

For information
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**Legislative Council Panel on Education
Strengthening Support for the Education Reform**

PURPOSE

We would like to inform Members of the progress in implementing the education reform and the tasks ahead.

DETAIL

Progress in Implementing the Education Reform

2. Following the Government's full endorsement of the Education Commission's "Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong" in October last year, the Administration is progressively implementing the various reform and support measures. These measures cover virtually all significant aspects of the education system – the academic structure, the curricula, the assessment mechanisms and the interface between different stages of education. As many facets of the education system are inter-related, the reform and support measures need to be implemented concurrently if the intended benefits are to be realised. For example, the Basic Competency Assessment has to be introduced following the abolition of the Academic Aptitude Test to provide feedback on student performance at both the student and system levels.

3. Attached at Annex I for Members' ease of reference is a pamphlet published last year setting out the key reform and support measures as well as the timetable for their implementation. Since the reform process started a year ago, we have implemented the following measures:

- (a) Early childhood education: we have raised the entry qualification for kindergarten teachers to five passes in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examinations (HKCEE) (including Chinese and English Language subjects) and relaxed the admission age for kindergartens to two years and eight months starting from 2001/02.
- (b) School Places Allocation: We abolished the Academic Aptitude Test (AAT) in 2000 and put in place the interim Secondary School Places Allocation System which groups students into three, instead of five,

bands. We also changed the Primary One Admission System for the school year 2002/03 so that school net and parental choices are the two key criteria for allocating Primary One places in public sector schools.

- (c) Curriculum development: We completed the curriculum review and published a ten-year implementation strategy in July 2001 with an action plan for the first phase from 2001/02 to 2005/06 .

What Remains to be Done

- 4. More reform measures have yet to be implemented. For instance,
 - (a) Secondary School Places Allocation: Preparation for the 2003 review on the long term arrangement needs to start before long.
 - (b) Curriculum development: To free education from the straitjacket of drilling for assessment, we have to ensure that the curriculum promotes whole-person development. Seed projects and various professional development programmes have also been launched to foster the professionalism of frontline educators in curriculum development. As the curriculum changes in the entire school system will take 10 years, such efforts would be enhanced both in breadth and depth in the years to come.
 - (c) Assessment reforms: Curriculum development will not be effective without corresponding adjustments to the assessment system. For better integration between curriculum and assessment, we are developing new assessment-for-learning tools such as the BCA for internal assessment purposes and a core competency approach to the HKCEE.
 - (d) School system: These include the implementation of initiatives such as “through-train” and the consequential implications for the linked and nominated schools as well as the class structure of affected schools.
- 5. In addition, the EC has also set up four Working Groups (which in turn have set up a few Task Forces) to examine various issues yet to be decided upon in its reform proposals. These include continuing education and the development of a qualifications framework as well as the feasibility of implementing a three-year senior secondary education system and its interface

with higher education. The EC expects to receive recommendations from these Working Groups in 2002. In parallel, the Government is considering the necessary measures that would need to be put in place if the new 3+3 secondary school structure is adopted, e.g. the need for new school premises, changing schools' class structure, the training of new and serving teachers, the development of new school curriculum and new public examinations, and the corresponding necessary changes in the admission criteria and curriculum of the first-degree programmes of the universities.

Staffing Support for the Education Commission and Education Reform Within EMB

6. The EC Division of the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) is responsible for implementing the education reform and servicing the EC. The division comprises one directorate officer at AOSGC level, one Senior Administrative Officer and three Executive Grade Officers.

7. Since the commencement of the education reform, the workload on this division has increased tremendously. Not only has the secretariat service to the EC increased due to the establishment of several Working Groups and Task Forces referred to in paragraph 5 above, the division also has to oversee and coordinate the timely implementation of the education reform. This involves maintaining an effective dialogue between relevant parties in the implementation of the various reform or support measure. Where new policies are involved, the division has to consult and develop the policy framework, e.g. development of a regulatory framework for continuing education.

8. A number of reviews and studies currently in hand are expected to be completed in 2002. These include the studies mentioned in paragraph 5 above as well as the University Grants Committee's Higher Education Review which may impact on the interface between tertiary and other education levels. Therefore, it is a foregone conclusion that the work pressure will further increase during the next few years when we have to process the recommendations of these studies, and should Government endorse them, take the necessary follow-up actions.

9. The envisaged quality changes in our education system would take root only if the efforts of the implementing agencies and various stakeholders are properly coordinated. In addition, the reforms require not only changes in the system, but more importantly, changes in the mindset. Thus, the importance of change management and overall coordination cannot be

underestimated. The AOSGC and her team perform a key role in this change management and overall coordination among the agencies concerned. This role cannot be discharged if there is insufficient time for dialogue with stakeholders and close tracking of the implementation details.

10. We are therefore reviewing the staffing support to be required for servicing the Education Commission and for implementing the education reform.

Research Capacity in EMB

11. In many other places, researches form an important component of the formulation and review of education policy.¹ Education policy deliberation is inevitably value-loaded. Education policy is implemented through many different agencies, with human factor playing an exceedingly critical role. It is therefore important to gauge and evaluate the perception and reaction of different stakeholders and the specific as well as overall impact of a certain measure. Only then can we accumulate evidence-based information to guide our assessment of the current position and formulation of the necessary improvement measures. In addition, there is merit in drawing references from the experiences and development in other parts of the world including relevant research and experiment findings.

12. So far, few longitudinal studies have been conducted to assess the impact of changes in the education system over time. In the process of thrashing out the education reform and mapping out the implementation details, we see a need for policy deliberations to be supported by evidence and researches, e.g. –

- (a) evidences on the impact of various reform measures on the learning and teaching process as well as the learning outcomes at various stages of education. These include undertaking longitudinal researches on the effects of the changes in the curricula; the teaching methods; the allocation of learning time; the content of learning activities; the learning attitudes and habits of students; professional development and workload of teachers as well as students' performance in academic and non-academic domains subsequent to

¹ The following are examples of research set-ups in other countries: a Research Division in the Ministry of Education in New Zealand, Research and Evaluation Branch of the Australian Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, and a Research and Evaluation Branch in the Research and Testing Division of the Singapore Ministry of Education. The US Education Department at the federal level houses and supports a number of organisations that provide research, evaluation and assessment, e.g. the Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

the implementation of various reform and support measures such as the School Place Allocation System at both the Primary and Secondary One levels, the BCA, the curriculum development and the introduction of the Capacity Enhancement Grant, etc.;

- (b) opinion surveys to gauge the feedback of various stakeholders, including principals, teachers, students and parents, etc., on the implementation of the education reform;
- (c) researches on an on-going basis to keep in view the developments in other places, such as the US, the UK, Japan, the mainland China, Europe, Singapore, to provide the Government with useful information on the experiences in implementing education reforms and the trends of changes in education policies in other parts of the world. This would help enhance our global perspective and facilitate forward-looking policy making; and
- (d) following, collating and consolidating information on relevant researches conducted by local and overseas academics, research and interest bodies to facilitate policy consideration.

Examples of researches that we would like to conduct are given in Annex 2. Again, we are reflecting on how best to provide for such researches.

POINTS TO NOTE

13. Members are invited to note –
- (a) progress of the education reform (paragraphs 2 – 5 above);
 - (b) our internal review on the staffing support for the Education Commission and the implementation of the education reform (paragraphs 7 – 10 above); and
 - (c) our internal review on how best to provide the Bureau with evidence- and research-based information to support the deliberation on and implementation of education reform (paragraph 12 above).

Examples of Researches in Support of Education Reform

(A) Monitoring the impact of the education reform

- (1) Impact of the abolition of the AAT on the learning and teaching process as well as the learning attitude and performance of students in primary schools
- (2) Impact of the new Primary One Admission System on the diversity of student abilities, teaching process and performance of students in primary schools
- (3) Impact of the introduction of the BCA on the learning and teaching process as well as performance of students in schools
- (4) Progress of the curriculum reform (including the improvement of teaching methods, the development of school-based curriculum, the promotion of reading, the use of project learning, the allocation of learning time, the improvement of internal assessment mechanism and the promotion of life-wide learning, etc.) in schools.
- (5) The mix of abilities of Secondary 1 intakes and impact on the performance of students as well as teaching and learning for different types of schools and its changes over time
- (6) Effectiveness of measures for coping with student diversity, in particular, in nurturing talents and maintaining minimum standards.
- (7) The effectiveness of schools using the through-train mode.
- (8) The effectiveness of schools using the DSS/ PIS mode.
- (9) The use of the discretionary Secondary 1 places by primary and secondary schools and how the effectiveness of the discretionary places arrangement can be further enhanced
- (10) Surveys for collating the feedback from various key stakeholders on the education reform.

(B) Researches for Education Reform Related Policy Consideration

- (1) The effectiveness of using different media of instruction for different classes or subjects in the same school
- (2) Feasibility and desirability of gauging schools' performance and value addedness
- (3) The mechanisms for putting in place comprehensive qualifications frameworks in other places of the world.
- (4) Study on the impact of different class sizes in other parts of the world;
- (5) Teachers' professional development in other places.
- (6) The trends of development in education policies in other places, such as on school management, admission system, public examination, curriculum, qualifications system, quality assurance mechanisms, funding modes, etc..
- (7) Latest developments regarding important schools of thought about learning and teaching.