

For information
on 29 November 2015

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Implementation of Territory-wide System Assessment

Purpose

This paper introduces the implementation and the latest situation of the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA).

Background

2. The TSA is one of the components of Basic Competency Assessments proposed in the Education Commission's 2000 Report entitled Learning for Life, Learning through Life. The Education Bureau (EDB) commissioned the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) in 2001 to develop and implement the TSA. It was introduced to P3 in 2004, P6 in 2005 and S3 in 2006. Since 2006, all students at P3, P6 and S3 take part in the TSA annually (except P6 TSA which was suspended in 2012 and 2014 respectively). P6 TSA has been held in odd years since the implementation of 2014 enhancement measures.

3. The TSA is a low-stake assessment. Relevant school report would not provide performance of individual students. The TSA is designed to gauge students' attainment of the basic competencies (BCs) at the end of the three key learning stages (i.e. P3, P6 and S3 levels) in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics before progressing to higher levels of learning.

4. The TSA data help the Government formulate related policies and measures, such as developing appropriate learning and teaching resources to cater for learner diversity, promoting "Reading to Learn" so

as to enhance reading culture in schools etc. At school level, the TSA data can help teachers understand students' performance against BCs and identify areas for improvement for provision of timely support, which would enable enhancement of learning and teaching strategies, and improvement on students' learning effectiveness. In the long run, the implementation of TSA enhances assessment literacy and promotes the culture of *assessment for learning* in schools, especially in basic education (P1 to S3).

Territory-wide System Assessment Items

5. The assessment items of TSA are developed in accordance with curriculum documents, including curriculum guides and BC documents. In addition, a multi-level mechanism has been set up to review the level of TSA items. The HKEAA set up a Moderation Committee for each subject at each level for moderation and endorsement of items. The Moderation Committees consist of academics from the tertiary sector, curriculum experts, local teachers (including Native-speaking English teachers for the English Language), managers from the HKEAA and curriculum officers from the EDB etc. Meetings are conducted regularly to deliberate on the items in terms of the level of difficulty, item types and marking criteria to ensure that the assessment coverage is in line with the curriculum and related to students' learning experience, and the items are pitched at BC levels not being excessively difficult.

6. After the release of the TSA results, the HKEAA will arrange meetings for the TSA Paper Review Focus Group for each subject and each level to review the assessment content, level of difficulty, types of items, rubrics of assessment and the overall percentage of correct responses (such as the rate of correct responses being too high or low) etc. Their comments are forwarded to the Moderation Committees for the development of the TSA papers in the following year. Where possible, members of the focus groups do not come from the Moderation Committee to keep the review objective.

Consultation with Stakeholders

7. Since the implementation of the TSA at P3 in 2004, the EDB

and the HKEAA have been attending to and collecting views and suggestions from various stakeholders on the TSA, including their concerns of workload for teachers and impact on students and schools.

8. In a questionnaire survey conducted as early as in 2008 by the HKEAA, 96% of the responded schools confirmed that their teachers had made reference to the TSA data in enhancing teaching plans. Most teachers found the school reports useful for analysing students' performance. They agreed that the TSA could provide an objective system-context for schools to identify areas where their students were faring relatively well and areas where they might need to improve upon.

9. In addition, the EDB announced in November 2011 that the TSA would be reviewed to examine areas including implementation arrangements, reporting functions, coverage and question items, etc. In 2012 and 2013, the HKEAA collected opinions from schools in focus groups regarding the TSA assessment design, the impact on students' learning performance, the implementation of the enhancement measures, the alternate-year arrangement of P6 TSA and the benefits of TSA on learning and teaching. Participants included principals and vice principals of primary and secondary schools, primary school curriculum leaders, panel heads and subject teachers. Schools which voluntarily joined the P6 assessment reflected that the "Item Analysis Reports" were of reference value for them to understand the learning needs of students and plan the curriculum.

10. In 2013, with a view to facilitating thorough deliberations among different stakeholders and soliciting their views and suggestions on other possible enhancement measures for the TSA, the EDB met with the primary and secondary schools councils, the Committee on Home-school Co-operation, the Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations, the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union, the Education Commission, the Curriculum Development Council, as well as the TSA Concern Group. Consultation work and views of stakeholders were presented in the Paper for the Legislative Council Panel on Education at its meeting on 13 January 2014.

11. In April 2014, the EDB announced the results of the review on TSA and the related enhancement measures (including not disclosing attainment rates to individual primary schools, removing the TSA from the Key Performance Measures for primary schools, continuing the alternate-year administration of P6 TSA, i.e. conducting the P6 TSA in odd years, while keeping the current arrangement for administering P3 and S3 TSA, enhancing the reporting functions in phases and launching the interactive platform for online reporting) and continued to maintain close communication with all stakeholders. In support of the implementation of TSA enhancement measures, the EDB has organised a series of seminars since April 2014 to inform schools about the relevant measures and listen to the views of the frontline personnel. In August this year, the HKEAA organised focus groups to consult primary school teachers who served as markers for their views on the enhancement measures for the TSA. Majority of them welcomed the enhancement measure of launching the interactive platform for online reporting and considered it of value for providing feedback to learning and teaching.

12. In order to enhance understanding of schools regarding policies and arrangements for the TSA, the EDB arranged a seminar on 30 October 2015 for principals, vice principals, curriculum leaders, teachers and representatives of school sponsoring bodies. Around 380 participants attended the seminar to share the effective use of assessment data to enhance student performance, making use of the Interactive Online Item Analysis Report to facilitate curriculum planning, designing/arranging tasks for assessments as well as making selection of quality textbooks and curriculum resources. Participants generally agreed that the TSA reports could help them identify students' strengths and weaknesses, develop curriculum and make adjustments to learning and teaching. Other than sharing their positive views on the enhancement measures implemented in 2014, the participants also expressed their opinions on further enhancement measures on the design of assessment papers (e.g. number of assessment items, length of texts, etc.), the coverage and the enhancement of professional support for teachers.

Latest Development

13. On the whole, stakeholders recognised the significance of the TSA assessment data for learning and teaching. However, we are aware of the concern expressed recently by education groups and parents about drilling for TSA in schools. Due to the different situation of individual schools, some schools might misconceive that assigning a huge quantity of homework, supplementary exercises and practice drills could consolidate learning of content knowledge, which leads to the impression that the drilling culture in individual schools is attributable to TSA. The EDB has updated and issued circulars and guidelines on homework and texts on 31 October 2015. It is clearly stated in the circular that with the incorporation of the curriculum targets into daily learning activities, the effective use of different student learning evidence collected (including that not from test or examination), as well as the application of appropriate tools for monitoring, recording and reporting performance and learning progression of students, teachers can devise teaching plans for the next stage of learning without the need to change the teaching and assessment approaches for the purpose of TSA.

14. Schools are also reminded in the circular to formulate an appropriate school-based homework and assessment policy. There should be clear targets for homework. The mode and content of homework should cater for students' learning needs and abilities. Schools should make clear and accessible to parents their homework and assessment policy as well as the types of homework. The EDB will continue to urge schools through different channels and means and provide professional advice, support and reports based on different school practices and the students' learning needs with a view to facilitating self-improvement and sustainable development of schools.

15. The EDB will continue to review and enhance the TSA to achieve its intended purpose of facilitating learning and teaching in schools as well as enhancing learning effectiveness of students. The EDB will be in close communication with all stakeholders. Other than meeting with school sponsoring bodies, schools and teachers, the EDB arranged in mid-November to meet with representatives of the Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations from 18 districts in a

discussion forum. Another meeting was also arranged on 27 November to meet with parents from different districts to collect their views and suggestions on TSA.

16. At the same time, the EDB has announced that the Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy (the Committee), established in October 2014, would review the implementation of TSA. To better represent the views of parents, we would introduce new members involving in home-school cooperation affairs to join the Committee. In parallel, representation of schools in the Committee would also be strengthened. We would continue to communicate with legislators, school sponsoring bodies, schools, professionals and other stakeholders. In reviewing the implementation details of the TSA, we will maintain an open attitude towards the feasibility of different enhancement measures including the implementation arrangements, assessment content, assessment items and coverage as well as the supporting measures for implementation, which include strategic arrangements for minimising the drilling culture. It is anticipated that preliminary plans will be made for implementation the soonest possible before the conduct of the TSA in the following year. All suggestions and views related to the TSA will be included and deliberated in the review.

Collection of views

17. Suggestions on the implementation and enhancement measures for the TSA are welcome.

Education Bureau
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