



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部教育局
Education Bureau
Government Secretariat, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

本局檔號 Our Ref : EDB(EI/BCA)/20/12/1

電話 Telephone : 3509 8521

來函檔號 Your Ref : CB4/PL/ED

傳真 Fax Line : 2186 8245

12 June 2017

Ms Angel WONG
Clerk to Panel
Legislative Council Panel on Education
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Fax Line : 3151 7052)

Dear Ms WONG,

Panel on Education
Follow-up to the motions passed under the agenda item
“Basic Competency Assessment Research Study” and views
raised by attendees
at the meeting on 8 May 2017

Thank you for your letter dated 10 May 2017. With regard to the two motions passed under the agenda item “Basic Competency Assessment Research Study” and views raised by attendees at the meeting on 8 May 2017, we submit our reply attached at the Annex. Grateful for your follow-up.

Yours sincerely,

(Ms Jenny CHAN)
for Secretary for Education

Encl.

**Response from Education Bureau
to the motions passed under the agenda item
“Basic Competency Assessment Research Study” and views
raised by attendees
at the meeting of the Panel on Education of the Legislative Council
on 8 May 2017**

1. Response regarding the two motions passed

Since the introduction of Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) in 2004¹, the Education Bureau (EDB) has been maintaining communication with various stakeholders (including schools, teachers, parents, primary and secondary schools councils, the Committee on Home-School Co-operation, the TSA Concern Group, etc.) to understand the implementation situation and enhance the implementation arrangements on an on-going basis. For details of the engagements with stakeholders and the enhancement measures introduced in 2014, please refer to Legislative Council Paper No. CB(4)284/13-14(03).

To address public concerns, the Secretary for Education announced in October 2015 that the Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy (the Committee) would conduct a comprehensive review on TSA. The Secretary for Education has regularly reported at Legislative Council meetings and listened to views regarding the review of TSA. The EDB and the Committee have attached great importance to the views of different stakeholders in the review process. Views and recommendations from various stakeholders, including school sponsoring bodies, school heads, frontline teachers, parents of various districts and concern groups, etc., were collected through various channels (such as conducting seminars, focus groups, meetings, etc.). Please refer to Legislative Council Paper No. CB(4)262/16-17(02) for details. In addition, the EDB has accepted invitations of a number of advisory bodies to introduce the review of TSA. The list of groups that the EDB has met is set out in Legislative Council Paper No. CB(4)976/16-17(01).

¹ Primary 3, Primary 6 and Secondary 3 TSA were first conducted in 2004, 2005 and 2006 respectively. Starting from 2014, Primary 6 TSA is implemented in every odd-number year (i.e. 2015, 2017 and so on).

In addition to the aforementioned methods of collecting views, we are also aware that schools participated in the 2016 Tryout Study (Primary 3) (2016 Tryout Study) took the initiative to hold an experience sharing session on 2 May to share how to make good use of assessment data to enhance learning and teaching at the school level. The EDB and the Committee will take into account the views and recommendations of different stakeholders in the process of the review.

Through the well-established channels of communication and the effective means of collecting views, the EDB will be able to understand and grasp the views and recommendations of various stakeholders on TSA.

2. Response regarding views raised by attendees at the meeting

In response to the different concerns raised by attendees on TSA at the aforementioned meeting, our reply is as follows:

Over-drilling problem, lacking of sufficient rest, sleep and play time of students, etc. induced by TSA

The EDB's position on opposing over-drilling is very clear and firm. In 2015, the EDB issued a circular on "Guidelines on Homework and Tests in Schools – No Drilling, Effective Learning" to schools, reiterating that the quality of homework is more important than the quantity. Schools should attach importance to students' whole-person development, and allow students to have spare time to participate in other meaningful social or extra-curricular activities, and have time to gain sufficient rest and sleep. School sponsoring bodies and school management committees should collaborate with schools to make arrangements for an appropriate homework and assessment policy. Schools should timely explain to parents the school homework and assessment policy (e.g. setting out the types of effective homework, frequency of tests and examinations, arrangements of supplementary lessons and whether there is a need to purchase supplementary exercises, etc.), as well as seek their views and encourage them to give feedback on their children's performance in homework. In addition, schools should inform all parents of the school homework and assessment policy and upload it at the beginning of every school year. Besides, early this year, a number of school sponsoring bodies, representatives of primary school heads associations and District Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations launched a three-party initiative on "Opposing excessive drilling and making good use of assessment to provide feedback to learning and teaching", supporting the effective use of assessment data to understand students' learning and opposing meaningless drilling.

In addition, the EDB has introduced various concrete measures to eliminate the incentives for over-drilling induced by TSA. To begin with, the assessment papers have been improved with the question design aligned with the requirements of Basic Competencies of Primary 3 students, and tied in with the spirit of the curriculum to address students' learning needs. As such, students are able to acquire Basic Competencies in their daily learning without the need for extra preparation or over-drilling specifically for TSA. Under the 2016 Tryout Study, the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) provided four types of school reports with different coverage, including a school report which only provided data of an individual school without the overall data for reference purposes. Schools may, in the light of school-based needs, choose the school reports. This effectively alleviated schools' concerns about the possible stakes of TSA data. In addition, the EDB has removed TSA from the Key Performance Measures for primary schools to reflect the low-stake nature of TSA. The EDB accepted the Committee's recommendation on strengthening internal guidelines to provide clear guidelines on the use of TSA data and information by various sections within the EDB. The EDB has also made it clear that government primary schools would not purchase supplementary exercises for the preparation of TSA, and would step up public education and enhance training for teaching staff at different stages (including training for prospective teachers, pre-service training for appointed teachers, and in-service training for serving teachers), and enhance their understanding of "assessment for learning" to ensure the proper and effective use of TSA data to facilitate learning and teaching.

TSA assessment items getting more difficult and tricky

Since the implementation of TSA in 2004, the standards for attainment of the Basic Competencies set have remained unchanged across the years. To maintain the standards set, the HKEAA conducts a research test to equate students' performance in different years in order to compare students' performance in the current and previous years to maintain the stability and consistency of the standards.

In view of the use of standards-referenced arrangement, the standards for attainment of the Basic Competencies will not be affected by the difficulty of the assessment items in different years.

It is worth-noting that the feedback collected from focus groups for schools and teachers participated in the 2016 Tryout Study shows that the improved assessment papers and question design could uphold the reliability and validity of the assessment, align with the requirements of Basic

Competencies of Primary 3 students, tie in with the spirit of the curriculum and address students' learning needs.

Recommending the cancellation of releasing school-level data to schools to avoid the exertion of pressure from school sponsoring bodies or monitoring from the EDB

At the school level, TSA school reports are provided. On top of the overall students' attainment rates of a school in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics (starting from 2014, individual primary schools are no longer provided with the attainment rates), the school reports provide item analysis and other supplementary data, including the percentage of students who have answered each item correctly and the performance of students in questions related to the respective Basic Competency.

Related information helps teachers identify the strengths and weaknesses of overall students and formulate plans to improve the effectiveness of learning and teaching with reference to the assessment data and their schools' development needs. After analysing students' performance in TSA, schools will generally follow up through various measures, such as adjusting the teaching content, improving the design of assignments/assessments, arranging after-school remedial programmes to cater for learner diversity, etc. Related follow up measures addressing the competencies of students participating in TSA can be implemented after students are promoted to another level, and can address the learning needs of students of different classes with a view to building a solid foundation for the students' grasp of Basic Competencies in the three subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics.

The 2017 Basic Competency Assessment Research Study being a "resumption" of TSA

In view of the effectiveness of the 2016 Tryout Study, the EDB accepted the Committee's recommendations and introduced the Basic Competency Assessment Research Study (Research Study) in 2017, extending the new initiatives under the 2016 Tryout Study to all primary schools in the territory. The objectives of implementing the Research Study are to expand the scope of the research in order to allow more schools to participate to collect more comprehensive feedback so as to continue to review and enhance related arrangements. The Research Study is not a resumption of TSA. Related data will not be used to assess the performance of schools so there is no need for schools to have extra drilling.

The Research Study covers four initiatives for enhancement as below:

- (i) Improving assessment papers and question design;
- (ii) Enhancing school reports;
- (iii) Strengthening professional support measures; and
- (iv) Including a questionnaire survey on students' learning attitude and motivation.

Some attendees claiming that most teachers oppose the “resumption” of TSA

The 2016 Tryout Study collected the views of teachers and parents through focus groups. Teachers considered that the assessment items tied in with the spirit of the curriculum and could address students' learning needs. Participated parents generally considered that it was necessary to continue conducting TSA because it could provide school and territory-wide data to facilitate schools' understanding of students' levels.

In addition, there was a meeting held with schools which participated in the 2016 Tryout Study in December 2016. All the attending school representatives indicated their support in extending the initiatives for enhancement under the Tryout Study to all primary schools in the territory. Besides, more than 1 000 participants attended the seminars held in the 18 districts from January to March 2017, and about 700 questionnaires (including questionnaires for school managers, school heads, teachers and parents) were collected. A majority agreed that the four initiatives for enhancement under the Tryout Study facilitated the enhancement of learning and teaching.

It was suggested that the questionnaire survey conducted by Hong Kong Professional Teachers Union earlier indicated that more than 85% of teachers objected to the resumption of Primary 3 TSA. It is worth noting that a total of 112 questionnaires were collected in the survey, and less than 10% of the respondents participated in the 2016 Tryout Study. Its representativeness and whether it can fully reflect the views of the sector are questionable.

Recommending conducting TSA on a sampling basis, in alternate years or every three years, on an anonymous basis or on a voluntary basis

The Committee has considered various administrative arrangements in carrying out TSA. Details have been set out in the “Report on Review of the Territory-wide System Assessment” submitted by the Committee (<http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/curriculum-development/tsa/fullreport.pdf>). The impact of the various administrative arrangements are summarised below:

- Sampling: TSA can provide data at the system and school levels. If conducted on a sampling basis, TSA can only provide data at the system level, while its function of providing feedback at the school level will be lost, since the number of participants in each school is insufficient to prepare reports at the school level with reference value.
- In alternate years or every three years: If TSA is conducted in alternate years or after a longer period of time, schools can only obtain feedback data in alternate years or after a longer period of time. Schools will not be able to address the issues by reviewing curriculum planning and adjusting learning and teaching in a timely manner.
- On an anonymous basis: If TSA is conducted on an anonymous basis, it can only provide data at the system level, not capable of serving the function of providing feedback at the school level.
- On a voluntary basis: Allowing schools/parents to choose to participate in the assessment cannot ensure the comprehensiveness of the sample, resulting in sample selection bias which affects the reliability of the assessment data.

TSA data not effective in facilitating students’ learning

TSA data cohort studies show a continuous upward trend not only in the percentage of Hong Kong students achieving Basic Competency in the three subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics at Primary 3, but also in the percentage of students achieving Basic Competency at both Primary 3 and Primary 6. This reflects that the data and analysis provided in the TSA school reports have been serving the function of providing reference at lower and higher primary levels, facilitating schools in improving teaching strategies, curriculum planning and teaching activities at lower and higher primary levels that brings about a continuous increase in number of students who attain respective Basic Competency at Primary 3 and Primary 6 levels.

Proportion of students achieving Basic Competency at Primary 3²

	2004 (%)	2005 (%)	2006 (%)	2007 (%)	2008 (%)	2010 (%)	2011 (%)	2012 (%)	2013 (%)	2014 (%)	2015 (%)	2016 (%)	Comparison of 2016 and 2004 (change in percentage points)
Chinese Language	82.7	84.7	85.2	84.9	85.4	85.9	86.4	86.1	86.6	86.3	86.4	85.8	+3.1
English Language	75.9	78.8	79.4	79.5	79.3	79.2	79.8	79.7	80.4	80.3	80.4	81.1	+5.2
Mathematics	84.9	86.8	86.9	86.9	86.9	87.0	87.0	87.3	87.5	87.4	87.6	89.9	+5.0

Proportion of students achieving Basic Competency at both Primary 3 and Primary 6 among different cohorts

	2004-2007 (%)	2005-2008 (%)	2007-2010 (%)	2008-2011 (%)	2010-2013 (%)	2012-2015 (%)	Comparison of 2004-2007 and 2012-2015 (change in percentage points)
Chinese Language	72.5	74.0	75.3	75.1	75.9	75.9	+3.4
English Language	68.0	67.9	70.2	69.5	69.8	70.1	+2.1
Mathematics	80.4	82.0	81.7	81.5	81.4	81.4	+1.0

² Due to Human Swine Influenza causing the suspension of primary schools in 2009, TSA was cancelled and no data has been provided. The 2016 P.3 TSA was conducted as part of the Tryout Study, the Basic Competency attainment rates of the Chinese language, English Language and Mathematics subjects were calculated using the data from some 50 participating schools