

For discussion  
on 11 January 2016

## **Legislative Council Panel on Education**

### **Issues Related to the Suspension, Continuation or Abolition of the Territory-wide System Assessment**

#### **Purpose**

This paper updates Members on the progress of the deliberation of the Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy (“the Coordinating Committee”) regarding the review on the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA).

#### **Background**

2. In 2000, the Education Commission proposed to introduce Basic Competency Assessments in the report entitled *Learning for Life Learning through Life* to enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching. The main objectives of the Basic Competency Assessments are:-

- (i) to provide the Government and school management with information on school’s standards in key learning areas;
- (ii) for Government to provide support to those schools in need of assistance; and
- (iii) to enable teachers and parents to understand students’ learning needs and problems so as to facilitate timely assistance.

3. The TSA is one of the components of Basic Competency Assessments. It is an assessment on the basic competencies (BCs) of students at the end of the three key learning stages (i.e. Primary 3, Primary 6 and Secondary 3 levels) in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics (CEM). The BCs are part of the curriculum incorporated in daily learning activities and internal student assessment in school. Students need to acquire the BCs in CEM to effectively progress to the next key stage of learning. Details of the implementation of TSA are at **Annex A**.

4. The TSA is a low-stakes assessment that does not assess and report performance of individual students. Neither does it affect students’ advancement in education nor allocation of school places for admission to

Secondary 1. The data is not used for ranking or classifying schools. It is not an index for imposing measures on schools to cease operation.

5. In November 2011, the Education Bureau (EDB) decided that P6 TSA would be suspended in 2012 and 2014. In 2014, the EDB reviewed the implementation of TSA and launched a number of enhancement measures (including not disclosing attainment rates to individual primary schools, removing the TSA from the Key Performance Measures for primary schools, continuing administering P6 TSA in alternate years and enhancing the TSA reporting functions in stages), with a view to striking a balance between preserving the core functions of the TSA and at the same time alleviating the pressure on students and teachers. Details have been set out in the paper LC Paper No. CB(4)284/13-14(03)

6. Since its introduction in 2004 (Primary 3, Primary 6<sup>1</sup> and Secondary 3 TSA was implemented since 2004, 2005 and 2006 respectively), the TSA has served the function of promoting *Assessment for Learning* by providing information which helps teachers identify the strengths and weaknesses of students on an overall basis and formulate plans for school to improve the effectiveness of learning and teaching based on the assessment data and their own development needs. On the day the results are released, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) will upload the reports, all papers and marking schemes onto its website on Basic Competency Assessments for public viewing. Schools can access information (including territory-wide student performance in different learning areas) by using the login password to download the school level reports for analysis and assessment of learning and teaching strategies.

7. Not only are the overall percentages of students achieving BCs in CEM included in the school reports (the number and percentage of students achieving BCs have not been disclosed to individual primary schools since 2014), item analysis, performance of the same student cohort and other supplementary data are also included (TSA provides feedback to school through this mechanism). After analysing students' performance in the TSA, follow-up measures, such as adjustment of lesson content, improvement in design of worksheets / assessments and provision of after-school remedial programmes to cater for learner diversity, etc. are generally adopted by schools.

8. For schools which seek to improve or enhance curriculum planning as well as learning and teaching after reflecting on their current situation, they can participate in professional development programmes as well as different professional exchanges and apply for school-based support services. The EDB also promotes sharing of good teaching practices and resources on

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<sup>1</sup> Since 2014, Primary 6 TSA is implemented in every odd year, e.g. 2015, 2017, etc.

the web. School-based support services are provided through on-site support based on the needs and situations of different schools. The EDB strengthens curriculum leadership of the schools and enhances teachers' understanding of the curriculum, which enables schools to incorporate curriculum targets into daily learning and assessment activities, make effective use of different student learning evidence collected, e.g. observations of student learning in class, performance in tasks, assessment data of internal and external assessments. The process facilitates review and provides feedback on learning and teaching to address specifically the strengths and weaknesses of students, which in turn facilitates student attainment of BCs to progress to the next stage of learning.

9. On the territory-wide level, TSA data help the Government review policies and provide focused support to schools. The EDB has been making reference to the TSA data for observation of the students' overall performance in CEM and preparing the "Territory-wide System Assessment Report" to be uploaded onto the web. The EDB also makes reference to the overall student performance in different BCs to set directions, focuses and themes, such as pedagogy for enhancing reading, for the school-based support services and professional development. To address the learning difficulties of students, the EDB conducts case studies and collects views from teachers through focus group interviews to develop a learning and teaching website entitled "Web-based Learning and Teaching Support" where follow-up measures and suggestions are provided for teachers' selection and reference to enable them to better understand the BCs to be acquired by students.

## **Review on TSA in 2015**

10. Since the implementation of TSA in 2004, EDB has been maintaining continuous dialogues with various stakeholders (including schools, teachers, parents, primary and secondary school councils, the TSA concern groups, etc.) to understand the implementation situation. It is noted that, notwithstanding the intended low-stakes purpose of the TSA, there have been voices that some stakeholders, including parents, have perceived it as an assessment of high-stakes that has induced great pressure to schools and students. Moreover, in some schools, teachers are still inclined to give students TSA-oriented drilling with practice papers, and some other schools even confine their design of learning tasks, homework, test or examination papers to match that of the TSA only. We also note that there has been confusion between the items of TSA and those from supplementary exercises. Some so-called TSA items widely circulated or publicised are actually supplementary exercise items instead of TSA items. These misunderstandings were caused by insufficient communication and

lack of information.

11. In response to the relevant concerns on TSA in the community, the Secretary for Education announced in late October 2015 that the Coordinating Committee, established in 2014 under the EDB, was tasked to conduct a comprehensive review on the operation and different implementation arrangements of TSA. To strengthen the representation of relevant stakeholders, the Committee introduced members from the area of home-school cooperation and representing secondary and primary schools. The membership list of the Committee is at **Annex B**. The Coordinating Committee is expected to come up with initial recommendations by late January/ early February 2016.

12. The focus of the review includes examining the original design and objective of the TSA; whether the prevailing arrangement for basic competence assessment achieves its original goal, including provision of information to schools and the government for improvement of school curriculum planning and enhancement of learning and teaching, as well as strengthening the provision of professional support to schools and teachers; whether and how TSA is to be implemented; and other short-term, medium-term and long-term improvement measures for addressing the concerns of the community, e.g. over-drilling, enhancing support to various stakeholders, and strengthening overall assessment to enhance assessment literacy.

13. Two working groups have been set up under the Coordinating Committee, which would respectively conduct in-depth examination on the reporting and administration arrangement of TSA, and the papers and question design of TSA. To better reflect views of different stakeholders, members from different school sponsoring bodies, primary and secondary school representatives, frontline teachers and experts have been invited to join the two working groups. We would also arrange focus groups and meetings to gauge views of stakeholders from related organisations.

14. As part of the discussion, the Coordinating Committee shared the local experience on making good use of TSA information to enhance learning and teaching, and the arrangement of system assessments overseas. The Coordinating Committee was also kept abreast of the concerns and views of various stakeholders on TSA (please refer to the section on “engagement of stakeholders” under paragraphs 16 to 18 below). The Coordinating Committee would take into consideration various kinds of opinions and balance the views of different sectors in the community in coming up with the suggestions for long-term enhancement.

## **Suspension, Continuation or Abolition of P3 TSA**

15. With reference to the issues regarding abolition, continuation and suspension of P3 TSA, the discussions held in the Coordinating Committee have not presumed any position and do not preclude suggestions of any kind. An open-minded attitude is maintained in considering the various implementation proposals in conducting the assessment. Based on the discussions so far, the Coordinating Committee meetings recognised the need and benefits of TSA to provide systematic assessment information on learning progress of students. In other words, there is no suggestion on abolishing P3 TSA immediately. With regard to suspending P3 TSA for 2016, the Coordinating Committee is aware that the recommendations have to be able to rectify the drilling situation as well as the perceived stake and enhance understanding of using data to improve learning for the benefits of students. As the EDB has pledged to announce recommendations of the review by late January or early February 2016, the Coordinating Committee has agreed not to rush to a conclusion at this stage on only one single recommendation (including suspension of P3 TSA in 2016). The Coordinating Committee and its working groups have already commenced detailed study on the benefits and trade-offs of the various options on the proposed implementations (including administering, reporting and improving the question design). The Coordinating Committee is confident that it would present recommendations to the EDB by late January or early February 2016.

## **Collection of Views on TSA from Stakeholders**

16. The Coordinating Committee attaches great importance to the views of stakeholders in conducting the review on TSA. In this connection, a number of sessions have been set up to meet various groups of stakeholders, including school heads, frontline teachers, district parent-teacher associations, parent concern groups, children's rights forum, regional parent seminars, etc. In addition to the five regional seminars inviting parents to attend through primary schools in 18 districts, the EDB will hold a seminar open to other parents to introduce TSA to them and collect their views on 19 January 2016. Details of that seminar and the sign-up arrangement are available at EDB's website. Views and suggestions from the public have also been received in written form<sup>2</sup>.

17. At the above-mentioned sessions, there were mixed views on retaining, improving as well as abolishing TSA. There were also suggestions requesting improvement concerning the length, item types and

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<sup>2</sup> The public can submit their views in written form through email ([asteam@edb.gov.hk](mailto:asteam@edb.gov.hk)) or by post.

the level of TSA items, the over-drilling problems directly or indirectly related to TSA, the support service provided to schools and students, as well as views on options of TSA implementation.

18. Based on the feedback received so far, it is observed that some public and parents are not well-equipped with the basic information on the operation, design and intent of TSA, as well as the related support available at the school and territory-wide levels for improving learning and teaching and the efficiency of students' learning. We will endeavor to enhance publicity effort in this aspect with a view to facilitating the discussion on review of TSA.

### **Professional Development and Capacity Building**

19. The EDB will continue to strengthen the promotion of *Assessment for Learning* and use of various modes of assessment through various channels, including professional development programmes, seminars and briefings, production of resource materials, publicity work and school visits, etc. Further to the release of the 2015 TSA results in December 2015, theme-based seminars for teachers to introduce effective ways of using assessment data and information to promote learning and teaching have been arranged.

20. We will continue to disseminate good school practices to parents and promote the meaningful use of TSA data to the school sector (including teachers, principals and school sponsoring bodies, etc.)

### **Advice Sought**

21. Members are invited to take note of the progress on the review on TSA by the Coordinating Committee.

**Education Bureau**  
**January 2016**

### **Implementation of the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA)**

- EDB commissioned the 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 and will be suspended in 2012 and 2014 respectively).
- The main purposes of TSA are :-
  - (i) to provide the Government and school management with information on school standards in key learning areas for the purposes of school improvement and to provide more focused support;
  - (ii) to provide teachers with feedback positively so as to enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching; and
  - (iii) to enhance assessment literacy and promote the culture of *assessment for learning* in schools, especially in basic education (P1 to S3).
- The design of this standards-referenced assessment is based on the BC Descriptors at the end of each learning key stage and the Curriculum Guide prepared by the Curriculum Development Council. The BC represent just part of the curriculum requirements. After the first year's administration of the TSA at each level (i.e. P3 in 2004, P6 in 2005 and S3 in 2006), panels of judges were formed to set the BC standards for the three subjects using two well-known psychometric methodologies (Angoff method and the Bookmark Method). The BC standards set remained unchanged across the years. To maintain the standards set, a research test is used to link and equate students' performance shortly before the conduct of each year's TSA.
- The TSA assessment items are endorsed by the Moderation Committees, which are composed of academics from tertiary institutions, serving teachers as well as officers from EDB and HKEAA. Meetings are conducted regularly to ensure item quality and consistency in item difficulty level.

- The assessments are conducted on designated dates and in the pencil and paper mode, except for the oral assessments of Chinese Language and English Language which are conducted by sampling. Each student is required to attempt only one sub-paper of each subject.
- On the day of release of TSA results, a TSA report with territory-wide data and students' performance exemplars, all question papers and marking schemes are uploaded to the HKEAA BCA website for public access. Schools can gather information from the website (particularly the territory-wide students' performance in different areas) and download their individual school reports, via a password preset for each school, for analyzing and evaluating the learning and teaching strategies.
- Apart from the school's overall attainment rates on the CEM subjects, the individual school level report also provides the item analysis report, cohort report and other supplementary reports, which serves the feedback purpose of TSA. No individual students' results are provided in the TSA school reports. The TSA results also do not affect schools' appeal in Primary One Admission nor students' allocation results under the Secondary School Places Allocation.
- Every year around November to December, the HKEAA will hold a series of seminars to help teachers interpret the TSA data and enhance their understanding about students' strengths and weaknesses.



## **Annex B**

### **Membership list of the Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy**

#### **Chairperson**

Deputy Secretary for Education

#### **Ex-officio Members**

Principal Assistant Secretary (Education Infrastructure), Education Bureau

Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum Development)/ Principal Education Officer  
(Curriculum Development) , Education Bureau

Secretary General of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority  
(*new member*)

Executive Director of the Hong Kong Education City Limited

#### **Members**

Professor Carol CHAN                      Professor, Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong

Ms CHAN Cheuk-lin, Irene              Principal, Po Leung Kuk Chee Jing Yin Primary School  
Dr CHAN So-ye, Zoe                      Curriculum Leader, L.K.W.F.S.L. Wong Yiu Nam  
Primary School

Mr CHEUNG Yung-pong,                  Principal, S.K.H. St. James' Primary School  
Langton (*new member*)

Dr CHONG Siu-man,                      Principal, Lai King Catholic Secondary School  
Ambrose

Professor HAU Kit-tai                      Choh-Ming Li Professor, The Chinese University of  
Hong Kong

Ms Martina KAN                              Chinese Panel Head, St. Francis' Canossian School

Mr LAI Tsz-man                              Principal, Kwok Man School

(*new member*)

Dr Winnie LAI                                  Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong

Ms LAM Sau-lan, Anna                      Vice Panel Head of English Department, Caritas Chong  
Yuet Ming Secondary School

Mr LAM Yat-fung, James                      Principal, Lions College  
(*new member*)

Ms LEE Suet-ying                              Principal, Ho Yu College and Primary School (Sponsored  
(*new member*)                                  by Sik Sik Yuen)

Mr LEUNG Wai-cheong	Vice-Principal, St. Anthony's School
Professor MOK Mo-ching, Magdalena	Chair Professor, The Hong Kong Institute of Education
Ms SIN Yuk-chun, Rosita	Chinese Panel Head, Stewards Ma Kam Ming Charitable Foundation Ma Ko Pan Memorial College
Mr TONG Sau-chai, Henry ( <i>new member</i> )	Chairman, Committee on Home-School Cooperation