

Legislative Council Panel on Education Arrangements for Implementing the “Through-train” Mode

Purpose

This paper aims to brief Members on the arrangements for implementing the “through-train” mode.

Background

2. Last year, the Education Commission (EC) recommended in its Report on Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong the implementation of the “through-train” mode. The essence of the “through-train” concept is to strengthen the collaboration between primary and secondary schools having the same education philosophy in order to provide students with a coherent learning experience. The EC also recommended the Education Department (ED) to look into the arrangements for implementing the “through-train” mode so as to facilitate schools in considering whether to apply to adopt this mode.

3. During the period from 13 June to 10 September 2001, the ED launched a public consultation exercise on the proposed arrangements for implementing the “through-train” mode. A total of 269 written submissions were received. Views and comments were also collected through briefings, sharing sessions with schools, e-mails, press reports and commentaries.

4. In formulating the proposed arrangements, the ED followed the rationale and principles of the “through-train” mode set out by the EC. The ED also took into account the views of different stakeholders as well as the practical circumstances.

5. In July 2001, the ED consulted the Legislative Council Panel on Education on the proposed arrangements for implementing the “through-train” mode. After completing the public consultation, the ED reported to the Board of Education (BoE) and EC the views collected, as well as the arrangements for implementation which had taken into account the public views. The BoE and EC have endorsed the arrangements for implementation. Guidelines on the arrangements will be issued to schools early next year to facilitate schools in considering whether to apply to adopt

the “through-train” mode.

Items for Consultation

6. Public views were sought on the following three issues in the consultation document published in June this year:

- (a) collaboration between linked primary and secondary schools;
- (b) proportion of S1 school places to the number of P6 graduates; and
- (c) S1 admission mechanism for P6 students (3 options).

(a) Collaboration between linked primary and secondary Schools

7. The salient views expressed by the public and the arrangements supported by the EC are tabled below:

Public views	Arrangements supported by EC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The linked primary and secondary schools should be managed by the same School Management Committee (SMC). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EC shares the view that having one single school management committee is one of the effective ways to enhance continuity between primary and secondary education. However, schools may explore alternative modes to realize the “through-train” concept and to enhance the coordination between the linked primary and secondary schools.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are views for and against the setting up of a chief principal post. • The proponents consider that the measure will ensure coherence and continuity of the linked schools, but the rank and salary point of primary school heads should be raised to match those of their secondary school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting up a chief principal post is not a proposal in the consultation paper. It is just an option that the linked schools may pursue if they are under separate registrations. • Nevertheless, a mechanism should be put in place to ensure continuity of operation between the linked schools. They should cooperate with each other rather

Public views	Arrangements supported by EC
<p>counterparts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The opponents are worried that the autonomy of the linked primary school will be compromised, with the secondary school assuming a dominant role. 	<p>than operating separately. It should be up to the schools to decide whether to establish a chief principal post, appoint a co-ordinating principal or adopt any other coordinating mechanisms.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional support and additional resources should be provided by the ED to enhance continuity in education, especially in teaching and curriculum design. The effectiveness of the “through-train” mode should be monitored. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ED will support and monitor the operation of the linked schools through its existing mechanisms e.g. Regional Education Offices (REOs) and the Curriculum Development Institute (CDI). For schools which have taken the lead to adopt the “through-train” mode, the ED will assist them in consolidating and disseminating their operating experiences.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research should be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness. Action should be taken to promote good practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ED will keep in view the operation of the linked schools. Schools will be encouraged to conduct action research and participate in seed projects conducted by the CDI.

(b) The proportion of S1 school places to the number of P6 graduates

8. It is proposed in the consultation document that a “through-train” secondary school should reserve a certain percentage of its S1 places for students of other primary schools. This proposal, widely accepted by the public, serves to prevent “through-train” schools from becoming a closed system. The percentages of school places to be reserved as suggested in the document are:

- (i) newly-operated “through-train” secondary schools should reserve **not less than 20% of their total number of S1 places** for admitting students of other primary schools through discretionary places (DP) or Central Allocation(CA);

- (ii) existing secondary schools turning into “through-train” schools should, in principle, reserve **not less than 7% of their total number of S1 places** for admitting students of other primary schools through DP and CA.

9. The key views expressed by the public and the arrangements supported by the EC are tabled below:

Public views	Arrangements supported by EC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many parents prefer a further increase in the percentage of the reserved places, especially in some popular secondary schools. They are of the view that too few reserved places will intensify competition for S1 places, thus causing discontent among parents. • Some schools consider that the proposed 7% and 20% are difficult to meet, not to mention a further increase in the percentage of reserved places. • The proposed percentages of 7% and 20% have not taken into account the 5% S1 places reserved for repeaters. For schools with the same number of S1 and P6 classes, and with an average class size of 40 in S1 and 37 (for primary schools adopting the ordinary approach to teaching) or 32 (for primary schools adopting the activity approach) in P6, the respective percentages for students of other schools will be further reduced to 2.5% and 15% respectively after reserving 5% of S1 places for repeaters. • Some are worried that secondary schools may have to expand their class size in order to maintain the required number of S1 places for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After deduction of 5% of S1 places for repeaters, “through-train” secondary schools, both existing and newly-operated, are required to reserve <u>not less than 15% of their total number of S1 places</u> for admitting students of other primary schools through DP or CA in consideration of the following factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To maintain the principle that “through-train” schools must not be a closed system ➤ Not to affect the number of S1 places reserved for repeaters and the class size of S1 ➤ Most feeder / nominated schools meeting the “through-train” requirements can reserve 15% of their S1 places for students of other schools. • However, in exceptional cases (e.g. the linked secondary and primary schools have the same number of S1 and P6 classes and the implementation of School Improvement Programme to expand the school capacity is technically not feasible), the ED may exercise its discretion to allow them to form “through-train” schools even though the

Public views	Arrangements supported by EC
<p>students of other schools. This will result in a higher teacher to student ratio and the quality of education may be affected.</p>	<p>proportion of reserved places is below 15%. But even under such circumstances, not less than 7% of the total number of S1 places (excluding the 5% for repeaters) should be reserved for admitting students of other primary schools through DP or CA. In the long run, the proportion of the reserved places should be increased by stages where circumstances permit.</p>

10. The EC’s recommendation on the admission of P6 students of other primary schools to “through-train” secondary schools as stated in paragraph 8.2.72 of its Report on Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong is as follows:

“After admitting all P6 graduates of the linked primary school, the linked secondary school in a through-train may allocate half of the remaining S1 places at its discretion, provided that the proportion of DP to the total number of S1 places in each linked secondary school should not exceed the prevailing permitted percentage of discretionary S1 places applicable to non-through-train public-sector schools.”

11. The EC’s views and the public opinions received relating to the admission of P6 students of other primary schools to “through-train” secondary schools are tabled below:

Public opinion	EC’s views
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some schools reckon that the essence of “through-train” schools is the genuine continuity and coherence in primary and secondary education. To uphold the characteristics and traditions of “through-train” secondary schools, these schools should be allowed to admit students to fill their remaining S1 places through DP to enable them to admit students of the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The EC’s original proposal as set out in paragraph 10 above should be maintained so that P6 graduates from other primary schools would have the opportunity to apply for admission to the “through-train” secondary schools through both CP and DP. In the context of the interim review of the SSPA mechanism in 2003, consideration would be given to the long-term mechanism from 2005/06 onwards for the through-train secondary

same philosophy and aspiration for education.	schools to allocate the remaining S.1 places after admitting all P6 graduates from their linked primary schools.
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(c) Secondary one admission arrangements for primary six students in “through-train” schools (three options for S1 admission)

12. Three options for S1 admission of P6 students in “through-train” schools have been proposed in the consultation document as follows:

Option 1:

- P6 students in a “through-train” school may choose to proceed to its linked secondary school direct or apply for DP of other secondary schools. If their application is rejected, they may choose to proceed to the linked secondary school direct or take part in CA.

Option 2:

- P6 students in a “through-train” school may choose to proceed to its linked secondary school direct or apply for DP of other secondary schools. If their application is rejected, they may take part in CA but will not be allowed to proceed to the linked secondary school direct.

Option 3:

- P6 students in a “through-train” school may choose to proceed to its linked secondary school direct or apply for DP of other secondary schools. If they choose the latter option and their application is rejected, they may proceed to the linked secondary school but will not be allowed to participate in CA.

After careful consideration of the public views received, the EC supported the ED’s proposal to adopt Option 2. (For the public views received and the reasons for selecting Option 2, please refer to the Appendix: Advantages and Concerns when Deciding on the Three Options for Secondary One Admission Mechanism.) The ED will state clearly the limitations of this option in the guidelines on the “through-train” mode. Under this option, P6 students are allowed to take part in CA. Though the number of participants may be small, primary schools must, for the sake of fairness, conduct internal assessments and prepare students’ performance records according to ED’s requirements. During the implementation of the short-term measure of S1 places allocation (from now up to the 2004/05 school year), primary schools must submit their students’ internal assessment results to ED. These requirements may constrain somewhat the development of the curriculum, the teaching methodology and the diversified mode of

assessment that the “through-train” primary schools may wish to adopt.

(d) Others: arrangement and timetable for existing feeder/nominated schools to apply for forming “through-train” schools

13. During the public consultation period from June to September this year, some feeder and nominated school representatives expressed the view that they needed more time to consider carefully whether they should adopt the through-train mode as this decision would have far-reaching impact on their schools’ long-term development. Besides, the EC will conduct an interim review on the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) in 2003. These schools would like to take the results of the review into account in deciding whether to turn into “through-train” schools. The EC recognizes the above concerns and supports the ED’s recommendation to defer the deadline from 31 May 2002 to 31 May 2005 for those existing feeder/nominated schools currently meeting the requirements for forming “through-trains” to indicate their intention. Those feeder/nominated schools which at present do not meet the requirements will still have 10 years to work out a solution with the Government and will have to make their final decision by 31 May 2012.

Points to note

14. Members are invited to note the arrangements for implementing the “through-train” mode as described in paragraphs 6 to 13. The ED will inform schools of the arrangements for implementation early next year.

Education Department
December 2001

**Advantages and Concerns when Deciding on the Three Options for
Secondary One Admission Mechanism**

Options	Advantages	Concerns
Option 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Written submissions and voting on the internet indicate that this is the most popular option. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Front-line school workers strongly object to this proposal. ● Public response shows that many consider this Option unfair. ● Public views on Option 1 are extremely divided. Many people are for it, while some other people are strongly against it. Parents whose children have the opportunity to study in “through-train” primary schools or are currently studying in feeder schools support the proposal, whereas parents and schools outside the “through-train” system strongly object to it.
Option 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It has the support of front-line school workers. ● Public opinion is for this proposal. ● There is not much opposition to Option 2 but it has the support of many schools and parents. ● It can strike a balance between the interests of all parties concerned. ● It follows the EC’s original proposal (i.e. students can apply for DP and participate in CA). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If many “through-train” primary school students do not choose to proceed to the linked secondary schools direct, the “through-train” mode will exist in name only. ● “Through-train” primary schools may become less attractive.
Option 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It can provide more room for schools with a vision to provide students with a coherent school learning experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Public response indicates that only few people understand the spirit of this Option. There is less discussion on it. Most schools are not yet so developed as to request to do away with the SSPA for conducting internal assessments. It will be more difficult to convince the public if the Government chooses this Option. ● Since the “through-train” mode is a new attempt, P6 students’ choices for S1 places should not be too restrictive.