

For discussion on

12 June 2008

Panel on Education

Progress of Preparation for the New Senior Secondary and Higher Education Academic Structure (334)

Purpose

This paper reports the progress of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) Academic Structure (334) in three interconnected arenas: preparation for NSS; interface between schools, post-secondary institutions and employers; as well as communication channels among key parties.

Background

2. The reports “*The New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education – Action Plan for Investing in the Future of Hong Kong*” (the 334 Report), published in May 2005 and “*Action for the Future – Career-oriented Studies and the New Senior Secondary Academic Structure for Special Schools*” released in August 2006 have laid down the milestones for implementation of the NSS academic structure after consulting the public widely at multiple stages.

Progress

(i) Preparation for NSS

Progress on NSS Curriculum and Assessment Reform

Curriculum and Assessment Guides

3. The 24 Curriculum and Assessment (C&A) Guides for the four core and 20 NSS elective subjects were published in March 2007 after

going through three rounds of consultation. All curricula were benchmarked against relevant subject curricula in Europe, Australia, United States and Asia through international agencies. The C&A Guides outline what is worth our students' learning, how they might be assisted in their learning, as well as the assessment design to determine how their learning could be evaluated and reported. They are essential to help schools prepare for the implementation of the NSS academic structure in the 2009/10 school year.

School-based Assessment (SBA) of NSS subjects

4. To enable schools and teachers to familiarise themselves with the NSS curriculum and to relieve them of the extra burden in the double cohort year (i.e. 2011/12 school year), a strategic approach to implement SBA was endorsed by the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) and the Public Examinations Board of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) after consulting the sector. SBA for 12 subjects, including those with SBA currently in the HKCEE, Liberal Studies and the four science subjects (laboratory work only) will be implemented in 2012. SBA for 11 other subjects will be deferred for two to four years and there will be no time-line for implementation of SBA in Mathematics to alleviate the burden of Mathematics teachers during the transitional years and to provide sufficient time for schools to complete the development work and get familiar with the administration of planned SBA activities.

Curriculum Development in Applied Learning (APL)

5. Underpinned by the generic framework for ApL set out in the Report *Action for the Future - Career-oriented Studies and the New Senior Secondary Academic Structure for Special Schools* (August 2006), the curriculum frameworks for the six areas of ApL studies¹ are being developed with the help of different stakeholders (e.g. trade sector, course providers, schools). The frameworks will outline the phased development of NSS ApL courses. A list and description of the first round of ApL courses under 334 to be offered to S5 students in 2010 will be

¹ The 6 areas of studies are: Applied Science, Business Management & Law, Creative Studies, Engineering & Production, Media & Communication and Services.

available to schools at the end of 2008 together with prototypes of courses to illustrate the nature of learning and assessment in ApL.

Development of NSS Curriculum for Intellectually Disabled (ID) Students

6. The principle of “one curriculum framework for all” guides curriculum adaptations to suit the different learning needs and capabilities of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) (including ID students). The Education Bureau (EDB) has revised the adapted curriculum documents for the three core subjects of Chinese Language, Mathematics and Liberal Studies/Independent Living after being tried out in special schools through collaborative research and development projects which have involved universities, local and overseas experts. The development of the adapted curriculum documents of two elective subjects (Physical Education and Visual Arts) also started in the 2007/08 school year. The adapted curriculum documents would be further revised and tried out in collaboration with special schools. The final adapted documents of the 3 core and 2 elective subjects will be available during the 2008/09 school year to facilitate school preparation for 2009. More elective subjects would be adapted and tried out in 2008/09.

Professional Development of Teachers and School Leaders

7. To ensure smooth implementation of NSS curriculum in schools, we have enhanced teachers’ understanding of the NSS curriculum and professional capacity in leadership by providing the following:

School Leaders Workshops and Middle Managers Workshops

8. Following the success of the series of 3-day School Leaders Workshops for Planning 334 for school leaders of 464 schools in the 2005/06 school year, another series of Middle Manager Workshops (MMWs) were organised in the 2006/07 and 2007/08 school years. Key Learning Areas (KLA) co-ordinators, subject panel chairpersons, special functional post holders as well as school librarians are invited to join. By end June 2008, over 10,500 middle managers coming from 513 schools attended the MMWs. Learning leadership and distributed leadership are the two main themes being promoted in the MMWs.

Middle managers' attention is particularly drawn to the importance of early curriculum planning and understanding students' interests and needs.

Professional Development Programmes (PDPs) for NSS Subjects

9. PDPs at the subject level are on-going and cover the following areas: (a) Understanding and Interpreting the Curriculum; (b) Assessing Student Learning; (c) Learning and Teaching Strategies; (d) Enriching Knowledge; and (e) Sharpening of teachers' understanding and mastery of strategies to cater for learner diversity, to use diversified modes of assessment for improving student learning and to manage changes. The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) will provide the assessment criteria exemplars and guidelines in the next year for reference of teachers; and organise training courses to enhance teachers' understanding in the design of School-based Assessment (SBA).

10. For the 2007/08 school year, we have offered over 50,000 training places for all teachers of the NSS subjects including the training on assessment offered by HKEAA. The number of places offered is sufficient as a whole and there is no significant slippage of planned programmes. A survey on contingency professional development needs arising from staff mobility and changing plans has been carried out in March 2008 to better inform our planning on NSS professional development programmes for teachers in 2008/09 and beyond.

Feasibility Study on Flexible Timetabling and Workshops on NSS Curriculum Planning and Timetabling

11. To meet the diverse needs of students, good time-tabling tools that help utilise space, flexible grouping and staff resources optimally are essential. A feasibility study and two pilots were conducted in the 2007/08 school year to generate more experiences on NSS curriculum planning and examples on timetabling arrangement. 23 workshops on NSS curriculum planning and timetabling were conducted in the 2007/08 school year focusing on early NSS curriculum planning, new approaches and concepts of timetabling. More than 820 principals and teachers

from 430 secondary schools attended the workshops in the 2007/08 school year.

Professional development programmes for ApL and special school teachers

12. PDPs on understanding and interpreting ApL for secondary school heads, members of the school management committee, careers teachers and teachers in charge of ApL were launched in December 2006. We are consolidating experiences from the pilots of ApL to facilitate systematic planning of PDPs. For special schools, workshops and sharing sessions on the expected learning outcomes and the planning and teaching of the core subjects (i.e. Chinese Language, Mathematics and Liberal Studies/Independent Living) are planned and conducted as scheduled.

Other Professional Support

13. Since the 2004/05 school year, the School-based Support Services Office (SBSSO) has been providing professional support to secondary schools to prepare them for the implementation of the NSS Curriculum. Support in curriculum leadership development (including holistic and long term planning of the curriculum, use of resources, etc.) has been strengthened to enable long term and sustainable development at school level.

14. To cater for the diverse needs of schools, the SBSSO is offering support on a KLA basis and theme basis through on-site visits, consultancy services and professional development activities. Schools and teachers are also networked to share issues of common concern and improve communication among different stakeholders in the development of NSS. Input was also drawn from the tertiary institutions through the “University-School Support Programmes” financed by the Education Development Fund.

15. In the 2007/08 school year, the SBSSO is providing on-site support to about 300 secondary schools.

Textbooks & Learning/Teaching Resources

16. To ensure that quality of textbooks would meet the aims and objectives of the NSS curricula, the Curriculum Development Institute (CDI) has continued to work closely with the publishers in the development process and provided them with feedback sessions so that clarification can be made and communication enhanced throughout the whole process. The recommended textbook list for NSS will be available for schools' reference in July/August 2008. The development of NSS learning and teaching materials is monitored quarterly. Approximately 80 resource development projects for NSS subjects are running smoothly according to pre-set targets.

Resource Support

17. EDB will advance the provision of the recurrent Senior Secondary Curriculum Support Grant by one year starting from the 2008/09 school year and increased by 50% in the 4 transitional years (2008/09 – 2011/12 school years), so that schools can better prepare for and implement the NSS academic structure up to and including the double cohort year. In the application of this measure a cash grant at least equivalent to the mid-point salary of a graduate teacher will be provided to each school offering NSS curriculum in 2008/09 and 2009/10 school years.

18. A Diversity Learning Grant (DLG) will be provided to schools starting from the 2009/10 school year on an application basis to encourage the development of a diversified curriculum under NSS, including ApL, other languages and other programmes such as gifted and network programmes. Consultation is under way with school councils on the proposed funding arrangement of DLG. Schools will be informed of the details later this year to ensure that they have sufficient time to plan ahead.

(ii) Interface with Schools, Post-secondary Institutions, International Agencies and Employers

Articulation to University Grants Committee (UGC)-Funded Institutions

19. The Heads of Universities Committee (HUCOM) announced on 5 July 2006 the general admission requirements and programme specific requirements of the eight institutions under the new undergraduate programme structure. The HUCOM has made clear its support for a more broad-based curriculum for senior secondary students with more choice to suit their individual aptitudes and interests.

Seeking recognition from Cambridge International Examinations (CIE)

20. HKEAA has been working closely with Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) on the international benchmarking of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination. There are three steps involved: moderation of sample papers, study of pilot scripts and the analysis of results. The first batch of sample papers was sent to CIE for moderation in December 2007. The whole exercise is scheduled for completion in 2011.

Seeking recognition with other international agencies

21. HKEAA has been working closely with international agencies to secure advanced recognition of the HKDSE, including National Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) and Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) in UK, and the Australian Consulate. Measures are under way for conducting benchmarking exercises on the recognition of Hong Kong public examination results. The NARIC study outcomes will focus on recognition of the HKDSE for the purpose of general education and employment. The UCAS study outcome is to set up a point system in the UCAS tariff for HKDSE results linking to other international qualifications in the UCAS Tariff system. It is expected that the benchmarking results will be available before the first administration of the HKDSE examination.

Articulation to Other Post-secondary Institutions

22. EDB will discuss with post-secondary institutions the alignment of the new HKDSE with the admission requirements of associate degrees, Higher Diploma and Diploma courses. There will be further communication with post-secondary institutions in second half of 2008 on their programmes of studies to be offered in 2012, as well as recognition of ApL and the offering of English vocational course for ethnic minorities.

Safety Net for School Leavers

23. Project Yi Jin (PYJ) currently provides an alternative route for Secondary 5 students who have failed to attain five passes in HKCEE. In consultation with the Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions which operates the PYJ Programme, the Administration is currently reviewing the long term development and positioning of PYJ under the NSS. The Vocational Training Council (VTC) is reviewing its curriculum planning for the small number of students who will not take HKDSE. The curriculum framework of VTC Higher Diploma programmes is being reviewed to better align with the NSS academic structure and the development of the Qualifications Framework.

Articulation to Other Pathways for Last Cohort of Secondary 5 and Secondary 7 Students

24. There are multiple articulation pathways provided for students in the transition to NSS. HKEAA will organise one more HKCEE and HKALE in 2011 and 2013 respectively for some subjects for Secondary 5 and Secondary 7 repeaters.

25. Secondary 5 students graduating in 2010 may repeat in the 2011 HKCEE, which will be the last HKCEE. However, as there will be no more Secondary 6 admission exercise in 2011, students are encouraged to repeat in Secondary 5 under NSS instead and to sit for HKDSE in 2012 since there is sufficient curriculum continuity between HKCEE and NSS subjects and the post-school pathways will be smoother. Many students

will do what the Secondary 5 leavers do now such as repeating in school or as private candidates, studying overseas, work, or join the PYJ or other post-school pathways.

26. The last cohort of Secondary 7 students graduating in 2012 may repeat as private candidates in 2013 HKALE, which will be the last HKALE. Students might choose to study sub-degree programmes instead as there will be no 3-year undergraduate programmes offered from 2013 onwards.

27. To alleviate worries of students and parents about the pathways for the last cohorts, EDB is working closely with HKEAA for early announcement of the arrangement for repeaters in the last HKCEE and HKALE cohorts in 2010 and 2012. The issue of repeating studies will be considered in a wider context of articulating the possible pathways outlined above for the last cohorts in the current system.

Articulation to Employment

28. EDB has set up an agreed process to discuss with the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) and HKEAA on benchmarking/drawing comparability of HKDSE qualifications with other qualifications currently recognised by different Civil Service grades. We expect the announcement of requirements of Civil Service grades would serve very good reference for other employers in considering the new HKDSE qualifications. Announcements on requirements for different grades will be made progressively from 2009.

(iii) Communication Channels with Different Stakeholders

29. To ensure better public understanding and support in the development of 334, EDB is maintaining close communication with different stakeholders through the following channels:

UGC-funded Institutions

30. The Liaison Group on 334 Interface Issues set up in 2004 has representatives from EDB, HKEAA, UGC Secretariat and 8 UGC-funded

institutions and has regularly discussed issues relating to entrance requirements under NSS and interface between the senior secondary and 4-year undergraduate curriculum. This has facilitated several joint decisions such as basic minimum entrance requirements, language requirements for non-Chinese speakers and use of standard-referenced reporting in HKCEE Chinese and English examinations 2007. These unified announcements are made with reference to agreed principles, which is critical in building confidence in the wider community.

31. Regular talks/briefings on the development of NSS were delivered by EDB and supported by HKEAA at different institutions either as offered through the Liaison Group on 334 Interface Issues or upon invitation from curriculum reform committees, departments or faculties of individual institutions. The UGC-funded institutions are actively engaged in preparation for the “3+3+4”, and are committed to providing a smooth transition to the four-year undergraduate structure.

32. The 334 Web Bulletin (<http://www.edb.gov.hk/334>) established by EDB also helps facilitate the dissemination of information on university entrance requirements to schools, parents and the public

Post-secondary institutions

33. EDB will continue to update various post-secondary institutions on the development of NSS curriculum and maintain close communication with them for smooth interface of the NSS with different post secondary courses.

Schools

34. The Principals’ Liaison meetings, established since 2004, have held regular meetings to consult school heads on issues related to NSS such as class structure, NSS curriculum and assessment. We also convey the latest development of 334 to school leaders and teachers and collect their concerns and feedback through the school leaders workshops, middle managers workshops, briefings and seminars in order to enhance the smooth implementation of NSS. A new round of regional principals’ seminars updating progress of 334 was completed in April 2008.

35. An NSS information kit (the Kit) which contains a full set of information on curricula, assessment, guidance, and planning, etc. in the format of powerPoint files or DVDs was launched on the 334 Web Bulletin in March 2008. The Kit is to facilitate schools to organise school-based NSS seminars/briefings for their parents. Hyperlinks are also provided in the 334 Web Bulletin to HKEAA and local tertiary institutions' websites for school information on recognition of the HKDSE and institutions' entrance requirements.

36. Teacher networks have already been in place on KLA/subject basis to facilitate exchange of good practices and collection of feedback.

Parents and the Public

37. 334-related messages are currently conveyed to the public through means such as 334 articles published in newspapers monthly, 334 Web Bulletin, parent pamphlets (issued every 6 months), DVD and booklet on frequently asked questions, Educational Television (ETV) Programmes, Announcement of Public Interest (API), roving exhibitions as well as interactive district-based parent seminars. A total of 20 parent seminars are scheduled for the 2006/07 and the 2007/08 school years and so far about 15,000 parents have attended the seminars.

38. In October 2007, an NSS School Information Network was established in the EDB's 334 Web Bulletin to provide a one-stop platform for parents and the public to gain access to information on schools' preparation for NSS through the websites provided by schools in different districts.

Employers

39. EDB will work jointly with HKEAA to update and explain to different employer sectors the standards of the new HKDSE levels and their possible application to different job positions. Communication with employers in the private sector about the HKDSE has already started through the Hong Kong Institute of Human Resource Management.

Way Forward

Stepping Up Inter-sector Communication and Further Engagement

Expanded Liaison Group on 334 Interface Issues

40. During the transition period before 2012, we propose to step up the communication between UGC-funded institutions, post-secondary institutions and secondary sectors to ensure smooth interface of the NSS curriculum with the 4-year undergraduate/post-secondary programmes as some decisions for each sector are hinging on the decisions of each other. The Liaison Group on 334 Interface Issues will be expanded on scheduled occasions to include representatives from post-secondary institutions, the VTC, and school councils to allow discussion on various matters of common concern.

Information exchange for schools, UGC-funded institutions, post-secondary institutions, and the government

41. The school sector, in particular, would like to be better informed about the development of the 4-year undergraduate programme and that of post-secondary institutions. Inter-sector sharing sessions involving curriculum reform groups of post-secondary institutions, school council executives, employer and parent representatives and government would be arranged to facilitate regular exchange and communication. The first session is scheduled in June 2008. We will work with all institutions in making available timely and concrete information for parents, schools and the community on developments in the tertiary sector.

Communication between the Government and wider community

42. With the introduction of the new HKDSE, there is a need to explain the new qualification and the new reporting by levels of performance to the wider community, as well as how these might relate to existing qualifications and measures. In addition to communication strategies with parents and teachers, EDB will strengthen communication/liaison with different parties including CSB, employers, UGC-funded institutions, post-secondary institutions and professional

bodies, etc. to assist broader understanding of the new curriculum, how the new standards might be interpreted, and the connections with other qualifications so as to facilitate their revision of relevant entry/job requirements. A comprehensive communication strategy will build on the work already done in regular release of key messages for the public. The aim is to ensure key stakeholders are able to obtain the information they need in a timely and accurate manner.

Regular Meetings with Teachers & Principals

43. EDB has ensured every school has the opportunity to attend the NSS curriculum planning and time-tabling workshop in the 2007/08 school year. The results of the latest survey on professional development needs will inform planning of PDPs in 2008/09 school year. The NSS PDPs for teachers will be designed to focus more on how to handle learner diversity issues. EDB will ensure all legitimate demands for professional preparation are met.

44. District-based seminars for principals, vice-principals and NSS co-ordinators would be organised to convey messages face-to-face. Based on expressed needs, another round of school leaders' workshops/sharings will be organised to facilitate exchange of information/experiences and problem-solving that synchronizes with the implementation of NSS.

Advice Sought

45. Members are requested to note the progress of 334 academic structure as reported in this paper.

Education Bureau
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