

For discussion on 21 June 2004

Legislative Council Panel on Education

School Based Professional Support

Purpose

This paper seeks Members' advice on a proposal to provide site based professional support for principals and teachers over the next five years commencing in the school year 2004/05.

Background

2. The objectives of the education reform have received widespread support among educators and the community at large. The reform involves a shift of educational focus from teaching to learning, which in turn requires that the curriculum and pedagogy should be school-based and tailored to the needs of students. It requires that principals and teachers should have a thorough understanding of the rationale behind the reform and possess the professional knowledge and skills to enable their students to learn with understanding and develop their potentials to the full.

3. Schools have already made much progress in implementing the reform, and the more they 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.

4. Such feedback is corroborated to an extent by the Key Learning Area (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. This was particularly marked in the secondary sector which could be due to the greater complexity and size of the secondary school curriculum, and especially at a time when schools are working hard on broadening and diversifying the offer to students in secondary 4 and beyond.

5. The Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) and its service providers have been offering support services of varying intensity to schools as illustrated in Annex A. At this stage, what schools need is more direct support,

particularly site-based support, to help them connect and implement the various elements of the education reform. There is an imminent need for EMB to support and strengthen schools' understanding of the reform aims and the connection of the different elements; help them prioritise these elements at school level; build additional capacity in schools to lead the reform; provide support tailored to school needs; and bring coherence to processes and initiatives at school level to maximise the impact of the reform on teaching and learning in particular.

Proposal

6. We propose to provide schools with more direct support to help them implement the changes occurring at the **School level** and **KLA level** to build, over the five-year period, a cadre of experienced principals and teachers through **two key programmes**, the “**Principal Support Network**” and the “**School Support Partners Scheme**”, who will be trained to provide schools with professional site based support. These two key programmes, complemented by three other programmes, will altogether make available a broader range of support and capacity building options to schools.

7. The five programmes are described below.

- (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) **Collegial Participation in External School Review (ESR)** – to encourage all serving principals, and a proportion of experienced teachers to take part, at least once, in the ESR of another school to support principals' understanding of school improvement processes and techniques, and bring additional expertise to the ESR team.
- (c) **School Support Partners Scheme (Seconded Teacher Scheme)** – to second excellent teachers, ideally those with whole-school curriculum planning experience, to work alongside the officers of the Regional Education Offices (REOs) and to provide school based professional support in the area of learning and teaching, focusing on the non-language KLAs, therefore complementing the existing support for language learning which is already under intense and increasing support provided by, for example, the Language Learning Support Service (LLSS) of the Standing Committee on Language Education Research (SCOLAR), the Native-speaking English

Teacher (NET) schemes and the like.

- (d) **Professional Development Schools** – to identify schools, including special schools, with breakthrough practices in KLAs or whole school pedagogical issues such as diversity, support to students with special educational needs (SEN) of less able and gifted children or assessment for learning. These schools will act as a locus of support and professional learning for an associated network of schools.
- (e) **University-School Support Programmes** – to provide commissioned support services through universities and other institutions which have a proven track record in delivering high quality school based support. The programmes will be tailored to identified needs of schools.

8. The possible direction of development is set out in Annex B. Further details of the programmes will depend on the identification of schools' needs and the availability of the right professional expertise.

Justification

Building a professional capacity within EMB and at school level

9. The proposed programmes are expected to provide an ideal mechanism to **build capacity** rather than create dependency. We will be able to draw on this capacity to:

- (a) provide differentiated **site based/close to school support** to all schools over time, by building on existing EMB services. This comes at a critical moment in the overall reform, when schools are seeking to overcome implementation challenges.
- (b) provide school leaders and teachers with the key skills that will enable them to become **change agents**, leading and embedding reform in schools.
- (c) establish the **long-term mechanisms** that will embed professional learning in organisations, interchange and networking within the education community. These will **complement** pre-service and in-service training of principals and teachers.
- (d) bring coherence, at school level, to the full range of **planning and processes** designed to improve student learning.
- (e) **relieve workload** and **release energy** by helping schools to prioritise their improvement goals.

To Support the Change Process at the School level and KLA level

10. The five programmes, elaborated in paragraph 7 are designed to support the three major change processes identified, as described below:

- (a) empowering teachers as change agents through introducing new learning and teaching strategies to implement the KLA change;
- (b) employing a whole school approach starting from the school principal through re-defining school goals and plans, effective improvement planning, staff development, management and organisation, and other whole school issues; and
- (c) changes at both the School and KLA levels simultaneously with co-ordination, ensuring the focus of change in each case mutually facilitates and reinforces all the changes happening in the school.

11. The five proposed programmes have been designed to complement and bring coherence to existing school support structures and initiatives. This alignment will be achieved both through the focus of the programmes and the way in which support is deployed.

12. Building a professional capacity to provide aligned programmes to support the change process at the School level and KLA level are critical to help with the implementation and therefore success of the education reform.

Implementation

Building a pool of professional secondees

13. At this stage of the education reform, what schools need is more direct support, and as revealed in researches, support from peers is very much highly valued. We will therefore place much emphasis on the Principal Support Network and the School Support Partners Scheme and we expect these two programmes would fulfill the schools' imminent needs and bring out the direct impact.

14. The model of the Principal Support Network and School Support Partners Scheme is expected to rely heavily on our ability to second high calibre professional secondees to EMB to provide the professional support required. In order to ensure that we can attract senior and experienced professional secondees in sufficient numbers, we propose to offer schools adequate compensation for release of their staff. These proposals also envisage drawing on support from other external sources, like tertiary institutions, mainland teachers and overseas expertise.

15. We will also provide a range of part time and full time working

options over an extended period for the professional secondees. Flexible secondment terms, extending up to 3 years, 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 Role of REOs in aligning the needs of schools to the whole range of supporting programmes/services

16. The REOs will facilitate schools in matching school support needs with the range of current and planned provision. Following the introduction of School Self Evaluation (SSE) and greater management autonomy, schools have grown in confidence in identifying their development needs. In these cases it will be the responsibility of EMB to agree with the school a tailored support package to help the school progress. This agreed support would be documented in the school development plan and school report.

17. In other cases, schools will require support earlier in the planning and development process in order to help them understand their improvement needs. In all cases, however, the emphasis will be on providing individually tailor-made solutions that will build capacity and release energy at school level. The REOs, with their close to school perspective, are in the ideal position to perform this bridging and servicing function.

Pace and Scale

18. 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 who can meet these needs.

Financial Implications

19. Subject to Members' views, we would sort out the funding arrangements for the proposed school based professional support programmes. A breakdown of the indicative financial implications of the proposed programmes is set out below:

	Estimated Programme Costs (HK\$ million) over 5 years
Principal Support Network	100
School Support Partners Scheme	260
Professional Development Schools	90
University-School Support Programmes	100
	Grand total: 550

Monitoring the delivery of the programmes

20. It is proposed that an EMB internal cross-divisional working group chaired by a Deputy Secretary will oversee, monitor and evaluate the progress of the proposed 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.

21. One of the key aims of the proposed school based professional support programmes is to relieve workload and release energy in schools. It is therefore imperative that the proposed 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, SSE, and ESR, to monitor the impact that the increased support is having on school improvement.

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

23. 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.

24. We will provide timely update to the Education Panel on the progress of the delivery of the proposed school based professional support programmes.

Consultation

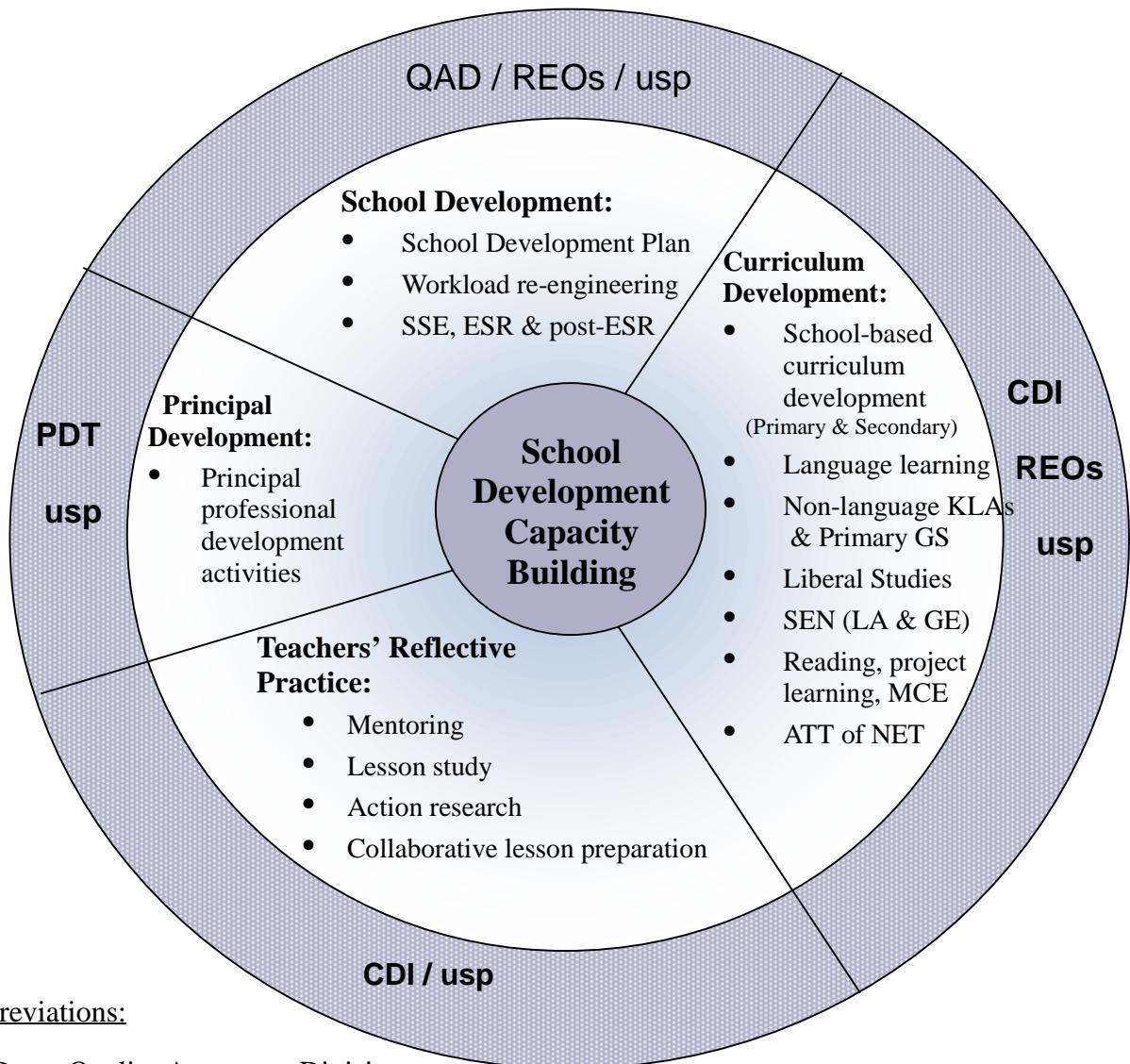
25. We have consulted the school councils and teachers through a series of regional seminars and meetings held in May and June. They welcome the proposed school based professional support programmes which will address

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.

Education and Manpower Bureau
June 2004

Annex A: 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.



Annex B:
Proposal on the development of the five school based professional support programmes

(A) Principal Support Network

1. 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 direct consultancy support 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 secondees 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 seconded on a full time basis to the regions/districts for up to 3 years.
 - These full time seconded principals would be supplemented by a complement of part time seconded principals who could spend a proportion of their time providing support to other schools, while continuing to serve their own school.
 - A team of advisors would provide professional input to the principal secondees.
4. The role of the advisors is set out below -
 - To provide professional input to the principal secondees.
 - To provide advice to EMB on the whole Principal Support Network Scheme.
5. The role of the principal secondees is set out below –
 - 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.

(B) Collegial Participation in ESR

6. This scheme is already underway, with more than 80 principals taking part in school year 2003/04. We shall encourage all serving principals and a proportion 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.

7. 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 followed by a short benchmark assessment 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.

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

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

9. The purpose of the scheme would be to provide school based consultancy and advice in the area of teaching and learning, focusing in particular on non-language KLAs and diversity, including SEN of less able and gifted children. The School Support Partners (SSP) would complement rather than duplicate existing sources of seconded support.

10. The target SSP would basically be experienced teachers who have years of 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.

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

- Establish a programme of up to three years' secondment, offering both part time and full time working options.
- The SSP would be deployed at the REO regional level, but would also form a strong central network.
- 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. The proposal to offer longer secondment terms (up to three years) could balance the need for extensive training.
- 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.

(D) Professional Development Schools

12. In order to support the work of the principal secondees and SSP in individual schools, 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

13. 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.

14. The broad parameters of the proposal are as follows:

- Establish Professional Development Schools in the districts when the capacity of potential schools becomes available. These 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 the 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

15. The commissioning of support services will take into account of 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.

16. 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, two current examples of which are described below:

(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 programs, 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 8 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.