

4th December, 2000

To: Education Panel
Legislative Council
Hong Kong Special Administrative
Region of the People's Republic
of China
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong

School-based Management Consultation

The Hong Kong Association of Sponsoring Bodies of Schools welcomes the opportunity of being consulted on School-based Management. Our association represents twenty-seven major sponsoring bodies of schools in Hong Kong and our members together have about one thousand schools of various levels under their care. A list of our members is in the appendix.

Constitution of the School Management Committee

We agree that initially the School Management Committee (SMC) may draw up its own constitution. However, this must be done in collaboration with the School Sponsoring Body (SSB). The SSB being the parent body of the SMC should have authority in approving the final draft as well as any subsequent amendments. Any school which already has in place an existing constitution may amend it with the approval of the SSB.

We understand that the Education Department will provide a sample constitution for the assistance of schools but this should be for reference only. The SSB and the SMC should be able to adapt, vary or entirely rewrite the constitution. The sample constitution should provide for the SSB to have final authority to approve amendments, and to include provisions to the effect that the SSB may dissolve and re-form the SMC, should the need arise.

In the event that an SMC is not functioning successfully, the SSB has the responsibility to take remedial action, including dissolution, and must therefore be clearly given the authority to do so.

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Membership of the School Management Committee

In drafting the constitution of each individual school, we are strongly of the view that a multi-model approach be adopted. The way that school sponsorship has developed in Hong Kong is best represented by the picture of a mosaic of many colours. Throughout the last two centuries, the varied traditions, backgrounds, visions, sizes and practices of the many sponsors and the schools under their charge have all contributed to the diversity and richness of the school system in Hong Kong and it is most essential that a multi rather than unitary approach be taken.

As recently as 1997, the Education Commission in its Report No. 7 on the topic of Quality School Education specifically recommends: 'that to facilitate efficient school management, schools may consider to establish a School Executive Committee (SEC) under the SMC, to decide on school matters and be answerable to the SMC'. We consider this to be a viable option in principle and would recommend that an alternative model based on the philosophy of the above recommendation be included.

This means that under the SSB, on the basis of any one individual school, a dual level management be set up.

The committee of the first level shall have the following characteristics:

1. it deals mainly with broad policy issues and sets the vision and mission of the schools,
2. it has oversight of the budget of the school involving Government grants proposed and drawn up by the second level,
3. it manages any private financial resources and raises funds from the public for major development,
4. it has final authority over personnel matters,
5. its members are generally appointed by the SSB according to conditions agreed between the two bodies,
6. it holds general meetings about two to three times a year.

The committee of the second level shall have the following characteristics:

1. It implements the vision and mission of the school, puts policy into practice and generally ensures the successful operation of the school.
2. The SSB shall appoint from the committee of the first level members of the second level committee, and shall appoint a chairman from among them.
3. One member to be elected from among the full-time teachers of the school.
4. One parent member to be nominated by the PTA.
5. One past student member to be nominated by the alumni association.
6. One independent member to be co-opted by the committee.

Apart from the alternative model above, it should be possible for SSBs to propose further alternative models according to individual needs and circumstances.

Number of Schools Served and Age Limit

We do not agree with the suggestion that no manager may serve more than five schools. In certain circumstances, it is necessary for a manager to serve more than five schools, particularly for large sponsoring bodies. The SSB and SMC concerned of course will make a decision with the best interests of the school in mind.

With regard to a mandatory upper age limit, we propose that it not be set to encompass the whole SMC. School managers are not employees. They serve the community without charge and freely give of their time, skills and experience. The SSB will obviously wish to appoint the most suitable persons.

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Conclusion

In conclusion, we wish to express our support for the general direction of moving towards greater transparency, more accountability and wider participation. However, we are convinced that the same aims may be achieved by a variety of means and it is essential that the rich diversity of the school system in Hong Kong, which is the envy of many other educational jurisdictions overseas, not be put at risk by forcing a rigid unitary system of management on it.

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