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Panel on Education

**Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council
Secretariat for the meeting on 12 December 2011**

**School-based professional support programmes financed by the
Education Development Fund**

Purpose

This paper summarizes the deliberations of the Panel on Education ("the Panel") on school-based professional support ("SBPS") programmes financed by the Education Development Fund ("the Fund").

Background

2. In July 2004, the then Education and Manpower Bureau ("EMB") set up the Fund with a grant of \$550 million as approved by the Finance Committee to assist schools in taking forward the education reform initiatives. SBPS programmes were implemented starting from the 2004-2005 school year for an initial period of five years. The SBPS programmes include the following –

- (a) Principal Support Network ("PSN") – to establish principal networks to facilitate professional learning and experience sharing;

- (b) School Support Partners Scheme ("SSPS") or the Seconded Teacher Scheme – to second/recruit excellent serving/retired teachers at Key Learning Area ("KLA") to work alongside the officers of the Regional Education Offices in support of learning and teaching at schools;
- (c) Collegial Participation in External School Review ("ESR") – to encourage all serving principals and a proportion of experienced teachers to take part in the ESR of another school to enhance participants' understanding of the school improvement processes and techniques;
- (d) Professional Development Schools Scheme – to build a locus of schools, including special schools, with breakthrough practices in KLAs or whole school pedagogical issues to provide support for an associated network of schools; and
- (e) University-School Support Programmes - to commission school support services through universities and other institutions with proven track record in delivering high quality school-based support.

Deliberations of the Panel

3. When the Administration consulted the Panel on the proposed SBPS programmes on 21 June 2004 before submitting the financial proposal to the Finance Committee, members in general supported the direction of providing more support to schools. They raised no objection to the establishment of the Fund to provide the proposed school-based professional support to enable schools to build capacity to take forward the education reform measures. They, however, had raised concerns about PSN and SSPS. The Panel was briefed on the progress of the SBPS programmes on 10 April 2006. The deliberations of the Panel are summarized below.

Feasibility of PSN and SSPS

4. Some members were concerned about the feasibility of PSN and SSPS. They considered it necessary to address some practical problems associated with these two programmes. These included the impact of engaging another principal in addition to the incumbent principal on the

operation of a school; the need to relieve serving principals/teachers to assist another school; and the difficulties faced by seconded principals/teachers in taking forward improvement measures.

5. Members pointed out that serving principals and teachers were already overloaded with teaching and learning activities in schools. It was doubtful whether schools would take the risk of releasing their outstanding principals and teachers to join PSN or SSPS for an extended period. Whether schools would like to invite other principals to guide their principals in implementing the education reform was also questionable. Moreover, there were situational and interpersonal factors which would affect the performance of principals and teachers in different schools. Members also expressed concern over the difficulties in recruiting sufficient number of excellent teachers to implement SSPS.

6. According to the Administration, the purposes of the proposed SBSP programmes were to strengthen schools' understanding of the aims of the education reform, and to prioritize the different elements of the education reform at the school level. PSN and SSPS were modeled on the successful experience of the Curriculum Development Institute in providing support to primary schools to develop school-based curriculum. The Administration considered that principals and teachers with an outstanding track record would be highly valued by peers and should be well accepted by the staff in the schools receiving professional support. The Administration would provide training and adequate opportunities for the secondees to make their secondment rewarding, and to deliver high quality school-based support to the staff who carried out the education reform in schools. Depending on the needs of individual schools, the Administration would provide a range of part-time and full-time working options over an extended period for the experienced principals and teachers to participate in the two programmes. The Administration would offer schools adequate compensation for release of their staff, and draw on support from other external sources such as tertiary institutions, Mainland teachers and overseas expertise.

7. As regards members' concern about the work pressure of serving principals and teachers, the Administration had assured members that the SBPS programmes were intended to relieve workload and release energy in schools, and not to impose another set of requirements on schools. The teachers under secondment would provide school-based professional support in the areas of learning and teaching, which should help reduce the workload of teachers.

Implementation

8. Some members considered it important to adopt an incremental approach in launching the proposed SBSP programmes. They stressed that secondment of principals and teachers to participate in PSN and SSPS should be arranged on a voluntary basis. Principals and teachers should be advised to take a vote to decide whether to participate in the SBSP programmes to avoid disputes during the implementation of the programmes. There should be more flexibility in implementing the programmes and in using the Fund. More efforts and resources should be put in implementing the more popular areas of the SBSP programmes. The Administration should also conduct regular review on the effectiveness of the programmes.

9. The Administration confirmed that the support programmes would be implemented on an incremental basis in order to avoid creating additional workload for principals and teachers. The pace and scale at which support would be provided to schools would be driven by the identification of school requirements as well as the availability of professional secondees and appropriate support programmes. The Administration would make use of the expertise and programmes offered by tertiary institutions in planning the provision and implementation of the support programmes for teachers. A working group comprising frontline educators, academics and community members chaired by a Deputy Secretary of the then EMB would be set up to oversee, monitor and evaluate the progress of the support programmes. The working group would consult the education sector on the detailed implementation of the programmes. The Administration undertook to report progress of the delivery of the programmes to the Panel.

10. Some members suggested speeding up and expanding the scope of PSN as the provision of support in school management and leadership development to serving principals was important in facilitating teachers' development and education reform.

11. The Administration advised members that PSN was operated in the form of small networks each comprising one seconded principal and two partner principals. In view of the positive feedback collected, the Administration would expand the scope of PSN and devise networks on a thematic basis such as curriculum leadership, human resources management, financial management and crisis management.

Resources utilization

12. At the Panel meeting on 10 April 2006, members noted that only \$52 million had been spent after two years of the implementation of the SBPS programmes and queried whether the Administration had over-estimated the budget for the implementation of the programmes.

13. According to the Administration, it had adopted an incremental approach in the implementation of the SBPS programmes. The Administration would consult participating principals and teachers on the effectiveness of the SBPS programmes and redeploy resources to the popular programmes to meet the development needs of principals and teachers. The Administration hoped that the initial allocation of \$550 million would be sufficient for the implementation of the SBPS programmes for more than five years. The Administration would consolidate the experience gained from implementation and aim at the establishment of a collaborative culture in schools to facilitate teachers' professional development in the long term.

Progress updates

14. The Administration provided the Panel with periodic progress updates on the SBPS programmes. The last update reported on the progress of the SBSP programmes in the 2010-2011 school year (LC Paper No. CB(2)2702/10-11(01)). As at August 2011, the Fund had allocated a total of \$445.5 million to support about 3 800 school support services and had a balance of some \$165.6 million. According to the Administration, the Fund should be adequate to meet the committed expenditures of the existing SBPS programmes for completion before the 2012-2013 school year. As at October 2011, the Administration is holding an uncommitted amount of about \$60 million.

Latest development

15. The Administration has conducted an in-house review on the way forward for the Fund beyond 2012 and will seek members' views on its proposals to inject \$550 million into the Fund to continue with the school-based support services at the upcoming meeting on 12 December 2011.

Relevant papers

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

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
6 December 2011

**Relevant documents on school-based professional support programmes financed
by the Education Development Fund**

Meeting	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Education	21.6.2004 (Item VI)	Agenda Minutes
Finance Committee	2.7.2004	Minutes FCR(2004-05)26
Panel on Education	10.4.2006 (Item III)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Education	---	Paper provided by the Administration on "Progress report on the school-based professional support programmes Education Development Fund" dated July 2008 LC Paper No. CB(2)2621/07-08(01)
Panel on Education	---	Paper provided by the Administration on "School-based professional support programmes financed by Education Development Fund" dated June 2009 LC Paper No. CB(2)2036/08-09(01)
Panel on Education	---	Paper provided by the Administration on "School-based professional support programmes financed by the Education Development Fund" dated November 2010 LC Paper No. CB(2)204/10-11(01)

Meeting	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Education	---	Paper provided by the Administration on "School-based professional support programmes financed by the Education Development Fund" dated October 2011 LC Paper No. CB(2)2702/10-11(01)

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