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

本局檔號 Our Ref.	EDB(CR) 1/1013/15 (7)	電話 Telephone:	3509 8535
來函檔號 Your Ref.	CB4/PAC/R64	傳真 Fax Line:	3428 6034

2 June 2015

Clerk, Public Accounts Committee
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central
Hong Kong
(Attn: Mr Anthony CHU)

Dear Mr Chu,

Public Accounts Committee

**Consideration of Chapter 7 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 64
Education Bureau Kowloon Tong Education Services Centre**

Thank you for your letter dated 12 May 2015 to the Secretary for Education on the Director of Audit's Report on the usage of the Education Bureau Kowloon Tong Education Services Centre (KTESC).

Before we respond to the questions in detail, we would like to provide you with some background information. KTESC has been providing a wide range of educational services for our stakeholders to support learning and teaching as well as teachers' professional development in Hong Kong. Various centre-based services are provided for school principals, teachers, parents, academics, students of educational institutes in post-secondary institutions, etc. through the Central Resources Centre (CRC), Special Education Resource Centre (SERC) and Hong Kong Teachers' Centre (HKTC). To

support new services and/or revamped services, the education and communal facilities provided therein have been improved and upgraded as necessary over the years to suit the needs of our target users.

In the past decade, we see a sharp increasing trend in the use of electronic resources for educational purposes. The centres in KTESC have upgraded their information technology systems and uploaded resource materials on the web to cater for the needs of users who are more adapted to electronic-service. The adoption of electronic databases through remote access service provided by the various centres of KTESC would certainly have impact on the utilisation rate of the education and communal facilities therein, in terms of "physical" visits to KTESC. In line with this latest development, we consider that utilisation statistics of the education and communal facilities in terms of physical visits and actual borrowing of resources will reflect only partial but not all facets of usage of KTESC.

Notwithstanding this, we agree that there is a need to ensure effective usage of KTESC to meet the needs of those stakeholders who choose to seek centre-based services and to continue improving our e-service for those who prefer electronic resources. We will keep in view the latest service needs of our stakeholders and review usage and service of the KTESC in the light of the Director of Audit's recommendations, any new services and/or revamped services to be introduced in the years ahead, as well as operational needs of the Bureau and make improvement in order to ensure the most effective use of KTESC.

With the above background, our response to your questions is set out below, following the paragraph numbering in the Appendix to your letter.

Issue 1: Realization of expected benefits of the Education Bureau's Kowloon Tong Education Services Centre (KTESC)

(a)   From the time of vetting and approving of the Schedule of Accommodation (SoA) in 2004 up to the actual move-in in 2006, it is inevitable that there were changes in the needs of various education services which called for corresponding adjustment of accommodation requirements to meet updated service demands. For example, the mode of service delivery of educational psychological services has been changed from centre-based to school-based which necessitated a re-organisation of and reduction in the allocated office space for the concerned section. We would like to confirm that all the changes in accommodation requirements were to support and enhance the delivery of education services to the public and did not involve any change in functional use of KTESC as originally designed for this Specialist/Departmental (S/D) Building. For general office accommodation approved and allocated by the Government Property Agency (GPA) to the Education Bureau (EDB), the Accommodation Regulations require approval by GPA only for significant changes in the use of accommodation and this is the guideline we have all along referred to. We have now written to the Property Vetting Committee (PVC) for seeking approval for changes from the approved

SoA.   We would also ensure strict compliance with the guidelines for S/D Building in managing accommodation requirements in KTESC in future.

(b)   As to the nine accommodations listed in Table 3, they are to support their respective divisions which are included in the approved SoA to provide the required educational services in KTESC to meet public demands.   There is no change to the functional usage of KTESC.   EDB will ensure strict compliance with the Accommodations Regulations and seek PVC's approval for future changes of accommodation requirements in KTESC as appropriate.   Meanwhile, we have written to PVC for seeking approval for changes from the approved SoA.

(c)   The main purpose of the installation of the detection system in CRC is to safeguard the CRC resources against loss and to ensure borrowed items had been checked out.   While we have all along been aware of the function of recording the daily counts of people passing through the gate, we had not made use of this function for counting visitors as we were then using the manual counting method. Upon review of the methodology of calculating visitors in 2011, EDB considered that the use of the automatic patron counter reading, as compared with visual counting, serves as an evidence-based, objective, reliable and cost-effective method for collecting visitor information.   We have therefore replaced our previous visual/manual counting method of visitors by this automatic method.

We have made suitable deductions from the number of entries/exits collected from the automatic patron counter (to take into account multiple entries of staff to avoid over-counting) when coming up with the number of visitors to the centre (see Note 6 in the Audit Report).   The deductions (i.e. 50 for weekdays and 18 for weekends) have taken into account the number of CRC staff and maintenance staff and their pattern in entering and exiting CRC at the time of devising the calculation formula.   Taking into account the Audit's comment, we will conduct survey and consider if there could be further enhancement/modification to the counting method.

(d)   It is noteworthy that the unique design of CRC being adjacent to the multi-purpose hall is to promote and enhance visitors' awareness of CRC.   According to our daily observation, quite a lot of visitors who attend events at the multi-purpose hall do benefit from the CRC resources.   For example, when visitors (many of them are teachers or school principals) arrive early before the start of the events or during the break or after the events, they will stay around CRC to use and borrow the resources like browsing the publications and exhibition items, using the computer, etc.   We consider the reading recorded by the automatic patron counter of the entrance gate should to a large extent accurately reflect the actual number of visitors to CRC.

We do not prefer blocking the entrance from CRC to the multi-purpose hall. While this will ensure that all visitors going through the automatic patron counter of CRC are visitors to CRC and not attending events at the multi-purpose hall, it is not conducive to our promotion of CRC resources among our stakeholders. In fact, we will continue to collaborate with event organisers of the multiple-purpose hall by supporting their functions with book fairs and exhibitions on related themes so that visitors attending events can benefit from entering CRC.

As stated in our response to (c) above, we will, taking into account Audit's comment, conduct survey and consider if there could be further enhancement/modification to the counting method of number of visitors to CRC.

(e) For SERC, we consider that the use of the automatic patron counter reading, as compared with the "sign-in" method used before, serves as an evidence-based, objective, reliable and cost-effective method for collecting visitor information. We have also made suitable deductions from the number of entries/exists collected from the automatic gate counter (to take into account multiple entries of staff to avoid over-counting). Taking into account Audit's comment, we will conduct survey and consider if there could be further enhancement/modification to the counting method of number of visitors to SERC.

As regards the use of the automatic patron counter in calculating the number of visitors to CRC and the possible enhancement measures, please see our response to (c) and (d) above.

(f) Young Achievers' Gallery (YAG) aims to encourage young people/achievers to learn from each other via gallery-based learning. The main reason of setting up an e-gallery and displaying the records in digital form is that such records have accumulated to a great number and the number is still growing. The outdated physical displays are digitised into the e-gallery. Furthermore, the converted multiple function hall will provide more space for exhibition of students' products (such as art work, design products), as well as for teacher professional development programmes (seminars, mass lectures) which will in turn further enhance the young achievers' learning and broaden the sense of celebrating young achievers' learning outcomes and peer-sharing.

With the conversion of YAG, users may mainly be pre-booked groups. Nevertheless, this initiative is in line with the trend of increasing use and penetration of information technology. We would like to highlight that utilisation statistics of YAG in terms of physical visits will reflect only partial but not all facets of usage of YAG. After the conversion and enhancement, the multi-purpose exhibition hall will showcase student work in different domains, thus increasing the sources of visitors and number of visitors. Besides, there is a shortage of medium-sized exhibition hall for a number of project exhibitions held annually by EDB to celebrate learning exhibits among students/young achievers.

The multiple purpose exhibition hall will serve to maximise the use of venues for medium scale functions such as prize giving ceremony and student work exhibition.

(g)   There is actually a keen demand for the communal facilities of KTESC. However, the existing booking system is not effective enough to ensure and monitor the timely release of bookings which are no longer required.   To address the late/no release of unused sessions, we are revamping the existing on-line room booking system which will introduce a penalty arrangement whereby officers will be barred from making bookings again for a certain period if he fails to take up any booked sessions or makes late cancellation.   The revamped booking system should help to change users' behavior and enable them to adopt a more responsible attitude in the booking and using of rooms in KTESC.

(h)   The concerned unused sessions of the communal facilities were not re-booked after cancellation.

(i)   Cancellation of bookings by the Administration and Management Office is currently done manually and due to the large number of bookings, the work could only be performed in batches.   Hence, it is not possible to arrange cancellation immediately.   We are revamping the online booking system and upon launching of the revamped system tentatively in August 2015, there will be automatic cancellation function which will allow immediate release of the venues.

(j)   Relevant facility information has been posted onto the Government's Central Cyber Government Office website since September 2013.   We will take more active steps to publicise the facilities in KTESC to other government departments with a view to promoting their usage.

(k)   Different centres in KTESC are providing different services with target clients with different service needs.   In view of the diversity and wide spectrum of needs of their stakeholders, which include students, parents, teachers, etc., it is more practical and meaningful for individual centres/facilities to conduct targeted and tailor-made surveys.   Respective sections will continue to refine and enhance their mode of survey with an aim to more effectively collect users' feedback to enhance delivery of education services to the public.

(l)   KTESC furnishes educational facilities for use by the teaching professionals and the public with a view to providing a focal point of resource support with appropriate facilities to both teachers and the public in the delivery of quality education.   The establishment of KTESC echoes with the education service needs

and hence clients are not required to register in using the services of the facilities. As a further step to continue to enhance the education service, we will review and consider developing appropriate performance indicators having regard to operational needs.

(m)   Besides visitor numbers, CRC and SERC have been closely monitoring the utilisation of various facilities by keeping monthly usage statistics for assessing the trend and utilisation of different services provided as well as evaluating the overall usage of the centres.   In response to Audit's recommendations, we shall explore the possibility of setting additional performance indicators.

Issue 2: Operational Issues of KTESC

(a)   Unlike public libraries, which usually have books targetting the general population for mass circulation/leisure reading, such as popular fiction and readers, books of a general nature and hot talks are not kept in CRC.   The publications/books in CRC are usually for functional/professional reading.   It is therefore not appropriate to compare the circulation turnover rate of CRC with that of the public libraries. Besides, the borrowing rate of library resources in the Audit Report only takes into account the borrowing of resources via the V-lib system.   It does not include in-house borrowing of resources for use in CRC, reading of CRC resources within the centre, loan of reference materials and inter-library loan.   The usage of the electronic databases with remote access service is not counted either.   In addition, the referencing service on items not for loan, for example the Quality Education Fund deliverables, could not be measured by borrowing rate.   Even in terms of the number of items loaned out via the V-lib system, CRC has recorded a steady rise (from some 2 000 items borrowed in the financial year (FY) 2011-12 to over 5 500 items in FY 2014-15).   It can be seen that there is progressive increase in terms of the number of items loaned in the past three years.   All in all, the borrowing rate alone is not an appropriate and representative indicator to reflect the utilization of CRC.

Notwithstanding the above, CRC will take the following measures to promote the use of its borrowing facilities:

- Solicit views from professionals to enrich resources and enhance services through strengthening collaboration with the Curriculum Development Council Committee and various Sections of the Curriculum Development Institute, etc.

- Continue to display publications/learning and teaching resources on various themes to encourage borrowing.

- Promote Block Loan Service to schools to provide flexible and convenient service to schools to encourage borrowing.

- Increase the number of loan items from different collections of the centre to meet users' needs.

- Extend Block Loan Service to EDB sections to provide flexible services and improve loan rate.

- Provide more channels for visitors to express their opinions and views including resources recommendations to CRC.

(b) There are four types of CRC registered members: (a) teaching professionals of local kindergarten, primary and secondary schools; (b) parents; (c) local tertiary students taking course in education; and (d) EDB staff.

Different from the public libraries which target users of the general public (including the non-working force), CRC has its own specific target users of limited groups, including professionals in the field of education, teachers and school social workers, etc. Unlike public libraries, which usually have books targetting the general population for mass circulation/leisure reading, such as popular fiction and readers, books of a general nature and hot talks are not kept in CRC. The publications/books in CRC are usually for functional/professional reading. Therefore, it may not be suitable to enlarge the membership to include other types of users. That said, as CRC is open to the public, members of the public can enter CRC and use resources and services in the centre though they cannot use the borrowing service.

With regard to the low percentage of registered members using the borrowing service, it should be noted that in the past decade, there has been a sharp increasing trend in the use of electronic resources for educational purposes. CRC has upgraded its computer systems and uploaded resource materials on the web to cater for the needs of users who are more adapted to electronic-service. The provision of electronic databases with remote access service will certainly have impact on the borrowing services within the CRC. Hence, the utilisation statistics in terms of actual borrowing of resources reflects only partial but not all facets of usage of the CRC. Besides, CRC does not only focus on providing borrowing services, but it also provides other professional education services which are important to realise its mission in supporting learning and teaching. Such services require the provision of a conducive environment for teachers to meet, interact, connect and network, as well as to share their good practices and professional know-how. In any case, CRC would take positive measures as outlined in (a) above to enhance the borrowing rate.

(c) The testing of the library system of CRC was performed by CRC staff. Before April 2015, there was not a specific account in the V-lib system created for testing, and CRC staff would have to use their member ID to test the system when necessary. However, it should be noted that testing of the library system is not carried out every month and is only performed due to system change such as system enhancements, launching of new loan policy, etc. The testing records

comprised only a small percentage of the borrowing records (less than 5% for the period from April 2011 to September 2014).

In view of Audit's recommendation, enhancement has been made to the V-lib system in April 2015 to separate the testing cases from normal borrowing.

(d)   The server in SERC was down during the five-day Audit survey causing the discrepancy in the borrowing records. SERC staff therefore had to record borrowing of books on manual basis. Based on the manual borrowing records (a total of 42 records involving 18 borrowers) taken during the five-day Audit survey, we have carried out an investigation by calling the borrowers concerned to verify the actual borrowing. Out of the 18 borrowers, we have successfully contacted six of them and confirmed that their borrowing records on the specified days are correct. The manual borrowing process might not be observed by the Audit team hence there was such a discrepancy.

(e)   The case quoted in the Audit Report was due to the breakdown of the server which was beyond repair and needed to be replaced. The procurement of a new server has to strictly comply with the standard government procurement procedures and involved a lead time. To minimize the impact on users, we have already installed a substitute server as soon as possible as a stop gap measure. Comparing with the old server, the new server is more robust and reliable. The new server has better backup solutions to enable us to resume services within a short period of time. Also, we will step up the maintenance service to minimize the chance of service disruption due to hardware breakdown. No complaint has been received.

(f)   While we have not kept the exact number of times the film in the mini-theatre has been played, the film was played every time for pre-arranged group visits as well as some impromptu visits by guests visiting the Gifted Education Section of EDB and there are 304 pre-arranged group visits since 2007.

The cost of updating the films for the digital exhibits and for maintaining the mini-theatre has been subsumed under the recurrent expenditure of the EDB and a separate breakdown is not available.

Issue 3: Way Forward

(a)   Conducting a post-implementation review (PIR) is one of the means to help assess whether the intended results of a project have been achieved and identify opportunities for further improvement. In this connection, we are mapping out the way forward for conducting a PIR.

(b)   For CRC, remote access service was established in November 2010.   Usage statistics of the service in terms of access counts from 2011 to 2014 is as follows:

Year	No. of Access Counts
2011	28 883
2012	31 946
2013	39 116
2014	37 210

We have the following plans to further enrich the electronic resources of CRC:
- To provide the electronic textbooks on the Recommended e-Textbook List at the workstations of CRC.
- To enrich the current Chinese electronic databases with remote access service.
- To further improve the CRC website (e.g. its design) to facilitate access to the electronic resources.

For HKTC, the number of access counts to the website from 2010 to 2014 is as follows:

Year	No. of Access Counts
2010	308 188
2011	391 648
2012	245 109
2013	191 981
2014	223 876

For SERC, the number of access counts to the website for 2013 and 2014 is 19 087 and 33 412 respectively, which shows an increase in the utilization (data prior to 2013 cannot be retrieved due to revamp of the website).   We will continue to enrich the resources on the EDB websites for public access.   We will also analyse the popularity of the resources and further improve the design and usability of the SERC website to facilitate easy retrieval of online resources by users.

(c)   In order to further maximise the usage of the mini-theatre, after the conversion, it will be able to accommodate around 60 audiences.   Apart from showing the original film of the student success stories, more functions, such as seminars, demonstrations, presentations, could be held inside this mini-theatre thus greatly extending the uses of the venue.   In addition, there is a shortage of medium-sized exhibition hall for a number of project exhibitions held annually by EDB, for example, to display the winning pieces of students participating in different national and international competitions.   The converted multiple function hall, together with the mini-theatre, will allow greater flexibility in the use of the venue. As YAG is now under renovation, we will review and consider developing appropriate performance indicators with reference to the new uses of the venue.

(d) For enhancement to the counting method in relation to the use of automatic patron counter, please see our responses to (c), (d) and (e) under Issue 1 above.

(e) CRC's unique design is to promote and enhance visitors' awareness of the centre. Visitors going to the multi-purpose hall via CRC do certainly benefit from the resources display and thematic exhibitions staged in CRC. When they arrive early for the event, it is observed that they often stay around the centre to use and borrow the resources. Besides, CRC often collaborates with event organisers of the multi-purpose hall by supporting their functions with book fairs and exhibitions on related themes, so that visitors can enjoy the resources during the break or after the event. With the rich displays of curriculum materials in CRC, visitors' awareness of the educational resources provided in CRC is enhanced and this helps schools to make full use of the resources support in its future curriculum work. CRC will evaluate its existing measures and enrich its educational references so as to cater for the needs of teachers. Arrangement will also be made for visitors to receive more information on the resource support (e.g. through display of pamphlets and posters) when they go to the multi-purpose hall via CRC.

(f) The schedule of revamping of the existing on-line room booking system is as follows:

Phase of System Revamp (Tentative Completion Date)	Improvement Measures
Phase I (August 2015)	Introduction of a penalty system for late cancellation of bookings
	Inclusion of the function of automatic cancellation of bookings
Phase II (November 2015)	Provision of e-booking confirmation forms
Phase III (March 2016)	Provision of search function to enable users to manage their bookings
	Generation of statistical reports for analysis

EDB will closely monitor the situation of "booked sessions unused" and "late/no release of unused sessions" with a view to increasing utilization of the communal facilities.

Yours sincerely,

(Miss Alice LAU)
for Secretary for Education

c.c. Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury
Director of Audit