

For discussion on
30 March 2009

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Progress of Implementation of Incorporated Management Committees

Purpose

This paper briefly reports the progress of implementation of the incorporated management committees (IMCs) in aided schools and the major findings of a review study on their operation. It also proposes to extend the deadline for school sponsoring bodies (SSBs) to submit draft IMC constitutions from 1 July 2009 to 1 July 2011.

Background

2. All aided schools have, since 2000, been devolved with greater autonomy and funding flexibility to make school-based decisions which should best meet the needs of the students. The quid pro quo to additional autonomy is that schools have to be more transparent and accountable to the community for their performance and the proper use of funds. The school-based management (SBM) governance framework is to provide participatory decision-making by all key stakeholders: SSB, teacher, parent and alumni representatives as well as the principal and independent members.

3. The Education Ordinance was amended in 2004 to require all aided schools to set up and be managed by their IMC. The provisions for the establishment of IMC came into operation with effect from 1 January 2005 subject to a transition period of five years. SSBs of aided schools are required to submit by 1 July 2009 draft constitutions for the purpose of setting up IMC to manage their schools.

Progress of implementation of IMC

Support measures

4. Since the IMC provisions of the Education Ordinance came into operation, we have put in place a number of support measures to help schools set up their IMC. For details, please refer to Annex I.

Establishment of IMCs

5. As at 1 March 2009, 380 aided schools have set up their IMC and 62 schools have pledged to do so before 1 July 2009. These schools account for about 50% of all aided schools.

6. A survey conducted in July 2008 showed that the remaining 50% aided schools (432 in number) were aware of the requirement but had yet to come up with an implementation timetable. Of these schools, about 64% are Catholic, Sheng Kung Hui and Methodist Church schools.

Review of IMC implementation

7. In January 2006, we commissioned an external professional consultancy company to conduct a three-year study to evaluate the operation of IMCs; to examine the adequacy or otherwise of EDB's support measures; and to assess the implementation of SBM in IMC schools.

8. The review was completed in early March 2009. Responses from the IMC schools showed that their transition, establishment and implementation of IMCs were on the whole smooth. The establishment of IMC had not affected the relationship between schools and their school sponsoring bodies (SSBs). The operation of IMC schools had not deviated from the original vision and mission set by the SSBs. Though IMC schools needed more time to realise and sustain the impact of IMC, they were operating smoothly. The major findings of the review are summarised at Annex II.

Proposal and justifications

9. The review recommended that non-IMC schools be allowed more time to

learn more about the operation and benefits of the IMC, based on the actual experience of IMC schools. Also, it recommended that consideration be given to extend the deadline for submission of draft IMC constitutions, as SSBs, in particular the larger ones, in general needed more time to prepare for the establishment of IMCs.

10. Having regard to the recommendations of the review study and the fact that while the deadline for submission of draft IMC constitutions is just three months away from now, about half of all aided schools have yet to set up their IMC, we propose to move a motion in the Legislative Council in May 2009 to extend the deadline for submission of draft IMC constitutions by two years, i.e. from 1 July 2009 to 1 July 2011. The Education Ordinance stipulates that the Legislative Council may, by a resolution passed after 1 October 2008 but before 1 July 2009, amend the deadline to a date after 1 July 2009 but before 2 July 2011.

Way forward

11. We will continue with our support measures to help schools to set up IMC and equip managers to perform their roles more effectively. As regards schools that have yet to come up with a time-frame to set up their IMC, we shall discuss with their SSB and offer advice and assistance so that they can set up their IMC as early as possible.

12. We will also endeavour to help IMC schools to better leverage the support of stakeholders and realise the spirit of SBM, with the ultimate aim of better meeting the specific needs of the students of the school. In particular, we will facilitate networking activities for IMC schools to share good practices and exchange experiences to materialise the spirit of SBM.

13. With the proposed extension of the deadline, the one-off cash grant of \$350,000, which aims to assist schools in handling school-specific matters when establishing their IMC, would correspondingly be disbursed up to the 2010/11 school year, and any unspent amount will be clawed back at the end of the 2011/12 school year.

14. After schools have established their IMC, they may, in the following school year, claim reimbursement of IMC-related expenditure up to a ceiling of \$350,000. With the proposed extension of the deadline to 1 July 2011, this arrangement will

continue and the reimbursement arrangement will be extended to the 2012/13 school year accordingly.

Public reaction

15. Since our proposal is to give SSBs more time to submit draft IMC constitutions, we anticipate that most SSBs and other key stakeholders will welcome the proposal.

Advice sought

16. Members are invited to comment on our proposal to extend the deadline as set out in paragraphs 9 and 10 above.

Education Bureau
March 2009

Support Measures

To help schools set up their incorporated management committee (IMC), the Education Bureau has put in place the following support measures:

- (a) publishing school-based management (SBM) documents, such as “What is SBM?”, “Incorporated Management Committee: Establishment and Operation”, “School Managers’ Handbook” and “Tips for School Managers”. Hard copies of these documents have been issued to IMC schools and schools that have pledged to set up IMC while soft copies are available on the SBM homepage on the website of the Education Bureau;
- (b) drawing up guidelines, references or manuals for handling IMC-related matters, such as workflow for setting up an IMC, sample IMC constitution, guideline on differentiation of funds and assets between SSB and school, manager election guides, roles of IMC managers, Change-over Manual, Guide to Financial Management, and principles on fund-raising and entering into contracts involving non-government funds. All these documents have been issued to schools which are about to set up their IMC and they are also available on the SBM homepage;
- (c) setting up an SBM homepage with all the necessary information, reference materials and guidelines for setting up the IMC, including frequently asked questions and answers;
- (d) organising and conducting seminars, briefings and experience-sharing sessions to advise schools on the preparatory work for setting up IMC, to share good practices and to answer questions;
- (e) visiting schools and meeting school sponsoring bodies to explain the benefits of IMC and offer advice on how to tackle their difficulties and solve their problems;
- (f) organising manager training programmes to familiarise serving and potential managers with the various aspects of school management and their roles in leading schools to materialise the SBM spirit;
- (g) providing additional financial resources in the form of a one-off cash grant of \$350,000. When a school has set up its IMC, it can also claim reimbursement of IMC-related expenses up to a ceiling of \$350,000 in the following school year; and
- (h) taking out an IMC Liability Insurance Policy to protect IMC schools and their managers from claims against any wrongful acts in school management.

Major Findings of the Review of IMC Implementation

Major findings of the review on the establishment and operation of IMCs are summarised below:

- The establishment and implementation of incorporated management committees (IMC) was smooth. In establishing their IMC, pledged IMC and IMC schools in general had not encountered much difficulty though much time and efforts were needed to complete the various procedures involved.
- Schools were highly satisfied with the wide range of support measures provided by the Education Bureau.
- The funding support and flexibility in funding arrangement for IMC schools were very much welcome by schools. As regards the Teacher Relief Grant, schools were less satisfied with the recurrent part of it.
- Most stakeholders of IMC schools surveyed had high expectations of the benefits of the IMC. They considered that the IMC had positive impact in respect of teaching and learning effectiveness, efficiency in school management, sense of commitment and job satisfaction of teachers, and schools being able to develop school-based curriculum and obtain support from teachers, parents and other stakeholders in the community.
- The establishment of the IMC had not affected the relationship between schools and their school sponsoring bodies (SSBs). The operation of IMC schools had not deviated from the original vision and mission set by the SSB, which continued to retain their role in the management of the school.
- Despite the perceived benefits of IMC, most school principals and teachers worried that increased transparency and accountability had brought about additional paper work and administrative workload in IMC schools.
- SSBs, especially big ones, might encounter difficulty in identifying enough number of suitable representatives to serve as school managers of their schools. EDB is recommended to be more flexible in handling requests for a manager to

serve on more than five schools.

- A significant proportion of IMC schools were still using their existing committees related to teacher and staff recruitment and promotion, internal auditing systems, financial guidelines, procurement procedures and personnel management guidelines. This is understandable as time is required for schools to experiment with the IMC operation before introducing changes.
- It would take time to materialise the spirit of school-based management in all aspects of school management, and more time was required for IMC schools to realise and sustain the impact of the IMC.
- Quite a number of parent representatives of non-IMC schools supported the establishment of the IMC. Parents' expectations on achieving the benefits of IMC on schools were high. Parent representatives of non-IMC schools in general were less worried that the relationship between schools and SSB would deteriorate and schools would deviate from the original mission of SSB in running the school. Views of parent, alumni and independent managers in IMC schools were more favourable.