

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(4)262/16-17(03)

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**Panel on Education**

**Meeting on 12 December 2016**

**Background brief on issues related to the  
review of Territory-wide System Assessment**

**Purpose**

This paper summarizes the major views and concerns of the Panel on Education ("the Panel") on issues related to the review of Territory-wide System Assessment ("TSA").

**Background**

Implementation of TSA

2. Introduced in 2004, TSA is an assessment of students' basic competencies ("BCs") upon completion of the three key learning stages (i.e. Primary ("P") 3, P6 and Secondary ("S") 3) in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. All P3, P6 and S3 students in subsidized schools participate in TSA annually (except P6 TSA which has been conducted in alternate years since 2012).

3. The design of assessment items is based on BC descriptors at the end of each key stage of learning and the Curriculum Guide prepared by the Curriculum Development Council. When TSA results are released, each participating school will obtain a TSA report with territory-wide data and a school level report which contains no individual student's results.

4. According to the Education Bureau ("EDB"), TSA is a low-stake assessment. Its data is neither used to rank or classify schools, nor to serve as an index for imposing measures on schools to cease operation. A number of enhancement measures have been launched since the introduction of TSA to improve its implementation arrangements.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See LC Paper No. CB(4)284/13-14(03)

## Review of TSA in 2015

5. On account of widespread public concerns about TSA, especially excessive drilling by schools, the Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy ("the Coordinating Committee")<sup>2</sup> conducted a comprehensive review on the implementation of TSA in late 2015.

6. In its report submitted to EDB in February 2016<sup>3</sup>, the Coordinating Committee recognized that the assessment papers and question design for TSA could be adjusted to reflect more clearly the intent of the assessment of BC. The Coordinating Committee's recommendations in this respect are set out in **Appendix I**. The Coordinating Committee also proposed to launch a Tryout Study at P3 level ("2016 Tryout Study") with an aim of enhancing TSA. The Administration accepted the recommendation and launched the 2016 Tryout Study in May 2016.

7. More than 50 primary schools from different districts, types (government, aided, Direct Subsidy Scheme and private) and sizes (i.e. about 10% of the primary schools in the territory) joined the 2016 Tryout Study on a voluntary basis or by invitation. The report of the 2016 Tryout Study was submitted to EDB in early November 2016.

8. Other recommendations made by the Coordinating Committee are summarized in **Appendix II**.

## **Major views and concerns**

9. During the Fifth Legislative Council, the Panel held several meetings to consider relevant issues, including a prolonged meeting to receive views from over 80 stakeholders including parents, teachers, students and the school sector over TSA. The major issues of concern raised by members are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

### Excessive drilling

10. Members shared the concern of many deputations that TSA had deviated from its intended purpose and become a "high-stake" assessment. Its implementation had led to excessive drilling by schools while teaching

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<sup>2</sup> The Coordinating Committee was established in 2014 under EDB.

<sup>3</sup> *Report on Review of the Territory-wide System Assessment* is available on <http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/curriculum-development/tsa/fullreport.pdf>.

and assessment had become TSA-oriented. There were criticisms that TSA questions had become increasingly difficult and tricky. The Panel urged the Administration to take effective measures to curb excessive drilling so as to remove pressure on students and teachers.

11. In its reply, the Administration explained that BCs were part of the curriculum incorporated in daily learning activities and internal assessments. Schools should not over-drill students or change their teaching and assessment methods because of TSA. EDB had issued guidelines and letters to schools in October and December 2015 respectively, advising them to formulate an appropriate school-based homework and assessment policy, and not to adopt drilling practices. The assessment papers and question design of the 2016 Tryout Study would be adjusted to tie in with the curriculum and student learning so as to reduce the incentives for over-drilling.

#### Usefulness of TSA data

12. Some members opined that the reliability of the TSA results was questionable if students' performance was the result of intensive drilling. The Coordinating Committee recognized the intent and the functional use of TSA data to provide feedback for improving learning and teaching, and considered it important to keep conducting TSA to retain its function. It was also noted that some schools have found the school level reports very useful in analyzing students' performance of enhancing teaching strategies. Different reporting formats would be introduced after the conduct of the 2016 Tryout Study to meet the needs of individual schools.

#### The suspension, continuation or abolition of TSA

13. Some members supported the continuation of TSA with improvements to its implementation, while some called for its abolition. Given the imminence of the P3 TSA scheduled for May 2016 and to allow time to address various concerns, the Panel passed a motion at the meeting on 11 January 2016 urging the Administration to, amongst others, suspend the P3 TSA. The wording of the motion is in **Appendix III**.

14. The Administration reiterated its stance that it was necessary to put in place TSA so that students' attainment of BCs could be gauged at the end of the three key learning stages. Otherwise, students' weakness in performance, if any, would not be known before results of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination were available. On the way forward for TSA, the Coordinating Committee considered that modifications to administrative arrangement of TSA could not effectively address the various public concerns, and that TSA should continue to be carried out.

### Communication with stakeholders

15. On concerns that TSA might be used by the Administration as one of the measures to evaluate schools' performance when considering the allocation of resources, EDB confirmed that it would issue internal guidelines to explicitly reiterate that TSA data would not be used to assess the performance of a school in the External School Review. Starting from the 2016-2017 school year, TSA would be removed from the focus questions under "8.1 Academic Performance" of the "Performance Indicators". Public education would also be strengthened so as to enhance stakeholders' awareness of TSA as part of the concept of "assessment for learning" with a view to enhancing quality education.

### The 2016 Tryout Study

16. Some members were concerned that EDB had already concluded that TSA would be fully resumed in 2017 before the outcome of the 2016 Tryout Study was known. They considered that a thorough and critical review on TSA should be conducted. According to the Administration, it would take into account whether the revamped paper and question design, as well as the revised reporting arrangements adopted in the 2016 Tryout Study could help eliminate the incentives for over-drilling and bring learning and teaching back on track. The assessment arrangement in 2017 would then be appropriately enhanced.

### **Relevant Council questions and motions**

17. Members expressed concerns about the pressure on teachers, students and parents, over-drilling and whether TSA should be abolished in their questions raised at the Council meetings of 27 May, 4 and 18 November 2015 and 24 February 2016.

18. At the Council meeting of 25 November 2015, a motion was moved urging the Administration to, amongst others, expeditiously abolish P3 TSA as well as review P6 and S3 TSA, but the motion was negatived.

### **Latest position**

19. The Administration will brief members on the feedback of the 2016 Tryout Study and the latest development on TSA review at the meeting on 12 December 2016.

**Relevant papers**

20. A list of relevant papers on the website of the Legislative Council is in **Appendix IV**.

Council Business Division 4  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
6 December 2016

### **Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy**

#### **Recommendations on Improvement to Assessment Papers and Question Design**

On assessment papers and question design, major recommendations of the Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy include:

- (i) Principles of modification:
  - learning needs of students;
  - alleviating the learning burden on students;
  - aligning with the spirit of curriculum; and
  - adopting appropriate choice of words and phrases in assessment materials.
  
- (ii) Primary 3 Chinese Language:
  - the number of texts in the reading assessment will be adjusted from three to two; the total number of words per sub-paper will be limited to not more than 1 200 and the number of items will not exceed 20; practical writing will only be included in one of the sub-papers of reading to avoid giving undue weight to practical writing;
  - in the writing assessment, certain information required for practical writing will be provided, such as salutation, complimentary close, greetings and date of a letter, etc.; the marking criteria on the format of practical writing will be adjusted; student exemplars demonstrating the attainment of basic competency will be provided; and
  - a review of “five-options-choose-two” items, items requiring “reverse thinking” and so forth in each paper will be conducted.

(iii) Primary 3 English Language:

- the number of parts in the reading assessment will be reduced from four to three. The number of words per reading task will be limited to not more than 150 and the number of words of the whole paper will be capped at 400;
- to help students manage the assessment time for the reading and writing paper, invigilators will announce the time twice during the examination, i.e. 15 minutes and 5 minutes before the end of examination;
- items expecting answers in the past tense in the writing assessment will be scrapped, such as writing a recount; and
- assessment items on basic book concepts should be avoided.

(iv) Primary 3 Mathematics:

- the number of items will be reduced, with an immediate cut of around 20%;
- only one basic competency will be assessed in each item; and
- items requiring solving linking problems will be minimised.

### **Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy**

#### **Recommendations to Address Concerns in the Community about TSA**

To address various concerns in the community about TSA (including over-drilling, different stakeholders' perception of the stakes involved and the provision of support to schools and students), the Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy has made the following recommendations:

(i) Over-drilling

- to refine TSA papers and item design to align better with the requirements of basic competencies and tie in with schools' everyday teaching and students' learning needs. In this way, the need for schools and students to prepare for TSA by drilling will be eliminated, enhancing learning and teaching, minimising impact on the balanced and whole-person development of students;
- through enhancing training and development for teaching staff at different stages (including training for prospective teachers, pre-service training for appointed teachers, and in-service training for serving teachers), to enable them to get acquainted with curriculum arrangements, teaching strategies and teaching resources, as well as to improve the assessment literacy, understanding that over-drilling is ineffective to facilitate student learning; and
- to strengthen communication among the EDB, school sponsoring bodies, schools, parents, students and different stakeholders in the education sector in order to promote understanding and support of the schools' arrangements on homework, exercises and tests/examinations.

(ii) Stakeholders' perception of the stakes involved in TSA

- the EDB to reassure the education sector of the low-stakes design of TSA. Specific internal guidelines should be issued to explicitly state that the EDB will not use TSA data to assess the performance of a school (e.g. External School Review). From the 2016/17 school year, TSA should be removed from the focus questions under "8.1 Academic Performance" of the "Performance Indicators" to alleviate schools' concerns. In addition, provision on schools' good use of TSA data to

provide feedback to learning and teaching should be further emphasised under “3.3 Performance Assessment”; and

- to step up public education and promote assessment literacy to encourage the public and the education sector for cultivating a positive and right attitude towards the application of assessment data to serve the function of “assessment for learning”.

(iii) Strengthening support for learning

- to organise seminars and workshops for different stakeholders in school;
- to encourage experience sharing among schools on the use of TSA data to enhance the curriculum and enrich teaching activities;
- to further promote the use of the “Web-based Learning and Teaching Support” platform (including exercises and learning materials that are developed based on TSA data) to support and facilitate learning and teaching;
- to conduct consultancy studies and visits to learn more about the relevant practices in other places, particularly their approaches in using assessment data for devising measures to support teaching in school and student learning; and
- to provide effective support to schools.

(iv) Enhancing transparency and strengthening communication with parents

- the EDB to disseminate information related to TSA through various channels to enhance transparency and strengthen communication with parents, helping them to understand the purpose, implementation and function of TSA

## **Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy**

### **Medium and Long-term Improvement Measures on TSA**

In the medium and long run, the Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy has made the following recommendations:

- (i) to enhance the overall assessment literacy among various sectors, including understanding assessment as an integral part of learning and teaching, knowing the functions of daily exercises, schools' internal examinations, public examinations and assessment studies; enhancing the capacities of making use of assessment data to provide feedback to learning and teaching and to develop and enhance the school-based curriculum and learning activities; as well as strengthening the communication and collaboration among various sectors, such as:
  - for school sponsoring bodies, incorporated management committee members, EDB visiting officers: promoting among them the understanding that the TSA data reflect and assess only part of the learning objectives, and student and school backgrounds should be taken into account in the relevant analysis;
  - for principals (including aspiring principals, newly-appointed principals): promoting among them the understanding of using TSA information for leading the school in enhancing learning and teaching;
  - for curriculum leaders and teachers: promoting among them the understanding of using TSA information for planning curriculum, enhancing curriculum leadership and providing feedback to learning and teaching;
  - for prospective teachers: equipping them with the understanding of the concept of the TSA design and its implementation as well as the knowledge of assessment for learning;
  - for parents: promoting among them the understanding of the concept of assessment for learning, strengthening home-school cooperation and communication for better understanding of their children's learning needs; and

- HKEAA officers: promoting assessment for Learning through enhancing assessment items and reports.
- (ii) in the long run, to review the overall arrangements for basic competency assessment and the formulation of basic competencies, to continue to draw reference from the assessment practices in other places;
- (iii) to expand the existing central online assessment bank, “Student Assessment”, to better serve everyday learning, teaching and assessment;
- (iv) to further promote professional development among schools, and to share successful experiences in making good use of assessment to benefit learning and teaching through the Quality Education Fund Thematic Networks;
- (v) to review the arrangements of basic competency assessment for students with special educational needs and non-Chinese speaking students;
- (vi) to ensure the interests of students should come first in the practices of effective learning and teaching in accordance with the curriculum documents so as to equip students with the abilities to embrace future challenges with a positive and proactive attitude and pursue lifelong learning and whole-person development; and
- (vii) to review the above recommendations on an on-going basis for improvement.

**教育事務委員會  
Panel on Education**

**在 2016 年 1 月 11 日會議上  
就議程項目"全港性系統評估的暫緩和存廢的有關事宜"  
通過的議案**

**Motion passed under the agenda item "Issues related to the suspension, continuation or abolition of the Territory-wide System Assessment" at the meeting on 11 January 2016**

**議案措辭**

本委員會促請政府當局切實回應社會訴求，暫緩小學三年級全港性系統性評估，邀請持不同意見的家長群組、校長代表、教師代表和學者加入基本能力評估及評估素養統籌委員會，以取得各界的信任，達致各方面都同意的全港系統性評估檢討方案。

(葉建源議員動議)

**Wording of the Motion**

(Translation)

That this Panel urges the Administration to respond genuinely to the aspirations of the community by suspending the Primary 3 Territory-wide System Assessment ("TSA"), and to invite parent groups, representatives of school principals, representatives of teachers and academics holding different views to join the Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy, so as to gain the trust of various sectors and reach an option agreed by all parties following the TSA review.

(Moved by Hon IP Kin-yuen)

## Appendix IV

### List of relevant papers

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Paper</b>
Legislative Council	27.5.2015	<a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings Pages 35 – 38 (Question 9)</a>
Legislative Council	4.11.2015	<a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings Pages 31 – 42 (Question 3)</a>
Legislative Council	18.11.2015	<a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings Pages 93 – 105 (Question 14)</a>
Legislative Council	25.11.2015	<a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings Pages 164 – 278 (Members' motion)</a>
Panel on Education	29.11.2015 (Item I)	<a href="#">Agenda CB(4)308/15-16(01) CB(4)391/15-16(01) Minutes</a>
Panel on Education	11.1.2016 (Item IV)	<a href="#">Agenda CB(4)579/15-16(01) CB(4)580/15-16(01) Minutes CB(4)670/15-16(01)</a>
Legislative Council	24.2.2016	<a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings Pages 23 – 30 (Question 6)</a>
Panel on Education	22.3.2016 (Item V)	<a href="#">Agenda Minutes</a>
Panel on Education	19.5.2016*	<a href="#">CB(4)1011/15-16(02)</a>

\* Issued date