



The Association of English Medium Secondary Schools
香 港 英 文 中 學 聯 會

Chairperson's Annual Report 2008-2009

This past year, 2008-2009, is the most memorable so far in the life of our Association. Since its inception in 2000, our Association has been put on the defensive for its stance on the promotion of English as the medium of instruction (MOI) in secondary schools because the then Education & Manpower Bureau decided that the mainstream medium of instruction was to be Chinese. By putting up a huge effort, 112 schools were permitted to keep on using English as the MOI. Even then, we received unfavourable treatment in many areas, e.g. the employment of a second Native-speaking English Teacher or the provision of additional resources to secondary schools to improve English standards: CMI schools were given \$3 million while EMI schools were given a mere half a million dollars. But we are proud that we have held our ground and have the full support of parents and the general public, especially the commercial sector. On many occasions, our voices were ignored despite the fact that our schools produce the finest young scholars in Hong Kong, taking up most of the places in local universities.

Then, last year, the Education Bureau (EDB) initiated the “Fine-tuning the MOI for Secondary Schools” policy and declared that henceforth English and Chinese would be given equal importance in schools and that the EDB would aim for true bilingualism for as many students as their ability allows. Even then we had to defend ourselves against pressure groups that wanted to forbid EMI schools from informing parents that English is used as the MOI. Members of the Executive Committee negotiated with Mr. Michael Suen, the Secretary for Education, Mr. Raymond Wong, the Permanent Secretary for Education, Mr. Kenneth Chen, the Under Secretary for Education, and their colleagues in numerous meetings. **We insisted that parents had the right to know the language in which their children were educated. Instead of being secretive, schools should be transparent in their language policy, in line with the government's policy of keeping the public informed instead of keeping them in the dark.** As Mr. Suen wanted the several School Councils and Associations to come to

some kind of agreement before making his final decision, members of our Executive Committee met with representatives of other Schools Councils, Associations as well as those of the Committee on Home-School Co-operation many times over many months and helped build a consensus and made suggestions before the EDB made its final decision. Throughout the negotiations, we had the support of the media in making our position known to the public. We spoke on radio and television programmes and talked to journalists. We participated in discussions with concerned parents groups and presented our position to the Education Panel of the Legislative Council. We did all this to promote the use of English as the MOI in secondary schools. Finally the EDB announced in June 2009 that schools had to be transparent by telling parents the MOI used for each subject and at each level. Now, we can continue to teach in English and parents will know it. The EDB declared that schools would no longer be bifurcated into EMI schools and CMI schools. That is acceptable to us, especially as it will make the EDB give us the same resources as they give CMI schools from now on.

Just when we thought our battles were over, the Hong Kong Examinations & Assessment Authority (HKEAA) unilaterally declared in June 2009 that the promised bilingual Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Liberal Studies (LS) examination papers for the first four cohorts of candidates from 2012 to 2015 will no longer be provided. Our indignation at their flimsy justification for this decision, the lack of logic in their argument, and their blatant disregard for the opinions of schools, teachers and students was echoed by the Grant Schools Council. With an eye to the availability of reference materials and suitable teachers, some schools have planned all along to teach some modules, say, Hong Kong Today and Modern China, in Chinese and others, say, Globalization, Energy Technology and the Environment, in English. Now, they must make hasty plans to redeploy their teachers and prepare new notes. In one fell swoop, the HKEAA has destroyed the trust between it and schools, and added unnecessarily to the workload of principals and teachers just as the new “334” academic structure is being launched. Indeed, we feel that the provision of bilingual LS examination papers should be made permanent and not just for a transition period of four years. The Executive Committee will continue to press the EDB on this matter.

Besides these policy issues of paramount importance to us, the Executive Committee organised various activities for our member schools throughout the year. Below are the reports from the Principals who put time and effort into organising these activities.

HKGCC-AEMSS Business-School Partnership Programme 2008-09:

Dr. Louise Law

Once again, the HKGCC-AEMSS Business-School Partnership Programme proved to be well-received by our members. Twelve companies of various profiles, industries and backgrounds, such as CLP Group, Esquel Group and Sun Hung Kai Properties Ltd., and 15 EMI schools took part in this joint venture.

The aim of the partnership was to develop a flexible channel of communication between schools and businesses so as to enhance mutual understanding and better prepare students for the business world. Activities organised this year included talks, workshops, site visits and internships. We are pleased to find that students benefited greatly from this venture by gaining business knowledge, workplace ethos and communication skills through a number of activities led by experienced executives and their staff.

Lions International Youth Exchange Scholarship Essay Competition:

Ms. Melaine Lee

This year, we participated in the 9th such competition. The interview of the 52 authors of the shortlisted essays, 38 of whom were from EMI schools, was held on 31 January 2009. The Final Competition and Award Presentation Ceremony was held on 7 March 2009. The 10 Finalists, all from our member schools, were given full scholarships to participate in Overseas Exchange Programmes.

English Cultural Exchange Programme:

Mr. Chan Hon Ling

To inspire EMI school students and widen their international horizons, our Association and The Summer Exchange co-organised this Programme, originally scheduled to run from 13 July 2009 to 24 July 2009 during the summer holidays. Conducted by Harvard University alumni, participants were expected to acquire public-speaking, drama and debating skills as well as use English with confidence. A total of 63 students enrolled in the programme. However, it had to be aborted due to the outbreak of Human Swine Influenza. We expect to launch this programme again next summer.

Drama Fest 2008

Mrs. Liliana Kung

(See separate report.)

At the beginning of September 2009, I retired after serving as a Principal for 27 years. Concomitantly, I retired from my position as Chairperson of this Association which I am so fond of. I want to thank my fellow Executive Committee members who worked side by side with me. I also want to thank member schools for your unfailing support of the mission and activities of the Association. Although the EDB has decided to remove official recognition of EMI and CMI schools, we feel our Association should continue its good work in the promotion of English as the MOI in secondary schools.

I wish the Association a healthy and prosperous future as it continues to serve its member schools and the community.

Thank you.



Rosalind Chan
Chairperson