

## Chapter 7

### Primary education - Delivery of effective primary education

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Audit conducted a review on the existing arrangements for the delivery of effective primary education by public sector schools (i.e. aided and government schools) and identified areas where improvements could be made.

2. At the public hearing, **Mrs Fanny LAW FAN Chiu-fan, Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower**, made an opening statement on behalf of the Secretary for Education and Manpower. She said that:

- the Administration considered that many of the Director of Audit's recommendations were in line with the Administration's measures to further improve the education system of Hong Kong, which stressed a balanced development of students in the domains of ethics, intellect, physique, social skills and aesthetics;
- to dovetail with the reform in the education system and school curriculum, the Administration compiled, in July 2002, a series of materials entitled "Basic Education Curriculum Guide - Building on Strengths". Apart from providing recommendations of a central curriculum for schools and time allocation, the Guide also provided suggestions for actions in school curriculum planning, learning and teaching and assessment to improve the quality of education, and for school-based adaptations to build on the strengths of Hong Kong schools as well as to meet the needs of students;
- the establishment of a self-assessment mechanism for schools to facilitate self-improvement was an important aspect of schools-based management (SBM). The Administration would strengthen the implementation of self-assessment for schools. Through external assessment, training for school leadership and self-assessment for schools, the schools would deliver quality education more effectively;
- since the implementation of the education reform and the abolishment of the Academic Aptitude Test in 2000, the Administration was encouraged to note that many schools had shown improvement. On the other hand, to address the problem of variance in students' levels in the three core subjects (Chinese, English and mathematics), the Administration was currently implementing the Basic Competency Assessments in these three subjects to enable teachers and parents to understand students' learning progress and needs and to give appropriate and timely assistance so that students who had different levels of competency could attain the basic standards;

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- the Administration shared the concern expressed in the Audit Report that there was much room for improvement by schools in the performance appraisals of their principals and teachers. The Administration considered that, in order to fully develop the spirit of SBM, it should assist schools in the establishment of a well-developed system which dealt with the problems of staff appraisal, award and punishment in the light of administrative needs. The Administration would therefore expeditiously conduct a review of the “last-in, first-out” (LIFO) arrangement; and
- to promote the professional development of teachers and affirm the leadership role of principals, the Administration would, apart from providing various training activities for teachers, implement measures on continuing professional development of principals so that the teaching profession would, like other professions, develop and improve continuously.

### Achievement of primary-education objectives

3. The Committee noted that in order to better achieve the objectives of primary education recommended by the Education Commission (EC) which had been adopted by the Government, Audit had recommended that the Director of Education<sup>1</sup> should, inter alia, expedite action to implement the recommendations of Home Affairs Bureau (contained in its report on Sports Policy Review of 2002) on conducting fitness tests for students and encouraging schools to make use of venues of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) to organise sports events. In response, the Director of Education had said in paragraph 2.55(b) of the Audit Report that the Education Department<sup>2</sup> (ED) would commission tertiary institutions to conduct an annual survey of students’ physical fitness and participation in sports activities from 2002 onwards. In paragraph 2.56(b) of the Audit Report, the Secretary for Home Affairs had said that the LCSD had plans to expand its services in the School Sports Programme to meet the needs of all schools in Hong Kong so that more students could benefit through the Programme.

4. Regarding the Committee’s question of whether the above annual survey had been commissioned, the **Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower** said, vide her letter of 29 January 2003 in *Appendix 63*, that:

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<sup>1</sup> Following the merger of the Education and Manpower Bureau and the Education Department, the post of Director of Education was deleted on 1 January 2003.

<sup>2</sup> The Education and Manpower Bureau and the Education Department have been merged from 1 January 2003 and, since then, the Education and Manpower Bureau (the new organisation after the merger) takes charge of both the formulation and implementation of education policies.

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- the survey for 2002-03 school year had been contracted out to the Hong Kong Baptist University; and
- the survey for 2003-04 school year would be conducted in primary schools subject to availability of funds. Proper procurement regulations would be followed for commissioning the study to the tertiary institutions. The survey would be conducted annually in secondary and primary schools in alternate years.

5. In response to the Committee's enquiry about the utilisation rates of the LCSD's venues by schools and by other users in 2000-01 and 2001-02 respectively, the **Director of Leisure and Cultural Services** provided the statistics, vide the letter of 3 December 2002 in *Appendix 64*. He also stated that:

- the LCSD adopted the same criteria in the processing of applications for use of leisure venues from special schools and other schools; and
- in the financial years of 2000-01 and 2001-02, 234 and 241 school applications for use of the LCSD's venues had been rejected respectively.

6. Noting that the utilisation rates were low, the Committee further asked:

- about the reason for the low utilisation rates and the reasons for rejecting the schools' applications; and
- how the LCSD would expand its services in the School Sports Programme.

7. **Mrs Loran MAO, Assistant Director (Leisure Services)<sup>1</sup>, LCSD**, responded that:

- the LCSD understood that schools could use its leisure facilities during the non-peak hours. Take the LCSD's sports centres as an example, while the non-peak hours of 7:00 am to 5:00 pm were not convenient to the general public, they were suitable for use by schools. In this connection, the LCSD had introduced a Free Use Scheme of the LCSD's sports facilities. In promoting the Scheme, the LCSD had continuously liaised with ED and school principals. It also published and sent booklets on this Scheme to schools inviting them to use the LCSD's sports centres which included respective courts for badminton, basketball and volleyball, etc. Nevertheless, the utilisation rates of the LCSD's facilities by schools were low because

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schools, particularly primary schools, only provided one session of physical education (PE) in a week which lasted for about 45 minutes. There was little time for students to take the PE lesson at the LCSD's facilities after discounting travel time. The LCSD had therefore recommended to school principals a bi-session period for PE lesson to enable the use of the LCSD's facilities for the PE lesson. The recommendation was being considered by school principals;

- the LCSD was extremely unwilling to reject the school's applications. Schools, like the general public, wished to use facilities which were new, better-equipped and at a convenient location, such as those in the sports centres of Hong Kong Park and Kowloon Park. As the time slots available for these facilities were over-subscribed, the LCSD had, apart from drawing lots to determine the allocation of slots, asked the schools concerned whether they could use facilities in other sports centres such as Lei Cheng Uk and East Kai Tak. But they declined. In other words, the LCSD rejected school's applications on the grounds that they had been unsuccessful in the drawing of lots and had declined to use facilities in other venues; and
- the LCSD hoped that more schools would participate in the School Sports Programme. In this connection, the LCSD had a team of staff dedicated to promoting the Programme. Due to resource constraints, the schools which participated in the Programme at its commencement in mid-2000 were not many. However, up to 2001, 347 schools had participated in the Programme. The LCSD hoped that in 2002-03, participating schools would increase to 750 and 400,000 students could benefit through it. The promotion of the Programme beyond 2002-03 would be considered in the light of the financial situation at that time. Nevertheless, the LCSD hoped that all primary and secondary school students could benefit through the Programme.

8. Regarding the issue of insufficient time for students to take PE lesson at the LCSD's facilities, the Committee asked whether the teaching timetable could be rearranged to enable students to do so.

9. **Mr LEE Hing-fai, Director of Education**, responded that the ED would further encourage schools to make use of the LCSD's facilities. Schools had the autonomy and flexibility to draw up their teaching timetable. Actually, the ED only imposed two restrictions on the scheduling of school holidays, namely, there should be a total of 90 days' school holidays and certain general holidays had to be taken as school holidays. Subject to these restrictions, schools could revise the schedule.

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### Primary-school students' attainment in three core subjects

10. The Committee noted from paragraph 3.13 of the Audit Report that in 2000, in its proposals for reforming the education system in Hong Kong, the EC stated that the education system should not give up on any single student, but rather let all students have the chance to develop their potentials. However, Figure 11 of the Audit Report showed that, in 2001-02, 3,906 primary students who had been identified as being in need of intensive remedial teaching could not attend the remedial classes provided under the Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme (IRTP) or Resource Teaching Centre (RTC) programme.

11. The Committee asked whether it was the Administration's continuous commitment to achieve the above EC's goal that the education system should not give up on any single student and, if so, when it would provide places to meet the needs of the 3,906 students who were in need of intensive remedial teaching.

12. The **Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower** responded, vide her letter of 25 January 2003 in *Appendix 65*, that:

- at present, every school was provided with resources for remedial teaching service. In addition, the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) provided extra support for primary students with learning difficulties in the form of school-based IRTP and centre-based remedial teaching service at RTCs operated by the EMB. Schools with eight or more students with learning difficulties were eligible for the provision of IRTP. For schools not operating IRTP, such students could receive remedial teaching service at RTCs. However, with the introduction of whole-day primary schooling, students often found it inconvenient to attend RTCs after school. Some declined the service due to transport or escort problems. These students had to rely on family support and the basic remedial teaching service in school; and
- to ensure more cost-effective use of resources to provide timely support to students in need, the EMB was currently reviewing the mode of remedial support services for students with learning difficulties in primary schools. The aim was to adopt a whole school approach to providing learning support to all students. This would remove the division of labour which existed between IRTP teachers and the rest of the teaching staff, and help to promote better collaboration and a more holistic approach to meeting students' needs.

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### Stakeholders' roles in delivery of effective primary education

13. According to paragraph 4.7 of the Audit Report, subsequent to the introduction of the SBM initiatives in recent years, schools had embarked on developing a fair and open staff appraisal system, which was not available when the LIFO arrangement was first adopted in 1970s. Audit considered that with the establishment of staff appraisal system, schools were in a better position to assess teachers' performance which should be taken into account when deciding which teachers should be made redundant. Furthermore, the LIFO arrangement was at variance with good human resource management practices, under which the merits of staff should be the determinants for staff retention. The LIFO arrangement had the risk of alienating good teachers and rewarding mediocrity. Audit recommended, in paragraph 4.18(a) of the Audit Report, that the Director of Education should consider abolishing the LIFO arrangement.

14. In this connection, the Committee asked whether the Administration had consulted school teachers and teachers' union on the arrangement for teacher redundancy.

15. In response, the **Director of Education** said that:

- the LIFO arrangement was adopted in 1970s as a principle for dealing with redundancy of primary school teachers. Every time when the ED dealt with the teacher redundancy problem in recent years, it had contacted the relevant parties, including the school council, before making the arrangement. In fact, the detailed arrangement for the current school year had not yet been promulgated. The ED had made preliminary contacts with some organisations and they had different views on the matter;
- as the ED was promoting SBM, it dealt with the problem of teacher redundancy in line with the spirit of SBM. One of the important aspects of SBM was to deal with all problems in a fair, just and open manner. The problem of teacher redundancy would therefore be dealt with in the same manner. The ED hoped that, in dealing with the problem of teacher redundancy, schools should not simply adopt the LIFO arrangement but should examine their needs and the teachers' performance, etc. Most importantly, schools should set up an appeal mechanism for teachers affected; and
- as the ED was still conducting preliminary consultation on the arrangement for dealing with teacher redundancy in the current school year, it could not disclose details of the arrangement at this stage.

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16. The Committee noted that in order to fully develop the spirit of SBM, the Administration should assist schools in the establishment of a well-developed system to deal with the problems of staff appraisal, award and punishment in the light of administrative needs. It asked about the progress made in establishing the system and whether an appeal mechanism would be drawn up.

17. The **Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower** responded that under the principle of SBM, all schools should put in place a staff appraisal system in the current school year. Not every appraisal system was already well-developed when it was established. Some schools did better than the others in the establishment of such system. Many schools considered that the problem of teacher redundancy should be dealt with under the principle of SBM. But schools were required to explain to their teachers their criteria in handling the problem of teacher redundancy. If schools were not fair and open in handling the problem, the teachers affected could lodge complaints against the schools. The Administration therefore hoped that an appeal mechanism should be drawn up by schools themselves under the principle of SBM.

18. The Committee asked how the problem of teacher redundancy, which was not resolved by natural wastage or the LIFO arrangement, would be dealt with.

19. The **Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower** explained that the problem of teacher redundancy arose from the reduction of classes. Where there was a need for making teachers redundant, schools had to decide whom to lay off. As there was no teacher appraisal system in the 1970s, the simple LIFO arrangement was adopted to avoid unfair decision. Since then, the appraisal system had developed and as schools had different needs, schools might need to consider a number of factors in deciding whom to lay-off. Teachers' performance was only one of these factors. If the performance of a teacher was considered unsatisfactory, he/she should receive training or assistance to help him/her develop. Teachers' performance was not entirely linked to the arrangement for teacher redundancy. Nevertheless, schools had to identify and retain those teachers who could benefit the schools most.

20. The Committee noted from paragraph 4.17 of the Audit Report that, in view of the challenges encountered by teachers in the adoption of all-round education in schools, Audit considered that teachers needed to be given more opportunities to attend related seminars and training courses to keep themselves abreast of the latest developments in teaching techniques and methodologies. The Committee asked about the statistics on the training for primary school teachers.

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21. The **Director of Education** advised, vide his letter of 3 December 2002 in *Appendix 66*, that:

- a total of 775 training courses and 336 seminars were offered by the ED to primary school teachers in the 2001-02 school year. On top of that, the ED also conducted 281 workshops and briefings in the same year to provide primary school teachers with more opportunities to keep themselves abreast of the latest developments in education policy, school administrative arrangements, teaching techniques and methodologies;
- for training courses, seminars and workshops with statistical data available, teachers' attendance rate on average was 87%; and
- the ED provided each primary teacher with approximately an average of 42 hours in attending the training courses/seminars/workshops/briefings. In addition, every primary school was also allowed to set aside three days (a total of 18 hours) on top of the 90 school holidays per school year as staff development days for teachers to take part in school-based staff development and school planning work. In this respect, compared to the 50 hours' continuing professional development activities that all serving principals had to attend each year, the ED had actually already provided each primary school teacher with more opportunities and hours to attend the training courses/seminars, thus assisting them to continue their professional development.

### **Monitoring of delivery of effective primary education**

22. According to paragraphs 5.23 to 5.26 of the Audit Report, the ED issued in January 1999 guidelines to schools stating that there should be formal participation of teachers, parents and, where appropriate, alumni in the school decision-making process and management. But the results of the ED's survey on membership of School Management Committees (SMCs) indicated that, up to June 2002, only 9% to 20% of the primary schools had complied with one or more of the ED's requirements on SMC membership. The Committee asked about:

- the disclosure of schools' compliance with the ED's requirements on SMC membership; and
- whether self-assessment arrangement for schools could be made in this respect.



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23. The **Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower** responded that:

- the progress was shown in the School Profiles and the schools which had complied with the ED's requirements were listed in the ED's website; and
- the Administration would introduce self-assessment arrangement for schools in respect of compliance with the ED's requirements on the SMC membership and upload the self-assessment reports onto the ED's website in order to encourage positive competition and provide additional information to parents and students.

24. The Committee noted that in December 2002, the Secretary for Education and Manpower had introduced to the Legislative Council (LegCo) the Education (Amendment) Bill 2002 which aimed to introduce the SBM governance framework to all aided schools. The Committee enquired about the operation of SBM.

25. The **Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower** responded that:

- the basic requirements of SBM, such as composition and powers of SMCs, were prescribed in the Bill. But more important was the spirit of the SBM, which gave the school leadership flexibility to manage their schools in order to meet individual schools' needs. Detailed control on schools by the Administration was not feasible. Parents, who should be concerned about whether the schools were well managed, and teachers of the schools concerned should take part in school management;
- monitoring of SBM by the public was also necessary. There should be increased transparency in the operation of school, particularly on the areas involving the use of public funds. To be open and transparent was the direction the Administration worked towards in recent years. Examples of such work were the publication of School Profiles and the uploading of school inspection reports onto the ED's website; and
- the most important part of SBM was that schools should have a sense of accountability whereby they were accountable to the public on how they spent the money and to the parents in respect of teaching objectives, schools' motto/values and teaching results.

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26. The Committee noted from paragraph 5.43(a) of the Audit Report that the ED would help schools comply with the requirements of the new school governance framework and encourage them to do so as soon as possible without waiting till the end of the five-year transition period. The Committee enquired about the implementation timetable.

27. The **Director of Education** responded that the new school governance framework was set out in the Education (Amendment) Bill 2002. If the Bill was passed and took effect, there would be a five-year transition period but schools would be encouraged to comply with the requirements under the governance framework as soon as possible. Under the new framework, all key stakeholders, including teachers, alumni and parents, were eligible to be school managers. The ED would provide support and assistance to help them understand their duties, e.g. training course or exchange activities, so that they could effectively take part in school management.

28. According to paragraph 5.43(e) of the Audit Report, the Director of Education had said that the essence of the successful implementation of SBM depended on the educational leadership of both the governing bodies and school executive personnel. The ED would step up measures towards the less effective schools to help them improve their planning and evaluation. The Committee enquired about the details of the measures.

29. The **Director of Education** responded that the ED hoped that every school could do its management job well under the SBM governance framework. If a school was unable to address problems on which the ED had given advice and asked for improvements to be made, he was empowered under the Bill to change the school managers. The power included the appointment of a new school manager or addition of a new school manager to the relevant SMC.

30. Noting from paragraph 5.43(k) of the Audit Report that the ED would conduct a survey in November 2002 on the implementation of the staff appraisal system in schools, the Committee enquired about the results of the survey.

31. The **Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower** responded, vide her letter of 6 January 2003 in *Appendix 67*, that the survey was conducted at the end of October 2002 and the Administration finished compiling the data in November 2002. She provided a summary of the survey results in the letter.

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32. According to paragraph 5.52(b) of the Audit Report, the Director of Education had said that apart from providing guidance, advice and training by the ED to schools which had difficulties in implementing the ED's requirements on staff management, self evaluation and curriculum, schools should address their own weaknesses and take initiative to make appropriate improvements. The Committee asked whether:

- the ED's staff who were responsible for providing guidance, advice and training to schools, had received relevant training to enable them to discharge their duties; and
- the manpower of the ED could be reduced if SBM worked well.

33. The **Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower** responded that:

- in the past, individual divisions of the ED looked after their own areas of work. However, since 2000 the ED had established district education offices and four regional education offices so that the ED could have a more thorough understanding of individual schools. Through school visits, the ED's staff could share the experience of successful schools with other schools. Even though the ED's staff might not be teachers at present or have undertaken front line work, they obtained a thorough understanding of school operation through school visits. Each of the staff in the ED's district education offices had expertise in a particular area of work. They could learn from one another and constituted a mutual learning group;
- in fact, the ED's staff had at least four to five years of teaching experience before joining the ED. They had received basic training in education ideology and had a grasp of the spirit of the education reform to enable them to have a wider view on education. In line with lifelong learning which the Administration advocated, training courses were provided by the ED to its staff; and
- if the SBM governance framework was well-developed to become a self-sustaining mechanism, transparent, and allow monitoring by parties outside the schools, it would not be necessary for the ED to issue guidelines or conduct more school inspections whenever problems arose. If such a mechanism was accepted by the public, there would be room for the ED to streamline its organisation.

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34. Noting that the grants given to schools were substantial and that the implementation of SBM would give schools greater autonomy in the deployment of resources, the Committee asked:

- about the percentage of administrative costs in the entire expenditure on primary schools; and
- whether professionals were engaged in the financial management of schools.

35. The **Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower** said that:

- as the annual grants to a standard school were substantial, the Administration put stress on strengthening the administrative management of schools. At present, the Administration provided schools with a number of administrative staff such as clerical staff. As the expenses of schools, e.g. electricity charges, were more or less fixed, the work of the administrative staff in this respect was similar to that of a cashier;
- following the implementation of SBM which gave schools more flexibility in the use of government grants, schools would have the power to decide how to utilize the grants in different areas of their activities. The Administration hoped that more professionals, such as accountants and lawyers, would join the SMCs. Nevertheless, the Administration did not consider it necessary for every school to be provided with an accountant as the accounts of a school relate mainly to regular expenses; and
- to assist schools in their financial management, the Hong Kong Society of Accountants had been providing them with voluntary accounting service. The Administration also held seminars to assist schools in drawing up their budgets and in financial management. Administrative management, including financial management, was also one of the six areas covered in the programme for continuing the professional development of principals.

36. The **Director of Education** supplemented that many parties were providing voluntary service to schools. For example, the Accountant Ambassador Programme was in its third year of operation. Under the Programme, over 100 aided schools were each provided with an accountant who gave advice to principals on financial management.

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37. In her letter of 13 December 2002 in *Appendix 68*, the **Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower** informed the Committee that the percentage of administrative costs in the entire expenditure on primary schools was 14%, based on the actual expenditure on primary education for the financial year of 2001-02 under Head 40-Education Department. The breakdown was as follows:

	<b>Government Primary Schools</b>	<b>Aided Primary Schools</b>
Professional related administrative duties by school head/senior teachers	6.6%	7.3%
Non-teaching staff and/or Administration Grant/Revised Administration Grant	7.4%	6.7%

38. The Committee was concerned that as SMCs comprised non-professionals, such as parents and alumni, who rendered their service on a voluntary basis, how they were equipped to do the work under SBM.

39. **Mr Andrew POON Chung-shing, Assistant Director of Education (Chief Inspector of Schools)**, responded that:

- the ED provided school managers with relevant training courses and experience-sharing sessions. Practical examples of school operation were given in the training courses. Financial management, human resource management and resource management were also covered in the courses; and
- every school was provided with the ED's School Administration Guide which sets out guidelines and examples on relevant matters. If schools were interested to know more about financial and human resource management, the ED could provide more information in this respect in the Guide.

40. In response to the Committee's enquiry about access to the Guide, the **Assistant Director of Education (Chief Inspector of Schools)** pointed out that the Guide had been uploaded onto the ED's website. The ED would also make more hard copies of the Guide for use by relevant parties such as school managers and auditors.

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### **41. Conclusions and recommendations    The Committee:**

#### **Achievement of primary-education objectives**

- expresses concern that:
  - (a) less than half of the public-sector primary-school parents, teachers and principals considered that schools had fully/largely achieved the primary-education objectives of encouraging students to take the initiative to learn and develop the ability to think and create, and of enabling students to develop their potential in aesthetics;
  - (b) some public-sector primary schools did not provide their students with sufficient extra-curricular activities, such as those organised by school-based youth clubs, inter-school sports events and inter-school music and cultural events; and
  - (c) many public-sector primary schools had not adopted the activity approach for teaching which would help promote active and self-initiated learning;
- acknowledges that the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) has commissioned a tertiary institution to conduct a survey of students' physical fitness and participation in sports activities for the 2002-03 school year;
- urges the Secretary for Education and Manpower to:
  - (a) take action to identify those schools which do not provide their students with sufficient extra-curricular activities and provide assistance to these schools to help them participate more in such activities;
  - (b) take action to ascertain the extent of implementation of the recommendation of the Education Commission on more extensive adoption of the activity approach in individual schools and provide assistance to schools which are slow in adopting the activity approach;
  - (c) consider issuing good-practice guides to secondary schools to encourage them, when admitting Secondary One students, to take into account students' potential in ethics, intellect, physique, social skills and aesthetics, in addition to academic performance;

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- (d) further encourage schools to make use of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department's venues to organise sports events;
- (e) develop appropriate performance indicators for schools to assess and report their performance in relation to the objectives of primary education; and
- (f) require schools to disclose, in their annual reports/school profiles, their performance in relation to the performance indicators of the Education Department (ED) on the achievement of primary-education objectives;

### **Primary-school students' attainment in three core subjects**

- expresses concern that:
  - (a) some primary-school students in need of intensive remedial teaching had not been enrolled in the remedial classes provided under the Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme (IRTP) or the Resource Teaching Centre (RTC) programme;
  - (b) the discharge rates of the IRTP were low, compared to those of the RTC programme;
  - (c) some teachers teaching IRTP classes had not received training in special education; and
  - (d) there were wide variations in students' average academic performance in the three core subjects of Chinese, English and mathematics among different schools;
- acknowledges that the EMB:
  - (a) has planned to provide additional IRTP and RTC classes to students who are in need of remedial teaching;
  - (b) is working on a funding model for the delivery of support service for students with diverse learning needs;
  - (c) is implementing the Basic Competency Assessments in Chinese, English and mathematics in primary schools in order to provide support for schools in need of assistance, and to monitor the effectiveness of education policies; and

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- (d) has taken various actions to help students nurture a reading habit;
- urges the Secretary for Education and Manpower to:
  - (a) provide sufficient places to meet the needs of all students who are in need of intensive remedial teaching in order to achieve the Education Commission's goal that the education system should not give up on any single student;
  - (b) provide appropriate training to teachers who are required to teach IRTP or RTC classes; and
  - (c) conduct a review on the variations in students' performance in the three core subjects in different schools and, in particular, ascertain the reasons for students' relatively low level of academic achievement in some schools;

### **Stakeholders' roles in delivery of effective primary education**

- expresses concern that:
  - (a) the ED had adopted the "last in, first out" (LIFO) arrangement to identify teachers for laying-off arising out of the reduction of classes, which was at variance with good human resource management practices;
  - (b) the performance of some schools was unsatisfactory in curriculum planning and organisation, curriculum management and teaching strategies and teaching skills;
  - (c) 12% of primary-school teachers did not attend education seminars and 44% did not attend training courses for teachers to keep themselves abreast of the latest developments in teaching technique and methodologies;
  - (d) some schools did not comply with the ED's guidelines on allocation of lesson time among the eight key learning areas;
  - (e) some schools did not comply with the ED's guidelines on the suggested time for written homework for students, resulting in their students spending excessive amount of time on homework; and
  - (f) some schools had not set up parent-teacher associations (PTAs);



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- acknowledges that the Secretary for Education and Manpower has undertaken to expeditiously conduct a review of the LIFO arrangement for laying off teachers;
- urges the Secretary for Education and Manpower to:
  - (a) incorporate the following into any revised arrangement for laying off teachers:
    - (i) the need to take into account teachers' performance; and
    - (ii) a proper appeal mechanism; and
  - (b) consult the Legislative Council and relevant parties in the review;
- acknowledges that the EMB:
  - (a) has required all serving principals to attend 50 hours' continuous professional development per year;
  - (b) has requested schools to draw up policies for staff development in consultation with staff; and
  - (c) has organised annual campaigns to encourage parents to learn together with their children;
- urges the Secretary for Education and Manpower to:
  - (a) where appropriate, require schools to set out, in their strategic plans, targets and actions for improvements in leadership in curriculum development, teacher-student interaction techniques, development of students' skills, attitudes and creativity, involvement of students in active discussions to inspire their higher-order thinking, development of students' potential, adoption of different teaching strategies and learning activities, and development and design of curriculum under the concept of all-round education;
  - (b) encourage schools to arrange more professional exchanges among their teaching staff;
  - (c) ensure that teachers attend a minimum number of hours of professional training each year;

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- (d) require schools to disclose in their annual reports/school profiles the frequency of their teachers' participation in seminars, training courses, and professional exchanges;
- (e) ensure that schools follow as far as possible the ED's guidelines on the allocation of lesson time among the eight key learning areas, the use of computers in schools as a learning tool, and the amount of time spent on written homework;
- (f) ask schools to disclose in their annual reports/school profiles schools' allocation of lesson time among the eight key learning areas, schools' homework policy, and the average time their students spend on homework;
- (g) organise promotion campaigns to explain to parents the importance of all-round development of their children especially in early childhood education and the need to reduce their homework;
- (h) ask the 87 primary schools which have not set up a PTA to set up one;
- (i) invite principals and parents to share the experience of parents' participation in school activities with other schools; and
- (j) organise promotion campaigns to convey to parents the importance of participation in their children's school activities;

### **Monitoring of delivery of effective primary education**

- expresses dismay that:
  - (a) 13 years after the recommendations of the EMB on the school-based management (SBM) initiatives in 1989, the initiatives have not been satisfactorily implemented;
  - (b) many schools had not complied with the ED's guidelines on preparation of written constitutions for school management committees (SMCs), teachers, parents and alumni's participation in SMCs and staff appraisal and staff development;
  - (c) 13% of the schools inspected were rated as performing unsatisfactorily on "evaluation tools and procedures", only 27% of the schools inspected had actively involved their staff in conducting evaluation, and 13% of the schools were rated as having unsatisfactory performance on "reporting and action";

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- (d) in some schools, the school managers served as school managers of a large number of schools at the same time. This casts doubts on whether they could perform their duties properly;
- (e) a significant percentage (46%) of primary schools only held SMC meetings once or twice a year. It is unlikely that their school managers could effectively participate in the affairs of the schools;
- (f) some schools had not conducted performance appraisals of their principals and teachers; and
- (g) some schools had not conducted appraisal interviews and established formal procedures for handling appraisees' appeals;
- acknowledges that the Secretary for Education and Manpower:
  - (a) has submitted the Education (Amendment) Bill 2002 to the Legislative Council in December 2002 which aims to introduce the SBM governance framework to all aided schools; and
  - (b) has undertaken to introduce self-assessment arrangement for schools in respect of compliance with the ED's requirements on the SMC membership and upload the self-assessment reports onto the EMB's Website in order to encourage positive competition and provide additional information to parents and students;
- urges the Secretary for Education and Manpower to:
  - (a) identify and provide appropriate guidance to those schools which have not yet complied with the ED's requirements relating to the SBM on annual school plans, annual reports and school profiles, written constitutions for SMCs, the membership of SMCs, and the staff appraisal system;
  - (b) require schools to prepare and distribute to parents their annual school plans, annual reports and school profiles (in summary form);
  - (c) provide assistance to schools to help them set up websites for the dissemination of school information;
  - (d) require schools to upload their annual school plans, annual reports and school profiles onto their websites;

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- (e) consider setting guidelines on the minimum number of meetings to be held by SMCs in a school year;
- (f) ask schools to incorporate in the staff appraisal system the relevant procedures laid down in the ED's School Administration Guide, such as the procedures for conducting appraisal interviews and appeals;
- (g) ensure that SMCs conduct formal appraisals of the performance of school principals;
- (h) issue guidelines to schools for developing appropriate attributes for assessing the performance of teachers; and
- (i) ensure that adequate resources, administrative support and training are provided for schools to implement the ED's requirements on staff management, self evaluation and curriculum, and the requirements under the SBM initiatives; and

### **Follow-up actions**

- wishes to be kept informed of:
  - (a) the results of the surveys of students' physical fitness and participation in sports activities;
  - (b) the progress of the provision of IRTP and RTC classes to meet the needs of all students requiring the service;
  - (c) the progress of the new funding model for the delivery of support service for students with diverse learning needs;
  - (d) the progress in implementing the Basic Competency Assessments;
  - (e) the progress in the provision of appropriate training to teachers of IRTP or RTC classes;
  - (f) the progress of the review of the LIFO arrangement, including consultation with relevant parties;
  - (g) the progress of principals' attendance in continuous professional development;

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- (h) the progress in drawing up staff development policies in schools;
- (i) the progress in launching annual campaigns to encourage parents to learn with their children; and
- (j) the progress in introducing self-assessment arrangements for schools.

**CHAPTERS IN THE DIRECTOR OF AUDIT'S REPORT NOS. 38 AND 39  
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5 Residential services for the elderly

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