

For discussion  
on 13 April 2018

## **Legislative Council Panel on Education Review of Basic Competency Assessment**

### **Purpose**

The Education Bureau (EDB) accepted the recommendations made by the Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy (the Committee) regarding the review of the Primary 3 Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) on 16 March, including the adoption of a sampling approach observing the principle of “no student names, no school names and no collection of school reports” for TSA in 2018 and beyond. This paper introduces to Members the recommendations made by the Committee.

### **Background**

2. Assessment, curriculum and learning and teaching are closely related. An important function of assessment is to enhance learning and teaching, i.e. adopting a variety of modes of assessment and strategies according to the goals and process of learning, and providing timely feedback to teachers and students to adjust teaching and improve learning, and to bring the greatest benefits to students’ learning. Therefore, assessment and follow-up work after assessment play a vital role in quality basic education. Background information on the implementation of “assessment for learning” in Hong Kong is set out in *Annex 1*.

3. In 2000, the Education Commission proposed to implement Basic Competency Assessment and put forward specific directions on “assessment for learning”. Basic Competency Assessment comprises three components, namely TSA, Student Assessment and Web-based Learning and Teaching Support (WLTS).

4. TSA is originally a low-stake assessment which does not provide assessment results of individual students. In addition, the EDB has made it clear that it will not use TSA results to evaluate the performance of schools. In respect of its function, TSA has been providing useful feedback at both the territory-wide and school levels. At the territory-wide level, TSA provides information for the Government to review education policies, set directions for and priorities of professional training, provide learning and teaching resources, plan school-based support services, review

the curriculum, and use related data for further analysis and research. At the school level, TSA school reports can provide detailed item analysis for all papers and other supplementary information, helping schools to understand the overall strengths and weaknesses of students. Schools can take respective measures to follow up and help students learn so as to enhance learning and teaching.

## **Review of Primary 3 TSA**

### Arrangements for the Review in 2015-17

5. Since the introduction of TSA in 2004<sup>1</sup>, the EDB has maintained close communication with various stakeholders to learn about the implementation progress and stakeholders' views, and to make improvements. To continue to respond to the public's concerns about TSA, the Secretary for Education announced in late October 2015 that the Committee would conduct a comprehensive review of Basic Competency Assessment.

6. Throughout the entire review that took more than two years, the Committee had adhered to the following core values and adopted a professional-led approach to ensuring that the review was premised on the promotion of quality education:

- (i) catering for the learning needs of students;
- (ii) upholding professionalism; and
- (iii) fostering mutual trust among stakeholders.

7. To ensure that the review was comprehensive, rigorous, systematic and evidence-based, the Committee collected stakeholders' views through different channels and proposed four targeted enhancement measures (mainly include improving assessment papers and question design; enhancing school reports; strengthening professional support measures; and including a questionnaire survey on students' learning attitude and motivation). It proceeded to introduce the 2016 Tryout Study (Primary 3) (involving about 10% of the primary schools in the territory) and the 2017 Basic Competency Assessment Research Study (extending to all primary schools in the territory) in a step-by-step approach.

---

<sup>1</sup> Primary 3, Primary 6 and Secondary 3 TSAs were implemented since 2004, 2005 and 2006 respectively. Since 2014, the Primary 6 TSA has been implemented in odd-numbered years (i.e. 2015, 2017 and so on).

## Stakeholders' Views and Feedback

8. Throughout the two-year review process, the Committee have heeded and collected views and recommendations of the education sector and stakeholders through different channels. Views were collected through questionnaire surveys<sup>2</sup> and 191 consultation sessions<sup>3</sup> of various types (including focus groups, seminars and meetings), covering school sponsoring bodies of more than 70% of primary schools in the territory, about 3 000 primary school heads and teachers from 509 primary schools (including all government, subsidised and Direct Subsidy Scheme primary schools and some private primary schools) and more than 23 000 parents of Primary 3 students.

9. Having consolidated and concluded the views of different stakeholders and schools' experiences, the Committee submitted the Report on Review of the Primary 3 Territory-wide System Assessment 2015-2017<sup>4</sup> on 16 March 2018. In general, most stakeholders affirm the function and importance of TSA in providing feedback to learning and teaching at both the territory-wide and school levels:

- (i) At the territory-wide level, stakeholders agree that the Government needs to have assessment information at the system level, including attainment rates, territory-wide percentage of correct responses and analysis of other student groups (non-Chinese speaking students), with the aim of grasping Hong Kong students' learning performance in the three subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics, and evaluating and monitoring Hong Kong's educational standards for formulation of appropriate policies;
- (ii) At the school level, schools need feedback to improve learning and teaching. Attaching great importance to the realisation of school-based management, school sponsoring bodies wish to have objective tools and feedback to understand the performance of schools under their purview, with a view to providing support.

10. In addition, stakeholders agreed that the four major enhancement measures (as stipulated in paragraph 7) should have effectively removed the incentives for drilling induced by TSA and alleviated public concerns about

---

<sup>2</sup> The 2016 Tryout Study (Primary 3) and the 2017 Basic Competency Assessment Research Study conducted 6 and 5 questionnaire surveys for different stakeholders respectively.

<sup>3</sup> The 2016 Tryout Study (Primary 3) and the 2017 Basic Competency Assessment Research Study conducted 97 and 94 consultation sessions respectively, with a total of 191 sessions.

<sup>4</sup> Report on Review of the Primary 3 Territory-wide System Assessment 2015-2017 (March 2018)  
<http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/curriculum-development/assessment/about-assessment/2015-17-tsa-report-en.pdf>

the risks of TSA. In eliminating the incentives for drilling, assessment papers and question design are improved to align with the Basic Competencies of Primary 3 which are already covered in daily teaching so additional drilling is not necessary. In addition, the questions are uploaded on the same day after the completion of the assessment to facilitate public's understanding that the assessment papers and questions of TSA are aligned with the Basic Competencies of Primary 3 and not overly difficult. Therefore, there is no need to purchase additional supplementary exercises. Regarding alleviating concerns about the risks induced by TSA, the EDB strengthens internal guidelines to point out explicitly that the EDB does not use TSA data to assess the performance of schools. TSA has been removed from the Performance Indicators for Schools to emphasise its functions on promoting assessment for learning in order to alleviate schools' concerns about possible risks brought by assessment data.

11. The major views of different stakeholders are set out in Part 3 of Chapter 4 of the Report on Review of the Primary 3 Territory-wide System Assessment 2015-2017.

## **Recommendations of the Committee**

### Enhancement Measures

12. After conducting the review of more than two years, the Committee concluded the experiences and considered that the enhancement measures could effectively remove the incentives for drilling and factors making TSA a high-stake assessment. Therefore, the Committee recommends implementing the four major enhancement measures (as stipulated in paragraph 7) **on a regular basis**.

### Primary 3 TSA in 2018 and Beyond

13. In spite of this, the Committee noted that some members of the community have yet established sufficient confidence in the TSA that have adopted the four major enhancement measures. In addition, the community's understanding of TSA and schools' development in the use of assessment information to improve learning and teaching vary in pace. On the other hand, the Committee also noted that in the review, the education sector generally agrees with the concept of assessment for learning. A considerable number of schools would like their Primary 3 students to participate in TSA and obtain detailed school reports so that they can draw reference from the analysis to improve learning and teaching in a focused manner. The Committee considered that in addition to the perspectives of the education

profession, other factors must also be taken into account. After careful consideration regarding the arrangements for Primary 3 TSA in 2018 and beyond, the Committee proposed to the Government **the arrangements at the territory-wide and school levels be handled separately:**

- (i) Selecting students to participate in the annual Primary 3 TSA by sampling for collecting information at the territory-wide level
  - To ensure that the Government can obtain information of reference value and representativeness at the territory-wide level (including territory-wide attainment rate, territory-wide percentage of correct responses and analysis of different groups of students), **about 10% of Primary 3 students will be sampled from each school for the assessment each year.** In addition, to understand the overall learning performance of non-Chinese speaking students and students with special educational needs so as to provide appropriate support, a certain number of students from these two student groups have to be separately sampled to meet the statistical requirements. Students' performance will only be counted as territory-wide data. Since only a small number of students in each school will participate in the assessment, **school reports will not be provided.** The overall performance of non-Chinese speaking students and students with special educational needs will be used to prepare special reports for the Government to monitor the effectiveness of learning support for these two student groups.
  
- (ii) Schools can choose to arrange all Primary 3 students to participate
  - If schools consider that the school-level reports can help them understand the overall strengths and weaknesses of students and formulate targeted measures to facilitate students' learning, arrangements could be made by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) for participation of all Primary 3 students and provision of school reports. Schools with such plans may approach the HKEAA directly. **The EDB will not obtain school reports of individual schools from the HKEAA,** and will not enquire about the identity of participating schools.

14. In addition, in respect of enhancing assessment literacy, the Committee has made a number of recommendations, including enhancing the assessment literacy of schools and teachers as well as their abilities to make

good use of assessment information; strengthening support for schools; continuing the development of quality online learning-teaching-assessment resources; exploring greater transparency of students' performance data; encouraging schools to organise parent education activities and fostering the community's understanding of assessment literacy. Details of related recommendations are set out in *Annex 2*.

15. The EDB considered the Committee's considerations adequate and comprehensive and therefore accepted the recommendations made by the Committee.

### **Practical Arrangements**

16. The EDB has issued a circular memorandum to all primary schools in the territory to introduce the arrangements for TSA in 2018 and beyond. The HKEAA also conducted a briefing session in late March 2018 for primary schools in the territory on the administrative arrangements for Primary 3 TSA. Schools with all their Primary 3 students to participate should contact the HKEAA on or before 9 April 2018. The overall administrative work has progressed smoothly. The speaking and written assessments for Primary 3 TSA will be conducted on 2 or 3 May and 12 and 13 June 2018 respectively. Schools were informed of the dates of the written assessments through the circular memorandum issued by the EDB in June 2017.

### **For Members' Information**

17. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

**Education Bureau**  
**April 2018**

## **Background of Implementing “Assessment for Learning” in Hong Kong**

### “Assessment for Learning”

Assessment, curriculum and learning and teaching are closely related. Follow-up work after assessment is an important part of the entire “learning, teaching and assessment” process, playing a vital role in quality basic education.

2. In the “Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong” issued in 2000, the Education Commission anticipated that the deep-rooted concept of society regarding assessment as a screening tool would be a major obstacle to promoting “assessment for learning”. To help schools carry out effective assessment, the Education Commission proposed in 2000 to introduce “Basic Competency Assessment” for Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics and put forward concrete directions on “assessment for learning”, recommending schools to put more emphasis on “assessment for learning” as an integral part of the daily learning, teaching and assessment cycle, and providing schools with an additional tool to understand the learning progress and needs of students.

3. To this day, it is still emphasised in the latest curriculum documents for Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics, viz. the Key Learning Area Curriculum Guides (Primary 1 - Secondary 6) published in 2017 that the promotion of “assessment for learning” should continue and there should be good use of assessment data to review students’ learning outcomes to inform learning and teaching. This reflects that “assessment for learning” should be a major component of the local curriculum framework, part of daily teaching, and even more, an important element in providing quality and suitable arrangements for learning and teaching to address the needs of students.

### School-based Management and School-based Curriculum

4. In addition, the Government has introduced the School Management Initiative (SMI) since 1991. In the Education Commission Report No. 7 on Quality Education issued in 1997, one of the major recommendations was that the Government should devolve more responsibilities to schools and enable them to have greater autonomy and flexibility to develop their own characteristics, cater for students’ different learning needs and enhance learning outcomes. To tie in with the implementation of school-based

management, the Education (Amendment) Ordinance 2004 came into effect on 1 January 2005. To develop quality education, schools have to adopt appropriate teaching and management practices and seek self-improvement to ensure accountability for the quality of education.

5. Pursuing school-based management policies, the EDB provides schools with a central curriculum framework that is coherent and flexible. Schools can make flexible adaptation and design a curriculum based on their school-based needs. Therefore, schools need a set of objective, reliable and valid tools to evaluate the effectiveness of the objectives set, the school-based curriculum and the arrangements formulated according to the schools' actual circumstances. Such information, when coupled with internal assessment data, can give teachers a fuller picture of the learning progress and needs of students and serve as a reference for developing the school-based curriculum, designing teaching methods and providing remedial support for individual students, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of learning and teaching.

**The Coordinating Committee on  
Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy  
Report on Review of the Primary 3 Territory-wide System Assessment  
2015-17**

**Other recommendations for enhancing assessment literacy**

In addition to recommending the arrangements for Primary 3 TSA in 2018 and beyond, the Committee noted during the entire review that there is an urgent need to enhance the assessment literacy of the education sector and the community. Other recommendations for enhancing assessment literacy are set out below:

Enhancing the assessment literacy of schools and teachers and their abilities to make good use of assessment information

2. It was indicated at the focus groups that the education sector's understanding and grasp of assessment had to be enhanced. It is recommended that the EDB has to continue to strengthen training for serving and newly recruited teachers, e.g. referring to good examples provided in the section on assessment in curriculum documents to help teachers better understand the concepts and implementation of assessment. The Committee agrees that it is necessary to continuously enhance the assessment literacy of schools and teachers, including strengthening focus inspections and school-based support services relating to assessment literacy, gathering schools' good experiences in and practices on the effective use of assessment data, and organising workshops on better use of assessment strategies to enhance learning and teaching in a systematic manner, etc. These initiatives are conducive to the continuous enhancement of the education sector's assessment literacy. In addition, discussions with teacher training institutions will also be held to further enhance the assessment literacy of pre-service teachers, including making use of assessment results to help students achieve better learning outcomes.

3. To cater for the needs of different schools, the Committee recommends that further school-level feedback information be made available for schools' selection, such as schools' attainment rates, reports on the performance of students with special educational needs (reference could be made to the practice of the existing reports on the performance of non-Chinese speaking students, and that a school should have five or more students with special educational needs to participate in TSA), etc.

### Strengthening support for schools

4. Under the concept of “assessment for learning”, follow-up work after assessment is an important part of the entire assessment system. TSA could benefit learning mainly because feedback provided by the assessment reports enables schools to take appropriate follow-up actions, make use of/apply for appropriate support services as necessary and thus enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching. Over the years, the EDB has been providing schools with support in various forms, including school-based support services and workshops to promote assessment for learning. In this connection, the Committee considers it necessary to continuously strengthen support for schools and teachers in the enhancement of assessment literacy. School sponsoring bodies may also apply for the Quality Education Fund to render support to schools at different levels using an evidence-based approach to raising students’ standards in languages and Mathematics.

### Continuing the development of quality online learning-teaching-assessment resources

5. The Committee considers it necessary to continue developing quality online learning-teaching-assessment resources, including enhancing the WLTS and STAR platforms, intensifying pilot projects on student adaptive learning to help schools cater for learner diversity, and providing learning and teaching materials appropriate to the learning progress of individual students to facilitate their self-learning.

### Exploring greater transparency of students’ performance data

6. In response to the views repeatedly reflected by parents in focus groups, the Committee considers that in enhancing the arrangements for TSA further, ways to respond to parents’ requests for information on students’ performance in TSA should also be explored.

### Encouraging schools to organise parent education activities

7. To enhance parents’ assessment literacy and deepen their understanding of “assessment for learning”, the Committee considers that schools should step up efforts on seminars/talks for parents on assessment literacy/school-based assessment policies to deepen mutual understanding and trust, and enable parents to understand better how to make good use of assessment to help their children learn effectively.

## Fostering assessment literacy of the community

8. The Committee recommends that public education be strengthened by disseminating information on TSA and assessment literacy through different channels to enable the public to acquire an understanding of the concept of assessment for learning and further deepen mutual trust among stakeholders.