

**Study on
Benefits of Whole-day Primary Schooling**

Research Team on Study on Benefits of Whole-day Primary Schooling

The Hong Kong Institute of Education

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Executive Summary

Commissioned by the former Education Department¹ of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in March 1999, a team of researchers from The Hong Kong Institute of Education conducted a study with the broad objective of an enhanced understanding of the value of whole-day primary schooling and how its benefits and effectiveness can be maximized. There have been numerous previous studies of the benefits of whole-day over half-day primary schooling in Hong Kong and overseas. This study, however, builds on and extends the knowledge from previous ones in:

- its aim to gather observable evidence in the present-day Hong Kong context of the benefits of whole-day schooling as claimed in previous studies and reports;
- its focus on identifying and describing good practices in existing whole-day primary schools;
- its development of a series of performance indicators for use in evaluating the effectiveness of whole-day primary schooling;
- its identification of facilitating factors and constraints to the full realization of the benefits of whole-day primary schooling together with measures to deal with the identified constraints;
- the insight it provides into the transition from half-day to whole-day schooling from a longitudinal study; and
- the recommendations it makes for future successful transition and post-transition support to whole-day primary schools.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study were:

- I. To identify observable evidence of the benefits of whole-day primary schooling;
- II. To identify good practices in existing whole-day primary schools;
- III. To propose performance indicators for evaluation of the effectiveness of whole-day primary schooling;
- IV. To identify constraints preventing the full realization of the benefits of whole-day primary schooling; and
- V. To propose measures to overcome such constraints.

¹ The Education Department and the Education and Manpower Bureau were merged with effect from 1 January 2003.

Method

In order to gather quantitative and qualitative data in support of these objectives, from March 1999 to December 2001 the research team undertook an extensive series of studies, including a two-phase Pilot Study, a three-phase Main Study comparing half-day and whole-day schools, a series of case studies of whole-day schools, and a three-year longitudinal study of schools in transition from half-day to whole-day schooling. Taken together, these studies entailed multiple sources of evidence and forms of analysis, including relevant documents and data gathered from on-site field observations of whole-day schooling, interviews and survey questionnaires. Information was gathered from a variety of stakeholders, including community leaders, school sponsors, policy-makers, administrators, school heads, teachers, pupils and parents. Performance Indicators were developed through stringent statistical procedures based on the survey data gathered from school heads, teachers, pupils and parents.

Evidenced Benefits of Whole-Day over Half-day Primary Schooling

The comparison of half-day and whole-day primary schools yielded concrete evidence of the following benefits of the whole day mode:

Domain 1. School Administration

- a. Greater flexibility in time-tabling;
- b. Greater flexibility in the utilisation and allocation of resources;
- c. Promoting a positive organizational culture;

Domain 2. Curriculum Development

- d. Greater flexibility in the arrangement of learning and teaching activities;
- e. Greater flexibility in the arrangement for remedial teaching in academic subjects;

Domain 3. Guidance and Counseling

- f. More chances for teacher-pupil interaction which facilitates counselling work and behavioural modification and improvement, and enhances teacher-pupil relationship;

Domain 4. Extra-curricular Activities (ECA)

- g. More time and space for conducting extra-curricular activities;

Domain 5. Pupil's Behaviour and Performance

- h. Better all-round development (Moral, Intellectual, Physical, Social, and Aesthetic);
- i. Promoting peer-relationship and peer-support learning;

- j. A stronger sense of belonging to school;
- k. Change in self-description and self-concept;

Other Benefits

- l. Arrangement of time for pupils to do their assignments in school with the help of teachers; and
- m. Promoting various functions during stay-in lunchtime.

Performance Indicators

The whole-day primary schooling environment does not by itself guarantee school effectiveness. It is therefore necessary for whole-day primary schools to monitor school effectiveness. The Performance Indicators may be considered by schools as one of the helpful tools for school-based self-monitoring purposes. A manual on the performance indicators for use by practitioners and those preparing for transition to whole-day primary schooling has been developed in this study.

Performance Indicators developed in the study were used to analyse the data gathered and provide a unique resource useful in examining and evaluating the practice of whole-day schooling in the future. Valid and reliable Performance Indicators were generated, with data from school heads, teachers, pupils, and parents in the areas of:

- resource allocation and utilisation;
- school management and administration;
- learning and teaching activities;
- curriculum and teaching;
- teacher-pupil relationships;
- extra-curricular activities;
- pupils' performance;
- working conditions;
- peer-relationships;
- schooling outcomes;
- pupils' sense of belonging to school; and
- pupils' self-concept.

Good Practices in Whole-Day Primary Schooling

The professional judgement of the research team in analysing and integrating evidence from all of the gathered data resulted in the identification of six unique good practices of whole-day primary schooling which have the potential to enhance pupils' learning and all-round development. The evidence was derived from a Case Study involving six existing whole-day primary schools, interviews with community leaders, as well as from the literature. The good practices were as follows:

Domain 1. School Administration

- a. Flexible allocation of subject learning time in the morning and extended learning programme or activities in the afternoon for enhancing all-round development;
- b. Extending opening time for pupils to access school facilities for more learning opportunities and interactions with teachers and peers;

Domain 2. Curriculum Development

- c. Multiple options for remedial teaching for pupils in need;

Domain 3. Guidance and Counselling

- d. Arranging class teacher periods before and/or after teaching periods for guidance and counselling;

Domain 4. Extra-curricular Activities

- e. Organising daily extra-curricular activities for enhancing pupils' all-round development; and

Other Benefits

- f. Organising stay-in lunchtime and pupil activities after lunch for developing school culture and facilitating social interactions and development.

No unique good practice was identified among the six existing whole-day schools in Domain 5, namely, Pupil's Behaviour and Performance.

Factors Pertinent to Effective Whole-day Primary Schooling

The study identified five factors crucial for the implementation of effective whole-day primary schooling. Such schooling entails:

- high-quality school leadership in managing change;

- school management capable of implementing flexible arrangements and appropriately utilising resources;
- school management capable of dealing with and managing resistance to change;
- staff with positive attitudes toward change and being willing and able to take advantage of programmes designed to help them adjust to change; and
- parents with positive attitudes toward change and willing to involve themselves in meeting the demands of change.

Dealing with Constraints on Realising the Benefits of Whole-day Schooling

The following specific constraints have been revealed in the study within the five factors described above:

- Insensitivity of school heads to change requirements;
- Low competence of school heads to monitor changes;
- Improper utilization and allocation of available resources;
- Discrepancies between teachers' perceived and actual workload;
- Teachers' anxiety about "benefit loss"; and
- Undesirable attitudes of some teachers towards whole-day primary schooling.

Those constraints can be effectively dealt with through:

- the provision of administrative and professional support and in-service education programmes for school heads to overcome the constraints of school heads' insensitivity to change requirements and their low competence to monitor change;
- the setting of realistic expectations of school personnel and (if possible) the provision of adequate resources (e.g. supply of land) to overcome school management problems concerning the unavailability of physical space and resources;
- the involvement of teachers in planning and decision-making through negotiation and open dialogue between staff and management in order to instil ownership, to minimise the sense of "benefit loss", to overcome constraints resulting from mismatch between teachers' expectation and actual work conditions, as well as to help manage anxiety brought about by change; and
- staff development programmes for teachers that focus on overcoming undesirable attitudes.

Longitudinal Study of Transition from Half-day to Whole-day Primary Schooling

The study revealed the importance of, and provided insight into, the process of successful transition, covering decision-making, planning, preparations, arrangements, and monitoring related to the areas such as school facilities, administration, curriculum development, guidance and counselling, extra-curricular activities, pupils' behaviour and performance, and auxiliary services.

Recommendations

The study has identified crucial factors contributing to the effectiveness of whole-day primary schooling. These factors can be organised around the different phases of the movement to whole-day primary schooling. More specifically, these are the preparation period before the actual transition, the management of change and adaptation during transition itself, the continuous support for full-implementation during the immediate post-transition period, and the longer term support and research. Within each of these phases, the study has identified important findings that provide guidance at the levels of system, school (heads), classroom (teachers and pupils), parents and broader community including professionals, educators and sponsoring bodies.

The following recommendations are grounded in evidence derived from the analysis of benefits of whole-day schooling, good practices in existing whole-day primary schools, facilitating factors and constraints pertinent to effective whole-day primary schooling, the transition from half-day to whole-day schools, as well as advice given in the literature. A comprehensive set of recommendations have been made and presented in Chapter 8. Those recommendations of prime importance are presented in this Executive Summary.

Recommendation 1: Preparation for Transition

The study found that preparation for transition has to be a coordinated effort among the education authority officials, school heads, teachers, pupils and parents. The transition from half-day to whole-day is a complex process which involves preparing concerned school members psychologically, technically, and cognitively, setting up expectations, planning, and organising the necessary resources and structures for implementation. The education authority needs to play an important advisory and facilitating role to schools in preparing them for the transition by providing general guidelines, organising training workshops, setting a supporting network and web-site as a resource centre. School heads need to prepare themselves as leaders of change towards whole-day

schooling, help their school members be prepared for change, and build up a clear vision and mission of whole-day schooling for their schools. Similar preparation is needed by staff, pupils and parents, so that all are ready for the transition and have developed deeper understanding of the benefits as well as realistic expectations of whole-day schooling.

Recommendation 2: Handling of Transition

As revealed in the study, the transition process included a number of changes, including technical and structural changes in physical environment, arrangement of facilities and time for teaching and learning, cultural changes in school social environment, school heads' management and leadership, teachers' professional attitudes and teaching approaches, and the nature of pupils' learning activities towards all-round development. To effectively manage structural and cultural changes in transition needs concerted efforts of the education authority, school heads, staff, and parents. The education authority should continue to play its advisory and supporting role at the system level. School heads need to facilitate staff and pupils to adapt to the changes, build up an alliance and lead the task force to overcome difficulties of structural and cultural changes in transition. Staff need to play a crucial role in supporting the transition, working closely together with other colleagues to overcome difficulties in change, facilitating pupils and parents as well as themselves to adapt to the new mode of schooling, and making changes in curriculum and educational activities to capitalise the benefits of whole-day schooling. Clearly, parents' involvement and support to the transition are needed.

Recommendation 3: Continuous Support for Full-Implementation

The study found that the full-implementation of whole-day primary schooling is a continuous development process after the transition. Continuous support and development for whole-day schools from all school constituencies are needed to realise the benefits and effectiveness of whole-day schooling for pupils' all-round development and effective learning. The continuing collective efforts of the education authority, school heads, staff and parents are necessary to support the full implementation of whole-day schooling. In addition to the central support, the education authority needs to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of implementation of whole-day schooling framework and advise schools on how to improve their practice for effective teaching and learning. School heads need to lead staff and various teams to consolidate the initiatives for effective whole-day schooling, improve the related practices, and engender a strong culture to achieve the vision of whole-day schooling. As the key actors, staff need to use the flexibility in time-tabling and extended school time to develop new curriculum and teaching strategies, arrange remedial teaching,

facilitate pupils' access to school facilities for learning, and organise various types of activities for pupils' all-round development. Parents are partners in operating whole-day schooling, particularly in some extended school activities .

Recommendation 4: Longer-term Follow-up Support and Research

Implementation of whole-day schooling in Hong Kong primary schools for effective learning and all-round education should be a long-term development process no matter whether at the Hong Kong system level, school level or even at the individual staff/school head level. To support this long-term development, systematic follow-up support and research is necessary. The education authority can further consolidate the supporting efforts at the system level, facilitate more partnerships between schools and other community sectors, and help to establish a professional organisation of all whole-day schools. In this way, the education authority plays a leadership role in the long-term development. School heads need to ensure the implementation of whole-day schooling as a long-term and holistic part of the school vision for pupils' all-round education and facilitate school members to improve their practice through continuous action learning and professional development. Scholars and educators in teacher education institutions also need to support the long-term development of whole-day schooling through research, training, and consultancy services.

Recommendation 5: Ensuring Student Outcomes in Whole-day Primary Schooling

Whole-day schooling provides greater flexibility in time-tabling and utilisation of resources and facilities for enhancing pupils' learning outcomes and all-round development. The study also identified some good practices of whole-day schooling for flexible allocation of learning time, and flexible resources allocation and utilisation. At both the system and school levels, the education authority and school heads need to have some measures for ensuring the implementation and practice of whole-day schooling positively influencing pupils' effective learning and all-round development .