

ITEM FOR FINANCE COMMITTEE

**HEAD 156 GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT :
EDUCATION AND MANPOWER BUREAU
Subhead 700 General non-recurrent
New Item "School-based Professional Support Programmes"**

Members are invited to approve a new grant of \$550 million for supporting school-based professional support programmes.

PROBLEM

Schools need more direct support, particularly site-based support, to help them connect and implement the various elements of the education reform.

PROPOSAL

2. We propose to create an Education Development Fund (EDF) with a grant of \$550 million. The purpose of the grant is to provide differentiated professional support, tailored to schools' needs, starting from the 2004/05 school year for an initial period of five years, to enable schools to build capacity to take forward education reform measures.

JUSTIFICATION

The school-based professional support programmes

Encl. 1 3. At present, schools are provided with support services of varying intensity as illustrated in Enclosure 1. There is, however, an imminent need for the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) to support and strengthen schools' understanding of the reform aims and the connection of the different elements; help

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them prioritise these elements at school level; build additional capacity in schools to lead the reform; provide support tailored to school needs; bring coherence to processes and initiatives at school level to maximise the impact of the reform on teaching and learning in particular; and support the abandonment of less necessary work of teachers and principals. To this end, we propose to take forward a number of school-based professional support programmes which will drive and facilitate the changes occurring at school and Key Learning Area (KLA) levels. Our current thinking is to include the following programmes -

- (a) **Principal Support Network** – to establish principal networks to facilitate professional learning and experience sharing. Where appropriate, experienced serving/retired principals with an outstanding track record will be seconded/recruited, on a full-time or part-time basis, to provide support to other principals and their school management on whole school development issues, with emphasis on implementing the curriculum reform, and fostering school improvement.
- (b) **School Support Partners Scheme (Seconded Teacher Scheme)** – to second/recruit excellent serving/retired teachers at KLA level, ideally those with whole-school curriculum planning experience, to work alongside the officers of the Regional Education Offices (REOs) in support of learning and teaching at schools;
- (c) **Collegial Participation in External School Review (ESR)** – to encourage all serving principals and a proportion of experienced teachers, as necessary, to take part, at least once, in the ESR of another school to enhance participants’ understanding of school improvement processes and techniques, and bring additional expertise to the ESR team;
- (d) **Professional Development Schools** – to build a locus of schools, including special schools, with breakthrough practices in KLAs or whole school pedagogical issues to provide support for an associated network of schools; and
- (e) **University-School Support Programmes** – to commission school support services through universities and other institutions with proven track record.

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Encl. 2 Detailed proposals on the above programmes are set out at Enclosure 2.

4. The REOs, with their close to school perspective, will facilitate schools in matching school support needs with the range of current and planned provision.

5. The pace and scale at which support will be provided to schools will be driven by the identification of school requirements and by the availability of professional secondees and other support programmes which can meet these needs. There may also be modifications to the types of programmes. The implementation will build on the experiences gained from existing proven support programmes, e.g. the Accelerated School Programme funded by the Quality Education Fund and certain effective outsourced programmes conducted by the tertiary sector. New programmes may be added as learning is gained during the implementation. The pace of implementing different programmes will also vary depending on the readiness of schools and the programmes.

Building a professional capacity within EMB and at school level

6. At this stage of the education reform, what schools need is more direct support and as revealed in researches, support from peers is very highly valued. We have therefore proposed the two key programmes of “Principal Support Network” and “School Support Partners Scheme” to train and build professional capacity made up of a cadre of experienced principals and teachers secured from within and outside Hong Kong. Successful implementation of the two programmes is expected to rely heavily on our ability to second/recruit high calibre professionals to provide the professional support required. In particular, to ensure that we can secure the release of senior and experienced professional school staff in sufficient numbers, we propose to offer schools adequate compensation in terms of additional provision for appointing time-limited replacements at the appropriate seniority. We also need to provide training and adequate opportunities for the secondees to make their secondment rewarding. These proposals also envisage drawing on support from other external sources, like tertiary institutions, Mainland teachers and overseas expertise.

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7. We will also provide a range of part-time and full-time working options over an extended period for the professional secondees. The longer secondment will enable us to invest more heavily in the appropriate training and development. This will have a positive impact both on the calibre of support the professional secondees can provide and the level of expertise they take back to the education system after the secondment term has elapsed. The professional secondments will allow sustained acting up opportunities for school staff, further building capacity in the school sector.

8. The Collegial Participation in ESR will benefit schools being reviewed in gaining the benefit of additional professional expertise; as well as the principals and experienced teachers themselves who will have an opportunity to focus on school improvement in an environment outside their own school and further develop their professional capacity.

9. The Professional Development Schools can network to share learning and promote improvement, with each of them developing the capacity to become professional learning organisation of specific expertise. It also provides an opportunity for effective in-school teams, more than just individual teachers, to provide support to other schools. The Professional Development Schools will also provide attachment for teachers from other schools.

10. The University-School Support Programmes can make use of the expertise and additional capacity beyond schools. The programmes can allow the 'scaling up' of proven programmes and can be tailored for specific areas to address schools' identified needs.

The proposed grant

11. Our support to schools is a developmental process in matching the available expertise with the needs of schools, which are in parallel being identified. The expenditure will therefore not be uniform among schools nor can it be accurately forecast across the span of a number of years. We propose to make a grant of \$550 million upfront to patently demonstrate to the school sector the Government's commitment to strengthen school-based support, and to assure the sector of resource availability for planning and executing the programmes notwithstanding other competing demands in the education sector.

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12. Subject to Members' approval of the grant, Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM) will set up an EDF to hold the grant. The Fund will be held in trust under the Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower (PSEM) Incorporated, who will act as the trustee. The EDF will be managed in accordance with a trust deed, which will provide the framework for the proper management and administration of the Fund.

13. The trustee will invest the Fund in accordance with the authority set out in section 5 of the PSEM Incorporation Ordinance (Cap. 1098). SEM proposes the Fund be deposited in local authorized institutions, and that the trustee shall apply the capital and income of the Fund in pursuit of the purposes for which it is established.

14. PSEM will keep accounts and records of all transactions in respect of the Fund in accordance with section 8 of the PSEM Incorporation Ordinance. Audited accounts of the Fund will be tabled before the Legislative Council as soon as practicable after the closing of the accounts at the end of each financial year. In addition, we will inform the Legislative Council Panel on Education annually of the operation of the Fund.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

15. Subject to Members' approval, we will make a grant of \$550 million into the proposed EDF in 2004-05. We have earmarked sufficient funds in the approved estimates for 2004-05 for this purpose.

16. The allocation of resources in pursuit of the purpose of the EDF is subject to further discussions with schools on their needs, on-going assessment of programme effectiveness and the need to vary implementation details in the light of experience and feedback. For planning purpose, a breakdown of the indicative financial implications of the support programmes as currently conceived is set out below -

	Estimated programme costs over five years (\$ million)
Principal Support Network	100
School Support Partners Scheme	260
Professional Development Schools	90
University-School Support Programmes	<u>100</u>
Total	550

17. The estimated cost of the Principal Support Network is primarily for the secondment/recruitment of some 40 serving/retired principals (on full-time equivalent basis) in a school year and for the provision of appropriate allowances for the releasing schools to appoint time-limited replacements.

18. The estimated cost of the School Support Partners Scheme is mainly for the secondment/recruitment of some 130 teachers (on full-time equivalent basis) in a school year and for the provision of appropriate allowances for the releasing schools to appoint time-limited replacements.

19. For the Collegial Participation in ESR, the current initial phase of principals' participation is on good will basis. Principals have seen this as good development and training in understanding school improvement processes and techniques and schools welcome the input of practicing school leaders on the review panel. Therefore, we have no plans to change the current practice at this stage.

20. The cost estimate for Professional Development Schools basically provides a cash grant for growing some 40 such schools, each focusing on their area of expertise, to lead professional learning networks of other schools, offer support and advice, and provide a training ground for teachers from other schools. We expect the schools to use the grant to hire time-limited teaching and non-teaching staff to support their plans to share and disseminate good practices.

21. The cost estimate for University-School Support Programmes is the amount earmarked for hiring the services of universities and other institutions.

MONITORING MECHANISM

22. It is proposed that an EMB cross-divisional working group chaired by a Deputy Secretary, with participation of frontline educators, academics and community members, will oversee, monitor and evaluate the progress of the support programmes according to the approved plan. The working group will be responsible for consulting colleagues in the education sector on the detailed implementation of the programmes. It will report to PSEM who will ensure that the grant is used cost-effectively for the stated purposes. It will also advise PSEM on the best engagement terms for the support programmes having regard to the need to provide incentives to secure the release of and to recruit a sufficient number of high calibre teachers and professionals.

23. One of the key aims of the programmes is to relieve workload and release energy in schools. It is therefore imperative that the programmes do not impose a fresh set of requirements on schools. We will therefore use our existing accountability mechanisms, which include school development planning and reporting, school self-evaluation, and external school review, to monitor the impact that the increased support would have on school improvement.

24. We will also map the progress of the programmes against our annual KLA surveys and the review of the curriculum reform to reveal the extra impetus of the programmes in implementing the reform.

25. In addition, we will actively monitor the efficacy of individual programme strands through existing stakeholder surveys and by inviting structured feedback from the schools in receipt of support. An annual process for assessing school needs and allocating support will ensure that provision remains relevant and fit for purpose.

26. We will provide timely update to the Legislative Council Panel on Education on the progress of the delivery of the programmes.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

27. The objectives of the education reform have received widespread support among educators and the community at large, and schools have already made much progress in the implementation. The more the schools progress on the implementation path, the more they understand about their needs, the practicalities faced and the support required. Feedback received from principals and teachers, via focus group meetings and other channels, suggests that schools feel that they do not have sufficient knowledge and capacity to implement the various elements of the education reform. Such feedback is corroborated to an extent by the KLA and other stakeholder surveys, which found that the teachers' understanding of the purpose of reform and the support they had in implementing the reform was not strong or thorough enough.

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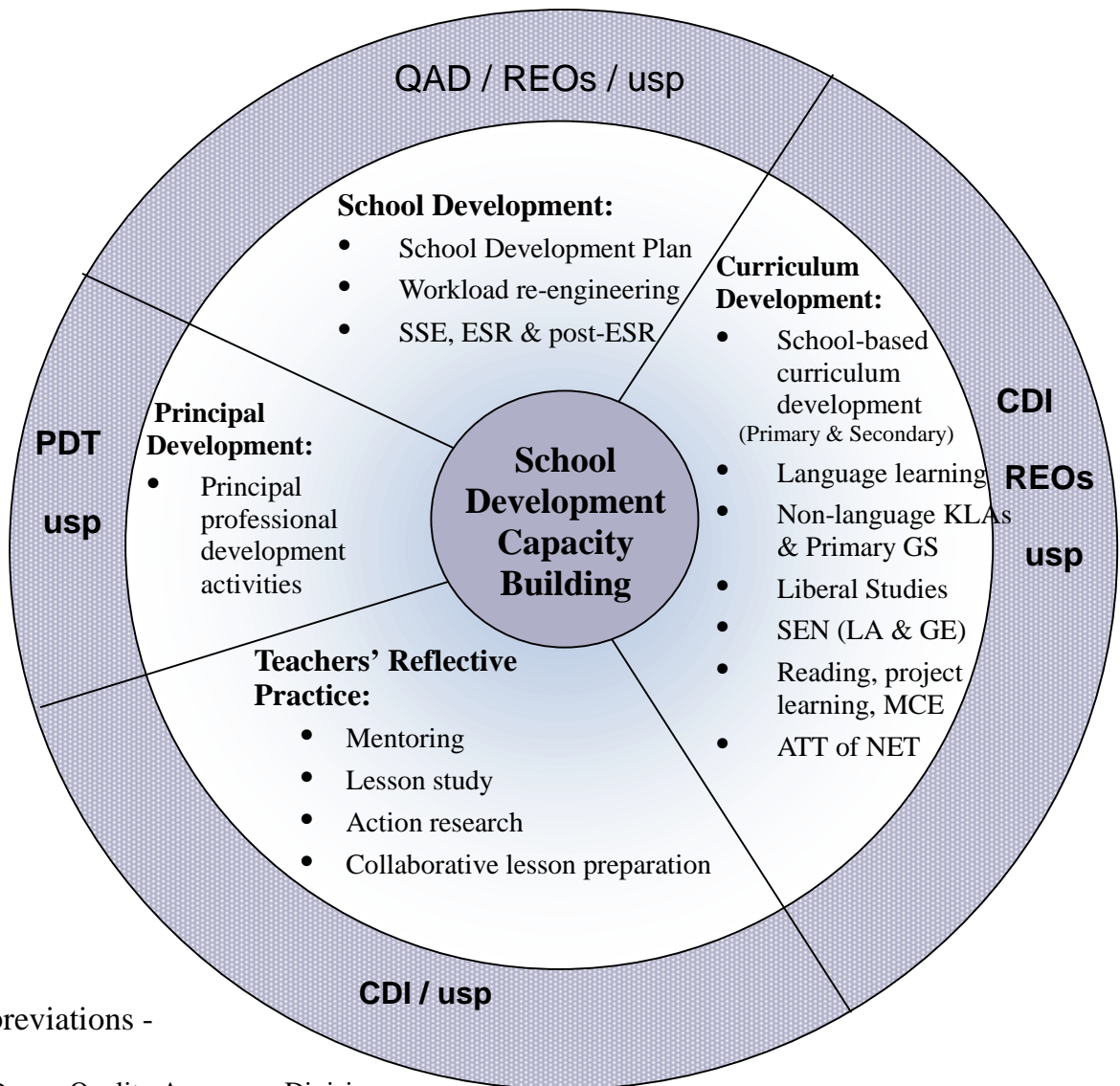
28. We have therefore come up with this proposal of providing more direct school-based professional support, particularly site-based support, to help schools implement the education reform. We consulted the school councils and teachers through a series of regional seminars and meetings held in May and June. They welcome the support programmes which will address the main concerns raised including schools' priority for reform measures, teachers' workload, difficulties in handling learning diversity, and the access to support and successful experiences.

29. We consulted the Legislative Council Panel on Education on 21 June 2004. Members supported the general direction of providing more direct school based professional support to schools and cautioned on the implementation scale and pace of the Principal Support Network and School Support Partners Scheme. Members also suggested more flexibility over the use and scope of the proposed grant based on implementation learnings along the way.

Education and Manpower Bureau
June 2004

Current support services offered by EMB

EMB and its service providers have been offering support of varying intensity to schools. The diagram below illustrates the range of existing EMB services.



Abbreviations -

- QAD - Quality Assurance Division
- REO - Regional Education Office
- PDT - Professional Development and Training Division
- CDI - Curriculum Development Institute
- usp - University-School Partnership
- GS - General Studies
- SSE - School Self Evaluation
- ESR - External School Review
- SEN - Support to Students with Special Educational Needs
- LA - Less able
- GE - Gifted Education
- MCE - Moral and Civic Education
- ATT - Advisory Teaching Team
- NET - Native-speaking English Teachers

Proposal on the development of school-based professional support programmes

(A) Principal Support Network

Feedback from principals, as well as academic research, suggests that peer support is one of the most valued and effective means of transferring knowledge and skills between schools. We therefore propose the establishment of a Principal Support Network to provide peer support and advice to other principals and their school management on whole school development issues, with particular emphasis on implementing education reform measures and fostering school development.

2. The target principal mentors would be experienced public sector primary and secondary principals with good performance who enjoy peer respect, including retired principals, academics, Mainland and overseas experts.

3. The proposed mode of operation is set out below -

A number of serving secondary and primary principals will be recruited on a part time or full time basis to provide peer support or advice to other schools. More specifically, they play the following roles -

- To conduct in-depth analysis with the other principals on the issues facing the school.
- To help the other principals develop and implement strategies aiming at areas of the school needing improvement.
- To meet the other principals regularly to review the implementation progress of the strategies.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies and advise the other principals on the way forward.
- To establish a network of principals, facilitate experience sharing and professional development, and introduce other services to the network, for example, university support programmes.

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(B) School Support Partners Scheme (Seconded Teachers Scheme)

4. The purpose of the scheme would be to provide school-based support and advice in the area of teaching and learning, focusing in particular on non-language KLAs, complementing the existing intense support for language learning provided by, for example, the Language Learning Support Service of the Standing Committee on Language Education Research, the Native-speaking English Teacher schemes and the like. It also focuses on diversity, including special education needs (SEN) of less able and gifted children. As a whole, the School Support Partners (SSP) would complement rather than duplicate existing sources of seconded support.

5. The target SSP would mainly comprise experienced teachers who have years of whole school planning and local teaching experience showing understanding of local classrooms and school organizational contexts; relevant experiences, good knowledge and ability in curriculum development of specific KLAs or professional issues inside and outside schools; leadership, interpersonal and communication skills; and the potential to serve as curriculum change agents.

6. The proposed mode of operation is set out below -

- We are to establish a programme of up to three years' secondment, offering both part time and full time working options.
- The SSP would work alongside existing staff in REOs and provide frontline expertise to schools giving them the strategic support they need.
- The training and induction required to ensure the SSP can provide high quality support requires significant investment in on-the-job training in order to gain the full benefit. It will therefore be necessary to start the programme based on available expertise and training in the first year and build up gradually.
- After up to three years, the SSP would return to schools and continue to spend several days a year on outreach activities to other schools in the area.

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(C) Collegial Participation in ESR

7. This scheme is already underway, with more than 80 principals taking part in the 2003/04 school year. We shall encourage all serving principals and a small number of experienced teachers to take part, at least once, in the ESR of another school in the five-year period. The benefits of this proposal would accrue equally to the schools being reviewed (who will have the benefit of additional professional input) as well as the principals and experienced teachers themselves (who will have an opportunity to focus on school improvement in an environment outside their own school). It will also help to foster informal networks and collaborative links between schools.

8. Participation as an active member in an ESR will require principals or senior teachers to reach a certain level both in understanding the process and quality assurance inspection techniques. A tailor-made training course will therefore be made available. We would consider introducing two levels of participation – as an active member which requires a higher level of involvement, or as an observer.

9. We could encourage more principals to take up this opportunity by allowing active participation in an ESR team to count towards a principal's annual Continuing Professional Development.

(D) Professional Development Schools

10. In order to support the work of the principal network and SSP, it is necessary to establish mechanisms whereby schools can network to share learning and promote improvement. Over time, this will build the capacity of schools to become professional learning institutions. It also provides an opportunity for effective in-school teams, rather than individual teachers, to provide support to other schools.

11. It is therefore proposed that we establish a number of Professional Development Schools. Research on current resource schools suggests that the benefits felt by the schools tend to outweigh the effect on the associated schools. In establishing the Professional Development Schools, EMB will therefore build on existing strengths and address current weaknesses. In particular, through the mechanism of a service agreement, we will assure that there is a greater emphasis on interaction between schools in the network, rather than simply observation, and that every professional development school will have a specific focus and a clearly defined remit and will provide a training ground for teachers from other schools, in the form of attachment, shadowing or action learning.

12. The broad parameters of the proposal are as follows -

- We are to establish Professional Development Schools in the districts when the capacity of potential schools becomes available. These schools, including special schools, should provide support for schools in each of the KLAs and to additional schools focusing on particular pedagogical issues such as diversity, SEN for the less able and gifted children and assessment for learning.
- A school, or a small partnership of schools, will be responsible for leading the area of expertise. Their remit would be threefold -
 - i. to engage in classroom observation and communities of practice which advance the knowledge and practice of teaching and learning in their area of expertise.
 - ii. to lead a professional learning network of schools focused on their area of expertise, which has the capacity to offer support and advice where needed.
 - iii. to buy in short term external support for the benefit of the members of the network.
- The support to schools will be of different level of intensity on the basis of the needs they identify and the improvement to be built on their strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, the schools will enter into a service agreement with EMB specifying the services they will provide to other schools, and the resource EMB will commit.
- To minimise bureaucracy and workload, the initial selection of Professional Development Schools will be on the basis of expressions of interest, accompanied by reference of track record including the school's development plan, its last ESR/Quality Assurance Inspection/SSE, the REO's assessment of its capacity, and its value added and attainment record.

(E) University-School Support Programmes

13. The commissioning of support services will take into account the proven track record of the universities and other credible institutions in delivering high quality school-based support. The programmes will be tailored to the identified needs of schools. Central quality assurance and bulk commissioning could ensure that the support offered is based firmly on the needs of the schools in question, and could achieve economies of scale.

14. Only those programmes of an established track record in enabling schools to improve will be eligible to be supported through the proposed University-School Support Programmes. The following are two current examples of programmes which could be considered for general application to more schools where the need is indicated -

(a) *The Chinese University of Hong Kong* has run a number of school improvement projects from 1998 to 2004, including the Accelerated Schools for Quality Education, Quality Schools Project, and Quality Schools in Action.

- The projects aim to enhance the professional development of principals and teachers for continuous school improvement; enhance and facilitate the development of school-based curricula, teaching programs and activities, and learning strategies; enable students to develop intrinsic motivation in learning; establish networks among participating schools for cross-fertilization; as well as to generate and disseminate effective practices and procedures for quality education.
- The programmes of the projects include vision building, development of school-based self-evaluation model, change and paradigm shift, learning to learn, and development of generic skills, languages and mathematics learning programs, language learning through the performing arts, project learning and life-wide learning in different KLAs, subject integration and cross-curricular learning, games and simulation as medium of learning and cascade training.
- Evaluation including pre-post intervention comparisons for elective programmes, students' portfolios and work, interviews, observations, reflective dialogues, case studies and other qualitative measures as a whole has revealed positive impact on the students, the teaching and learning activities, and enhancing the learning capacity of the principals and teachers.

(b) *The Hong Kong Institute of Education* has been conducting a number of projects using Learning Study and the Theory of Variation as tools for evidence-based curriculum development, improving teaching and learning in schools and contributing towards teachers' professional growth.

- The projects aim to enhance the implementation of the Curriculum Reforms across all KLAs by bridging the gap between the goals of the reforms and actual student learning; build teacher capacity, produce research lessons that reflect the practices advocated by the curriculum reforms in each KLA and the integration of values and attitudes across the curriculum; develop learning communities within and across schools to enhance teachers' professional learning.
- The projects have advanced the professional knowledge base of teaching. So far, over 120 Learning Studies on specific topics in the eight KLAs have been carefully conducted to identify student difficulties, and have identified ways to bridge the learning gaps. Sharing of the learning and experiences has been made through dissemination seminars and conferences.
