

CDC Key Learning Area Committee on English Language Education 1999-2000
Minutes of the Second Meeting

Date: 19 January 2000

Time: 2.30 p.m.

Venue: Rm 1023B, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wanchai

Present: Mr. Derek Rodney Too (Chairperson)
Ms Chan Wai-ming (Vice-Chairperson)
Mr Chan Sai-ho
Ms Chan Wai-han
Mr Stephen Chan
Ms Shirley Chuang
Mrs Christina Lee
Mr Lam Cho-ki, Luke
Ms Catherine Lui
Dr Angela Mok
Ms Emily Mok
Ms Truely Siu
Dr Gordon Slethaug
Mr Simon Tham
Ms Mellissa Yam
Ms Moira Yuen
Mr Raymond Ng (Secretary)

Apologies: Mrs Catherine Li
Professor William Littlewood
Mr Lindsay Miller

In attendance: Dr Hon-kwan Cheng
Miss Catherine Y S Chan
Ms Amy Shu
Mrs Olivia To

1 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were confirmed.

2 Matters arising from the minutes

The Vice-Chairperson referred members to item 4.2 in the minutes of the last meeting.

and reported on some of the proposed reform measures that had already been taking place within the context of English Language Education curriculum development:

- *Partnership in Curriculum Development*

A community service organization (i.e., the Society for Community Organization) and the Education Department were in the process of organizing English Language residential day camps for students this summer with Native English Teachers as programme co-ordinators.

- *Development of Life-long Learning Skills*

Four identical workshops on Self-Access Language Learning (SALL) were held between 10th and 13th January 2000 for teachers of senior secondary English classes. The workshops were led by Mr Lindsay Miller, Associate Professor of English at City University of Hong Kong, and Mr David Gardner, Senior Instructor of English at The University of Hong Kong. The SALL materials produced by the teacher participants would be selected, edited and compiled into a resource book to be disseminated to all schools for teachers' reference and use. It was anticipated that similar SALL workshops for primary school teachers and for teachers of junior secondary English classes would be held at a later stage.

- *Catering for Learner Differences*

Under the supervision of the Research and Evaluation Section, a project exploring various ways of catering for learner differences, including the possibility of subject setting (a method in which students of the same learning level in a subject are put together in the same set to learn the subject), in schools would be launched. Teams of consultants had also been hired to work on different aspects of catering for learner differences at P.3/P.4 levels

3. Report on Holistic Review of the English Language Curriculum Forums

3.1 The Secretary briefly went over the Summary Report on the Holistic Review of the English Language Curriculum Forums and the Report on Questionnaire Survey on the Holistic Review of the English Language Curriculum. The two English Language Education forums held on 15 December 1999 at City University of Hong Kong were well-attended and generally well- received.

3.2 In response to the reports, Mr Cho-ki Lam drew members' attention to two of the comments made by respondents to the questionnaire:

- in the context of language learning, nothing can be more essential than having the chance of actually using the language; and
- open-mindedness is essential for life-long learning.

He considered these very valid responses and could serve as guidelines for the committee's future curriculum development work.

- 3.3 The Secretary also referred to some comments/suggestions collected from the public after the completion of the open forums. One suggestion which led to some discussion was that the Key Learning Area (KLA) of English Language Education should be broadened to include not only English language but other foreign languages. Dr Cheng suggested that it was premature to consider other foreign languages, as he regarded the teaching and learning of English as the committee's most important concern. Having considered the real needs of the students, the Committee agreed that the proposal be rejected.

4 **Draft Curriculum Framework for the Key Learning Area of English Language Education**

- 4.1 The Vice-Chairperson explained to members that the draft Curriculum Framework for the Key Learning Area of English Language Education was meant to be used as a framework rather than a prescribed curriculum, allowing schools to have the flexibility to decide on what to teach and when to teach it. She remarked that the draft was not yet complete, as it had to incorporate the generic learning skills and elements to be supplied by colleagues working in the other sections of Curriculum Development Institute. She also added that the section on the relationship between English Language Education and the other Key Learning Areas in the draft needed further revision work.
- 4.2 Dr Angela Mok commented that the document was, on the whole, comprehensive and useful. However, she asked whether the Language Arts component under the Experience Dimension on p.6 could be made more explicit by incorporating examples of imaginative/literary texts such as poems, plays, short stories, song lyrics, etc. In this way, the link between English Language and English Literature could be made even clearer.
- 4.3 The Vice-Chairperson observed that the table on p.6 was meant to be simple, showing an overall picture of the way in which the two strands of English Language and English Literature were organized and their learning focuses. She further explained that the tables on pp.8-15 represented an elaboration of the English Language strand on p.6. The Language Arts component under the Experience Dimension across Key Stages 1-4 was clearly shown in those tables, which provided examples of imaginative/literary texts and what learning goals they could be utilized to help learners work towards.
- 4.4 It was also suggested that the draft curriculum framework attach greater importance to extra-curricular activities so that students could apply both their language and literary skills for use outside class. One example would be to ask students to send e-mails to, or work on projects with, students in other countries.
- 4.5 Mrs Moira Yuen referred to the recommendation on p. 2 of the Curriculum Framework that a child should start learning a second language at Primary One. She remarked that the teaching of English actually started earlier, as it took place in a good number of

kindergartens in Hong Kong. Instead of exposing children to English through interesting activities, formal teaching of English such as vocabulary and spelling took place. This had put undue pressure on the children. She suggested that action be taken to discourage formal teaching of English in kindergartens.

- 4.6 Mr Cho-ki Lam observed that whether English language could be effectively learned in kindergartens depended a great deal on the approach adopted. Mrs Emily Mok supported this view by suggesting that children in kindergartens could enjoy learning English through engaging in fun-filled, student-centred language learning activities. The Vice-Chairperson reported that such practice was evident in some primary schools which, instead of depending entirely on textbooks, made creative use of materials such as songs, rhymes and Big Books to arouse students' interest and develop their language skills.
- 4.7 Members agreed to endorse the draft Curriculum Framework for the Key Learning Area of English Language Education in principle.

5 Tasks for the Ad Hoc Committees

5.1 Ad Hoc Committee on English Literature (S4-7), 2000-2001

- It was agreed that this Ad Hoc committee should continue to develop and complete the resource package on the teaching of poetry for S4-5, a task which had not been finished prior to the dissolution of the CDC English Literature Subject Committee (Secondary) 1998-1999 as a result of the restructuring of CDC. It was also agreed that the Ad Hoc Committee would deliberate on issues related to Curriculum 2000 in its first meeting.
- Some members suggested that English Literature be taught as a subject in the lower forms in secondary schools (i.e. S1-3). The Secretary replied that the current English Language curriculum included a Language Arts component which aimed at promoting language learning through literature. The learning experience gained through such means would serve as a springboard for furthering students' interest in studying English Literature as a subject in the upper forms (S4-7).
- The Vice-Chairperson was concerned about the availability of teachers for the subject. She explained that many language teachers teaching lower secondary forms were not trained in the teaching of English Literature and therefore it was necessary that they attend relevant professional development courses/workshops to better prepare themselves before they were asked to take on the task of teaching the subject.

5.2 Ad Hoc Committee on English Language (S1-7), 2000-2001

- Mr Cho-ki Lam proposed that resource packages be developed to support language teaching in S1-S7. Mr Stephen Chan pointed out that materials development in support of the CDC Syllabuses for both English Language (S1-5) and Use of English (Sixth Form) 1999 had already got underway. The language learning tasks produced

by teacher participants in the following workshops/courses would be selected, edited and compiled into resource packages on their respective topics to be disseminated to schools for teachers' reference and use:

- ☞ Self-Access Language Learning Workshops (10–13 January 2000);
- ☞ Workshops on Task-based Language Teaching/Learning for Teachers of Senior English Classes (14 January–11 March 2000); and
- ☞ Teacher Development Course on Task-based Language Teaching/Learning (25 January–17 June 2000).

- It was agreed that the Ad Hoc Committee on English Language (S1-7) do the following at its first meeting:
 - ☞ consider and make recommendations on ways to support the implementation of the English language curriculum at secondary level; and
 - ☞ deliberate on issues related to Curriculum 2000.

5.3 *Ad Hoc Committee on English Language (P1–S3), 2000-2001*

- It was agreed that this committee do the following at its first meeting:
 - ☞ consider and make recommendations on ways to support the implementation of the English language curriculum with regard to basic education; and
 - ☞ deliberate on issues related to Curriculum 2000; and
 - ☞ develop a resource package on assessment for teachers of English.

6 **Any Other Business**

6.1 The Vice-Chairperson reported briefly on the general response to the broad reform measures proposed in the Holistic Review of the School Curriculum open forums.

- There was general agreement to the proposed measures. Many participants acknowledged that curriculum reform would involve not only the effort of teachers as change agent, but the co-operation of the community at large. They also recognized the importance of research work, and the need for disseminating good educational practices among schools.
- There was, however, concern among some teachers, as they thought that curriculum reform would mean an increase in workload. They thought it would be hard to bring about change unless they received ample support from the school management.
- Useful suggestions were also made in the open forums, notably closer co-operation or collaboration between parents and schools, and the promotion of cross-curricular approach to learning.

6.2 The Vice-Chairperson reported on the latest developments regarding proposals for change in the secondary school academic structure. She indicated that the current "5-2" system (i.e. 5 years of secondary school education and 2 years of post-secondary education)

might make way for the "3-3" system comprising 3 years of junior secondary education followed by 3 years of senior secondary education. Such a change would have implications for changes in the English Language Education curriculum at secondary level.

6.3 The Vice-Chairperson requested the committee to consider the following three questions that were to be addressed in the final report on the CDC Holistic Review of the school curriculum:

1. How to make schools and teachers understand the curriculum changes?
2. How to make schools and teachers know how to carry them out?
3. What are the incentives for schools?

Members addressed the third question first, as they thought it was the easiest. They suggested that teachers should be allowed more spare time to look into the curriculum. This could be achieved by:

- providing a flexible time-table
- abolishing the Secondary School Placement Allocation (SSPA)
- reducing class size
- integrating the curriculum

Members discussed the first two questions together, as they thought they were related to each other. They generally agreed that teachers should attend the seminars, workshops and courses organized by the Curriculum Development Institute to keep abreast of latest curriculum changes and to gain an understanding of how to carry them out in schools.

Members also discussed ways of promoting reading among both teachers and students. Some of their suggestions included:

- organizing reading workshops for teachers;
- liaising with the Reading Association to see what can be arranged for teachers;
- parents should spend time reading with their children; and
- making greater use of mobile libraries

6.4 There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 5 pm.

Confirmed on _____

Mr Derek Rodney Too
(Chairperson)

Mr Raymond Ng
(Secretary)

