

For discussion
on 9 January 2012

**Legislative Council
Panel on Education**

**Creation of a Supernumerary Principal Education Officer Post
in the School Administration and Support Branch
of the Education Bureau**

Purpose

This paper seeks Members' views on the proposal to create a supernumerary Principal Education Officer (PEO) (D1) post in the School Administration and Support (SAS) Branch under the Education Bureau (EDB) for a period of 36 months from 1 May 2012 to 30 April 2015 to review and oversee the implementation of enhanced services for students with special educational needs (SEN) (including specific learning difficulties, intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorders etc) and non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students in local mainstream schools.

Background

Education for Students with SEN

2. Under the existing education policy, students with severe SEN are referred to special schools for intensive support services subject to the assessment and recommendation of specialists and parents' consent. Other students with SEN are placed in ordinary schools where they can learn in an ordinary study environment. Parents can apply for admission to primary schools for their children through the current school places allocation system. Schools are advised to implement the Whole School Approach to integrated education (IE) to cater for student differences and enhance the effectiveness of

school education as a whole. From the 2006/07 school year to the 2010/11 school year, the number of SEN students has increased from around 10 000 to some 26 000. The substantial increase in students identified to have SEN in recent years is due to improvement of assessment tools and increased awareness among parents and teachers. This is consistent with the global trend. Within the context of Hong Kong, the Education Reform which covers, among others, the reform of the Primary One Admission (POA) System which took away public sector schools' discretion in student admission has also helped facilitate the implementation of IE where allocation of students apt for learning in ordinary schools is dictated by parental choice and a number of rather objective factors such as chance elements and school net, etc.

3. We currently provide various special education services for students with SEN, including providing educational psychologist services in either referral or school-based mode, developing screening and assessment tools as well as teaching resources to support students with diverse learning needs, providing training to school personnel on the management and education for students with SEN and rendering advice to parents on school placement. Professional advice is provided to ordinary schools and special schools in the public sector as well as parents and prospective parents.

Education for NCS Students

4. In the 2010/11 school year, 288 primary schools and 244 secondary schools have admitted NCS students. The total number of NCS students has increased from 7 136 in the 2006/07 school year (4 503 in primary schools and 2 633 in secondary schools) to 14 076 in the 2011/12 school year (7 703 in primary schools and 6 373 in secondary schools). In respect of NCS students, the POA System has been reformed in 2004 giving NCS parents choice of schools on par with their Chinese counterparts, thus further facilitating the admission of NCS students in mainstream schools.

5. To assist NCS students in adapting to the local education system, a series of school/student-centered support measures have been put in place since 2006. At the school level, we have been inviting schools which, through the school places allocation system, have admitted a sizeable number of NCS students, to become 'designated schools' so as to enable the provision to them of additional resources and focused support, the objective of which is to

facilitate schools' accumulation of experiences and development of expertise in the learning and teaching of NCS students so that they may serve as the anchor point for sharing experiences among schools which have also admitted NCS students. To cater for the diversified background, needs and aspirations of NCS students in learning Chinese language, we have developed the Supplementary Guide to the Chinese Language Curriculum for NCS Students tailored for different contexts and environments to empower them to attain different learning targets at different stages of development leading to multiple pathways.

Justifications for Creation of a Supernumerary Post of PEO

6. Our policy and support measures for students with SEN and NCS students have evolved over time. They represent different manifestations of the bigger issue of 'learner diversity'.

Education for Students with SEN

7. With regard to special schools, the major milestones in the past few years include the implementation of the new senior secondary (NSS) academic structure from the 2009/10 school year, reduction of class size in schools for mild intellectual disability starting from Primary One and Secondary One in the 2008/09 school year, implementation of the Extension of Years of Study (EoS) improvement measures from the 2009/10 school year, establishment of Special Schools cum Resource Centres to enable special schools to share their expertise with ordinary schools and improvement works for school premises/reprovisioning of existing schools for implementation of NSS and EoS etc. The professional support for special schools has been stepped up through the Tripartite Model of Support with a view to enhancing their learning and teaching effectiveness.

8. The implementation of IE has been in steady progress after the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Ordinance and the Code of Practice on Education enacted in 1995 and 2001 respectively. It is premised on a Comprehensive Review of IE conducted by EDB from December 2005 to September 2006 which aimed to evaluate the impact of IE and chart its future development. Schools now adopt the Whole School Approach to

implementing IE, supported by enhancement of school-based support.

9. Notwithstanding the above, the increasing number and types of SEN students identified in each school, coupled with the encouraging development of a wide range of cross-sector/disciplinary-basis learning and teaching resource packages for students of different SEN has generated a demand for stronger and more effective school-based support that would integrate the specific strategies/resources in the normal classroom teaching. The education reform introduced in 2000 comprises an extensive curriculum reform, with changes to the Primary One and Secondary One admission systems and the NSS academic structure as well as the assessment culture. The implementation of the education reform has resulted in a widened within-school student diversity, which has made the delivery of IE even more challenging. As some experience of special schools in supporting SEN students is relevant to those teachers in ordinary schools, there is a need to review the scope of services to be rendered by these resource/expert teachers so that more effective support would be provided to SEN students studying in ordinary schools and more appropriate capacity building among teachers in ordinary schools. There should also be efforts to coordinate external resources and cross-disciplinary collaboration to better support the SEN students in both special and ordinary schools.

Education for NCS Students

10. The learning and teaching of NCS students involves different manifestations of learner diversity. Against the policy backdrop of promoting the integration of NCS students in the local education system and ensuring the provision of equal opportunities to education for NCS students, our work involves the planning, development, implementation, regulation and monitoring of the support measures for NCS students which cut across different Divisions of EDB. Our progressive understanding of the more deep-rooted issues relating to education services for NCS students has brought to the fore the imperative of adopting a more holistic and coordinated approach to rendering support for NCS students so as to facilitate their integration into the community. Further, the oversight on the school-based adaption of the Chinese Language curriculum in schools, to be supported by a team of professionals comprising academics, frontline educators and EDB staff, would be most efficacious if it is professionally provided to schools in supporting NCS students.

11. In its recent review, the Equal Opportunities Commission has set out areas that it finds deficient in our support of NCS students which include, amongst others, the policies on and support to designated schools taking heed in tandem of the needs of other schools which also admit NCS students, the promotion of an early start in education for NCS students to facilitate better adaptation to local primary schools and the implementation of the Chinese Language curriculum. We consider it necessary to maintain a continuous assessment of the existing measures and modes of support to schools and students to ensure their effectiveness in supporting the learning and teaching of NCS students in our local schools.

12. With the increase of the NCS student population in local schools and the wider distribution of NCS students in schools in recent years, we need to expand the school network for supporting NCS students and enhance the appeal of mainstream schools to parents, so that more schools, in addition to the existing designated schools, would be involved in gearing up for the implementation of the Supplementary Guide to the Chinese Language Curriculum for NCS students as mentioned in paragraph 5. This is necessary for achieving a more diverse ethnic mix within a school and eventually mainstreaming of NCS students, both of which have been evidenced to provide a more conducive environment for NCS students' acquisition of the Chinese language. It is worth noting that while multiple pathways of the learning and teaching of the Chinese language is essential to cater for the diverse aspirations in academic study and career pursuit of NCS students, since the circumstances of individual schools admitting NCS students are unique, a single and identical mode of support to schools can hardly suffice as the context of our professional support.

13. At present, the policy on SEN and NCS students together with the relevant implementation work are segregated amongst different divisions and branches under different directorate officers in the Bureau. Specifically, the policy responsibilities and duties relating to these students in ordinary schools are currently segregated amongst five divisions under three branches which are mainly and respectively responsible for school administration and support, special schools, Direct Subsidy Scheme schools, curriculum development, school places allocation system. As all of these divisions are already fully occupied with their existing work on their major subject areas, they have no

spare capacity to discharge the review, overall strategic planning and co-ordination work on policy and support services for NCS and SEN students in ordinary schools in the coming few years. As learning diversity, irrespective of causes, would be manifested as academic under-achievements and their school-based intervention measures, irrespective of specificities, invariably involve motivating students and helping them to focus, we see potential for significant synergy in integrating school-based professional support generally including services targeted at NCS and SEN students. We intend to launch a policy study of the possible modalities of school-based professional support that could be more efficacious in handling learning diversity especially learning problems faced by NCS and SEN students, and based on this study, to pilot the various modalities. We expect the study and the pilot will take around three years. The increasing demand for the support services as presented in paragraphs 7-12 above and the lack of a dedicated directorate post responsible for overall strategic planning and oversight of the various implementation aspects could render it very difficult for the Bureau to conduct the policy and pilot studies in a focused manner. The studies are expected to be quite complicated as they would need to draw together the different strands of support currently in place as well as take account of the various practices that have developed autonomously at the school level.

14. In view of the above, we propose that a supernumerary PEO post, designated as PEO(Support Services) [PEO(SS)], be created in SAS Branch from 1 May 2012 to 30 April 2015. The PEO(SS) post seeks to give strategic co-ordination and professional steer to the development of appropriate teaching pedagogies and resource support, the development of school-based support strategies and the planning/coordination of cross-sector/discipline professional coordination that will facilitate the learning of students with different SEN. To enhance the services for NCS students, the PEO(SS) post will provide professional input to facilitate support for individual schools with NCS students at the early stage of planning. The PEO(SS) post should also be responsible for reviewing the number of schools for intensive support for NCS students and the related funding support in developing different modes of support which are essential to enable us to test out how the learning and teaching skills can be better transferred to other schools admitting NCS students through restructuring the platform for sharing of practices and experiences among schools. In addition, the PEO(SS) post would also be tasked to oversee the assessment of the cost-effectiveness and viability of the support measures and evaluation of

alignment of the support modes for schools. Also of importance is the collection and analysis of data to be collated through a longitudinal study to track the NCS students' academic performance in local mainstream schools so as to facilitate the formulation and evaluation of support measures for them. As research studies also suggest that there are likely to be synergies among some strategies that seek to cope with learner diversity (be it induced by NCS or SEN needs of students) at whole-school/school-based level, the above review work and related tasks would be placed under the same PEO(SS) post. This post would need to be created for three years, as the requisite service review and strategic planning work involved in formulation and conducting the pilot would require around three years to complete. We expect that the review and the pilot studies would enable us to chart the way forward on how best to sustain the policy and implementation measures for NCS and SEN students in ordinary schools on a long-term basis.

15. The supernumerary PEO(SS) post will be put under the supervision of the Deputy Secretary of SAS Branch, and its main responsibilities are -

- (a) to review various policies relating to special education;
- (b) to plan and implement support strategies and measures to enhance learning of SEN students in ordinary schools;
- (c) to oversee the professional support to schools admitting NCS students with coordination of different approaches and measures being adopted and to map out new support strategies;
- (d) to re-organise the platform for sharing of practices and experiences among schools with structured and enhanced engagement with stakeholders; and
- (e) to evaluate the effectiveness of support to NCS students including learning and teaching strategies, pedagogies, intervention approaches for tackling learner diversity etc. to provide evidence-based professional support to address the needs of NCS students.

The proposed job description of the supernumerary PEO(SS) post is at **Annex**

A. An organization chart of EDB showing the proposed creation of the post is at **Annex B**.

Alternatives Considered

16. At present, there are nine PEOs in EDB overseeing different policy portfolios. We have critically examined the possibility of redeployment of the existing PEOs to absorb the additional duties to be handled by the PEO(SS) post. However, as EDB is working on a number of pressing issues including the implementation of the NSS curriculum and introduction of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination, enhancement of administration of Direct Subsidy Scheme schools pursuant to the audit review, implementation of the policy of textbook debundling, establishment of incorporated management committees in aided schools, enhanced transportation arrangement for cross-boundary students etc, the PEOs in the Bureau are already more than fully stretched and are operationally not feasible to take up additional responsibilities without affecting the quality of their work and services currently being delivered. The job descriptions of the nine PEOs in EDB are set out in **Annex C**.

Financial Implications

17. The proposed creation of the supernumerary PEO(SS) post will bring about an additional notional annual mid-point salary of \$1,357,200. The full annual average staff cost of the proposal, including salaries and staff on-cost, is \$1,960,000.

Advice Sought

18. Members are invited to comment on the proposal. Subject to Members' support, we intend to make a submission to the Establishment Subcommittee of the FC on 15 February 2012.

Education Bureau
January 2012

Job Description
Principal Education Officer (Support Services)

Rank : Principal Education Officer (D1)

Responsible to : Deputy Secretary for Education (4)

Main Duties and Responsibilities:

Education for students with special educational needs (SEN)

1. To review on the services rendered by special schools in supporting ordinary schools to cater for students with SEN.
2. To give strategic coordination and professional steer to the development of appropriate teaching pedagogies and resource support.
3. To plan and coordinate for the improvement measures to enhance special education training for teachers.
4. To plan, coordinate and deliver support strategies and measures, including cross-disciplinary collaboration, for enhancing the learning of SEN students in ordinary schools.

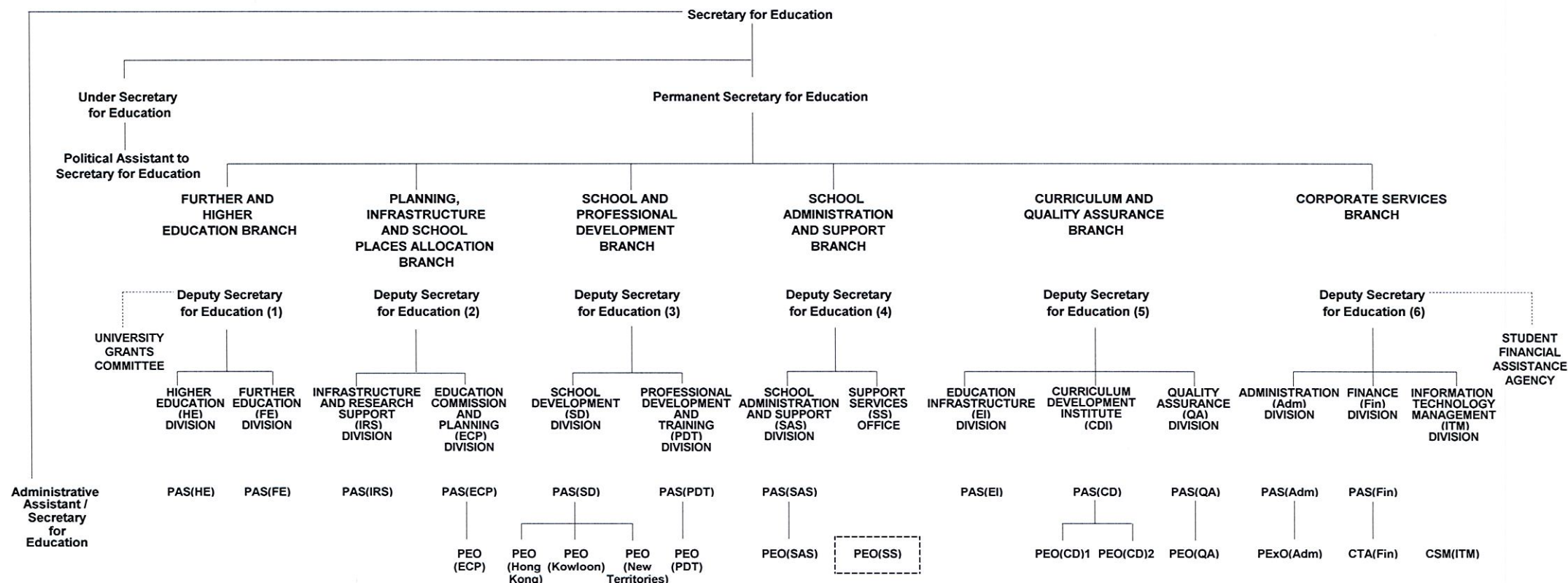
Education for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students

5. To oversee the professional support to schools admitting NCS students with coordination of different approaches and measures being adopted and to map out new support strategies.
6. To re-organize the platform for sharing of practices and experiences among schools with structured and enhanced engagement with stakeholders.

7. To evaluate the effectiveness of support to NCS students including learning and teaching strategies, pedagogies, intervention approaches for tackling learner diversity, etc. to provide evidence-based professional support.

Organisation Chart of the Education Bureau

Annex B



Legend:

PAS Principal Assistant Secretary
 PEO Principal Education Officer
 PEXO Principal Executive Officer
 CTA Chief Treasury Accountant
 CSM Chief Systems Manager

PEO(SS) Supernumerary directorate post to be created for 36 months from 1.5.2012 to 30.4.2015

**Main Duties of the Existing Principal Education Officers (PEOs)
in the Education Bureau (EDB)**

Currently, there are nine PEOs in EDB and their main duties are as follows:

- (1) PEO(Education Commission and Planning) (i) oversees the operation of various school places allocation systems such as the Primary One Admission (POA) System and the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System which severally control the admission of Primary One and Secondary One students (the POA System and SSPA System were participated by some 42 000 and 56 000 students respectively in 2011); (ii) oversees the administration of the Pre-Secondary One Hong Kong Attainment Test which is administered annually to all Secondary One entrants in Hong Kong for the purpose of facilitating secondary schools' designing of remedial and enhancement programmes for improving students' standard in English language, Chinese language and Mathematics as well as serving as a moderation tool for SSPA System; and (iii) monitors the development of various international educational research projects commissioned to tertiary institutions such as the Programme for International Student Assessment and the Consultancy Study on Extended Learning Activities Conducted in English in Chinese-medium Schools.
- (2) PEO(Hong Kong) (i) heads the Hong Kong Regional Education Office (REO) which provides a full range of professional support services to schools such as school administration, curriculum development as well as learning and teaching; (ii) enforces the Education Ordinance, Education Regulations and the Codes of Aid; (iii) offers advice on the strategies for implementing established education policies, including establishment of incorporated management committees (IMCs), review of the Codes of Aid and support for IMC schools and provision of support services for newly arrived children; (iv) steers on the work plans for the school sector on various administrative matters as directed by other government bureaux/departments, for instance, handling issues

arising from the management and prevention of communicable diseases; and (v) oversees the planning and formulation of new initiatives and measures, including the Voluntary Optimization of Class Structure Scheme (VOCSS) in secondary schools under which participating schools with five or more Secondary One classes reduce the number of Secondary One classes on a voluntary basis, the pilot exercise on strengthening schools' internal administration management and reducing teachers' administrative workload as well as the enhancement of complaint handling mechanism in schools.

- (3) PEO(Kowloon) (i) heads the Kowloon REO which provides a full range of professional support services to schools such as school administration, curriculum development as well as learning and teaching; (ii) enforces the Education Ordinance, Education Regulations and the Codes of Aid; (iii) assists in the formulation and implementation of policies, including the initiative on home-school cooperation by encouraging the establishment of Parent-Teacher Associations and promoting positive attitude towards home-school cooperation and parent education; (iv) oversees the implementation of Business-School Partnership Programme which aims to widen students' exposure and equip them with necessary skills to meet challenges ahead and assists them in establishing the right work attitude, adapting to changes of the economy and ultimately achieving whole-person development of the students; (v) steers the provision of careers guidance services for students under the new academic structure (NAS) taking effect from the 2009/10 school year; and (vi) oversees the implementation of VOCSS in schools under his purview.
- (4) PEO(New Territories) (i) heads the New Territories East REO and New Territories West REO which provide a full range of professional support services to schools such as school administration, curriculum development as well as learning and teaching; (ii) enforces the Education Ordinance, Education Regulations and the Codes of Aid; (iii) assists in the formulation and implementation of policies in relation to transportation arrangement for cross-boundary students (estimated to increase from 12 850 students in the 2011/12 school year to 20 000 students in the 2013/14 school year), including liaison with mainland officials and his counterparts in other bureaux/departments; (iv)

oversees REOs' information management and IT applications, including the redevelopment and enhancement of REO Repository, identification of information needs, formulation of business requirements and enhancement of application systems for REOs; and (v) oversees the implementation of VOCSS in schools under his purview.

- (5) PEO(Professional Development and Training) (i) formulates, implements and reviews various policies conducive to the professional development of teachers and principals; (ii) oversees the policy on teacher registration, including the implementation of enhanced measures to further enhance the transparency and operation of teacher registration mechanism so as to address public's concern of sex offenders teaching in schools; (iii) devises measures to further promote teachers' professional conduct, advises on the appropriate levels of punishment for teachers with misconduct, and supervises the Council on Professional Conduct in Education to promote professional conduct in education; (iv) oversees language teachers' attainment of training and qualifications requirements; and (v) coordinates measures related to alleviating teachers' workload.
- (6) PEO(School Administration and Support) (i) plans and develops support services for students with special educational needs in ordinary and special schools through provision of additional resources, professional support and teacher training; (ii) plans, develops and reviews policies on special schools, including student placement in special schools, approving and reviewing special school class structure and manpower and resources provision, and professional support for special school teachers; (iii) formulates and implements policy proposals and handles matters related to guidance and discipline services, educational psychology services, speech and audiological services, government schools, Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools (including the implementation of improvement measures to enhance the governance and administration of DSS schools pursuant to the Director of Audit's Report No. 55), through-train schools, etc; and (iv) plans, implements and reviews policies on school administration matters of aided schools.

- (7) PEO(Curriculum Development)1 [PEO(CD)1] (i) oversees the development and implementation of the curricula, assessment and related support strategies for various subjects at Primary and Secondary levels such as English Language, Chinese Language, Mathematics, Chinese History, History, Geography, Economics, Music and Moral and National Education; (ii) administers the Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme which provides professional support services to some 800 primary and secondary schools for the purpose of improving the English language standard of students in Hong Kong; and (iii) deals with matters related to the supply and quality of textbooks, including the implementation of measures to enhance the transparency of the information in the Recommended Textbook List and the development of an electronic textbook market which enable parents to know about the changes of textbook prices and provide users with greater choice of learning and teaching materials.
- (8) PEO(CD)2 (i) oversees the development and implementation of the curricula, assessment and related support strategies for various subjects at Primary and Secondary levels such as Liberal Studies, Applied Learning, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Physical Education, Design and Applied Technology, Information and Communication Technology, etc; (ii) assists in overseeing the implementation of the NAS taking effect from the 2009/10 school year, which mainly involves the preparation and implementation of the new Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination which will first be held in 2012 and will be taken by some 80 000 students in that year, amendment of Education Ordinance and requirement of civil service appointment under the NAS, etc; and (iii) plans, manages and monitors the evaluation of the NAS upon the implementation of the first cycle of the NAS in end 2012.
- (9) PEO(Quality Assurance) (i) formulates and implements policy relating to pre-primary education, including the implementation of the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme, provision of pre-primary education support to kindergartens and child care centers as well as harmonization of kindergartens and child care centers; (ii) monitors and reports on school performance standards through the conduct of about 150 external school reviews, 70 fine-tuned medium of instruction focus

inspections, 10 special reviews or comprehensive reviews for DSS schools, etc per annum; and (iii) develops and monitors strategies for the implementation of the School Development and Accountability Framework, including the development and use of school evaluation tools in supporting school development, for achieving the target of enhancing quality assurance in school education and schools' capacity of self-improvement.