teaching the subject in PTH before others. As CLS teachers did not necessarily teach the PTH subject, they had to adapt to the change in the MOI. As such, schools made arrangements for them to attend PTH courses or relevant PMIC pedagogy courses run by tertiary institutions in batches and deployed teachers who were more confident to be the forerunner in using PTH to teach CLS. All these arrangements required the planning and implementation efforts of the school management.

In short, the participating schools implemented PMIC in an orderly manner, taking into account their individual circumstances. Under the arrangements made by the management, the schools could, in the process of switching to another MOI, build up a pool of qualified teachers, get recognition from parents, as well as accumulate and draw on the experience of running such classes. Schools then endeavoured to implement PMIC across the whole level or extend it to a higher level each year.

(iii) Consultation with Parents

In considering whether to switch from CMIC classes to PMIC classes, the school management of the participating schools would consult parents to solicit their support. Before kicking off, the schools would first get in touch with parents to know if they were willing to let their children study in such classes, and also to prepare them for its implementation. For those parents who were against it, the schools would explain to them in detail and do their best to bring them over. For schools which operated both CMIC and PMIC classes, before allocating students to the PMIC classes, the schools would generally send questionnaires to parents in September before commencement of the school term to know if they would let their children attend Chinese Language lessons taught in PTH. Some participating schools said that if only a small number of parents were against it, they would try to persuade these parents to accept the arrangements of the schools. The schools would also write to the parents to address their concerns, informing them that students could still speak Cantonese in school and also advising them on how to help their children adapt to PMIC.

To show their respect for the volition of parents, individual participating schools continued to run certain CMIC classes at each level. To facilitate parents in helping their children with their homework and study, some participating schools organised PTH pinyin courses for parents with a view to alleviating their concerns about their children learning CLS in PTH.

⁵ Among the three secondary schools, two switched to PMIC in all junior classes in the 2006/07 school year.

(iv) Flexible use of Medium of Instruction

In some participating schools, PTH was not the MOI for CLS throughout the whole lesson. The management of these schools allowed flexible use of MOI in CLS lessons to facilitate teachers and students in adapting to the PMIC language environment. With regard to listening and speaking, some schools allowed students to use Cantonese to express themselves and communicate during lessons. On reading and writing, sometimes teachers explained difficult terms or taught classical Chinese in Cantonese. Teachers switched the MOI according to students' abilities and teaching contents.

(3) Language Environment

3.11 All participating schools agreed that for the effective implementation of PMIC, they had to create a rich PTH language environment to provide more opportunities for students to speak in and listen to PTH. In addition to PTH and CLS subjects, two primary schools used PTH as MOI in all subjects (except English Language). Three secondary schools used PTH to teach Chinese related subjects such as Chinese Literature and Chinese History.

3.12 To enhance students' confidence and proficiency in speaking PTH, the participating schools strove to create a favourable PTH language environment through:

- (i) Using PTH as the language of communication at school. Individual schools conducted weekly assembly, flag-raising ceremony, gatherings and promotional activities in PTH. Apart from CLS teachers, teachers of other subjects also communicated with students in PTH.
- (ii) Creating a PTH language environment at school by organising various PTH promotional activities, such as:
 - PTH day, PTH week or PTH month;
 - PTH forum, PTH game stalls, PTH speech competitions;
 - PTH radio and PTH TV station;
 - PTH training programmes⁶, PTH award schemes⁷ and PTH ambassador programmes⁸, etc.

⁶ “PTH training programmes” include “PTH refresher courses” and “practical PTH courses” for students at senior levels and “courses on PTH performing skills” for students competent in PTH which aims to enhance their proficiency in PTH.

⁷ “PTH reward schemes” aim to encourage students to speak PTH more frequently at school. The more they speak PTH, the more rewards they will get.

(iii) Maximising learning opportunities outside the classroom to create a PTH language environment:

- After and between lessons, PTH recordings of texts were broadcast to serve as a model for students to imitate and practise reading aloud.
- During lunch break, teachers talked with students in PTH while distributing lunch boxes. Individual schools arranged teaching assistants to practise PTH with students after lunch.
- Appropriate use of school setup such as posting words and sentences with Hanyu Pinyin transcription at stairways to increase students' exposure to PTH.

(4) Students' Learning Ability

3.13 According to the experience of the participating schools, schools should consider students' readiness in learning CLS in PTH in the process of implementing PMIC. The participating schools understood that the abilities of students should be taken into account in the implementation of PMIC. In this connection, they prepared students for the change and exercised flexibility in teaching through various means. For example:

- (i) Pinyin classes were run for new students. At the primary level, the focus of learning was on elementary pinyin knowledge such as initial consonants, compound vowels and daily language in PTH, etc. At the secondary level, the foci were on Hanyu Pinyin (Chinese phonetic alphabets) and on consolidating students' PTH knowledge learnt in primary schools.
- (ii) All participating primary schools advanced the teaching of Hanyu Pinyin (as suggested in the current PTH curriculum, Hanyu Pinyin should be taught in P.4) to enable students to get used to the use of PTH as the MOI.
- (iii) Teachers arranged competent classes to learn the more difficult part of PTH phonetics such as neutral tone words. For less competent classes, teachers focused on consolidating their knowledge on initial consonants, compound vowels and tones.
- (iv) Efforts were made to cater for students who were less competent in listening to and speaking in PTH. For instance, listening and speaking courses were designed for these students; Cantonese was used in teaching; or small class teaching was implemented for them.

⁸ "PTH ambassadors" assist teachers in promoting PTH at school. A student chosen from each class guides students at lower levels to read aloud in PTH at break time.

(v) Students with better academic achievements and higher level of PTH proficiency or elite classes were selected for PMIC classes.

(5) Arrangements for curriculum, teaching methods and teaching materials

3.14 As the MOI for CLS was switched from Cantonese to PTH, it was necessary to make corresponding adaptation to the curriculum, teaching methods, assessment and teaching materials of CLS.

3.15 Regarding the curriculum, there were two modes with respect to teaching CLS in PTH - CLS and PTH subject were combined together as one single subject and CLS and PTH subject remained as two separate subjects. For schools which adopted the combination mode, CLS was taught in PTH and PTH phonetic knowledge and listening/speaking training were integrated into the CLS curriculum. PTH was not offered as a separate subject. These participating schools combined the two subjects together to avoid overlapping in the syllabuses. For schools which adopted the separation mode, CLS was taught in PTH and PTH was offered as a separate subject. While the objectives and syllabuses of the two subjects differed, they complemented and supported each other.

3.16 Among the participating schools, most primary schools went for the combination mode while secondary schools tended to adopt the separation mode. The participating schools adopted the combination mode or separation mode in the light of their own circumstances, such as teachers' capabilities and students' abilities etc. The adoption of either mode hinged on whether the teachers could integrate and coordinate the relationship between the two subjects. For instance: How could a teacher effectively handle the problems faced by students in mastering the pinyin system and correct their pronunciation in CLS lessons? How could a teacher arrange suitable teaching materials in a systematic way? Specifically, the following approaches were adopted: all participating primary schools started to teach Hanyu Pinyin before P.4 whereby students practised reading aloud and learnt with the assistance of Hanyu Pinyin; Cantonese and PTH vocabularies were included in the syllabus of CLS to help students perceive the differences between Cantonese and PTH. Most participating secondary schools adopted the separation mode mainly because of the different requirements in the deployment of teaching staff and the different teaching foci of the two subjects⁹.

3.17 On teaching methods, the participating schools focused on developing the skills of reading aloud and encouraged students to practise reading aloud to build up their PTH language sense.

⁹ The participating secondary schools pointed out that the requirements for PTH and CLS teachers were different because the syllabuses and objectives of the two subjects were divergent. CLS focused on thinking and language abilities whereas PTH subject focused on listening and speaking abilities in PTH.

Individual schools enhanced their students' confidence in reading aloud and developed their language sense through four different modes of reading aloud, namely reading by invitation and by rotation, demonstration reading and student-led reading.

3.18 With respect to assessments, those participating schools which adopted the combination mode included the assessment of students' knowledge in PTH phonetics and pinyin in their Chinese Language syllabus. As for external assessments, some participating schools chose to let their students to sit for the listening and oral assessments in PTH under the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA), though more opted to use Cantonese in the assessments. According to these schools, as the mother tongue of most of their students was Cantonese, it was more advantageous for them to use Cantonese in the listening and oral assessments. In addition, as these schools had to cater for the CMIC classes, they, therefore, opted to sit for the listening and oral assessments in Cantonese under the TSA.

3.19 As for teaching materials, most participating schools used Chinese Language teaching materials developed by publishers. However, some teachers reflected that in designing and preparing for their teaching, they encountered the problems of substandard teaching materials and inadequate supporting materials. The influence of the Cantonese dialect was found in some texts and suitable textbooks and teaching materials were not available in the market, in particular, textbooks with Hanyu Pinyin transcription, and materials for training students' listening and speaking abilities. In view of this, the teachers of the participating schools adopted the following measures having regards to their individual circumstances:

- (i) teachers selected suitable texts and design worksheets and assessment methods based on the text.
- (ii) teachers selected audio-visual materials with high language quality or made self-recorded PTH materials.
- (iii) teachers developed Hanyu Pinyin, audio-visual and speech training materials and revised the teaching materials which were influenced by the Cantonese dialect.

(6) Support for Teaching and Learning

3.20 Generally speaking, primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong have used PTH to teach CLS for only a short period of time. Many of them are still at the initial exploratory stage and there is a strong demand for support with respect to qualified teachers, curriculum and teaching materials. The participating schools provided administrative support as far as possible to facilitate the implementation of PMIC, such as sponsoring teacher training, hiring additional teaching assistants and soliciting the support of expert consultants and parents.

3.21 According to the participating schools, the support services provided by expert consultants helped significantly in strengthening teachers' confidence, facilitating the integration of Chinese Language and PTH subjects, developing PMIC teaching materials and improving PMIC teaching strategies. They also provided teachers with professional advice on language teaching, which helped enhance the overall effectiveness of teaching.

3.22 The Language Learning Support Section of the Education Bureau ("EDB") arranged Mainland language teachers to provide on-site support to some participating schools to help them develop the PMIC curriculum and to conduct lesson demonstrations. Some schools applied for government grant to set up PTH learning websites to enable students to learn PTH at home.

3.23 Some schools sought the support of parents by inviting parents as volunteers to conduct PTH interest groups for students and parents, tell stories to students in PTH, advise students in their PTH recital training, and help schools in running PTH activities, etc. Through the home-school co-operation, schools could bring in additional manpower resources and earn the support of parents by enhancing their understanding of the schools' direction in the implementation of PMIC.

3.24 Four cases selected from the participating schools (two from primary schools and two from secondary schools) were attached in the Appendix of the Executive Summary to illustrate the practices adopted by the participating schools in implementing PMIC and how these schools managed to create factors that were conducive to implementing PMIC.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Based on the six favourable factors identified as conducive to the implementation of PMIC in the participating schools, the Study Group makes the following recommendations to facilitate creation of these factors:

(1) Teacher Training

4.2 The participating schools agreed that teacher training was very important for the implementation of PMIC. The Study recommends that the Government should step up the training for serving CLS teachers to enhance their PTH proficiency and help them master PTH as the MOI and the pedagogy of PMIC. For pre-service training, the Study recommends that teacher training institutions should strengthen their PTH programmes by including training in PTH proficiency, in using PTH as the MOI and the relevant pedagogy.

4.3 In order to improve the PTH proficiency of CLS teachers, the SCOLAR started the “Putonghua Summer Immersion Course Subsidy Scheme”¹⁰ in 2004. The Study recommends that the Scheme should continue and SCOLAR should consider improving the scope and operation details of the Scheme so more teachers may benefit from it.

4.4 Dissemination of effective strategies for teachers’ reference is the major way to boost the confidence of teachers in teaching CLS in PTH. The dissemination can be done through collaborative teaching, peer lesson preparation, lesson observation, PMIC sharing sessions and exchange of experience with visiting PMIC experts to foster their professional development. In this regard, the Study recommends that relevant parties should organise more sharing activities such as lesson observation, and arrange subject experts to provide on-site support services to teachers.

(2) School Management

4.5 The school management’s attitudes and determination have an important bearing on the pace of its implementation of PMIC. The Study recommends that the school management should have more communication with teachers and parents on this issue. For example, before kicking off, schools should consult teachers and parents on issues concerning the schedule and methods of implementation through questionnaires and interviews. During its implementation, parents and schools should build consensus on the plan and methods of implementation.

(3) Language Environment in the Community

4.6 In Hong Kong, the language spoken at home is mainly Cantonese. Nonetheless, exposure to PTH language environment is available in the community through PTH radio and TV programmes, PTH courses for the public and PTH promotional activities¹¹. Moreover, EDB helps create a PTH language environment for schools. The Chinese Language Education Section of the Curriculum Development Institute provides support for schools in organising various PTH extra-curricular activities¹² while the SCOLAR has also organised a series of activities¹³ to provide students with more exposure to PTH and more opportunities to use PTH. However, the PTH environment in the community is still inadequate. The above activities only lay a foundation for the promotion of PTH. At the community level, the Government, schools, the mass media and other organisations can

¹⁰ For details of the Putonghua Summer Immersion Course Subsidy Scheme, please visit the website of SCOLAR at http://cd1.edb.hkedcity.net/cd/scolar/html/new_index_tw.htm.

¹¹ The SCOLAR, for instance, has organised a number of PTH activities in recent years including Vocational Putonghua Public Speaking Contest and PTH Radio Host Competition.

¹² The PTH promotional activities organised by the Chinese Language Education Section of the Curriculum Development Institute included PTH workplace, radio broadcast on current affairs, PTH fitness exercise, etc.

¹³ The promotional activities organised by the SCOLAR included PTH debate competition, inter-school PTH drama competition, PTH tourism ambassador training programme, etc.

conduct more PTH promotional activities to boost the interest and ability of the public in learning PTH, and enrich the PTH language environment at school and in the community. Specifically, it is recommended that the mass media may gradually increase the number of hours broadcasting in PTH to enrich the language environment for learning PTH. They may produce PTH programmes which are suitable for the youngsters and children to draw their interest in and expose them to PTH at an early stage so as to prepare them for PMIC. EDB may continue to organise diversified PTH promotional activities.

(4) Students' Learning Ability

4.7 Can students understand what the teachers say in PTH? Can they express themselves in PTH? If their PTH proficiency is not up to standard, they may have difficulties in understanding what is taught in PTH and in participating in class discussion in PTH. This may affect the pace of learning and the results in public examinations, or may give rise to greater learning diversity among students. To prepare students for the implementation of PMIC, schools can enhance students' skills in communication, delivery and speaking in PTH by consolidating their PTH phonetic knowledge and strengthening training in speaking PTH. For instance, schools may conduct summer PTH adaptation courses for new intakes of P.1 or S.1 and PTH remedial classes for students who are less competent in PTH to enhance their proficiency. As the implementation of PMIC may give rise to greater learner diversity among students, the Study recommends that schools should strengthen their support to cater for learning diversity to enhance the overall learning effectiveness of students.

(5) Curriculum, Teaching Methods and Teaching Materials

4.8 Teaching CLS in PTH involves a change in the MOI which necessitates modification and adjustment in the curriculum, teaching methods, assessment and teaching materials. In this respect, teachers can enhance their professionalism by attending relevant PMIC courses or sharing activities such as lesson observation and exchange of experiences.

4.9 To facilitate the effective implementation of PMIC, the academic sector is recommended to focus their studies on empirical issues (e.g. the operation of PMIC lessons) rather than at theoretical level (e.g. the effectiveness of PMIC). The Study recommends that the academic sector should examine the curriculum design, teaching arrangements and selection of teaching materials with a view to identifying an effective mode of teaching Chinese Language in PTH.

(6) Support for Teaching and Learning

4.10 The Study recommends that both the schools and relevant authorities should provide resources to support the development of PMIC. At the school level, the Study suggests that schools which are interested in or are practising PMIC should facilitate its implementation by repositioning

the deployment of resources, making appropriate administrative arrangements, and seeking relevant professional and manpower support. For instance, they may invite expert consultants to provide on-site professional advice on language teaching and to conduct training in PMIC for their teachers. They may also hire teaching assistants to alleviate the workload of CLS teachers in administration and teaching so that teachers can have more capacity to address the learning diversity among students. Schools may also employ PTH teaching assistants to enhance students' PTH proficiency. In addition, schools may invite parents to help schools conduct PTH activities and their children adapt to PMIC.

4.11 As for EDB, the Study recommends that resources be allocated to schools which are interested in or are practising PMIC to provide on-site support services to assist these schools in grooming curriculum leaders, developing suitable curriculum and teaching materials, and working out effective teaching strategies, etc.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Participating primary and secondary schools are at various paces and adopted different methods in respect of putting in place the six favourable factors. With regard to capacity of teachers, the participating schools considered that this was an important factor affecting the implementation of PMIC. A large number of teachers who are competent and confident in using PTH to teach CLS are required if the school is to implement PMIC in full scale. Cantonese has been the major MOI adopted in our primary and secondary education. Teachers born and brought up locally have received education in Cantonese, even for their professional training. As such, if they are required to teach CLS in PTH, they will need a long time to upgrade their PTH proficiency and enhance their confidence in adopting PTH as the MOI. As shown from the experience of the participating schools, to ensure the sustained implementation of PMIC, a relatively long period of time is required to train and build up a pool of qualified teachers and to develop their confidence in teaching in PTH.

5.2 With respect to the school management, the Study found out that though all participating schools supported PMIC, some did not implement it in full scale having regards to their individual circumstances, such as insufficient qualified teachers or concerns over students' learning progress and public examination results, or learning diversity among students. Furthermore, different sponsoring bodies or schools had different objectives and missions in education. Since the implementation of PMIC required a lot of manpower and resources, the school management, after considering their objectives and missions in education and their priorities in the development of school curriculum, might not consider implementation of PMIC the most pressing task. The Study Group consulted major sponsoring bodies in Hong Kong on the implementation of PMIC. All of them disagreed to across-the-board implementation without due regards to individual schools'

circumstances. Most sponsoring bodies suggested that whether to launch PMIC should be decided by the management of their schools having regards to their circumstances. They also hoped to get support with respect to upgrading of teachers' capacity, curriculum design and teaching materials.

5.3 On the methods of implementation, the participating schools held different views on issues such as the scale of implementation, the most desirable level for implementation and the need to screen students for PMIC classes. Moreover, the participating schools differed in making their choice on whether to adopt the combination mode or separation mode. Although many local scholars have released their studies on PMIC, they have not yet reached any conclusion on what is the effective way of implementation. Hence, the schools had to consult parents on and inform them of the methods of implementation.

5.4 It is important that parents and schools should reach certain consensus on the methods of implementation. Most parents from the participating schools agreed that PMIC could enhance their children's PTH proficiency and therefore supported their children learning CLS in PTH. Nonetheless, a small number of them still had worries and preferred their children to learn in Cantonese for easier integration into the community. Some worried that their children might lack the motivation to learn and might not be able to adapt to PMIC classes. Some worried that the results of their children in public examinations might be affected. Parents who did not speak PTH were concerned that they could not help their children with their homework and study. Though these parents were in the minority, their concerns would directly affect the school management's decision on whether to implement PMIC in all classes.

5.5 Language environment is an important factor affecting the implementation of PMIC. As Hong Kong is situated at the Yue (Cantonese) dialect area, Cantonese is the dominant language in the area, hence the environment is not conducive to enhancing the public's PTH proficiency. Moreover, as Cantonese is the mother tongue of most Hong Kong people and a language for communication among family members, it is difficult to create a PTH language environment at home. It is therefore particularly important to create a conducive language environment at school and in the community. Though PTH promotional activities are run in the community and at school, there are rooms for expanding the scope and extent of these activities.

5.6 In short, at present, Hong Kong is not yet ready for the implementation of using PTH to teach CLS in all primary and secondary schools. It is hence too early to formulate a timetable for its implementation across the territory. The imminent task is to create the above favourable factors.

5.7 Under the existing policy, primary and secondary schools may use Cantonese and/or PTH as the MOI for CLS and decide on an implementation schedule having regards to their own circumstances. The Study recommends that the Administration should adopt a school-based

approach and proactively help schools which intend to implement PMIC create favourable factors to facilitate the smooth implementation of PMIC.

5.8 To follow up the report of this Study and to respond to some of the recommendations mentioned above, the SCOLAR has launched the “Scheme to Support Primary and Secondary Schools in Using Putonghua to Teach Chinese Language subject” (“the Scheme”) and set up a support team to provide assistance to the secondary and primary schools which are determined to systematically implement PMIC in a comprehensive way.

5.9 The Scheme was formally launched in the 2008/09 school year for a period of four years until 2011/12. A maximum of 40 schools can join the Scheme every year, making a total of 160 schools for four years. The Scheme aims to offer long-term (for three years) and multi-dimensional support (including school-based support by Mainland language experts, on-site support by local language experts, professional training for PMIC teachers and lesson observation and sharing) and to provide a special allowance (for three years) for schools to hire additional supply teacher to share the workload of PMIC teachers so the latter can have more capacity to help schools move forward towards their goal of implementing PMIC.

5.10 In addition to arranging teachers of participating schools to attend PMIC lesson demonstration in the Mainland and Hong Kong, the Scheme will also conduct professional workshops for teachers to enhance their capabilities and confidence in PMIC. The Scheme also encourages participating schools to share their experience and resources with each other. Participating schools can conduct inter-school lesson observation and exchange activities by allowing teachers from other schools to observe their PMIC lessons. Furthermore, the support team will look into the curriculum design, teaching arrangements and selection of teaching materials, with a view to providing more specific recommendations on an effective mode of teaching.

Appendix Cases for Illustration

There were a total of twenty primary and secondary schools participating in the Study. Some of them implemented PMIC in all classes while others in some classes only due to their own constraints. The following four cases illustrate how the participating schools implemented PMIC.

1. Case 1 of the Study on the Implementation of Using PTH to Teach CLS in Primary Schools (School 104¹⁴)

School 104 endeavoured to implement PMIC in all classes at P.2 in the 2000/01 school year. It took the school five school years to switch the MOI for CLS from Cantonese to PTH in P.1 to P.6 classes. Under the leadership of its Head, the school worked out strategic planning with regard to teacher training, curriculum, teaching materials and teaching arrangements, the support for teaching and learning, the creation of a language environment and assistance from parents, thereby facilitating a smooth progress in its implementation. The following is its implementation schedule:

Table 1
Implementation Schedule of School 104

School year Class level (Total number of classes)	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
P.6 (5 classes)					5
P.5 (5 classes)				5	5
P.4 (5 classes)			5	5	5
P.3 (5 classes)		5	5	5	5
P.2 (5 classes)	5	5	5	5	5
P.1 (5 classes)			5	5	5
Total	5	10	20	25	30

The school started off with all five P.2 classes in the 2000/01 school year, extending to P.3 covering all five classes in the ensuing year, and a year later, to P.1 and P.4 with five classes in each level. Thereafter, the extension to the next higher level was on a year-by-year basis. The school took five school years to switch the MOI for CLS from Cantonese to PTH in P.1 to P.6 classes. The Head of the school deserved the credit for its successful implementation.

From the studies by academics and educational exchanges with the Mainland and local counterparts, the School Head concluded that the most effective way to enhance the language standard of students was to use PTH to teach CLS and to help students cultivate a keen interest in reading and build up good reading habits. In view of this, the School Head was determined to launch a pilot scheme to implement PMIC in the 2000/01 school year. Thorough planning and preparations were made before the actual implementation.

On teacher training, the school started to build up a pool of qualified teachers from the 1996/97 school year by recruiting in every school year CLS teachers who were competent in PTH.

¹⁴ This is the serial number of the 20 schools. For the 11 primary schools, they are numbered from 101 to 111, and the 9 secondary schools, from 201 to 209.

In the 1996/97 school year, only two teachers were capable of teaching CLS in PTH, but the number increased to eight in the 2000/01 school year, i.e. the first of year of implementation. In the 2004/05 school year, the school implemented PMIC at all six levels. At that time, all the 18 PMIC teachers satisfied the Language Proficiency Requirement for PTH teachers¹⁵. In addition, in the 2000/01 school year, the school sponsored all CLS teachers to attend a professional certificate programme in using PTH to teach CLS to foster continuous learning among teachers and enhance their professional knowledge. During the implementation process, the School Head made arrangements for all teachers to visit primary schools in Guangzhou, Shanghai and Shenzhen to observe their teaching in language classes. The Head also managed to establish a shared vision on using PTH to teach CLS among teachers and reinforce the confidence of CLS teachers in using PTH as the MOI.

On curriculum, teaching materials and teaching arrangements, the school included the PTH subject in the school-based core curriculum¹⁶ in the 1997/98 school year. Two PTH lessons were allocated weekly in P.1 to P.6 to enhance students' PTH proficiency and to prepare them for the implementation of PMIC at P.2 in the 2000/01 school year. In the 2002/03 school year, the School introduced the "student-centred education" to help students build up their repertoire of vocabulary and expand their reading volume. In the second term of the 2004/05 school year, the curricula of CLS and PTH Subjects concerning speaking skills were combined. P.3 and P.6 students practised speaking using CLS materials in the two PTH lessons, and in the second term, PTH textbooks were replaced by the syllabus and teaching materials prepared by the teachers. As for teaching arrangements, before combining the two subjects, CLS and PTH Subjects of the same class were taught by the same teacher. Every day in the first CLS lesson, teachers would arrange a reading and sharing session of five to ten minutes to provide more opportunities for students to speak in PTH. At the same time, the teachers would allocate some time for students to practise Hanyu Pinyin. In addition, the teachers compiled their own Hanyu Pinyin materials to meet the needs of local students and to enhance their confidence in learning CLS in PTH. In the 2006/07 school year, the school stopped to offer PTH as an individual subject and PTH phonetics and listening/speaking training were integrated into the CLS curriculum.

With regard to the support for teaching and learning, the school sought the support of language consultants from local tertiary institutions to help their teachers compile teaching materials and to provide professional advice on using PTH to teach CLS. The school also made an effort to

¹⁵ EDB requires all PTH teachers to meet the Language Proficiency Requirement for PTH teachers by 31 August 2006.

¹⁶ At that time, EDB proposed to include the PTH subject in the school-based core curriculum in the 1998/99 school year.

address the concern of “how to increase students’ exposure to PTH in a Cantonese-speaking language environment” within the school.

As for creating a language environment, the School Head required CLS and PTH teachers to use PTH as the working language and for communication within the school. Various PTH activities were organised to create a rich PTH language environment within the school. Active support and assistance from parents was another important factor that contributed to the successful implementation of PMIC in the school. Parents were invited to tell stories in PTH to P.1 students to enhance their interest in the subject.

If all the above favourable factors are in place in a school, does it mean that there are no other stumbling blocks in the implementation? The answer from School 104 is “No”. The School pointed out that in the process of implementation, it had encountered such difficulties as insufficient qualified teachers and lack of suitable teaching materials. However, the school was not discouraged. It endeavoured to find a way out instead. Regarding its teaching force, it took the School Head four school years to train up teachers, hence by the time it first implemented PMIC, there were sufficient PMIC teachers for all P.2 classes. As for teaching materials, in addition to developing their own Hanyu Pinyin teaching materials, the teachers used student-centred materials to expand students’ reading volume and build up their repertoire of vocabulary.

In conclusion, the management of School 104 played a significant role in implementing PMIC. Its leadership, along with the support and collaboration of teachers, parents and external experts, enabled the school to switch from CMIC to PMIC progressively across all levels.

2. Case 2 of the Study on the Implementation of Using PTH to Teach CLS in Primary Schools (School 111)

School 111 started to implement PMIC in all five P.1 classes in the 1999/2000 school year. It took the school four school years to extend to most classes between P.2 and P.6, and eight school years to all classes within the school. The school implemented the use of PTH to teach CLS across all classes in a gradual manner after careful consideration and trials. Its former School Head took the helm in the planning for implementation. Matters relating to teacher training, curriculum, teaching arrangements and teaching materials, support for teaching and learning, creation of language environment and soliciting parental assistance were all well planned. The school spared no effort in providing teaching and learning support. Its implementation schedule is as follows:

Table 2
Implementation Schedule of School 111

School year Class level (Total number of classes)	1999/ 00	2000/ 01	2001/ 02	2002/ 03	2003/ 04	2004/ 05	2005/ 06	2006/ 07
P.6 (5 classes)				3	3	3	3	5
P.5 (5 classes)				3	3	3	3	5
P.4 (5 classes)				3	3	3	3	5
P.3 (5 classes)			5	5	5	5	5	5
P.2 (5 classes)		5	5	5	5	5	5	5
P.1 (5 classes)	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Total	5	10	15	24	24	24	24	30

The school used PTH to teach CLS in all five P.1 classes in the 1999/00 school year, thereafter, extending to one higher level every school year. In the 2002/03 school year, the implementation was extended to P.4, P.5 and P.6, thereby the PMIC classes covered P.1 to P.6. Students were taught by the same teacher from P.5 to P.6 with regard to Chinese Language, English, Mathematics and General Studies for easier adaptation to the change of the MOI for CLS. However, not all classes learn CLS in PTH at that time. For example, there were two classes of students with weaker learning ability in P.4 to P.6. The teachers taught only selected texts in PTH in these classes. In the 2006/07 school year, the whole school used PTH to teach CLS. During that time, the school made special arrangements for the six classes of students with weaker ability to cater for their learning differences. These students were arranged to take Chinese lessons in a small class setting. Teachers made adaptation to the CLS curriculum and assessment content in teaching these classes.

On teacher training, the former School Head had a long-term plan. Since the implementation of PMIC, the School Head had started to recruit CLS teachers proficient in PTH, such as those whose mother tongue was PTH, in order to build up a pool of qualified teachers. CLS Teachers were also encouraged to attain the Language Proficiency Requirement for PTH teachers within five years. Under the Head's systematic planning, the school had sufficient qualified teachers to implement PMIC in all classes.

As regards curriculum, teaching arrangements and teaching materials, the school took part in the 1980s in the pilot scheme of teaching Mandarin carried out by the then Education Department and offered the PTH subject at P.4 to P.6. From the first term of the 2001/02 school year, the school taught P.1 students the entire Hanyu Pinyin system as well as classroom language and daily life language in PTH lessons. The syllabus for P.1 focused on teaching pinyin system and for P.2 and P.3 on training the students' listening and speaking skills. In the 2003/04 school year, the

school attempted to teach pinyin in Chinese Language lessons in some P.1 classes with a view to integrating the teaching of phonetics and reading as well as to strengthening students' pinyin knowledge through the teaching of vocabulary and reading. In the 2006/07 school year, the school combined the syllabuses of CLS and PTH Subjects. After combination, one CLS lesson was allocated to teaching Hanyu Pinyin every week. To meet the needs of the students, the teachers compiled their own school-based pinyin and vocabulary textbooks, nursery rhymes and classical poetry and prose with Hanyu Pinyin transcription. The school facilitated students to make full use of the school resources and learn in a rich PTH environment through the school website, story-telling activities (for P.1 and P.2 students) and provision of language environment. With regard to the support for teaching and learning, the school managed to seek relevant support for its teachers in many ways. For instance, in the 1999/00 school year, the school took part in a study on teaching CLS in PTH conducted jointly by the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Institute of Education. During the study, the two institutions arranged experts to pay on-site visits to school to provide professional assistance and answer enquiries from parents. In the first and second terms of the 2002/03 school year, two master teachers (at the rank of School Head and Deputy Head) from the Mainland stayed in the school to share their experience in using PTH to teach CLS with teachers of the School. In the 2003/04 school year, two experts were hired by a local publisher to provide on-site assistance to teachers in the teaching of CLS and to observe and help students minimise the interference of Cantonese in writing. From 2004 to 2007, the School took part in the "Exchange and Collaborative Project between Chinese Language Teachers of the Mainland and Hong Kong" organised by the Language Learning Support Section of the then Education and Manpower Bureau ("EMB"). Under the Project, a Mainland teacher was deployed to the School for three months to conduct demonstration lessons, observe classes and design curriculum with a view to promoting exchanges between the Mainland and Hong Kong teachers. The school also developed PMIC curriculum in cooperation with Mainland universities to provide a blueprint for teachers' reference.

On language environment, the classroom language used by teachers and students in Chinese Language lessons was PTH. Outside the classroom, CLS teachers talked in PTH among themselves as well as with their students. Students greeted their School Head in PTH when they met in the school. Directional signs with Hanyu Pinyin were erected in the school. Other measures such as weekly assembly in PTH, PTH television station, PTH award schemes, PTH parent-child activities, etc. were in place to encourage students to listen to and speak in PTH. In addition, parents became part of the manpower resources by offering assistance in organising PTH activities.

Even if all the above favourable factors were in place in the school, it still ran into a lot of difficulties in the process of implementation. Differences in students' abilities and the lack of a facilitating language environment in the community to support the implementation of PMIC impeded

the pace of implementation. Despite these difficulties, the school endeavoured to find ways to solve the problems, such as seeking external assistance and arranging small class learning for the less able students.

As shown from the development of School 111 in the implementation of PMIC, the School Head was able to lead the school in coping with changes at various levels. Throughout the implementation process, the school managed to introduce the above teaching measures in an orderly manner. In particular, it had a thorough plan to cater for the needs of the less able students.

3. Case 1 of the Study on the Implementation of Using PTH to Teach CLS in Secondary Schools (School 203)

School 203 started using PTH to teach CLS in three S.1 classes in the 2000/01 school year, extending to all S.3 classes in a progressive manner and subsequently to all S.5 classes. In parallel with the implementation of PMIC, the school started curriculum integration by combining the Chinese Language, Chinese History and PTH Subjects to form a single subject. Its teachers put in a lot of effort in the implementation of PMIC and in curriculum integration. Its implementation schedule is as follows:

Table 3
Implementation Schedule of School 203

School year Class level (Total number of classes)	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
S.5 (6 classes)							6
S.4 (6 classes)						6	6
S.3 (6 classes)					6	6	6
S.2 (6 classes)			6	6	6	6	6
S.1 (6 classes)	3	6	6	6	6	6	6
Total	3	6	12	12	18	24	30

As a start, the school tried out in three S.1 classes, extending to all S.1 classes (six classes) in the next year, and progressively to all classes in S.5 in the subsequent years. As the new senior secondary curriculum would soon be implemented, the school was considering whether PMIC should be extended to S.6. Favourable factors which were conducive to the implementation of PMIC, such as the attitudes and strategies of the school management, capacity of its teaching staff, arrangements on curriculum, teaching materials and teaching methods, support for teaching and

learning, language environment and students' motivation in learning, were in place in the school. They are further elaborated below.

Regarding the attitudes and strategies of the school management, the school planned to adopt a level-by-level approach in using PTH as the MOI for CLS. To facilitate the progressive adaptation of teachers to the PTH teaching environment, the school started with three S.1 classes and further extended to S.5, covering six classes at each level. The school also strove to enhance teachers' professional development by arranging and sponsoring teachers to pursue courses in "Using PTH as the MOI for CLS" and to attend sharing sessions to exchange their experience in relation to PMIC. Teaching assistants were employed to provide teaching support in respect of CLS so the teachers could focus their efforts in teaching.

With respect to capacity of teachers, PMIC teachers of the school had a good command of PTH. Most of them had satisfied the Language Proficiency Requirement for PTH teachers, and some were even native PTH speakers. The teachers played an active role in the curriculum reform and had been working unflinchingly in the process of curriculum integration and the implementation of PMIC.

Regarding arrangements on curriculum, teaching materials and teaching methods, in order to allow sufficient time for the teachers to work on the module design for CLS and PTH Subjects and to adapt to the change in the MOI, from the 2001/02 school year, the School combined CLS and the PTH Subjects to become one single subject on a level-by-level and year-by-year basis. In the 2004/05 school year, the syllabus of S.1 Chinese History subject was integrated into the CLS module design and lessons, and Chinese History was no longer an independent subject. In the following year, Chinese History was not offered as a subject to S.2 students. It would be removed from the S.3 curriculum in the 2008/09 school year. In addition, attempts were made to use PTH to teach the S.4 Chinese Literature Subject in the 2005/06 school year. Subsequently, CLS covered three subjects including Chinese Language, Chinese History and PTH. As for teaching arrangements, the school started to implement small group teaching on a level-by-level basis starting from the 2002/03 school year so teachers could take better care of their students and to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning. To cater for learning diversity among students, CLS teachers allocated one lesson (out of the eight or nine CLS lessons) each week to teach PTH phonetics in a systematic manner, or teach PTH phonetics based on the materials of PTH textbooks or through integrating PTH knowledge into language teaching.

During the implementation, the school sought external professional support. In the 2002/03 school year, the school participated in the "Exchange and Collaborative Programme for Mainland Language Teachers and Hong Kong Primary and Secondary Language Teachers"

organised by the then EMB to explore the modular approach and enhance the effectiveness of teaching in PTH.

On the creation of a language environment, it was spelt out in the student handbook that the languages for communication in the school were PTH and English only. The MOI for CLS and Chinese History Subjects was PTH whereas for other subjects it was English. Internal activities concerning CLS, such as announcements, morning assembly, award presentations, etc., were all conducted in PTH to increase students' exposure to PTH. The listening and speaking abilities of the students were in general good. They could understand the teachers' explanations, express their views and answer questions in PTH. Their abilities facilitated the interaction and communication in class.

Throughout the seven school years of implementing PMIC, the school encountered many problems, but managed to resolve them. One of the problems was the capacity of teachers. In the first two years of the implementation, the school lacked CLS teachers with a good command of PTH, but with continuous training for serving teachers and the recruitment of new teachers, the problem was resolved. To help teachers and students gradually adapt to PMIC, CLS teachers were allowed to use Cantonese to teach classical Chinese and argumentative writings and use PTH to teach descriptive and narrative writings in the first two years.

The school also ran into problems concerning curriculum and teaching materials. On curriculum integration, the teachers had to put in a lot of time and effort to combine the Chinese Language, PTH and Chinese History Subjects, which were originally three separate subjects. To tackle the problem, after combining the three subjects into a single one, the teachers adopted a Chinese Language oriented syllabus, with the part on Chinese History comprising the spirit, approach and means in exploring history (with some learning materials and assessments removed from the Chinese History curriculum) and the part on PTH focusing on phonetic knowledge. Teachers found that there were inadequate materials to train composite listening skills in PTH in the market and the influence of Cantonese was spotted in textbooks occasionally. Faced with these problems, the teachers had to identify and revise teaching materials as well as to ask publishers to include relevant materials in their publications.

During the period of implementation, School 203 went through significant reform in curriculum integration and the MOI. In addition to switching the MOI for CLS from Cantonese to PTH in S.1 to S.5, it also endeavoured to teach Chinese History and Chinese Literature in PTH by combining the three subjects to form a single one. All these were the results of the strenuous efforts made by the school management and the teachers concerned.

4. Case 2 of the Study on the Implementation of Using PTH to Teach CLS in Secondary Schools (School 207)

School 207 attempted to implement PMIC in the 2000/01 school year. It started with two S.1 classes, extending to the next higher level each year and gradually to all S.3 classes. Its former Principal, a staunch supporter of PMIC, mapped out implementation plans for teacher training, curriculum and teaching arrangements, the provision of teaching and learning support as well as the creation of a language environment. The implementation schedule of the school is as follows:

Table 4
Implementation Schedule of School 207

School year Class level (Total number of classes)	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
S.5 (5 classes)							
S.4 (5 classes)							
S.3 (5 classes)			2	2	4	4	5
S.2 (5 classes)		2	2	4	4	5	5
S.1 (5 classes)	2	2	4	4	5	5	5
Total	2	4	8	10	13	14	15

As CLS teachers of senior secondary level had to prepare for the new senior secondary curriculum, the school implemented PMIC at junior levels only. Initially, the school tried using PTH to teach CLS in some S.1 classes and it took the school three school years to extend progressively to S.3. The number of such classes at S.1 increased gradually, then further extended to higher levels, achieving the target of full implementation at junior levels after four school years. During the implementation, its former Principal made necessary arrangements and preparations in various aspects to foster its smooth progress. Below is a summary of the favourable factors in place in the school.

On teacher training, its former Principal started to build up a pool of qualified teachers by recruiting CLS teachers with higher level of PTH proficiency from the 1997/98 school year. With the formal implementation of PMIC in the 2000/01 school year, CLS teachers who also taught PTH began to teach CLS in PTH while other CLS teachers observed and learnt from their practices. At the same time, new CLS teachers with an excellent command of PTH were recruited. With more PTH teachers available, the school was able to move forward with the plan of teaching CLS in PTH. Meanwhile, the school arranged training for CLS teachers in batches to enhance their delivery skills in language teaching. To proactively foster teachers' professional development, the school

arranged peer lesson planning and observation, and invited experts to conduct on-site demonstration and sharing activities to strengthen peer sharing and enhance teaching effectiveness.

On curriculum and teaching arrangements, PTH lessons were offered in S.1 to S.6 in the 1997/98 school year and the number of PTH lessons increased from one to two per cycle. The curricula of CLS and PTH subject were gradually integrated together by the teachers. In CLS lessons, the teachers focused on teaching Cantonese-PTH transcription, while reading with proper tone and intonation was taught in PTH lessons. Thus, the teaching foci of the two subjects differed. The school organised “intensive PTH courses” for S.1 students during summer vacation each year to help them adapt to the PTH teaching environment. To cater for students who were less competent in PTH, the school implemented small class teaching by splitting two classes into three for some S.1 classes. In addition, teaching assistants were arranged to practise speaking PTH with students after lunch to help the latter enhance their communication skills.

On the support for teaching and learning, the school participated in the study on PMIC conducted by the Hong Kong Institute of Education. During the study, teachers attended courses, such as training in the skills of reading aloud, organised by the Institute to enhance their competency in using PTH as the MOI. Furthermore, the school was supported by Mainland master language teachers who provided support services on the overall teaching and learning strategy of CLS. School-based curriculum and evaluation mode were also developed in cooperation with local experts to strengthen peer exchange and enhance teaching effectiveness.

The school played an active role in creating a rich language environment. PTH was not only the MOI for CLS but also the language used in school functions. PTH activities, including flag-raising ceremony, morning assembly, PTH month, PTH ambassadors, etc., aimed to increase students’ exposure to PTH within the school.

In the process of implementation, the school ran into many difficulties. First, there was the problem of insufficient qualified teachers. To solve the problem, the school kicked off by deploying PTH teachers to teach CLS in PTH while at the same time, it began to recruit teachers competent in both CLS and PTH with a view to building up gradually a pool of qualified teachers. The teachers also had to face the problems of curriculum integration and students’ pinyin ability, etc. All these required the cooperation and devotion of time and energy on the part of the teachers to find out the best solutions.

Under the leadership of its former Principal, School 207 implemented PMIC in all classes at junior levels. It took the school seven school years to carry through from planning to implementation. Though the implementation was not accomplished within a short time, the progress was steady and the objectives were clear. The process could be divided into two stages:

first, implementation in some classes in S.1 to S.3; second, from partial implementation to full implementation at junior levels. Despite the difficulties, the school's resolution and determination in implementing PMIC was not undermined.

Summing Up:

The above four cases share two similarities. First, the MOI for CLS in the four schools was Cantonese at the time of their establishment, but was switched to PTH in a progressive manner at a particular stage of their development, such as in P.1 to P.6, S.1 to S.3 and S.4 to S.5. Second, similar factors, including the attitudes and strategies of the school management, training of qualified teachers, curriculum, teaching arrangements and teaching materials, the support for teaching and learning as well as the creation of a language environment, were in place for the successful implementation.