

For discussion on
30 March 2009

Panel on Education

Progress of Preparation for the New Senior Secondary and Higher Education Academic Structure

PURPOSE

This paper reports on the progress of the preparation for the New Senior Secondary and Higher Education Academic Structure (New Academic Structure) focusing on the areas of curriculum, learning and assessment, support for schools, preparation of schools, interface with post-secondary and university education, and communication with various stakeholders.

BACKGROUND

2. The New Academic Structure (also known as 334ø) would replace the 4-year senior secondary education (Secondary 4 to 7) and 3-year undergraduate degree programme provided by the University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions with 3-year senior secondary education (Secondary 4 to 6) and 4-year university programme respectively. The two public examinations of Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination and the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination would be replaced by one examination of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE). All students, irrespective of abilities, would be entitled to 12 years of schooling from 2009 onwards. It has taken four years, since the recommendation made in 2005 on implementing the New Academic Structure, for the Government and the school sector to prepare for the implementation at Secondary 4 in September 2009. The structural change is introduced in tandem with curriculum and assessment reform to enable whole-person development and life-long learning for school and university students.

3. We have taken a multi-stage approach of development and consultation, and have been communicating to different stakeholders including parents, principals, teachers, post-secondary institutions, universities, employers, and providing support to schools based on their needs as reflected in their feedback through different channels. We have been reporting to the Education Panel every year. In the previous updates (July 2006, May 2007 and June 2008), we have reported on the latest development of the New Academic Structure and the progress of preparation we have made. The paper on 10 November 2008 reported specifically on the local and international recognition of HKDSE, and the paper in December 2008 discussed the revamping and upgrading of the computer system of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) to cater for the needs of administering the HKDSE Examination.

4. As the New Academic Structure will be implemented at Secondary 4 in September this year, this paper aims to update Members on the progress made since our last report in June 2008 on support measures that facilitate the smooth implementation of the new senior secondary (NSS) curriculum and assessment in schools, preparation of schools, and development at the interface between secondary education and post-secondary education.

PROGRESS

(I) Curriculum, Learning and Assessment

Liberal Studies (LS)

5. LS is the most concerned subject among schools and parents as it is new to most of them. A multi-pronged strategy is developed to support the smooth implementation of LS. Teachers are the direct change agents in the classroom to bring about effective student learning. The planning and provision of professional development courses for LS teachers are based on the principle that all teachers teaching LS would have the opportunities of attending professional development (PD) courses in six aspects, namely, (1) *Understanding and Interpreting*

Curriculum, (2) *“Assessing Student Learning”*; (3) *“Learning and Teaching Strategies”*; (4) *“Enriching Knowledge”*; (5) *“Independent Enquiry Study”* and (6) *“Curriculum Management, Planning and Leadership”*. (1) and (2) are provided to all prospective LS teachers, while the others are attended by teachers, LS co-ordinators and principals according to their own needs. Based on the needs for PD expressed by schools in our survey, we have provided courses on (1) to (5) above, each offering about 3,600 places for teachers, and about 2,800 places for school and curriculum leaders on (6). In total, about 34,000 participants attended the LS PD courses from July 2005 to March 2009. So far, about 7,800 teachers have attended LS courses on various aspects mentioned above. In the 2009/10 school year, we will continue to provide induction course for LS teachers who are new to the profession, and for those who would start to teach LS in 2010. The provision of courses on updating subject knowledge would be on-going, whereas more emphasis would be put on practical learning and teaching in the classroom and the planning of Independent Enquiry Study (IES), the task of SBA in LS.

6. There has been collaboration of efforts in the Education Bureau (EDB) in facilitating exchange, peer support and expert help to schools. By 2008, about 100 schools have taken part in the three School Support Partnership Scheme (SSPS) teacher networks. In each network, four to five professional development meetings were held every year for teachers to share good practices and problems so that peer support and expert help could be offered. Schools experienced in implementing LS are invited to play the role as professional development schools which would provide direct help to a cluster of schools. Networked service is also provided by the Regional Education Office (REO) to help schools form professional learning communities.

7. For the 2009/10 school year, efforts of the three networks would be synergized in order to form one satellite network to provide more imminent and effective support to schools on LS (including IES) via collaboration with REOs and other Non-Government Organisations.

8. As the learning and teaching of LS relies on the provision of contemporary resources, the LS Resource Platform has been specifically

developed since 2005 to provide a one-stop service for teachers' reference. It provides teachers with curriculum and assessment documents, fact sheets, glossaries, examples of learning and teaching activities, articles and booklists. The website will be revamped further and the new website will be available in early May. As LS is an innovation to most parents, special seminars would be organised and a parent handbook will also be published in June 2009 to help parents understand the subject and their role.

Applied Learning (ApL)

9. ApL courses are a means to diversify the senior secondary curriculum through the provision of subjects that combine practical learning and theoretical learning in areas which suit the changing economic and social needs of Hong Kong. They would be offered as elective subjects to students studying at Secondary 5 and 6 commencing the 2010/11 school year. The provisional final draft of the ApL Curriculum and Assessment (C&A) Guide was uploaded on the EDB website in January 2009 to inform schools and the general public of the nature and structure of ApL, the courses to be offered, and to guide course providers to design details of the courses. The assessment framework and moderation mechanism are being developed by the HKEAA and will be completed around August 2009.

10. 30 ApL courses are proposed and being developed by 11 course providers. To provide early information to schools, the provisional course list of ApL courses was uploaded on the EDB website in September 2008. To build up the capacity of course providers in developing ApL courses, a series of workshops on course development and meetings with individual course providers have been organised by EDB and the HKEAA since October 2008. The courses will be finalised in the beginning of the 2009/10 school year. Briefing seminars and exhibitions will also be organised for schools, teachers, students, parents and the public to enhance their understanding of ApL.

11. The discussion on the recognition of ApL with universities and sub-degree providers is on-going. Descriptors and exemplars of student

work would be available later this year for users' reference. Further details on recognition of ApL will be announced in early 2010.

Development of NSS Curriculum for Intellectually Disabled (ID) Students

12. The principle of 'one curriculum framework for all' guides the adaptation of different curricula to cater for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) (including ID students). EDB has revised the adapted curriculum documents for the three core subjects of Chinese Language, Mathematics and Liberal Studies/Independent Living, and four elective subjects (Physical Education (PE), Visual Arts (VA), Technology & Living (T&L) and Information & Communication Technology (ICT)).

13. The try-out of the three core subjects for special schools (ID) in the collaborative research and development projects has come to its third year, and the try-out of the elective subjects of PE and VA has come to its second year. The projects are supported by university, local and overseas experts. The Supplementary Guides to the C&A Guides for these subjects have been drafted and teachers are being consulted. The final version will be uploaded on the EDB website in May 2009 and hard copies will be dispatched before the summer holiday so that schools will have time to prepare for the 2009/10 school year. The adapted curriculum frameworks of T&L and ICT are being tried out in special schools and the Supplementary Guides for these two elective subjects will be distributed to schools in May 2010. More elective subjects (e.g. Music and Design & Applied Technology) will be adapted and tried out in the 2009/10 school year.

The Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE)

14. The HKDSE is a new qualification developed by the HKEAA to recognise the achievements of students at the end of Secondary 6 based on the recommendations on the school curricula under the New Academic Structure. We updated Members on the progress of promotion of the HKDSE qualification in November 2008. A recapitulation with an

update is set out below.

Local recognition & articulation of pathways

15. The Heads of Universities Committee (HUCOM) Statement announced on 5 July 2006 has set out the specific requirements for admission to individual faculties / departments. In addition to the four core subjects of the NSS school curriculum, most universities will include one elective in their entrance requirements and in some cases, a second elective from a wider group of subjects. To reaffirm the universities' support for Other Learning Experiences (OLE) of students, HUCOM issued another statement on 21 October 2008 to confirm that the Student Learning Profile (SLP) of NSS students will be a document with good reference value for consideration of university admission. The issue of admission requirements was further deliberated in the last Liaison Group meeting held in February 2009 where all UGC-funded institutions were represented. Further details on the recognition of foreign languages as elective subjects were also provided. It was understood that admission requirements were intended to serve the purpose of selecting students for university studies as well as to help broaden the school curriculum rather than to narrow it.

16. EDB has started discussion with post-secondary institutions on the suitable alignment of 3-year senior secondary education with the programmes for associate degrees, Higher Diploma and Diploma courses to be offered to the first cohort of new Secondary 6 when they graduate in 2012. Briefings were held by EDB and the HKEAA to provide information for the consideration of admission requirements into these programmes and their design.

International recognition

17. The HKEAA has been working closely with the Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) on the review of the HKDSE sample papers. The peer review ensures that the standard of the HKDSE examination papers is up to the A level to facilitate selection by tertiary institutions. The first two rounds of review of the HKDSE sample papers were completed in 2008. The third which is the final round of

review will be completed in mid-2009. So far, the comments from CIE are positive.

18. The HKEAA has also been working closely with international agencies to secure advanced recognition of the HKDSE, including the National Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) and the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) in the UK. Measures are underway to conduct benchmarking exercises on the recognition of the HKDSE standards. The NARIC study outcomes will focus on recognition of the HKDSE for the purpose of general education and employment. The outcome of the UCAS study is to allocate UCAS tariff points to HKDSE Examination results so that they are also linked to other international qualifications in the UCAS Tariff system. The HKEAA has met with the UCAS and the response is positive. The HKEAA will make a first stage announcement by the end of 2009. In order to meet the requirements of the necessary procedures, the final benchmarking results will be available before the first administration of the HKDSE Examination.

19. At the end of last year, the Australian Government recognized HKDSE as comparable to the Australian Senior Secondary School Certificate.

School-based Assessment (SBA)

20. After the extensive consultation with the school sector in 2007 and 2008, a strategic implementation time-table, together with simplification of the SBA design in many subjects, was finalized. To ensure a smooth implementation of SBA in the HKDSE Examination, a SBA Advisory Group on the overall co-ordination and working groups for specific subjects was set up last year. The SBA Advisory Group, comprising school principals and teachers, advises the HKEAA on various issues related to the implementation of SBA. The subject working groups, comprising school teachers, tertiary academics, EDB and HKEAA officials, develop SBA-related requirements, guidelines and exemplars. In addition to the strategic implementation schedule and allocation of lesson time to conduct the assessment activities proposed in the C&A Guides, the following measures will also be adopted to help

relieve the workload of teachers and students in implementing SBA:

- The HKEAA will provide specific guidance to schools on how to effectively conduct the assessment ;
- Schools will be required to complete a minimum amount of the relevant SBA by the end of Secondary 5;
- Simplified assessment designs will be adopted for school repeaters and transfer students; and
- SBA marks will be collected in stages (in Secondary 5 and Secondary 6) and the submission period will be staggered across different subjects.

21. The HKEAA has also conducted 62 briefing sessions for teachers of all subjects from October 2008 to January 2009. The sessions aimed to update teachers on the latest development in the HKDSE Examination including the proposed arrangement for the public assessment of the 24 subjects (public examination and SBA) as well as soliciting their further comments. Responses from teachers were positive and they found the information useful. Taking into account teachers' feedback, an SBA Handbook containing assessment requirements, assessment criteria, guidelines and procedures for the conduct of the SBA will be published by the end of June 2009 for each of the 24 subjects. For subjects which do not carry an SBA component in the 2012 examination, the handbooks will enable teachers to familiarize themselves with the implementation of SBA at a later stage. Furthermore, a handbook containing general guidelines and administrative procedures will also be published to facilitate planning and monitoring by school administrators. The handbook will also be available to the general public who are interested in knowing the implementation of SBA in general.

Support materials for the HKDSE Examination

22. As the assessment format and reporting of assessment results would be changed in order to align with changes in curriculum development and learning, the HKEAA will produce the following from April to the end of June 2009 to help teachers understand better the assessment requirements and standards of the HKDSE Examination:

- Standards-referenced Reporting (SRR) Information Packages for each of the 24 HKDSE subjects, which include the assessment framework, sample papers, level descriptors and marking guidelines; and
- The 2012 HKDSE Examination Regulations and Assessment Frameworks.

Professional Development Programmes (PDP) and School-based Support for Teachers and School Leaders

23. Taking into consideration teachers' feedback through various channels, PDP have been conducted and will continue to be offered to enhance the understanding and capacity of teachers and schools in implementing the NSS curriculum smoothly. The planning of the PDP is premised on the following: all NSS subject teachers are entitled to basic courses for understanding the curricula and assessment; programmes should be offered in advance of implementation so that teachers have time to prepare; optional courses are offered to teachers with different roles and needs in schools; survey of needs each year; and programme evaluation to ensure continuous improvement of quality. Induction courses for new NSS teachers will also be conducted each year. For the 2007/08 school year, we have offered over 80,000 training places for all teachers of NSS subjects, including training on assessment offered by the HKEAA. Up to the end of February 2009, over 45,000 training places had been offered in the 2008/09 school year. They have all met the targets as planned.

24. Following the success of the series of 3-days School Leaders Workshops for Planning for school leaders of 464 schools in the 2005/06 school year, two other series of Middle Managers Workshops (MMWs) and School Leaders Meetings (SLMs) were respectively organised in the 2006/07 - 2007/08 and 2008/09 school years. By the end of June 2008, over 10,500 middle managers (including Key Learning Areas (KLA) co-ordinators, subject panel chairpersons, special functional post holders and school librarians) from 513 schools attended the MMWs and over 1,600 school leaders attended the SLMs from September 2008 to March 2009. The MMWs and SLMs have facilitated early

curriculum planning and understanding of students' interests and needs in schools.

25. Teachers are also supported by on-site school-based support service which is delivered by university-school partnership projects and EDB officers from REOs; and school and curriculum development according to the needs of schools such as whole-school curriculum planning, catering for learner diversity, learning and teaching in KLA, project learning and assessment for learning. In the 2008/09 school year, the School-based Support Services Office (SBSSO) is providing on-site support to about 320 secondary schools. The preparation of LS is the thrust of these supports.

Textbooks & Learning Resources

26. A Senior Secondary Curriculum Guide on whole-school curriculum development and implementation matters such as interface with junior secondary curriculum, effective learning and teaching, assessment for learning, catering for learner diversity, schools as professional communities would be published by the Curriculum Development Council in May 2009. To ensure that the quality of textbooks would meet the aims and objectives of the NSS curricula, the Curriculum Development Institute (CDI) has been working closely with the publishers in the development process and providing them with feedback sessions so that clarification can be made and communication can be enhanced throughout the whole process. The recommended textbook lists were published on the EDB website for schools' reference in August 2008 and another list on re-submitted textbooks were published in mid-February 2009. Apart from textbooks, we encourage the use of multiple resources to facilitate learning and teaching. Approximately 110 resource development projects conducted by CDI for NSS subjects are running smoothly in accordance with pre-set targets. The NSS Subject Resource list of each NSS subject was uploaded to the Web Bulletin in December 2008, which clearly lists out the availability and sources of relevant learning and teaching materials (e.g. textbooks, the learning packages and websites) for teachers' reference.

Funding Support

The Senior Secondary Curriculum Support Grant (SSCSG)

27. The SSCSG provides each senior secondary class with an additional 0.1 teacher recurrently, on top of the class:teacher ratio at 1:2. The purpose is to provide more resources for diversifying the school curriculum and to ease teachers' workload. EDB has advanced the provision of the recurrent SSCSG by one year starting from the 2008/09 school year to help schools better prepare for and implement the NSS curriculum. In the 2008/09 and 2009/10 school years, EDB will ensure that the amount of SSCSG is at least equivalent to the mid-point salary of one GM for each secondary school offering the NSS curriculum.

The Diversity Learning Grant (DLG)

28. The DLG will be provided to schools starting from the 2009/10 school year upon application to encourage the development of ApL, other languages, gifted education and network programmes to be shared among schools as measures to diversify the school curriculum. Schools will be invited to apply for the DLG in March / April 2009 for the first cohort of NSS students.

Teaching space

29. Schools are supported with government fund to make space for broadening curriculum provision. To help schools execute minor alteration works, EDB has engaged the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) to provide technical advisory services to schools in the 2008/09 and 2009/10 school years. A set of guidance notes was uploaded in mid November 2008 in the "334" Web Bulletin for reference. Schools could make use of the NSS Curriculum Migration Grant, the surplus of the general domain of the Operating Expenses Block Grant (OEBG) or the Expanded OEBG for minor alteration works so as to create additional teaching space. Schools with genuine financial difficulties may apply for a top-up provision which will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

(II) Preparation of Schools

30. There is much interest in the preparation of schools for the New Academic Structure. In the process of collecting feedback from schools on how they have been preparing for the implementation of the NSS curricula and how we could improve our support strategies, we conducted a related survey in November 2008 (i.e. 1st semester of 1st S3 cohort). Some 100 secondary schools responded to the survey. The data were generally consistent with our observations and feedback received from different sources of contacts with schools.

From the survey, our overview of the preparation of schools, teachers and students so far is as follows:

- a. Preparation at school level: The majority of secondary school heads (over 90%) indicated that they have made preparation for NSS in curriculum planning, resources & manpower allocation, catering for students' choice of subjects, development of OLE & SLP and arrangement for LS.
- b. Preparation of teachers: The majority of secondary school teachers (over 80%) indicated that they have developed professional competence and confidence in implementing NSS curriculum and SBA through participation in professional development.
- c. Student learning (Perception of S3 Students): The majority of S3 students (over 80%) indicated that they have developed project learning and generic skills as well as positive values and attitudes. They also reported that their schools have given them information on the NSS core and elective subjects including ApL and LS.

31. The NSS curriculum and assessment reform is aiming to reduce early specialization and to encourage a broad and balanced curriculum to cater for diverse interests, abilities, aptitudes and aspirations of students. Details of the survey reflect the preparation of schools in the following particular aspects.

Subject choices and selection

32. The progress of schools' planning for subjects and their involvement of students and parents in subject selection based on strengths and interests is encouraging. Over 90% of the school heads expressed that they would (i) no longer stream students into arts, science and commercial classes; (ii) make flexible resources arrangements to maximise students' choice of subjects; (iii) take students' preferences as the major consideration in deciding on the subjects to be offered; and (iv) provide students with guidance in selecting elective subjects.

33. The School Information Network (hosted in the EDB's Web Bulletin) also shows that up to March 2009, 383 schools (over 82%) have already uploaded their school-based information on NSS. According to the data collected in the School Leaders' Meetings, about 95% of 240 schools which have responded indicated that they had collected information of students' preferences in choosing elective subjects and used block timetabling arrangement to maximize the number of elective subject combinations in order to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for students.

Preparation for LS

34. Over 93% of the school heads in the survey have adopted measures in developing and preparing for the teaching of LS, though fewer of them (85% of school heads and 75% of LS coordinators) reflected that they had more concrete ideas about the arrangement of 90-hour Independent Enquiry Studies (IES) which is in the form of SBA.

Preparation for OLE and SLP

35. Over 96% of the school heads agreed that they have been developing a whole-school plan for OLE and they already have plans to enhance students' whole-person development through SLP.

Preparation for SBA

36. Over 95% of the school heads and over 87% of the panel heads

