

**11 December 1998**

**School-based Assessment in the HKEA examination system**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. In September 1997, ECR7 recommended

*“the Government to, together with education bodies such as the HKEA, examine the feasibility of and encourage public acceptance of considering students’ school-based assessment alongside their public examination results, so that their academic standard will not be determined by a single examination. In this respect, we note that the HKEA has included school-based assessment component in some HKCEE and HKALE subjects. Consideration can be given to extending this to more subjects.”*

2. The Chief Executive, in his Policy Address in October 1997, committed to reviewing the examination system to take account of students’ performance at schools.
3. The Hong Kong Examinations Authority assumed this important task and decided to commission a consultancy study in this area. HKEA also took this opportunity to review a number of other areas in the public examination system.

**THE CONSULTANTS**

4. After a competitive selection process, a panel of nine local and overseas consultants organised by the Hong Kong Baptist University was commissioned to undertake the task. The consultants have submitted an Interim Report to the Authority at the end of September 1998 as planned. A copy of the Report is attached in the **Annex**. (Note : In view of the time constraint, only the English version is available.) The Report focuses on the three issues of school-based assessment,

resolving the conflict between certification and selection, and the grading methodology. It sets out the background information and presents various options. The Final Report will contain recommendations having taken into account the local cultural background and situation. This will be available by the end of the year.

### **SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT (SBA)**

5. This paper focuses on the issue of school-based assessment only. We understand Members of the Panel on Education would like to know
  - whether school-based assessment is considered the best system for the HKCEE and the HKALE, and
  - the assessment criteria of the proposed school-based assessment.

### **WHY SBA?**

#### *Validity*

6. While public examinations have their merits and strengths in being fair, reliable and objective, they have their inherent limitation in not being able to assess all the skills required in the teaching syllabuses because not all skills lend themselves to be assessed under public examination setting. For example, in the HKCEE, currently the speaking and listening skills in Chinese Language are not examined, nor the practical skills for science subjects. Important curricular objectives, such as investigatory skills, cannot be examined. In this respect, there is a gap between what should be assessed and what can be assessed in public examinations. This gap has given rise to the perception that the education system is too examination-led. SBA should be able to complement public examinations and enhance their validity.

#### *Reliability and fairness*

7. Both HKCEE and HKALE are “high-stakes” examinations for our students. Currently, students are judged by their performance in a one-

off examination. It is arguably less favourable to many students because their career opportunities largely hinge on their snap-shot performance in the examination halls, particularly for those who do not adapt easily to this kind of assessment (). Multiple assessments using a variety of assessment schemes, would be fairer to all students because the reliability of the assessment will be higher. This can be achieved through the use of SBA.

### ***Concerns and Problems***

8. The main concerns and problems associated with the implementation of SBA are as follows:
  - Workload for teachers
  - Fairness
  - Teachers' concerns
    - tension with students (being facilitators and assessors at the same time)
    - pressure from principals and parents
  - Pressure on students
  
9. At present, there are already a number of subjects with a teacher-assessed component. Most of these are in the HKALE. However, when SBA is developed to a greater extent, particularly in the HKCEE, there will be much more serious implications. Paragraph 8 has highlighted some of the issues. The Authority will therefore proceed prudently and will invite expert assistance to ensure all these concerns are addressed before school-based assessment is extensively launched.

### ***What are the assessment criteria of the proposed SBA?***

10. There are several elements to be considered in determining how the processing of SBA scores should be processed-

- the exact nature of the SBA (whether it involves school tests or continuous assessment of students' regular work or projects etc.);
  - Measures to be put in place to ensure the quality of the SBA:
    - > **Quality assurance** measures (pre-assessment guidelines issued by an examining body, aiming at standardisation of the assessment process)
    - > **Quality control** measures (post-assessment moderation procedures aiming to adjust teachers' marks so as to eliminate as far as possible differences between schools/teachers.)
  - Whether the SBA scores are to be combined with the public examination scores to form the final subject result of the candidate. If this is the case, the weighting factor of each component will have to be determined. Alternatively, SBA results could be reported alongside public examination results without being integrated into the latter.
11. Regarding these two questions, more information will be available when the consultants' Final Report is available by the end of the year. The Authority will carry out an extensive consultation with all parties concerned on the recommendations of the consultants before taking a final decision.

## **REMARKSSUMMARY**

12. Concerted efforts of relevant parties including the HKEA are required to make this initiative a success. This would include, as stated in the ECR7 at the beginning of this paper, encouraging public acceptance of SBA alongside public examinations.
13. The following extract from the book "Dearing & Beyond: 14-19 Qualifications, Framework and Systems" succinctly summarises the position of the Authority:

*“..... the process of change will need to be dynamic but gradual, planned and managed. This process will also need to be open and inclusive, so that a broad alliance of forces in education and beyond can be harnessed in the shaping of a future.....”*

14. Any suggestions and views from Honourable Members of the Panel on Education will be most appreciated and welcome.

**Hong Kong Examinations Authority**  
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