

## **School Management Committees of Primary and Secondary Schools**

### **Purpose**

This paper aims to provide information on the operation of the School Management Committees (SMC) in primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong as well as the recommendations on the improvement of school management framework.

### **Present Situation**

2. All primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong are required to be registered under the Education Ordinance, Cap. 279. By law, every school shall be managed by its management committee. The SMC shall be responsible for ensuring that the school is managed satisfactorily; the education of the pupils is promoted in a proper manner and the Education Ordinance is complied with. The Ordinance also stipulates that all members of the SMC shall be registered as managers of the school.

3. At present most of the managers of the SMCs in primary and secondary schools are nominated by their sponsoring bodies. Some schools may include the principal, teachers, parents and alumni as their SMC members. Some of the sponsoring bodies will set up a central school management committee, i.e. the same SMC to govern all the sponsored schools; while individual schools may have their own advisory council or school executive committee to give advice on the formulation and implementation of school policies. Membership of these bodies involves teachers and parents. However, as these bodies are merely advisory in nature, they have no substantive decision-making power.

### **Development of School-based Management**

4. The School Management Initiative (SMI) was implemented in 1991 by the Education Department to encourage schools to adopt school-based management. The Education Commission endorsed the spirit of SMI and recommended in its Report No. 7 that all schools in Hong Kong should practise school-based management which advocates the collaboration of key players in the school system. Schools are also required to conduct self-evaluation to ensure quality school education. In response to the recommendations, the

Education Department issued in early 1999 a circular requesting all schools to implement school-based management. Schools are required to produce their annual report, annual school plan and school profile. They also have to develop their SMC constitution before the end of the 2001/02 school year to enable formal participation of teachers, parents and, when appropriate, past students in the school decision-making process and management.

5. In order to facilitate the implementation of school-based management, the Education Department set up the Advisory Committee on School-based Management (ACSBM) in December 1998 to give advice on the planning, implementation and evaluation of school-based management. The ACSBM is chaired by an unofficial member of the Board of Education. Since the existing legislation does not contain any specific requirement on the composition and functions of SMCs as well as the qualifications of school managers, the ACSBM has made a comprehensive review of the operation of the SMCs in all aided schools. The roles and responsibilities of the Education Department, sponsoring bodies and SMCs are clearly defined. Recommendations are also made on the legal status and composition of SMCs, as well as the qualifications and conduct of school managers.

## **Recommendations**

6. Under the current legislation, there is no specific requirement on the composition and mode of operation of the SMC. Individual schools may have different ways of management. Individual sponsoring bodies still have reservations about the inclusion of teachers and parents into the SMC. Therefore, teachers and parents lack a proper channel to participate in school decision-making. On the other hand, there is no provision in law requiring the SMC to disclose the names and particulars of school managers, and they are not required to declare any conflicts of interest with the operation of the school. The lack of transparency in school operation makes it difficult for the public to understand how school decisions are made. In case problems arise in the management of individual SMCs, the public may lose faith in the operation of the SMC and in the management of the school. It was therefore recommended that the Education Ordinance be revised to register the SMC as a body corporate. School managers will have to assume collective responsibility for the management of the school. The SMC will have to be accountable to the Director of Education on the school's overall performance. The Ordinance will also stipulate that SMCs should include teacher, parent representatives and other community members or professionals in its composition. Recommendations were also made on the age of school managers and the maximum number of schools to be served by a school manager. For details of recommendations, please refer to the Annex. The ACSBM will put forth the recommendations for consultation in early 2000.

## **Accountability Mechanism**

7. To enhance the transparency of the SMCs, the Education Department requires all school managers to declare personal and pecuniary interests. Some of the information of school managers will be made public in order to monitor the operation of the SMCs. The Education Department will also draft a Code of Ethics for School Managers which will list out the requirements on moral standards and commitments for reference by the school managers and the public.

8. With the implementation of school-based management, schools will enjoy greater flexibility and autonomy in school management and the use of resources. To ensure that the SMCs carry out their duties effectively, schools are required to set up an internal monitoring and accountability mechanism. They have to set out clear, open and fair procedures in financial and personnel management particularly in handling issues like appointment, dismissal, promotion or any decisions related to personal interests of individuals.

9. The Education Department will continue to ask schools to submit annual school plan, school report and school profile in order to put in place their development plan and self-evaluation system aiming for the improvement of school performance and enhancement of accountability. The District Education Officers will maintain close liaison with schools; to identify their strengths and weaknesses as well as maintain close contact with other sections of the Department to provide school-based support to schools. The Department will also conduct quality assurance inspection to monitor the performance of schools and provide appropriate support to schools in need. At the same time, the Director of Education will continue to exercise the authority empowered by the Education Ordinance to ensure that schools are properly managed.

## **Support to school managers**

10. To facilitate the implementation of school-based management, the Education Department conducts various courses and supportive services for school managers, covering topics on education policies, school management as well as the roles and responsibilities of SMC members. Induction courses will be offered to newly-appointed SMC members to help them understand and carry out their duties. A Handbook for school managers will also be published for managers' reference.

Education Department

## **Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on School-based Management**

### **School Management Committee (SMC)**

The SMC will play a pivotal role in school governance to enhance the quality of education offered. In bringing together representatives of different stakeholders, it lays the groundwork for broadened and shared decision-making.

#### *Status*

2. One major change to the SMC is its proposed corporate status, a departure from the present arrangement of assigning to the supervisor full responsibility for the running of the school. Instead, the duties of the supervisor will be taken up by the SMC who will assume collective responsibility for school management and performance. This also serves to protect individual managers from personal liabilities in relation to the activities and responsibilities of the school. As a body corporate under the Education Ordinance, the SMC is a separate legal entity and its liabilities could be limited by statute.

#### *Composition*

3. Membership should include :
- managers nominated by the School Sponsoring Body (SSB). They may constitute over 50 % of the total membership
  - principal
  - 2 teacher managers to be elected by teachers
  - 2 parent managers to be elected by the parent-teacher association set up in each school
  - alumni manager(s) - optional, number of seats at school's discretion
  - other community member(s) or professional(s) - optional, number of seats at school's discretion

4. In order to strengthen ties, the Director of Education (DE) may send representative(s) to sit in on SMC meetings. This need not be on a regular basis and the representative(s) will not have a voting right.

#### *SMC Constitution*

5. The SMC constitution will set out how the school is to be managed and safeguard broadened participation by laying down in concrete terms the following :

- composition and membership
- tenure of different categories of school managers (the SSB can decide on the tenure of its nominated managers while a 2-year term is proposed for teacher/parent/alumni managers)
- the appointment of different categories of managers through nomination or election
- the setting up of a selection committee which comprises SSB and SMC representatives and other co-opted independent members for the selection of principal
- a mechanism for amendment to the Constitution which should involve consultation with the key stakeholders

#### **Roles of Major Key Stakeholders**

6. *ED* will be the regulator and professional partner of schools to
- develop plans and policies, as well as set priorities for the improvement of education
  - enforce the Education Ordinance, Education Regulations and other relevant legislation
  - be responsible for the allocation and spending of public funds in the school sector
  - set the curriculum framework and draw up guidelines
  - provide professional advice and support to schools
  - set standards and assure the quality of school education
  - approve and withdraw approval of the principal
  - register and cancel the registration of school managers and teachers
  - establish a system of checks and balances to safeguard against malpractice and abuse of power

7. Although the *SSB* is not directly responsible for the day-to-day operation of the sponsored schools, it has an overall responsibility for their performance as the schools bear its name. It also has considerable influence over the *SMC* through its nominated members. The *SSB* has full control over the use of private funds and assets which it owns, and supports the sponsored schools in the delivery of education, by

- entering into an agreement with ED upon the allocation of a new school
- setting the overall direction for the formulation of school mission
- drawing up the first *SMC* constitution and establishing a mechanism for future amendments
- taking part in the selection of the principal
- nominating and withdrawing the nomination of *SSB* managers
- overseeing the performance of sponsored schools

8. *SMC* will assume responsibility for

- the delivery of teaching and learning and the learning outcomes of students
- submitting the *SMC* constitution for DE's approval
- recommending the appointment of the principal for DE's approval
- ensuring compliance with the Education Ordinance and Education Regulations in its school operation
- managing the appointment and performance of staff
- the spending of public and school funds
- establishing proper channels of communication with staff, parents and members of the public

### **Registration Requirements for School Managers**

#### *Age*

9. Managers should be aged between 21 to 70 so that they can draw on their experience in life in the promotion of student learning. Those wishing to serve beyond 70 will have to satisfy certain criteria such as producing a certificate of fitness.

*Maximum Number of Schools to be Served by Each School Manager*

10. With the devolution of responsibilities from ED to schools, the SMC will take on an increasingly more important role in overseeing school operations and making decisions on resources management. This will demand more time and commitment on the part of school managers. In view of this, each person can be registered as a school manager for NOT more than five schools. Exemptions may be granted under special circumstances.

*Declaration of Interests*

11. Managers are required to disclose personal data including personal and pecuniary interests. Some of this information will be made public.

12. A Code of Ethics will be also developed on the ethical standards and commitment expected of school managers for their reference. It will spell out general principles governing discharge of duties such as confidentiality, selflessness, integrity, accountability and leadership. In so doing, the Code hopes to heighten public awareness of the task of school governance, thereby gaining recognition and support for the work of school managers, as well as encouraging parents and community members to take an active part.