

**For information
on 17 June 2014**

**Legislative Council Panel on Education
Subcommittee on Integrated Education**

**Implementation and Future Planning on the Provision of the
School-based Educational Psychology Service in Ordinary Schools**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the current status and future planning of the implementation of the School-based Educational Psychology Service (SBEPS) in ordinary schools by the Education Bureau (EDB).

Background

2. To support public sector ordinary schools in implementing integrated education to cater for students with special educational needs (SEN), the EDB has been providing schools with additional resources, professional support and teacher training.

3. The SBEPS is a comprehensive and integrated educational psychology service encompassing remedial, preventive and developmental work on the levels of school system, teacher support and student support which aims at enhancing schools' capacity to cater for students with SEN. Specifically, educational psychologists (EPs) visit the schools they serve on a regular basis to provide assessment and intervention for students, training for parents, consultation and professional development for teachers, as well as professional advice on the school policies and measures for supporting students with diverse educational needs.

Development of the SBEPS

4. The EDB has been implementing SBEPS from the 2008/09 school year, with priority given to the most needy schools, so that every year more schools can be provided with this comprehensive and integrated support service to cater for students' diverse learning needs.

5. A mid-term review to evaluate the effectiveness of the SBEPS was completed in the 2011/12 school year, in which views from different stakeholders were collected. Findings of the study showed that since the implementation of SBEPS in the 2008/09 school year, the

service had been effective in supporting schools at different levels, which include providing timely assessment and intervention to students, enhancing teachers' professional knowledge and skills in supporting students with SEN as well as their collaboration with parents.

6. To tie in with the progressive expansion of the SBEPs and ensure a steady supply of EPs to meet the service needs, the EDB has suggested the University Grants Committee to increase the provision of EP (professional practice) training places through its triennial manpower planning, with effect from the 2009/10 academic year. Currently, the University of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University provide 25 and 15 EP (professional practice) training places respectively in alternate years, whereas in the past, only 20 EP graduates were provided from one university in every two years. In other words, there are graduates from EP (professional practice) programmes every year.

7. The Chief Executive announced in the 2011-12 Policy Address that the SBEPs would be extended progressively, with the target of covering all public sector secondary and primary schools by the 2016/17 school year. The number of public sector secondary and primary schools provided with the SBEPs has been increased from 350 in the 2008/09 school year to about 580 in the 2013/14 school year, covering about 70% of all public sector secondary and primary schools.

8. Under the SBEPs, one EP serves six to ten public sector schools (including secondary and primary schools). As the number of assessment cases and the level and intensity of EP support required vary across schools, the EDB will consider different factors when assigning schools to EPs or School Sponsoring Bodies (SSBs), such as the schools' student enrolment and their number of students with SEN, as a measure to help balance the workload of individual EPs.

SBEPs Quality Assurance and Service Effectiveness

Assuring Professional Qualification of EP

9. To ensure that all EPs possess relevant professional qualifications, all EPs employed by the EDB and the public sector secondary and primary schools must be a registered member of either the Division of Educational Psychology of the Hong Kong Psychological Society or an equivalent internationally recognized professional organization of Educational Psychology, and are hence bound by the relevant code of professional conduct. To register as a member of the Division of Educational Psychology under the Hong Kong Psychological Society, an EP must have met specified requirements on professional training and completion of practicum hours. In addition, psychologists must acquire pertinent recognition of their

professional qualifications from the test developing agencies before they are eligible to use some of the major local assessment batteries.

Promoting Continuing Professional Development of EPs

10. The EDB is committed to ensuring the professional standards of the SBEPS. We actively promote lifelong learning among EPs and attach great importance to their professional development. We consider that on-the-job training and hands-on experience sharing are effective means to enhance EPs' professionalism. In this regard, the EDB reviews regularly the training needs of serving EPs, plans and organizes training and professional development activities on an annual basis, and evaluates the effectiveness of the training conducted.

11. Specifically, the EDB has been offering continuing professional development activities to EPs serving in both the EDB and the public sector schools, which include inviting overseas experts and local professionals to conduct seminars/ workshops, facilitating sharing of experiences on overseas practices for broadening of perspectives, organizing regular case conferences with psychiatrists for case sharing and discussion, setting up of learning circles for development of specialties, as well as organizing EP network and EP supervisor meetings throughout the year for sharing of frontline experiences and good practices conducive to professional growth. Through the annual briefings, the EDB has also been reiterating service work flow and points-to-note to all EPs under the SBEPS.

Reviewing SBEPS Effectiveness and Implementation

12. On top of the provision of professional development opportunities, the EDB has been carrying out monitoring and quality assurance of the SBEPS through regular school visits and review meetings with EPs and SSBs. To ensure service quality, we also scrutinize the work plans and progress reports submitted by EPs, and conduct questionnaire surveys to schools receiving the SBEPS to gauge feedback from stakeholders.

13. The EDB requires EPs providing the SBEPS to work with schools for arrangement of assessment as soon as possible upon receipt of each referral case. Normally, the assessment should be completed within six months. Based on the statistics of the 2012/13 school year, about 80% of the cases referred to EPs were assessed within two months and about 90% within five months. The remaining cases with a longer waiting time for assessment were often due to some specific circumstances. For example, there were cases where the parents requested to defer the assessment, while in other cases assessment had to be held up pending the students' medical treatment.

Future Planning

14. With an understanding that schools have an eager demand for EP service, it is the foremost task of the EDB to implement the progressive expansion of the SBEPS to cover all public sector secondary and primary schools. The SBEPS is an integrated educational psychology service. To cater for students' individual needs, the SBEPS goes beyond handling individual student cases and emphasizes systemic enhancement and home-school collaboration, which are achieved through collaboration with and consultation to school personnel, with the aim of facilitating schools in resolving and preventing problems. In the future, the EDB will continue to review the implementation of the SBEPS and envisage the optimization of the service aptly so as to further enhance the effectiveness of integrated education.

Advice Sought

15. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

Education Bureau

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