Legislative Council Panel on Education

Report on the Progress of Curriculum Reform

PURPOSE

This paper informs Members of the progress of the curriculum reform.

BACKGROUND

2.   In tandem with the Education Commission's reform proposals and having solicited public responses through consultations, the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) released the final report on *Learning to Learn – The Way Forward in Curriculum Development* in June 2001.

WORK PLAN FOR THE FIRST PHASE

3.   A ten-year work plan has been proposed in the report. At the initial stage, schools are recommended to formulate their own school-based curriculum development plans bearing in mind the school missions and the existing strengths they have. They are also encouraged to enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching in the Key Learning Areas (KLA) through developing the generic skills that are fundamental to help students learn how to learn. These generic skills include critical thinking, creativity and communication. Schools can also foster learning to learn through promoting the four key tasks -- Moral and Civic Education, Reading to Learn, Project Learning and Information Technology for Interactive Learning. For schools

that are ready, we encourage them to make flexible arrangements as regards the recommended time, contents, activities and resources for learning and teaching to suit the different needs, interests and abilities of their students without deviating from the central curriculum and the general directions of curriculum development.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Take gradual steps

4.   Schools are encouraged to decide on their own pace of curriculum development, having taken into account their existing strengths, readiness especially that of the teachers as well as the characteristics of students.

Accumulate experiences

5.   Curriculum development has changed from the top-down linear model in the past to generating experiences together with schools through the try-out of new curriculum models, learning styles and assessment modes in the present. The useful experiences generated will be conceptualized and disseminated to other schools for references.

Work in partnership

6.   Different parties from the public, including the related professional bodies and organizations, employers and parents, are to work in partnership to build up the capacities for effective curriculum reform.

SUPPORTIVE MEASURES AND EVALUATION

7.   The public in general agrees to the guiding principles, the directions and

strategies of the curriculum reform. We have also initiated a number of supportive measures for schools and teachers, for example issuing new curriculum guides (e.g. the Basic Education Curriculum Guide and curriculum guides for different Key Learning Areas), organizing teacher and principal development programmes, conducting research and development ('seed') projects, developing different types of resources on learning and teaching, and providing on-site school-based support. The following reports the progress of work:

Teacher and principal training programmes

8.   From September to December 2001, the Curriculum Development Institute (CDI) organized 287 programmes in different modes of professional development (e.g. fixed-hour courses, workshops, etc.) for teachers and principals. The emphasis of these programmes was placed on nurturing curriculum leaders in schools and enhancing teachers' professionalism. A total of 21,086 primary and secondary teachers and principals attended these programmes.

Promoting a new culture of assessment for learning

9.   Assessment is an integral part of the learning and teaching cycle. Apart from being a tool for selection, assessment has the more important function of providing information for both students and teachers to improve learning. To promote a new culture of assessment for learning, a knowledge fair on "Assessment for Learning" was held in November 2001 for teachers to share their valuable experiences in assessment methods. Around 5,000 principals and teachers participated in the fair and their responses were generally positive. They all agreed that good use of quality feedback in assessment could help enhance students' learning.

Conducting 'seed' projects

10.   The purpose of the 'seed' projects is to help schools identify their own needs and to help teachers implement the curriculum reform principles in their schools in collaboration with the CDI officers and experts from tertiary institutions.   The first stage of the 'seed' projects began in September 2001 with around 170 secondary schools and 140 primary schools participating in them.   Schools' fervent response to the 'seed' projects reflected that numerous teachers and schools were willing to serve as 'pioneers'.

Nurturing 'seed' teachers

11.   Through the 'seed' projects, a critical mass of proactive and enterprising 'seed' teachers, who are willing to attempt creative teaching approaches and develop new assessment modes, will be identified as 'pioneers' and curriculum change agents.   There are also around a hundred teachers seconded to CDI. These teachers have displayed their highest professionalism and helped promote the culture of collaboration by sharing their own successful experiences with other teachers.

Collaborating with other organizations/bodies

12.   Many schools, tertiary institutions and professional organizations have developed their own curriculum experiments and new projects in response to curriculum reform, for example, those that were funded by Quality Education Fund and Standing Committee on Language Education and Research.   CDI will continue to liaise with them to enhance exchange of information and collaboration.

Providing all primary schools with a Primary School Master/Mistress(PSM)

13.   Starting from the 2002/03 school year, the Education Department (ED)

will provide each public-sector school, by phases within three years, with an additional teacher to serve as curriculum development leader at the rank of Primary School Master/Mistress(PSM) for five years to assist the school in coordinating curriculum planning and strategies, and promoting school-based curriculum development.

14.   Please refer to the Annex for details of progress concerning the supportive measures taken by ED, the implementation of the four key tasks and infusing the generic skills into learning and teaching of existing school subjects.

INITIAL ACHIEVEMENT

15.   Positive achievements since the introduction of the curriculum reform are as follows:

a. Some of the public's misconceptions are being clarified, for example, they have moved away from the concept of the curriculum as *documents* to the concept of the curriculum as *learning experiences of students* both within and outside the classrooms.

b. As compared with curriculum initiatives conducted in the past, the education profession has shown a higher standard of professionalism and better understanding of the new concepts of curriculum reform through the quality of their discussions.

c. Both the schools and teachers are generally aware of the variations of the curriculum, the diversified modes of learning contents, learning units, curriculum stages and project design to suit the diversified learning needs.

d. Schools understand that they have the flexibilities to adopt different learning strategies and styles that suit the needs of their students as long as they achieve the learning objectives of the central curriculum.

They also realise that the modes of assessments should be suited to the objectives of the curriculum and the methods of learning.

e. There is also positive feedback regarding the professional supportive services provided by the Education Department to schools.

CONCEPTS TO BE RECTIFIED

16. As the curriculum reform is a complex process involving a vast number of stakeholders, there are still some misconceptions among the public that need clarifications:

a. ***The relations between the central curriculum and the school-based curriculum***

There is the general misconception that encouraging schools to develop their own school-based curriculum would mean transferring all curriculum development work back to schools so that the teachers have to develop all the necessary teaching materials by themselves. In actual fact, CDC is responsible to set the general directions of curriculum development and the central curriculum framework for schools. The Basic Education Curriculum Guide and the Curriculum Guides for the eight Key Learning Areas to be published in May 2002 will spell out the essential contents in the curriculum, core components and the basic elements required in learning. The contents will also include the learning targets, curriculum structures, generic skills, etc. for the reference of schools. Schools can base on the objectives and directions set by the central curriculum to flexibly exercise their professional autonomy to select and modify the teaching contents, choice of subjects, teaching, learning and assessment strategies according to the abilities of their students to help them achieve the learning targets.

b. *Textbooks and learning/teaching resources*

The curriculum reform encourages the use of a diversity of teaching materials. This does not mean abolishing the use of textbooks. In order to ensure the quality of textbooks, ED has provided all publishers with the guiding principles for quality textbooks that are in line with the new curriculum framework and the student-centered teaching approach. The publishers can develop textbooks based on these guiding principles before submitting them to the reviewing broad for approval. A recommended textbook list will be compiled and updated to facilitate schools to choose textbooks for their students. ED will also encourage all parties, through various means, to continuously develop useful learning and teaching resources and exemplars. Teachers are advised to use their professional judgement to select and make use of the materials in textbooks and a variety of teaching resources to enhance the effectiveness of learning in students and to achieve the learning targets.

FUTURE DIRECTION

17. Besides evaluating the effectiveness of various strategies every year, we will conduct an interim review of the ten-year plan in 2005/06 to take stock of the overall progress of the first phase (from 2001/02 to 2005/06) and to consolidate successful experiences so as to improve plans and actions for the medium-term phase (from 2006-07 to 2010-11) in order to ensure that the directions of the curriculum reform meet the current needs.

CONCLUSION

18. The curriculum reform aims at liberating students' dynamic drive in

learning, so that learning will become more interesting, strategic and lively. This is definitely a challenge to the traditional way of textbook-based teaching. During the early stage of the curriculum reform, when people are not accustomed to this paradigm shift, the feelings of uneasiness and rejection are understandable. Moreover, Hong Kong is at present short of a professional force in curriculum design. However, the expertise will be nurtured through practices and verifications. During these processes, deliberations and discussions are necessary and constructive. What is the most important of all is that the education professionals agree that the school curriculum should meet the needs of the society, schools and students. This overarching principle of the curriculum reform also serves as the interactive spirit of the central curriculum and the school-based curriculum. We have faith that in the near future, there will be advancement in curriculum development among the education professionals of Hong Kong. This faith comes from the encouraging changes in learning and teaching in schools, the prominent culture in collaborative learning and classroom observation, as well as the importance the education professionals have now attached to the development of the profession.

Education Department
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Progress on the Curriculum Reform Annex

Implemented programmes	Progress	Participants	Impacts
The government provides schools and teachers with a range of supportive measures: (1) curriculum guides	New curriculum guides for basic education and all Key Learning Areas in basic education will be issued in 2002.	Curriculum Development Institute, Curriculum Development Council	<u>New curriculum guides for basic education</u> Developing a supportive structure which set out what students should know, value and be able to do at various stages of schooling and to ensure the standards of students. <u>New curriculum guides for all Key Learning Areas in basic education</u> Providing details on the learning targets, the organisation of contents, the learning, teaching and assessment strategies, the resources, exemplars and other useful information. Schools are encouraged to adapt the central curriculum and organise the framework in different modes so as to develop their school-based curriculum to cater for the needs of their students.
(2) resources and exemplars on learning and teaching	Producing various types of learning kits including: multi-media packages, exemplars of learning and teaching practices, self-access learning materials, life-wide learning database, education television programmes and CD-ROM curriculum planners	Curriculum Development Institute, approximately 100 seconded teachers	

Implemented programmes	Progress	Participants	Impacts
	Curriculum Bank (cd.ed.gov.hk/cdb/public/exa mplar_c.asp)		Providing useful references on daily practices with ready-to-use learning and teaching resources and a platform for contributions from teachers and exchange of experiences
	"Exemplars of Curriculum Development in Schools" was issued in June 2001		Illustrating the ideas and recommendations in the report of the Curriculum reform; with authentic and practical experiences from Hong Kong schools and also illustrating how they were realised in Hong Kong.
(3) Research and development projects	The first stage of the collaborative research and development ("seed") projects began in September 2001.	140 Primary schools, 170 Secondary schools, Curriculum Development Institute, approximately 100 seconded teachers, consultants and expertise	Through participating in the "seed" projects, schools work collaboratively with CDI officers and consultants and expertise in developing the school-based curriculum and useful resources and trying-out the related learning and teaching strategies.
(4) School-based Curriculum Development support	Providing on-site school-based support	80 Primary schools, 130 Secondary schools, Curriculum Development Institute	Conducting collaborative lesson preparation with teachers. Helping them to adapt suitable teaching strategies, prepare teaching resources and develop school-based curriculum. There are approximately 20 primary schools participated in the action-research to verify the effectiveness of the learning and teaching strategies. Results have shown that it has great impact on teachers' development and students' learning.
(5) Teacher and Principal Development	From Sep. to Dec. 2001, the CDI had organized 287 programmes in different	Curriculum Development Institute,	Enriching the knowledge and skills of principals and teachers in curriculum

Implemented programmes	Progress	Participants	Impacts
Programmes	modes of professional development (e.g. fixed-hour courses, workshops, etc.) for teachers and principals.	Tertiary institutions, consultants and experts	change, learning and teaching, assessment and different factors for school-based curriculum development. Through practising, principals and teachers learn to realise the reform and develop a life-long learning capacity.
(6) Primary School Master/ Mistress (PSM)	Each primary school in the public sector will be provided with an additional Primary School Master/ Mistress (PSM) for 5 years by stages over the next three years.		Assisting school heads in co-ordinating whole-school curriculum planning, assessment policy and assessment practices in school and to lead teachers in professional development
Developing the four key tasks: (1) Moral and Civic Education	An Ad Hoc Committee for moral and civic education formed under CDC was set up. Series of training courses and seminars will be provided to facilitate teachers to use life-event approach when developing moral and civic education in schools A try-out scheme on adopting the Life Event Approach in moral and civic education will be launched in February 2002. A life-event exemplars resource bank is set up in 2001-02	2 Primary schools, 2 Secondary schools, Curriculum Development Institute, approximately 100 seconded teachers, consultants and expertise, Tertiary institutions	Reviewing the matters concerning the promotion of moral and civic education and making recommendations.

Implemented programmes	Progress	Participants	Impacts
(2) Reading to Learn	Disseminating a series of packages on "The Promotion of a Reading Culture at School"	Curriculum Development Institute, approximately 100 seconded teachers, consultants and expertise, Tertiary institutions	
	Organising seminars on "The Promotion of a Reading Culture at School" for secondary school teachers	400 Secondary school teachers	Disseminating successful school experiences
	Setting up a mobile library to provide service to schools		Promoting reading culture in schools and arousing students' interest in reading
(3) Project Learning	Developing a Web-based Tool to support Project Learning	Approximately 20 primary and secondary schools Curriculum Development Institute, approximately 100 seconded teachers	The electronic devices have been developed to facilitate students to develop self-learning strategies. Students can record their learning process, set their progress in stages, act step by step accordingly, and report their achievements to their teachers. In this way, teachers can know the students' progress and problems, and provide suitable feedback.
(4) Using Information Technology for interactive learning	A questionnaire survey on the implementation of IT in education in all primary schools is being conducted.	Curriculum Development Institute, approximately 100 seconded teachers	Setting the springboard for reviewing and revising the supportive measures and adjusting the junior secondary IT curriculum.
	A series of teacher training courses on "Using IT in Project Work" is being organised.	More than 200 primary school teachers	
	Developing interactive assessment tools		
Infusing generic skills (accord	Developing various types of learning and teaching kits to	Curriculum Development	The targets and plans for infusing generic skills into

Implemented programmes	Progress	Participants	Impacts
priority to critical thinking, creativity and communication) into learning and teaching of existing school subjects.	support schools	Institute, approximately 100 seconded teachers, Tertiary institutions	learning and teaching have been widely accepted by teachers in general.
	Organising teacher training programmes	More than 600 primary and secondary school teachers	