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ASSOCIATION FRANÇAIS LANGUE ETRANGERE HONG KONG  
The Hong Kong Association of French Teachers  
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Professor Arthur Li  
Secretary for Education and Manpower  
15/F, Wu Chung House  
213 Queen's Road East  
Wanchai  
Hong Kong

December 22, 2006

Dear Professor Li,

Our association contacted you on several occasions concerning the future of French teaching in local secondary schools. However, while students currently studying French instead of Chinese in Form 1 face an uncertain future, we are still waiting for a clear and unambiguous answer over several very important points.

- 1) EMB has repeatedly said in the past that schools offering French classes to students who, for various reasons, cannot take Chinese will be allowed to continue doing so in the future. It seems that that policy has changed, and that now Chinese is a compulsory subject for ALL students, from JS1 (Form 1) onward. Can you please confirm that?
- 2) However EMB still maintains that schools can continue to offer French. That means students choosing to learn French in Form 1, 2 and 3 will now have to take Chinese lessons AND French lessons, in addition to all the other subjects. Can you please explain us how schools are going to squeeze French lessons in an already full timetable?
- 3) In the New Senior Secondary 1, 2 and 3, all students will have to take the 4 core subjects (Chinese, English, Maths and Liberal Studies) and 2 or 3 elective subjects. Since foreign languages are not included in the elective subjects, French can only be taught as “other learning experience”. Schools however have other subjects to teach in these “other learning experiences”, such as music, P.E., religion, etc. In these conditions, how can they offer the proper number of French lessons each week?
- 4) EMB promised that these French classes would be financed with the help of the Diversity Grant. How is this going to work exactly? Will schools be able to use this grant if they organize part of the French lessons after regular school hours, as an extra-curricular activity?
- 5) During a recent seminar organized by the HKEAA for French (and other foreign languages) secondary school teachers, a HKEAA representative announced that they had decided on the Cambridge “I-AS level” examination for students taking French and that this examination will take place in Novembre each year. However, this examination is designed for students taking at least 6 years of French, and they usually sit for the exam in Novembre of their seventh year. How do you expect HK students to reach the required standard for that subject, taking into consideration the fact that they will have to sit for the examination after only 5 years and 3 months of study and with less student/teacher contact hours than before ?

- 6) As a result of the Education reform, some of our colleagues, who dedicated themselves to educating HK children for so many years and have done an excellent job of it, will probably lose their job. Are you considering offering compensation and/or retraining for them ?

There can be no doubt that an international city like Hong Kong is in need of more people speaking more foreign languages. We had an example of it last year, when the government was desperately contacting secondary schools and universities to find French (and other languages) speakers for the WTO meeting. It is our view that, rather than making it so difficult for schools to teach French, EMB should pursue a vigorous policy of encouraging schools to teach foreign languages to their students. A very strong message could be sent by including foreign languages among the elective subjects.

For your reference, we attach to this letter the position paper we published last year, which gathered widespread support among teachers, academics and the general community.

Yours truly,

Jean-Luc Rey  
Chairman

c.c.

Mr. Raymond Wong H. C., Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower  
Mr. Chris Wardlaw, Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower