

For discussion on
10 July 2006

Panel on Education

An update on the latest developments of 334 including the feedback on Further Consultation on Career-oriented Studies and the New Senior Secondary Academic Structure for Special Schools

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to report to members the progress of 334 reform including the consultation result of Career-oriented Studies (COS) and New Senior Secondary (NSS) Academic Structure for Special Schools.

Background

2. The report *The New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education – Action Plan for Investing in the Future of Hong Kong* (the 334 Report), published in May 2005, has announced that the NSS system will be implemented in September 2009 and that the Secondary One students in the 2006/07 school year will be the first cohort of students in the new system.
3. Following the issue of the 334 Report, a second consultation on the detailed design of the curriculum and assessment (C&A) frameworks for the 24 NSS subjects was launched and it was completed in October 2005.
4. In the 334 Report, the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) has also committed to conducting a further consultation on COS and the NSS academic structure for special schools. In this regard, a consultation document *Action for the Future – Further Consultation on Career-oriented Studies and the New Senior Secondary Academic Structure for Special Schools* was released at the end of January 2006 and a 3-month consultation was conducted.

Progress of 334

Curriculum and Assessment Framework

5. Taking into consideration the feedback from various stakeholders, the curricula of the 24 NSS subjects were revised. To ensure the subjects are contemporary and of high standards, international benchmarking was also done to complement professional input by the school sector. In January 2006, the curriculum parts of the 24 C&A Guides were uploaded to the EMB website for the reference of secondary schools and universities. The completed C&A Guides (including the assessment plan) have just been uploaded at the end of June 2006. In parallel, a Senior Secondary Curriculum Guide (SSCG) is being prepared and an initial draft will also be uploaded to the EMB website for the reference of schools.

6. A third consultation on the 24 NSS C&A Guides with focus on the revised assessment plan and design (including School-based Assessment (SBA)) will be conducted in September/October. Hard copies of both the SSCG and C&A Guides will be issued to schools by the end of 2006.

Assessment

7. The public assessment system to support the NSS includes a component of SBA in order to improve the validity and reliability of student assessment and to promote a student learning and assessment culture in schools. A strategic implementation schedule of SBA will be proposed to address the issue of readiness of teachers. Subjects with SBA in the current public examinations of Hong Kong (e.g. Chinese History and Physics) and subjects with no SBA currently but with a strong practical component (e.g. Music) will implement SBA in 2012. On the other hand, subjects with no SBA in the current public examinations and with new mode of assessment (such as Mathematics and Economics) will adopt a phased-in approach. The overall impact on the workload of students has been carefully considered in the revised designs of SBA in the various subjects. School sector will be consulted on the details of the assessment plan in the third consultation mentioned in para.6. Comprehensive plans will be in place to provide training and support for teachers for the implementation of SBA.

Interface with University

8. To ensure smooth interface with university programmes, HUCOM,

EMB, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA), University Grants Committee (UGC) and schools will continue to work closely as planning for the senior secondary curriculum and four-year degree proceeds.

Recognition of HKDSE

9. HKEAA has worked closely with the Cambridge Assessment to ensure international recognition of HKDSE by benchmarking key levels in HKDSE subjects to General Certificate of Education (GCE) grades. Meetings with other overseas universities and examination bodies have also been conducted to secure direct recognition. The benchmarking of standards, including the standards in English, will be an ongoing exercise in the coming years and the different partners will be contacted again when the public assessment of the NSS subjects is more developed.

Professional Development

10. A series of 3-day workshops (in two stages – 2 consecutive days in the first stage and one single day in the second stage) for secondary school leaders including supervisors, representatives of school management committees, principals, vice-principals and senior teachers have just been completed. The workshops have provided opportunities for the school leaders to ponder over the challenges of the reform in a systematic manner and formulate school-based action plans and timetables; as well as provided them with opportunities for group discussion and reflection, and sharing experiences with other schools.

11. Similar school leaders workshops for special schools will be conducted in October/November 2006 while workshops for school middle managers will commence in November 2006. Professional development programmes on curriculum, pedagogy and enriching knowledge for the NSS subjects are underway.

Class Restructuring

12. In the workshops for secondary school leaders, participants expressed great concern about the uncertainty in class structure which was essential for helping schools plan for 334. We understand the importance of maintaining a stable and sustainable class structure for the schools' future planning and resource allocation and their staff's professional development. We consulted the Panel on Education on class restructuring for secondary schools in June 2006 and will continue to discuss with the school sector. Our goal is to inform

schools of the provisional class structure based on key principles as soon as possible.

COS and NSS Academic Structure for Special Schools

13. The consultation on COS and NSS academic structure for special schools was completed at the end of April and the feedback from various stakeholders has been consolidated and considered carefully.

14. A consultation report on these two issues will be uploaded to the EMB website around mid-July and hard copies will be published in September/October 2006.

(A) Feedback on the Consultation of COS

Results of the Consultation on COS

15. Feedback indicates that there is strong support to the purpose and positioning, design principles, areas of studies and quality assurance framework of COS. A high degree of agreement is received on professional development framework for school leaders, career masters and teachers. There is also support for the proposed links to the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) and Qualifications Framework which can provide dual recognition for student progression for further studies and work.

Nomenclature of COS

16. There are diverse views on the nomenclature of COS. The current name is generally supported, but alternative names are also suggested to better reflect the purpose and position of applied learning. A new name ‘Applied Learning (應用學習)’ is proposed as a general reference to all COS courses.

Curriculum and Assessment Framework and Quality Assurance Mechanism

17. The C&A Framework and the quality assurance mechanism (covering curriculum development, monitoring of course delivery and moderation of assessment) will be developed and refined according to the blue print set out in the consultation document.

Professional Development

18. People strongly agree that professional development is a crucial

element to the effective and smooth implementation of COS. EMB is committed to supporting secondary teachers who are willing and able to teach COS in partnership or collaboration with tertiary education providers. Also, EMB is committed to exploring and developing the framework and piloting training programmes to facilitate career teachers' role in guiding and advising students to better understand their strengths, interests and aptitudes.

Yi Jin / Secondary Schools Collaboration Project

19. There are concerns about the development of the Yi Jin/Secondary Schools Collaboration Project. The successful elements of the Project will be incorporated into the NSS curriculum. The NSS Chinese and English language curriculum frameworks will embody practical communication skills. The feedback and experiences got from the Project will inform learning, teaching and assessment of the NSS curriculum and how the full range of student abilities and interests could be addressed.

COS Centres

20. A number of schools are concerned about how they could become specialized centres offering COS. In brief, schools can offer COS but they must meet the criteria for provision. They must have the capacity to design, deliver and provide the venue and resources for COS courses within one or more of the six proposed areas of studies, supported by a network of connections to industry and the professions and relevant workplaces. A school wishing to become a centre of COS provision would need to show that it is supported by its stakeholders, that it meets the quality assurance requirements and is approved by EMB.

Funding

21. Schools are concerned about the funding model of COS. The Government remains committed to the shared funding model, in which all the stakeholders and co-beneficiaries of senior secondary education (i.e. parents, schools and the Government) should contribute to meeting the costs. Embedding COS fees in the students' senior secondary school fee will be explored, but the fees paid by parents will not exceed 18% of the unit cost of senior secondary education. The funding model used in successive cohorts of COC piloting has been consistently improved and refined. We will continue to use the forthcoming pilots and the feedback from schools to develop a viable and effective approach.

22. EMB has earmarked sufficient funds to support diversification of the curriculum in “334”. The funding must be used in such a way to maximise the access of students to their desired student programme. Our basic principle is that no student should be prevented from enrolling in COS because of a lack of financial means.

(B) Feedback on the Consultation of NSS Academic Structure for Special Schools

Academic Structure

23. The proposed academic structure is generally well received. The existing 10 years of basic education for the physically disabled (PD) and the hearing impaired (HI) students capable of pursuing the mainstream curriculum is maintained to better prepare them for the 3-year senior secondary education leading to the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education. The academic structure of Schools for Social Development (SSD) will be extended by 3 years to cover senior secondary education.

24. For students with intellectual disabilities (ID), 3 years of junior secondary and 3 years of senior secondary education will be provided. Applications for repeating class may be considered for cases with justifiable reasons as in the current practice.

25. The existing academic structure for schools for the visually impaired (VI) students up to junior secondary level will be maintained. Extension of the hospital education service to senior secondary level will be tried out in the 2006/07 school year.

NSS C&A Framework for Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

26. The principle of “one curriculum framework for all” is strongly supported. To effectively implement the NSS curriculum, special schools offering ordinary school curriculum are advised to work in collaboration to provide a wider choice of elective subjects. The curriculum would also be appropriately adapted to suit students’ need. Try-out of senior form curriculum will be launched in SSD.

27. There are concerns about the curriculum and assessment for students

with ID. Research and Development (R&D) Projects on the future NSS curriculum for the ID students (NSS(ID) curriculum) will be conducted from the 2006/07 to 2008/09 school years with the aim of identifying and specifying learning goals and contents, defining success criteria and developing practical assessment procedures for learning outcomes upon completing the 6-year secondary education.

28. Based on the experience gained from the R&D projects, the C&A Guides on the NSS(ID) curriculum and Learning Outcomes Framework (LOF) for ID students will be developed. The development of LOF will start in the 2007/08 school year to provide reference for measuring the progress of students. The C&A Guides will be due for completion by the 2009/10 school year. EMB will make reference to the initial LOF and work in collaboration with HKEAA in the development of the systemic assessment which will commence in 2012 the earliest. Extensive consultation with stakeholders will be conducted during the development process.

29. Individualised Education Programme (IEP) is an effective strategy to help teachers set learning targets and processes in tracking ID students' progress and performance. Each student would also have a Student Learning Profile to recognize his/her full range of achievement. To this effect, we will ensure that teachers of special schools are properly trained in the delivery of IEP and are ready to work with parents in reviewing the learning outcomes.

Pilot of Adapted COC Courses for Students with ID

30. Adapted COC courses for students with ID will be piloted and the first cohort will commence in September 2006. In the first phase of the piloting, only students with mild grade, or at higher-end moderate grade, ID will be involved. Students with SEN who follow the ordinary school curriculum should, in principle, join the same pilot COC courses as other students with the provision of appropriate support when necessary.

Professional Development

31. The provision of different levels of professional development programmes is welcome. To facilitate the implementation of NSS curriculum in special schools, school leaders' workshops will be conducted in October/November 2006. Various professional development programmes will also commence in 2007.

Resource Considerations

32. There are concerns about the resources for the implementation of NSS. Additional resources have been earmarked to cater for the potential demand for additional number of classes in special schools. For effective use of resources, the future provision under NSS should be differentiated across the different types of special schools to reflect students' varied learning needs. It is anticipated that the R&D projects will shed light on the future resource requirement in schools for students with ID. Flexibility in resource deployment will be explored to improve effectiveness. EMB will discuss with stakeholders on the fee adjustments in regard to boarding service, and examine special schools' proposals on conversion works and/or additional facilities. Under NSS, students in both ordinary and special schools at the same level of senior secondary study will pay the same school fees.

33. To meet the need for boarding service of students studying in PD schools but residing in the New Territories (NT), boarding services in two special schools, one in NT East and one in NT West will be provided.

Exit Pathways

34. Schools and parents are concerned about the exit pathway for students with ID. Education at NSS level will be articulated to appropriate exit pathways, such as vocational training, further education and adult life programmes. EMB will coordinate with relevant service providers, e.g. Vocational Training Council (VTC), non-government organisations (NGOs), so that in future, course/programme can be designed to ensure articulation with the learning objectives of senior secondary education. Work in this regard includes adapting the COC, collaborating with the Social Welfare Department to arrange structured attachment programmes, exploring with NGOs to provide opportunities in adult education as part of their community services, and liaising with tertiary institutions to provide the necessary learning facilities and assessment for those capable of pursuing advanced education.

Advice Sought

35. Members are invited to give their views on the progress of 334 and the feedback on the consultation on COS and NSS academic structure for special schools.

Education and Manpower Bureau
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