

For discussion on 30 March 2005

**Subcommittee to study issues relating to the provision of
boarding places, senior secondary education and
employment opportunities for children with special educational needs**

**Issues relating to the proposed academic structure for
senior secondary education and higher education**

The purpose of this paper is to give an account of the major issues relating to the proposed academic structure for senior secondary education in special schools and the initial responses of the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB).

Background

2. The Main Document on “Reforming the Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education” seeks feedback from the public on its proposed changes to the senior secondary and higher education. Among others, it includes

- a. the introduction of a “3+3+4” secondary and undergraduate academic structure;

- b. a curriculum framework at senior secondary level comprising three components
- Core subjects: Students will take 4 core subjects, i.e. Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics and Liberal Studies;
 - Elective subjects: Students will take two to three elective subjects among a total of 20 senior secondary subjects or courses in Career-oriented studies (COS);
 - Other learning experiences: Students need to acquire non-academic learning experiences for whole-person development. They include moral and civic education, community service, work-related experiences, aesthetic and physical/sporting activities;
- c. the organization of structured learning activities by schools within and outside school days for students to address the non-academic goals of the curriculum for whole-person development;
- d. the introduction of a wider range of approaches to assessment and reporting, including the use of moderated SBA, SRA and student learning profile; and

- e. the replacement of the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination and Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination by one single qualification, tentatively named as the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education.

Major issues relating to special education

3. A series of discussion sessions held during the consultation with the special education sector has generated diverse views on what to pursue and how to achieve the goals under the new academic structure in respect of the students with special educational needs (SEN). The major issues are discussed in the following paragraphs.

The academic structure of special schools

4. At present, there are a total of 62 aided special schools in Hong Kong, among which three operate a primary section only, 55 operate both primary and secondary sections and four operate a secondary section only. The existing academic structure for special schools with secondary level classes is tabulated as follows:

School Category	No of schools	Year of junior secondary education	Year of senior secondary education up to S5	Progression to further studies
School for the hearing impaired	3	4	2	Integration in ordinary schools or training courses under the Vocational Training Council
School for the physically disabled	7	4	2 (being provided in 2 schools)	
School for social development	5	3	2 (being piloted in 2 schools)	
School for the visually impaired	1	3	N.A	
School for the mentally handicapped (MH) (including those for the mildly MH, moderately MH and severely MH and visually impaired with mental handicap)	42	4 (plus a two-year Extension of Years of Education Programme launched since the 2002/03 school year)	N.A	Training courses organized by the Vocational Training Council under the rehabilitation programme or support services under the Social Welfare Department
Hospital school	1	3	N.A	Most students have already been enrolled in day schools. Thus Hospital School's service is transient/ remedial in nature

5. While there has already been consensus that all students will receive a 6-year secondary education in principle, the Education and Manpower is considering how best to prepare students with SEN under the 6-year secondary academic structure for proceeding to studies which lead to the proposed Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) and other progression pathways. We shall take into account the following in proposing the implementation details and the subsequent consultation with the special schools sector:

- a. the long history of successful integration of visually impaired students in ordinary schools at various class levels;
- b. the language acquisition and development needs of the hearing impaired students;
- c. the frequent needs for therapies, medical attention and hospitalization for the severely physically disabled;
- d. the arrangements for school allocation/placement services for progression to further studies/integration into the mainstream sector; and
- e. the experience gained from the implementation of the 2-year Extension of Years of Education Programme for all the mentally handicapped students to reap the benefit of the 6-year secondary education.

The curriculum for special education

6. We have received comments suggesting that there should not be a mainstream curriculum for ordinary schools and an alternative curriculum for special schools upon the implementation of the “3+3+4” academic structure.

7. We consider that under the proposed new senior secondary structure, the principle of “one curriculum framework for all” should continue to be applied. With the reform of academic structure, students of special schools will be provided, in principle, with 6 years of secondary education. Special schools that offer mainstream curriculum should follow the curriculum reform of senior secondary education programme to cater for the diversity of students’ needs and abilities, while the schools for the mentally handicapped should adapt the curriculum in line with the direction of curriculum reform to cater for such student diversity. For the sake of differentiation, such an adapted curriculum is termed ‘non-mainstream curriculum’.

8. The educational needs of the mentally handicapped students will be catered for by school-based curriculum designed under the same curriculum framework for schools in Hong Kong, and individual education programme planned and evaluated according to the needs and interests of each individual student. Adaptation to the curriculum contents and teaching methodologies to help students to strengthen their generic skills building on the knowledge content and curriculum aim of

the 8 Key Learning Areas will be the direction forward. The school-based curriculum and individual education programme should also reflect age-appropriate learning.

9. For students with SEN in mainstream schools, necessary support such as specific learning support programme and development of learning strategies should be in place so that participation at senior secondary levels is viable for each student with unique potential, including those with specific learning difficulties. Multiple-exit points and different pathways to further study or training leading to recognizable qualifications for employment will be explored for students who are not inclined to pursue an academic curriculum leading to HKDSE. With the introduction of Career-oriented Studies, which offers more choices alongside the academic subjects, students with SEN will be able to choose among a range of subjects that develop their interests and abilities under the new senior secondary structure. Under these circumstances, opportunities for diversified post-secondary courses will be explored with service providers such as Vocational Training Council and other non-government organizations serving those students having suitable capabilities.

Assessment matters

10. Students with SEN taking part in the public examination will be assessed on par with all other children sitting for the same examination, but with special accommodation arrangements. For example, at present, candidates with disabilities entering the Hong Kong Certificate of

Education Examination or the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination may apply for exemption from parts of the examination or special examination arrangements such as allocation to special centre, extra time allowance, provision of braille or enlarged question papers, etc.

11. For the mentally handicapped students, they will not be prepared for open examinations. Their educational needs will be catered for through school-based curriculum and individual education programmes. Regarding assessment for the mentally handicapped students, EMB considers that the key process is the development, monitoring and assessment of progress of an individual education programme for each student to allow personalized learning.

12. The implementation of the curriculum and assessment framework in special schools is a developmental process which will involve continual adaptation and adjustments, as is the practice for mainstream schools in accommodating the needs of students with SEN.

13. At the systematic level, benchmarking assessment at significant stages, could be explored in the longer term, to gauge learning outcomes and pave the way for accreditation of vocational competence for mentally handicapped students.

Class size and class structure

14. Special schools have indicated concern about the number of places and classes to be provided, the teacher-to-class ratios for students

with SEN as well as other resources and support measures to facilitate implementation of the proposed changes in schools.

15. Classes will be offered in special schools for students who are best suited to the programmes of these special schools. Under the new senior secondary structure, while it is considered that the class size of various categories of special schools will remain unchanged, the class structures of special schools will, in principle, follow the proposed 6-year academic structure for special schools, which will be the subject of further consultation. EMB will focus on the needs of students with SEN and use guiding principles consistent with resource allocation for all schools and the overall provision available for education.

Advice sought

16. Members are requested to note the above developments and comment on the initial responses.

Education and Manpower Bureau

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