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Panel on Education

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 14 January 2008**

School Administration and Management System

Purpose

This paper summarizes the discussions of the Panel on Education (the Panel) and the Finance Committee on the enhancement of the School Administration and Management System (SAMS).

Background

2. In 1993, the Finance Committee approved the implementation of an Information Systems Strategy to maximise the effective utilisation of resources through the introduction of information technology (IT) facilities both for schools and the former Education Department (currently the Education Bureau (EDB)). Under the Strategy, SAMS was launched in 1994 to provide all public sector schools with a networked computer system to assist in the administration and management processes, and to enable the electronic transmission of information between schools and EDB. The project covered some 1,000 public sector schools and was completed in 1998.

3. With the rapid development in IT, users found the processing speed of SAMS too slow. EDB commissioned a consultant in late 1998 to conduct a study to identify areas for improvement and for recommended enhancement solutions. The study was completed in end 1999. Based on the consultant's recommendations, the Administration proposed in June 2000 to enhance SAMS by replacing and upgrading the SAMS computers, integrating the SAMS network and computers in schools provided for IT in education, and converting SAMS into a web-based application.

Concerns of members

4. The Panel and the Finance Committee discussed the Administration's proposal on 8 and 23 June 2000 respectively. Members supported the proposed project to enhance the efficiency of SAMS to meet users' expectation and needs. Nevertheless, they raised concern on some issues which are summarised in the following paragraphs.

Coverage of SAMS

5. Members noted that public sector primary and secondary schools and schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DDS) were currently covered by SAMS. They were concerned whether the enhancement project would apply to public sector schools and DDS schools alike; whether private independent schools could have access to SAMS facilities; and whether SAMS would be extended to kindergartens.

6. The Administration confirmed that the enhancement project would cover both public sector schools and DDS schools. Private independent schools did not have access to SAMS facilities currently but could have access to the relevant website(s) upon the conversion of SAMS into a web-based application. As all kindergartens were privately run, the Administration had no plan to expand SAMS to cover kindergartens. Moreover, the applicability of SAMS facilities to kindergartens was limited as they were primarily designed for secondary and primary schools.

Workload

7. Members expressed concern about the impact of the enhanced SAMS on the workload of teaching and supporting staff in schools. Members were worried that since each school had only a few supporting staff, they could hardly cope with the increasing administrative workload arising from the use of IT in school education and administration. Members expressed concern on the need for additional resources to schools for the implementation of the enhanced SAMS. They also enquired whether schools had made any requests for additional manpower resources in this regard.

8. The Administration explained that SAMS was developed to enhance efficiency in school administrative work such as recording students' examination scores, and the proposed enhancement would further reduce teachers' non-teaching workload. The enhanced SAMS would incorporate a web-based application which would allow teachers to access SAMS anywhere and anytime and schools to download any upgraded version of SAMS and add-on school administrative software through the Internet.

9. The Administration further pointed out that qualified contractors had been appointed to assist in the day-to-day operation and maintenance of computers and network systems in schools. Depending on the number of classes, the clerical staff establishment in each secondary and primary school was 4-6 and 2-3 respectively. Currently, each school only had a small number of computers connected to SAMS, and clerical staff might have problems coping with the increased workload during peak periods such as after year-end examinations when the demand for SAMS was high. However, after integrating the SAMS network and the computers for IT education, schools could pool the IT resources together and optimize their use for both administrative work and teaching and learning activities. Moreover, the introduction of the operating expenses block grant from the 2000-2001 school year onwards provided flexibility to schools to deploy additional and temporary resources to operate the enhanced SAMS. The Administration advised that it had not received any complaints from schools about inadequate staff resources to operate computers under SAMS.

Implementation timetable

10. Members sought information on the schedule for implementing the enhanced SAMS in schools. According to the Administration, it would start upgrading SAMS in the 2000-2001 school year and complete the task in the following year. Conversion of SAMS into a web-based application would be completed in October 2002. To cater for their different needs and priorities, schools could determine by themselves the timing for replacing and upgrading their computers, and the schedule for the necessary site preparation works. Schools would have the option of receiving grants from the Administration for the procurement of equipment only, or for both procurement of equipment and conducting site preparation works. Alternatively, schools could also request the Administration to procure the equipment and conduct site preparation works on their behalf.

11. As regards the life cycle of the enhanced SAMS, the Administration advised that the normal life span of computer hardware was five years. With a web-based application, the enhanced SAMS would facilitate future upgrading of software programmes onto school computers and save substantial manpower costs.

Relevant papers

12. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in the **Appendix**.

**Relevant papers on
School Administration and Management System**

Meeting	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Education	8.6.2000	Minutes Agenda
Finance Committee	23.6.2000	Minutes FCR(2000-01)37
Finance Committee	26.3.2003	Administration's replies to Members initial written questions (Reply Serial No. EMB054)
Finance Committee	1.4.2004	Administration's replies to Members initial written questions (Reply Serial No. EMB028)
Finance Committee	12.4.2005	Administration's replies to Members initial written questions (Reply Serial No. EMB113)

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