



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

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23 May 2019

Ms Angel WONG
Clerk to Panel
Legislative Council Panel on Education
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Ms WONG,

Panel on Education
Follow-up to the meeting on 29 March 2019

I refer to your letter dated 2 April 2019. Our response in respect of the agenda item of "Review of the directorate manpower and organisational structure of the Education Bureau" is set out in the Annex for Members' reference.

Yours sincerely,



(Miss Alice NG)
for Secretary for Education

Encl.

**Motion passed under the agenda item
“Review of the directorate manpower and organisational structure
of the Education Bureau”
at the meeting of the Panel on Education on 29 March 2019**

Response of the Education Bureau

Wording of the Motion

This Panel considers that, before creating additional directorate posts, the Education Bureau should first perform well in its monitoring role under the school-based management policy, including actively discharging its monitoring duties, ensuring school operation in compliance with the requirements in the Code of Aid and relevant ordinances, and handling complaints proactively to find out the truth and ensure fair and just results. The Bureau should ensure checks and balances on the governing powers of schools, enhance transparency of school governance and participation of stakeholders such as teachers, parents and alumni, and urge incorporated management committees to set up independent investigation teams comprising independent persons to handle and follow up with serious complaint cases so as to ensure fair and just results.

(Moved by Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan)

Response

The Education Bureau (EDB) has all along been steadfastly performing its monitoring role in overseeing the operation of schools at different levels in pursuance with the statutory powers given by the Education Ordinance. Should there be problems arising in individual schools regarding the quality of their management, the EDB will proactively intervene and follow up. We never shirk from the responsibility of monitoring schools.

2. School-based management (SBM) is a management framework which is school-based, student-centred and quality-focused. Its purpose is to devolve decision-making on students’ learning and resource deployment to schools so that they can make policies that better meet the needs of students and enhance students’ learning outcomes based on individual school situations. While enjoying greater autonomy in the deployment of human and financial resources and the formulation of teaching and learning policies, schools should be accountable to the community for their performance in order to achieve synergy, maintain checks and balances, and manifest the spirit of SBM. Schools are required to operate within a governance and accountability framework prescribed by the Government and in accordance with the Education Ordinance, Education Regulations, other legislations, Codes of Aid, instructions issued by the EDB from time to time, as well as guidelines of the school sponsoring bodies (SSBs) and the constitutions of the Incorporated Management

Committees (IMCs).

3. Stakeholders' participation in decision making enhances transparency in school operation and demonstrates the principles of "participatory decision-making by key stakeholders of school". SSB Managers and Independent Managers of IMCs are nominated by SSBs and IMCs respectively, while the Education Ordinance stipulates that Teacher Managers, Parent Managers and Alumni Managers shall be respectively elected by teachers of the whole school, Parent Teacher Association and Alumni Association. Whether nominated or elected, school managers are required to apply to the EDB for registration. The EDB will also conduct reviews of the composition of IMCs from time to time. Like other school managers, Teacher Managers, Parent Managers and Alumni Managers have the same rights to participate, speak and vote in IMCs. They all attend regular IMC meetings, discuss school matters, participate in the formulation of school policies and overall management, and offer advice to IMCs from different stakeholders' perspectives based on their professional knowledge and front-line experience. Furthermore, to ensure participatory decision-making for stakeholders and materialise partnership in governance, IMCs will generally establish different mechanisms, such as setting up sub-committees served by different IMC members, so that school managers have direct channels to listen to stakeholders' views, thereby implementing SBM and enhancing transparency in school operation.

4. Over the past years, the majority of schools have been operating smoothly under the SBM principles and stakeholders are involved in school administration. However, the quality of governance in individual schools may have been undermined by insufficient knowledge and skills in school management of the school managers. While some managers do not have a full understanding of their roles in school management, some over-rely on school leaders. If the quality of governance needs to be improved in individual schools, the EDB will provide enhanced support for the schools concerned. For serious cases, apart from issuing advisory letters and warning letters, the EDB may exercise its statutory power conferred by the Education Ordinance and its subsidiary legislation to intervene and handle the matter as appropriate. This may include appointing school managers to IMC, cancelling the registration of school managers and withdrawing the approval for appointment of school principals.

5. As a close partner of schools, the EDB has always been playing a supporting and monitoring role to ensure the smooth operation of IMCs. Information and guidelines on the operation of IMCs (such as the online version of the School Administration Guide) are available on the EDB website for reference of schools and school managers. Besides, the EDB conducts regular school visits to learn more about IMC operation and meets with school managers to address their concerns. The EDB also provides diversified training for school managers to better equip them for performing their functions effectively.

6. The Education Ordinance has entrusted the IMCs/School Management Committees (SMCs) with the authority and functions to manage schools. Schools should, in collaboration with SSBs, develop their school-based mechanism and procedures for handling school affairs, including complaints related to schools. The Enhanced School Complaint Management Arrangements (the Enhanced Arrangements), though not part of SBM, have been fully implemented since 2017. All public sector schools and schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme are required to establish a fair, impartial and open school-based mechanism with appeal procedures. Under the Enhanced Arrangements, upon receipt of complaints from parents, students or members of the public against the daily operation and internal affairs of schools (e.g. school bus service and teaching arrangements), the EDB will seek the complainant's consent for referring the complaint to the school for direct handling. The school concerned should handle the complaint in accordance with its school-based mechanism and procedures, and issue to the complainant a written reply, a copy of which should be sent to the EDB for information. The EDB will take follow-up actions where necessary.

7. All along, schools may assign appropriate designated staff or set up a task force to handle complaints, having regard to the nature and severity of the cases. Depending on the situation, a task force may consist of representatives from the IMC/SMC and/or SSB. Independent parties may also be invited to serve on the task force to enhance its credibility. Where necessary, the EDB would be pleased to provide professional support for schools in respect of handling complaints.

8. On the other hand, if the EDB receives complaints lodged by school staff (including teachers) or complaints involving the Education Ordinance, Education Regulations, Codes of Aid, education policies and services that the EDB directly provides, investigations and follow-up actions will be undertaken by the Bureau, just in the same way as before the implementation of the Enhanced Arrangements in 2017. The EDB will study thoroughly the information provided by the complainant and the situation as known by the EDB, and then conduct investigation as appropriate. This includes, with the consent of the complainant, notifying the school concerned of the allegation and seeking information and clarification from the school. The school concerned should assign appropriate persons to handle the complaint and the subject of complaint should not take part in the investigation. The EDB will examine the responses given by the school and decide whether further action is required, such as conducting interview with the parties concerned and scrutinizing the relevant documents. Upon completion of investigation, the EDB will reply the complainant directly. The EDB has all along upheld the principle of fairness and impartiality in handling complaints rigorously. To ensure that there is adequate information for making judgment and the principle of fairness is observed, during most investigations, the allegation will inevitably be fully or partially made known to the school concerned and the views of the subject of complaint have to be obtained. If the complaint is substantiated, the EDB will approach the school to follow up on its irregularity. The EDB has so far issued verbal or written advice and warning to schools and demanded them to rectify the irregularity and submit improvement plans.

9. In response to the recent concerns expressed by Members and the public about SBM and the complaint mechanism, the Task Force on School-based Management Policy (Task Force), which was set up to review the implementation of the SBM policy, is now following up and further deliberating the issue. The Government will study the recommendations carefully upon receiving the review report of the Task Force.

10. The EDB is always committed to its role in supporting and monitoring schools and has been working closely with SSBs, IMCs and schools to promote effective school governance. We will continue to enhance the training for school managers to deepen their understanding of the spirit, principles and knowledge of SBM, with a view to facilitating stakeholders' participation in schools' decision-making and discharging their respective functions in effective school management. Meanwhile, the EDB will formulate policies and guidelines in light of the overall needs, remind schools that, under the SBM framework, they have to refine their mechanism of checks and balances and render timely assistance to the teaching team, so as to provide quality education for students.

Wording of the Motion

Long-term education planning is vital to the nurturing of talent for the future and enhancement of Hong Kong's competitiveness. With the implementation of various education policies and the more extensive work nature, we need to focus the relevant manpower and resources on studying the long-term planning for education in Hong Kong. This Panel urges the Education Bureau to explore the establishment of a "Long-term Education Planning in Hong Kong Branch" under its organisational structure in order to focus on studying long-term education development in Hong Kong, enhance the competitiveness of young people in an innovation and technology era, and cultivate students to become talents with diversified and all-round abilities.

(Moved by Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun)

Response

The Education Bureau (EDB) attaches great importance to the long-term planning and development of education. On curriculum at the primary and secondary levels, we have, over the years, participated in international curriculum studies and kept in view the developments in other countries and regions to ensure that the education in Hong Kong can keep pace with the times and our curriculum can meet global and local development needs. For example, with reference to the world's development trend in education, the EDB launched the "Learning to Learn" curriculum reform in 2001 to foster students' lifelong learning and whole-person development through the provision of a broad and balanced school curriculum. The New Academic Structure (NAS) introduced in 2009, which encompasses the implementation of the senior secondary curriculum, marks a significant milestone in the curriculum reform. At present, various recommendations on curriculum reform under the NAS have been implemented in schools, and the qualification of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination has been widely recognised locally and internationally. Students are thus effectively provided with multiple study and career pathways.

2. To timely respond to different changes occurring in our society, the neighbouring regions and the world, curriculum development has entered a new phase of "Learning to Learn 2+" since 2017. Through ongoing renewal of curriculum guides of various key learning areas at different learning stages and introduction of key emphases such as STEM education, information technology education and coding education. The current curriculum at the primary and secondary levels seeks to prepare students for opportunities of a knowledge-based, technologically advanced, and increasingly globalised world, as well as to equip young people with the necessary knowledge and

skills and enhance their competitiveness in an innovation and technology era. Take STEM education as an example, the focus is to, through the curriculum implementation in the key learning areas of Science, Technology and Mathematics, enhance students' capabilities to integrate and apply knowledge and skills, as well as to enable them to discover the relevance of innovative technology to daily life, thereby unleashing students' potential in the areas of science and technology while nurturing talent with diversified and all-round abilities to facilitate Hong Kong's economic development.

3. In recent years, we have been partaking in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Education 2030 project, exploring with other countries/cities what knowledge, skills and attitudes are needed for students to take on challenges of 2030 and beyond. Besides, we set up the Task Force on Review of School Curriculum (Task Force) in November 2017 to conduct a holistic review of the primary and secondary school curriculum. Four pivotal areas, namely whole-person development, catering for learner diversity, multiple pathways and STEM education, have been identified for in-depth deliberation. The Task Force will continue meeting with major stakeholders to gather their views and suggestions on how to refine the implementation of the school curriculum. The Task Force plans to submit its report by end-2019 to offer directional recommendations to the Government.

4. With the introduction of various major education policies and initiatives and the rising expectations of stakeholders for quality education, issues relating to education policies have become much more complex and sensitive and spanned a much wider scope than before. Currently, long-term planning for the local school curriculum, including the aforesaid tasks pertinent to curriculum development, participation in international studies and support for the Task Force, is mainly undertaken by the Curriculum and Quality Assurance Branch. Having reviewed the operational needs and the manpower situation at the directorate level, we consider it a dire need to strengthen the directorate establishment of the Curriculum and Quality Assurance Branch to ensure that the three areas of work, i.e. curriculum development, curriculum support and quality assurance, are all overseen by directorate officers.

5. While keeping track of global and local developments, we will, in light of the EDB's manpower and workload, from time to time consider separately setting up another branch to take charge of long-term education planning.

Wording of the Motion

To avoid misunderstanding that “prevention of student suicides” is “a part of special education” and further association of student suicides with “mental illness”, this Panel urges the Education Bureau to re-define the scope of work relating to “prevention of student suicides”.

(Moved by Hon SHIU Ka-chun)

Response

It is known that suicide results from the interplay of multiple factors at different levels, involving health system, society, community, relationship, as well as individual factors (World Health Organisation, 2014). According to the local study by the Committee on Prevention of Student Suicides (2016), the multiple factors that have interacted and contributed to students’ suicidal behaviours include mental health issues, psychological concerns, family and peer relationship problems, school adjustment and academic stress.

2. The accumulation of multiple risk factors will increase a person's vulnerability to suicidal behavior, and the risk factors at the individual level include mental illness, sense of hopelessness and exposure of overwhelming chronic stress, etc. In line with overseas practices, student suicide prevention is indivisible from mental health promotion and mental illness prevention, which includes work such as creating a caring and supportive school environment, enhancing students' awareness and understanding of mental health as well as mental illness, encouraging help-seeking behaviour, and identifying and supporting students at-risk. The Special Education Division of the Education Bureau (EDB) has all along been promoting the aforesaid practices.

3. Other different divisions have their own roles and responsibilities for prevention of student suicides. For example, the Curriculum Development Institute has specified “Perseverance” as one of the seven priority values in value education and has taken into consideration of the values in curriculum development. Regarding guidance and discipline, the School Administration Division has been actively organising diversified developmental programmes for students, encouraging schools to enhance students’ resilience by means of adventure-based, team building, problem-solving training and parent-child activities. The division also promotes preventive education and organises various discipline and guidance activities as well as teacher training to remind schools to face, prevent proactively and follow up on school bullying related problems, to strengthen teacher-student and peer relationship and to create a harmonious as well as caring school culture. Works of different divisions has all along been helping students to develop potential and enhance mental wellbeing, resilience and perseverance. Overall speaking, we see it unnecessary to

redefine the scope of work relating to “prevention of student suicides” in the EDB.