

For discussion on
1 June 2018

Legislative Council Panel on Education **Development of Quality Assurance in Kindergarten Education**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the latest development in enhancing quality assurance in kindergarten (KG) education under the new KG policy.

Details

2. KG education lays vital foundation for children's balanced development and life-long learning by fostering in children an inquisitive mind, an interest in learning and exploration, a balanced development, a healthy self-concept, and the ability as well as confidence to adapt to the ever-changing world, such that children can be nurtured to become adults who can contribute to the community. Towards this end, the Government has implemented the new KG education policy starting from the 2017/18 school year. The policy objectives are to provide good quality and highly affordable KG education, and enhance the accessibility of students to different modes of services that suit their specific needs. Under the new policy, quality of KG education is being improved through various means including, among others, promoting teachers' professional development, catering for students' diverse needs, enhancing the Quality Assurance (QA) Framework, etc..

Refinement of Performance Indicators

3. The QA Framework comprises School Self-evaluation (SSE) by KGs and Quality Review (QR) by the Education Bureau (EDB), both of which are conducted on the basis of Performance Indicators (PIs). All KGs joining the new KG education scheme (Scheme-KGs) are subject to this QA Framework. They are required to conduct ongoing SSE for school development and accountability while QR serves to complement SSE to foster the sustainable development of KGs.

4. To ensure the effectiveness of QA, EDB has refined the PIs to dovetail with the development of education, changes of the society, children’s developmental needs and implementation of various measures under the new KG education policy. For refining the PIs, the Advisory Group on the Review of PIs (Advisory Group), comprising early childhood education (ECE) experts, frontline early childhood educators and lay members was set up in 2014 to gauge comments and suggestions from various stakeholders. In the process, views and practical experiences were also collected from tertiary education institutions, school sponsoring bodies and KGs through on-site interviews, try-out programmes, etc. Besides, reference was drawn from local and international research findings and practices for thorough discussion in the Advisory Group meetings.

5. The PIs are refined on the basis of the last version issued in 2003¹ which are grouped under four Domains, namely Management and Organisation, Learning and Teaching, School Culture and Support for Children, and Child Development. Under each of the four macro-level domains, the *Performance Indicators* are categorised into the tiers of Area, Performance Indicator, Aspect and Evidence of Performance. They cover various aspects of school operation and essential information on children development, guiding KGs to evaluate the effectiveness of their school performance comprehensively. Major features of the refinement include re-organising and streamlining the framework of the PIs to make the tiers and items more precise and user-friendly; promoting a reflective culture in schools through newly added “Guiding questions” to encourage schools’ reflection and striving for improvement; modifying the PIs to tie in with the implementation of the new KG education policy including the new *Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide (2017)*; and enriching the content of the PIs to reflect on requirements being raised on the basis of experiences and achievements of KGs gained over the past years.

6. With collection of views from the KG sector, consultation through four briefings and a questionnaire survey for KGs from end of May to end of July 2017 and thorough deliberation at the Advisory Group meetings, the PIs were finalised and uploaded onto the EDB website in December 2017. All KGs were informed of this through a circular. To enhance KGs’ understanding and use of the refined PIs, nine briefing sessions were conducted

¹ The said PIs were rolled out by phases from 2001 to 2003.

from February to April 2018. All sessions were completed with positive feedback. Participants generally opined that the concrete and practical contents of the briefing sessions could facilitate their use of PIs for SSE and for fostering schools' sustainable development. The refined PIs would be used for SSE starting from the end of the 2017/18 school year and used for QR starting from the 2018/19 school year. For KGs not joining the Scheme, they are also encouraged to conduct their SSE with reference to the refined PIs for schools' continuous improvement.

7. The PIs are refined on the basis of experiences of using the PIs (2003) for SSE and QR. In this connection, it is note-worthy that, as observed in the current QR cycle (i.e. from the 2012/13 to 2017/18 school years)², KGs have demonstrated progressive improvements in conducting SSE based on the PIs (2003). For instance, whole-school approach has been generally adopted, with the KG principals engaging their staff members in conducting SSE and taking into account views and needs of stakeholders in evaluating their school-based measures and formulation of school development plan for further improvements. Besides, with accumulated experiences, KGs are exploring different strategies to embed SSE in daily school routine to promote school development. For instance, KGs are developing the practice of on-going review for their school-based measures, on the basis of which they plan for refinements, while a comprehensive self-evaluation is conducted at the end of the school year. Besides, the refined PIs dovetail with the key features of the new KG curriculum guide. For instance, the new curriculum guide for KGs highlighted that K1 students should not be asked to write with pens or pencils and K2 and K3 children should not be asked to do mechanical copying or calculation drills. The relevant PIs have been refined to reflect clearly such requirement. Besides, PIs on catering for student diversity are strengthened. For instance, it is clearly spelt out in the refined PIs that teachers should be encouraged to participate in relevant professional training, so as to help children with special needs or those at risk of developmental delay. On catering for the needs of non-Chinese speaking students, KGs should provide

² With the roll-out of the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme (PEVS) in 2007, all KGs joining the PEVS are required to conduct ongoing SSE and undergo QR for sustainable school development and accountability purposes. From the 2007/08 to 2011/12 school years, all the 703 KGs under PEVS have undergone the first cycle of QR. The second cycle of QR, which is also the current cycle, started in the 2012/13 school year and will end in the 2017/18 school year. All KGs joining the PEVS or the new Scheme have to be assessed by EDB's QR team within the QR cycle. In these two QR cycles, QR has been conducted on the basis of the PIs (2003). Starting from the third cycle, i.e. from the 2018/19 school year onwards, the refined PIs would be used in QRs.

an authentic Chinese language environment for them and support their integration into school life. We will continue to support KGs in familiarising with the use of the refined PIs in conducting SSE by organising training courses and workshops.

Enhancing transparency

8. In tandem, we will further enhance transparency of the QA framework under the new policy. Since the 2013/14 school year, we have involved external independent members as external observers in some QR visits. They are all ECE experts with profound experience in school inspection, teaching or educational administration in the ECE sector, while currently not serving in the education sector. As external observers, they do not assess the performance of the KGs. They share their professional observation with the KGs at the end of the QR visits. To further enhance the transparency of the QR mechanism and process, and capitalising on the professional knowledge and experience of frontline KG principals, we are planning a pilot scheme that includes serving KG principals as external observers in the 2018/19 school year. Similar to the existing practice, these KG principals will not assess the school performance but will share their observations. We are mapping out the implementation details in consultation with major stakeholders.

9. As an integral part of the QA Framework, all Scheme-KGs are required to conduct on-going SSE for school development and accountability. They are required to record the self-evaluation findings in a school report and formulate school-specific development plan for the following school year. To enhance transparency, they will be encouraged to upload their school reports onto their school websites. As for the QR conducted by EDB, the inspection team provides oral feedback to the KG, including recommendations for improvement, at the end of the QR visit, followed by a written QR report, usually in Chinese, which are uploaded on the EDB website for public information. Taking into account of the views from KGs and parents, we will upload both Chinese and English versions of the QR reports onto EDB's website starting from the 2018/19 school year.

10. To further promote the sustainable development of KGs, EDB will continue to organise training activities to support KGs in capitalising on the experiences gained in implementing the QA Framework for sustainable school

development. Good practices identified during QR, in the domains of learning and teaching and catering for students' diverse needs, will be disseminated to promote quality KG education.

Advice Sought

11. Members are invited to note the latest development in the enhancement of quality assurance in KG education.

Education Bureau
June 2018