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Panel on Education

Meeting on 13 April 2018

Background brief on issues related to Primary 3 Basic Competency Assessment Research Study

Purpose

This paper summarizes the major views and concerns of the Panel on Education ("the Panel") on issues related to Primary 3 Basic Competency Assessment Research Study ("P3 BCA").

Background

2. Introduced in 2004, the Territory-wide System Assessment ("TSA") is an assessment of students' basic competencies in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics upon completion of three key learning stages (i.e. P3, P6 and Secondary 3).

3. In recent years, there have been widespread public concerns over P3 TSA because some schools over-drilled their students for the assessment. To address the concerns, the Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy ("the Coordinating Committee")¹ conducted a comprehensive review on the TSA in late 2015², and recommended implementing the 2016 Tryout Study (Primary 3) ("Tryout Study").

4. The Tryout Study covering four new initiatives³ with a view to minimizing drilling for TSA was participated by more than 50 primary schools on a voluntary basis or by invitation. The report of the Tryout

¹ The Coordinating Committee was established in 2014 under the Education Bureau.

² The Coordinating Committee's report on the review of TSA is available on:
<http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/curriculum-development/tsa/fullreport.pdf>

³ The four new initiatives include: (a) improving assessment papers and question design; (b) enhancing school reports; (c) strengthening professional support measures; and (d) including a questionnaire survey on students' learning attitude and motivation.

Study⁴ recommended, inter alia, extending the implementation of the Tryout Study to all primary schools in the territory in order to collect more comprehensive feedback so as to continue to review related arrangements. EDB accepted the Coordinating Committee's recommendations and introduced P3 BCA to all primary schools in 2017. The report on P3 BCA was submitted to EDB in March 2018.

Major views and concerns

5. The Panel held two meetings to discuss the implementation of the Tryout Study and P3 BCA on 12 December 2016 and 8 May 2017 respectively. The major views and concerns expressed by members are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

Future arrangements for P3 BCA

6. Some members called for the abolition of P3 BCA because the enhancement measures recommended by the Coordinating Committee could not eliminate the incentives for over-drilling. Given that students' competencies could be gauged by internal assessments, some members queried the need for the assessment. The Administration responded that internal assessment could only assess performance of individual students, and could not provide data to facilitate schools' understanding of students' levels in the territory so as to improve learning and teaching in the long run. It was necessary to conduct an assessment at the end of Stage 1 of learning (i.e. P1 to P3) so as to provide feedback for improving teaching strategies at Stage 2 of learning (i.e. P4 to P6). If there was only an assessment at P6, it might be too late to take remedial measures to improve the teaching and learning before students entered secondary schools. Furthermore, P3 BCA would not collect information on the performance of individual students, there was no need to prepare for it by means of drilling.

7. While recognizing the need to have an assessment tool like BCA to gauge students' attainment in basic competencies, some members suggested the Administration to conduct P3 BCA in alternate years on a sampling basis and with anonymity of students and schools to avoid comparisons among schools and excessive drilling. There was also a view that parents should be given the chance to choose whether their children would take the assessment. The Administration advised that if

⁴ Report on 2016 Tryout Study (Primary 3) is available on:
<http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/curriculum-development/assessment/about-assessment/2016fullreport-e.pdf>

BCA was conducted on a sampling or an anonymous basis, data could only be provided at the system level and could not serve the purpose of providing feedback at the school level. The usefulness of the assessment data would be affected eventually.

Communication with stakeholders

8. Noting that parents and teachers of the tryout schools had given very positive feedback on the improved assessment, some members urged the Administration to disseminate the positive feedback to the public so as to alleviate their concerns about over-drilling. The Administration responded that video clips sharing the experience of the parents and teachers were available on the Internet.

Composition of the Coordinating Committee

9. On concerns that there was a lack of representation of parent concern groups in the Coordinating Committee and some of its members' holding pre-conceived ideas about the implementation of BCA, the Administration advised that various stakeholders were invited to participate in the Coordinating Committee to strengthen its representation and members had provided valuable insights to the Administration.

Relevant Council question

10. A question on the implementation of BCA was raised at the Council meeting of 17 May 2017.

Latest position

11. At the Panel meeting on 13 April 2018, the Administration will brief members on the outcome of the review of BCA and future arrangements.

Relevant papers

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

Appendix

List of relevant papers

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Education	12.12.2016 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes CB(4)552/16-17(01) CB(4)683/16-17(01)
Panel on Education	24.1.2017 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes CB(4)552/16-17(01) CB(4)683/16-17(01)
Panel on Education	8.5.2017 (Item III)	Agenda Minutes CB(4)1223/16-17(01)
Legislative Council	17.5.2017	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 7-11 (Question 1)
Panel on Education	31.10.2017 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes CB(4)654/17-18(01)

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