



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部教育局

Education Bureau

Government Secretariat, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

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13 April 2012

Clerk-to Panel
(Attn.: Ms Amy YU)
Panel on Education
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Ms YU

Panel on Education
Follow-up to meeting on 12 March 2012

I refer to your letter dated 16 March 2012 requesting written information on the Administration's strategy and efforts in nurturing and training talents (such as educational psychologists and speech therapists), including the training of such talents in local universities, in respect of specialist support services for students with special educational needs (SEN). The information required is provided as follows:

Educational Psychology Service

To step up the support for students with diverse learning needs, including those with SEN, the Education Bureau (EDB) has started to extend the School-based Educational Psychology Service (SBEPS) to more needy schools since the 2008/09 school year. Under the SBEPS, each EP serves six to ten schools. The educational psychologists (EPs) pay regular visits to schools to provide comprehensive service at the school system, teacher and student support levels. Specifically, they provide assessment and

intervention for students, training for parents, consultation and professional development for teachers as well as professional advice on the school policies and practices for supporting students with diverse educational needs. In the 2011/12 school year, about 50% of the public sector schools are receiving the SBEPS. As announced in the 2011-12 Policy Address, the SBEPS will be extended progressively to cover all public sector primary and secondary schools by the 2016/17 school year.

Speech Therapy Service

We also provide speech therapy service (STS) in all public sector primary and secondary schools to cater for students with speech and language impairment (SLI). Public-sector primary schools can make use of the Enhanced Speech Therapy Grant to provide school-based STS for their students. School-based STS includes three areas of support services, namely prevention, remediation and enhancement, to schools, teachers, students and parents. Through the service, appropriate and timely school-based support will be provided to students with speech or language difficulty to prevent the difficulty from developing into a persistent disability. Public sector secondary schools could use school resources such as the Learning Support Grant, which is designated for supporting students with SEN including those with SLI, to cater for their students with SLI. The STs of EDB would also provide school-based support services for individual schools on need basis. These services include speech and language assessment and intervention services for students, training for parents, consultation and professional development for teachers as well as professional support for schools.

Strategy and efforts in nurturing and training of EPs and STs

EDB is committed to promoting lifelong learning among EPs and STs and attaches great importance to their professional development. Apart from formal training programmes provided by the tertiary institutions, we consider that on-the-job training and hands-on experience are effective means to enhance their professionalism. In this regard, EDB regularly reviews the training needs of serving EPs/STs, plans and organizes training and profession development activities, and evaluates the effectiveness of the training conducted.

EPs

To tie in with the progressive expansion of SBEPS and ensure a steady supply of EPs to meet the service needs, EDB has suggested the University Grant Committee to increase the provision of EP training places through the triennium manpower planning. With effect from the 2009/10 school year, in addition to the 25 EP training places offered by the University of Hong Kong (HKU) in alternate years, and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University has also been providing 15 training places in alternate years. In other words, at present, there are EP graduates from local universities every year. EDB assists the two universities in training up the EP trainees by providing them with individualised supervision and exposure to the work of EP in various school settings through a EP trainees placement programme.

Continuing professional development activities offered to serving EPs in both EDB and the aided sector include seminars/workshops by overseas experts and local professionals, sharing on overseas practices for broadening of perspectives, case conferences with psychiatrists for case sharing and discussion, learning circles for development of specialties, etc. In addition, EDB conducts EP network and EP supervisor meetings at least three times a year for sharing of frontline experiences and good practices as well as developing mutual support. We also conduct quality assurance school visits and scrutinize the work plans and progress reports submitted by EPs to ensure that the SBEPS provided to schools meets the requisite professional standard.

Moreover, EDB collaborates with tertiary institutions to develop screening tools with local norms such as Observation Checklist for Teachers (OCT), Chinese Reading and Writing Abilities Assessment for Secondary Students (CRWAAS), Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), Strengths and Weaknesses of ADHD-symptoms and Normal-behavior (SWAN), to facilitate the identification of students with SEN. Resource packages such as Fun with Reading and Writing, Fun with Maths, Development of Executive Skills (DOES) are also developed for use of EPs to support students with SEN. Apart from these, EDB has been developing and trying out effective strategies to enhance the support for students with SEN at school. For example, we are conducting a Read & Write Project for supporting students with Specific Learning Difficulties and a pilot project on enhancement of support for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Through participation in these support programmes, EPs could gain hands-on experience and enhance their expertise on specific domains of the profession.

STs

With regard to STs, the training in Hong Kong is provided by HKU. It offers an honours degree of Bachelor of Science in Speech and Hearing Sciences with 40 training places each year. Similar to EP, EDB offers a placement programme to provide ST trainees with individualised supervision and exposure to the work of ST in various school settings.

We also provide professional development programmes for serving STs, having regard to their training needs, to enhance their practical and functional skills as well as professional knowledge. In this connection, EDB holds sharing sessions on school-based STS and theme-based workshops every year to acquaint STs and teachers with good practices and updated strategies in the support of students with SLI. Speech Therapy Learning Circles, where school-based STs meet twice a year, have been set up to facilitate the formation of a learning platform for school-based STs, so that they could share their valuable experience in the provision of STS at school and build up a professional support network among themselves. EDB also provides consultation to school-based STs to ensure the quality of school-based service delivery. Moreover, we provide advice on the collaboration between school-based STs and teachers in enhancing the learning of students.

Apart from consultation and professional training programmes, EDB has also developed related school-based support guidelines, observation checklists on speech and language skills for teachers, a standardized expressive language assessment tool (the Cantonese Expressive Language Scales) and resources focusing on the different aspects of speech, language, communication and language related learning skills training for use of the STs and other school personnel.

For enquiries on the above matters, please contact Miss Daisy LI, Senior Specialist (Speech Therapy), of EDB at 3698 3788.

Yours sincerely



(Miss P L WU)
for Secretary for Education