

**Macao SAR Government**  
**Non-tertiary Education: Language Education Policy**

The language education policy for non-tertiary education, in addition to being closely linked to the transmission of culture and the quality of school education, is also related to the language literacy of all residents, as well as the overall competitiveness and the sustainable development of the Macau society. Since the establishment of the SAR Government, there has been rapid development in Macao's economy, politics, culture, society and non-tertiary education; it is, therefore, necessary to formulate a forward-looking language education policy that can cater for the current needs.

**1. Focal Points of the Policy**

1.1 Relevant provisions in the *Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region*

In accordance with Article 9 of the *Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region*, in addition to the Chinese language, Portuguese may also be used as an official language by the executive authorities, legislature and judiciary of the Macao Special Administrative Region. Article 121 also states that the Government of the Macao Special Administrative Region shall, on its own, formulate policies on education, including policies regarding the educational system and its administration, the language of instruction, the allocation of funds, the examination system, the recognition of educational qualifications and the system of academic awards so as to promote educational development.

1.2 Relevant provisions in the *Fundamental Law of Non-tertiary Education System*

According to Article 37 of the *Fundamental Law of Non-tertiary Education System* (Law No. 9/2006),

- 1) Public schools should adopt one of the official languages to be the medium of teaching, and provide students with the opportunity of learning the other official language.
- 2) Private schools can use the official languages or other languages to be the

medium of teaching.

3) Private schools that plan to use other languages to be the medium of teaching should be assessed and approved by the education authority and be confirmed that they possess adequate conditions prior to the enforcement of the language.

4) Private schools using other languages as the medium of teaching should provide the opportunity of learning at least one of the official languages.

### 1.3 Relevant provisions in the *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language*

Macao is a special administrative region of the People's Republic of China. In accordance with the *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language*, the standard spoken Chinese language refers to Putonghua and the standard written Chinese language refers to the standardised Chinese characters; the State popularises Putonghua and the standardised Chinese characters and all citizens shall have the right to learn and use the standard spoken and written Chinese language.

### 1.4 Macao's increasingly close relationship with the Chinese mainland

Exchange between Macao and the Chinese mainland has been increasing since the Macao SAR government was established. Therefore, it has become crucial to promote Putonghua.

### 1.5 The need for Macao to act as a platform for cultural, trade and economic exchanges between the Greater China Region and Portuguese-speaking countries

With its unique language and cultural advantages, Macao, in recent years, has been successfully acting as a platform for cultural, trade and economic exchanges between the Greater China Region and Portuguese-speaking countries through holding the "Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries" and other activities. Teaching Portuguese to students in an appropriate and effective way is significant in terms of sustaining and taking full advantage of Macao's regional

advantages.

#### 1.6 The need for Macao to develop into an international city

To develop Macao into an international city and to ensure the sustainable development of its economy and society, it is necessary to popularise English among residents and nurture foreign language professionals.

#### 1.7 Residents' need for lifelong learning

Language is the tool for people to understand the objective world, think effectively and communicate with others. Language teaching in non-tertiary education must lay a solid language foundation for residents in pursuit of lifelong learning and development.

#### 1.8 The cultural role of the language education policy

Aside from a means of communication, language is also the vehicle of culture. The language education policy plays a significant role in transmitting and developing Chinese culture as well as promoting multiculturalism. The language education policy of Macao should ensure the further development of Chinese culture in the city and take into account its multicultural characteristics.

#### 1.9 The tradition of speaking Cantonese and the value of traditional Chinese characters

For a long time, Cantonese and traditional Chinese characters have been most widely used in schools and among Macao residents. The language education policy should reflect and acknowledge their importance.

## **2. Policy Objectives**

### 2.1 Macao SAR Government

- To specify, with consideration to Macao's legal system, history, cultural characteristics, etc., the status of Chinese, Portuguese and English and put emphasis on educating students to be biliterate (to master written Chinese and Portuguese) and trilingual (to speak fluent Cantonese, Putonghua and

Portuguese);

- To nurture a certain amount of Chinese-Portuguese bilinguals;
- To establish an effective mechanism for promoting Putonghua, Portuguese and English learning;
- To provide sufficient language education resources for schools, teachers and other institutions;
- To improve laws and regulations related to language education (in particular laws and regulations related to curriculum design as well as the required conditions for schools planning to adopt an unofficial language as the medium of instruction).

## 2.2 School

- To create a good language learning environment in schools;
- To optimise the language curriculum, with special regard to strengthening the teaching of the language of instruction, so that the quality of language lessons can be guaranteed;
- To substantially raise the teaching effectiveness of Putonghua, Portuguese, English and other languages.

## 2.3 Teacher

- To incrementally raise Chinese teachers' ability to teach in Putonghua;
- To ensure teachers from schools which adopt an unofficial language as the medium of instruction possess the language ability as required by the government;
- To help language teachers continuously enhance their language teaching skills.

## 2.4 Student

- To help students foster a proactive attitude towards learning language and enhance their self-confidence in communicating in the learned language, so that their language aptitude can be fully developed;
- To ensure that students' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills meet the requirements for further studies and employment after graduating from secondary school;
- To ensure students, on graduating from secondary school, are proficient in the medium of instruction as well as at least one other language;

- To ensure students of Chinese medium of instruction schools, on graduating from secondary school, speak relatively fluent Putonghua, write traditional Chinese characters correctly, are fluent in written Chinese and understand standardised Chinese characters;
- To continuously raise students' reading interest and ability.

## 2.5 Other educational institutions and civic organisations

- To encourage educational institutions and civic organisations to, in accordance with related policies of the SAR government, actively promote language education;
- To optimise and develop language learning resources of the community, so as to improve the language learning environment and conditions for the public.

## 3. Policy Measures

### 3.1 Policy on language curriculum design

#### 3.1.1 Prioritise the teaching of official languages

- Public schools must adopt one of the official languages to be the medium of instruction, and provide students with the opportunity of learning the other official language;
- Private schools should provide students with the opportunity of learning at least one of the official languages.

#### 3.1.2 Strengthen the teaching of languages other than the medium of instruction

- Educational institutions must teach students at least one language other than the medium of instruction throughout primary education. The teaching of such language should be more standardised and systematic in the fifth and sixth year of primary education;
- Encourage schools to create conditions in which students can learn other languages.

#### 3.1.3 Formulate the new “Requirements of Basic Academic Attainments” and related language proficiency indexes

- Formulate the Requirements of Basic Academic Attainments in Chinese, Portuguese and English language learning;
- Assign research institutes to investigate the feasibility of formulating a Putonghua proficiency index that meets Macao students' actual needs.

#### 3.1.4 Enrich curriculum resources and improve curriculum design

- Advance the compilation and the publication of Putonghua, Portuguese and English teaching materials;
- Helping students acquire a good knowledge of traditional Chinese characters should be prioritised in Chinese lessons. However, schools can, at their own discretion, use teaching materials written in traditional Chinese characters or standardised Chinese characters as approved by the government;
- Provide subsidies to schools to improve and enrich their language curriculum resources;
- Open professional translation diploma courses in vocational and technical schools;
- Improve and strengthen the transition between language lessons at every educational stage.

### 3.2 Policy on medium of instruction

#### 3.2.1 General regulations

- Public schools should adopt one of the official languages to be the medium of instruction;
- Private schools can use the official languages or any other language to be the medium of instruction;
- Private schools that plan to use other language to be the medium of instruction should be assessed and approved by the education authority and be confirmed that they possess adequate conditions prior to the enforcement of that language;
- Schools are encouraged to progressively create conditions in which Putonghua can be used in the teaching of Chinese. Chinese schools can use Cantonese as the medium of instruction in non-language subjects.

#### 3.2.2 Required conditions for schools that plan to apply for adopting an unofficial language as the medium of instruction

The government takes the responsibility of formulating the required conditions

for schools that want to apply for adopting an unofficial language as the medium of instruction. The required conditions mainly concern teachers' ability and the school's support measures.

### 3.2.3 Required conditions for schools that want to apply for adopting English as the medium of instruction

#### 3.2.3.1 English language proficiency requirements for non-English subject teachers who teach in English

- Most fundamental requirement: teachers should be able to express his/ her ideas clearly in English, while in the meantime his/ her English will not create any negative impact on students' English learning.
- Specific requirement: teachers must

(a) attain at least the following scores in the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL):

TOEFL-Computer based		TOEFL-Paper based		TOEFL-Internet based (iBT)	
Total Score	Essay Rating	Total Score	TWE (Test of Written English)	Overall Score	Writing
237	4.5	570	5	90	21

or

(b) attain an overall score of at least 6.5 and a score of at least 6 for Writing in the Academic version of International English Language Testing System (IELTS)

or

(c) attain at least the following grade in the subject of English in the General Certificate of English (GCE) or the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE):

GCE	GCSE
Grade D	Grade C

or

(d) attain other equivalent requirement(s) as recognised by the education administration.

### 3.2.3.2 Schools' support measures

- Schools must, in a conscious and strategic manner, provide students with an environment conducive to their English learning, including:
  - (a) strengthening English teaching and learning;
  - (b) creating an environment which is good for English learning;
  - (c) formulating a sound bridging plan.
- Schools must include related support strategies and specific measures in their development plan and annual report. They must also, from different perspectives, evaluate and monitor the teaching quality and quantity according to their self-evaluation and external evaluation systems.

3.2.4 As for schools which are currently using English as the medium of instruction, their prospective non-English subject teachers who are to teach in English must meet the requirements as listed in 3.2.3.1.

### 3.3 Teachers' professional development

- Strengthen training for teachers and optimise the whole language teaching team by organising school-based training, off-the-job training for teachers and letting teachers take sabbatical leave for further studies;
- Cooperate with relevant institutions to guide the teaching work of language teachers;
- Create conditions for teachers and students to have the opportunity to exchange ideas and experience with their overseas counterparts;
- Encourage and support schools to provide training for local outstanding language teachers through different subsidy schemes;
- Formulate the Putonghua proficiency requirements for Chinese teachers (including Putonghua teachers) on the basis of relevant requirements set by the



State Language Commission of China, and establish a relevant testing system.

- Provide Putonghua and other special training for practicing Chinese teachers phase by phase;
- Cooperate with relevant institutions to strengthen training for Portuguese teachers, so as to raise the quality of Portuguese teaching;
- Take measures to raise the sense of belonging of school-based Portuguese teachers, and provide them with support in teaching materials and teaching aids;
- Continue to implement the “Programme of Overseas Learning Trip for English Teachers”- outstanding English teachers are selected and sent to English speaking countries for further studies.

### 3.4 Government support

- Strengthen and improve schools’ language education by providing them with different kinds of subsidies, including subsidies for book purchase, teachers’ professional development and hiring teaching assistants, etc.;
- Subsidise schools to hire specific duty personnel to promote reading, so as to help students develop their reading interest;
- Formulate and implement a “Subsidy Scheme for Language Promotion” by subsidising students and residents to learn Putonghua, Portuguese and English; or by subsidising relevant institutions to provide the aforesaid language teaching services;
- Enhance the functions of the Centre of Languages and the Centre of Educational Resources of the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau and take full advantage of relevant civic organisations and associations, so as to provide residents and teaching staff with abundant language learning opportunities and rich language educational resources;
- Subsidise relevant institutions to conduct Putonghua proficiency test;
- Promote the cooperation between tertiary and non-tertiary education institutions in nurturing Chinese-Portuguese bilinguals and in creating conditions for vocational and technical secondary schools to offer translation courses;
- Continue to send Portuguese teachers to teach in private schools;
- Improve the “Portugal Study Programme for Students” and encourage local students to take the Portuguese proficiency test organised by the European Union;
- Subsidise schools to hire native English speakers as teachers.

### 3.5 Other educational institutions and civic organisations

- Courses offered by the faculty of education of tertiary institutions and the teaching of these courses must be corresponding with the government's language education policy. Undergraduate programmes of Education in Chinese Language and Literature, in particular, are required to offer compulsory Putonghua courses to students throughout the four years. Moreover, students planning to teach Chinese must pass the Putonghua proficiency test as required by the government;
- Tertiary institutions should develop more translation courses.