**Panel on Education
Subcommittee on Integrated Education**

**Views and suggestions regarding
the implementation of integrated education
gathered from school visits on 18 and 21 March 2013**

I. General

(a) In principle, the schools support the objectives of integrated education ("IE") to provide equal learning opportunities for students with special educational needs ("SEN"). However, considerable difficulties have been encountered in the implementation of IE in ordinary schools under the existing education system.

II. Challenges faced by frontline teachers

(a) Within a class, it is not uncommon that there are SEN students of different types, with Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorders ("ADHD") and Autistic Spectrum Disorders ("ASD") being cited by some teachers as the most difficult types to handle. The interaction among SEN students and between SEN students with other regular students often lead to conflict and discipline problems, as well as disruption to normal classroom activities.

(b) Teaching and administrative duties, as well as providing support to SEN students through measures such as individual education plans ("IEP") and adapting teaching materials have resulted in a very heavy workload on frontline teachers.

(c) It has been reported that although schools can engage supply teachers to cover serving teachers on IE-related training, there are operational difficulties as the supply teachers are not familiar with the needs of the SEN students concerned.

III. Availability of qualified personnel and related support

(a) There is a common view that there are insufficient educational psychologists to support schools in catering for SEN students. Students often need to wait for an unduly long period of time for assessment by educational psychologists.

(b) There is difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified teachers with the necessary training and commitment in IE.

(c) Some other problems depicted by the schools include the anticipated reduction in the number of workshop teachers, resulting in less guidance and attention to SEN students in the relevant technical subjects; and the need for assistive tools such as voice-recognition softwares to facilitate students with Communication Difficulties to express themselves in public examinations.

IV. Resources constraint

(a) There is a view that owing to the need to go through the necessary procedures, schools may not be able to obtain timely support from the Education Bureau ("EDB") on urgent matters. Schools would therefore need to procure the necessary services from non-government organizations ("NGOs").

(b) There is a view that the maximum of $1.5 million of Learning Support Grant ("LSG") per school per annum may not be sufficient for the school to procure the necessary professional services, especially if the school has admitted a relatively higher number of SEN students.

(c) There is concern about the lack of support measures targeted at Tier-1 students and those with average to borderline intelligence. Tier-1 support such as the Capacity Enhancement Grant is an entitlement for all students and not designated for SEN students.

V. Further education and career opportunities for SEN students

(a) Under the new senior secondary ("NSS") curriculum, SEN students studying in ordinary schools are required to sit and

compete in the same public examination as regular students (i.e. the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination). As their academic performance may not be comparable to that of regular students, it is not fair to subject both SEN students and regular students to the same standard of assessment.

(b) As most SEN students are not high academic achievers, nor in possession of good language abilities, their prospect for further studies and employment has been limited under the existing education system. An example cited by teachers is the NSS Visual Arts curriculum in which students are also assessed for their ability in "Art Appreciation and Criticism". Given their relatively weak language and expressive skills, SEN students are disadvantaged.

(c) According to parents, some SEN students have encountered difficulties in seeking admission to Applied Learning courses offered by other institutions, such as the "Bakery and Pastry" course offered by the Vocational Training Council ("VTC"). The selection interview is said to be too formidable; and only one out of five SEN students can gain admission.

VI. Some suggestions put forth by schools, teachers and parents

Teaching and other professional support
(a) To minimize the impact on schools arising from the need to release serving teachers on training, it would be desirable if arrangements can be made for professionals to deliver the training to teachers at the school.

(b) The provision of educational psychologists needs to be strengthened.

(c) To enhance the quality of teaching and learning, the teacher to students ratio for ordinary schools which admit SEN should be lowered by making reference to that for special schools.

(d) Greater technical support should be provided so that SEN students will not be disadvantaged. For example, the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority should promulgate approved voice-recognition softwares for use by

SEN students, in lieu of providing written answers, in public examinations.

Early identification and early intervention
(e) Greater support should be provided to SEN students in their primary school years so that a more solid foundation is laid when these students progress to secondary level.

Education and career opportunities
(f) The Government and related organizations (e.g. VTC) should offer a wider range of appropriate courses, preferably with less emphasis on academic subjects but greater focus on vocational skills and manual dexterity to cater for SEN students.

(g) Institutions for higher studies and vocational training may wish to consider providing adjusted admission criteria or more flexibility in their study programmes so that SEN students will not deprived of the opportunities for further studies.

Cross-sectoral collaboration
(h) More face-to-face sharing session between frontline teachers and EDB officials should be arranged so as to facilitate EDB's understanding of the difficulties encountered in the implementation of IE.

(i) More seminars and outreaching programmes should be organized to facilitate the community at large to understand IE and to develop an inclusive culture.

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