

For information

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Report of the Task Force on School-based Management Policy

Purpose

The Education Bureau (EDB) originally proposed to brief Members on the key findings and recommendations of the Task Force on School-based Management Policy (Task Force) and the follow-up actions of the EDB at the meeting of the Panel scheduled for February 2020. Nevertheless, the Panel meetings from February to April 2020 had to be rescheduled due to the Coronavirus pandemic. This paper briefs the Panel on what we originally have proposed to introduce.

Background

2. The Chief Executive announced in her 2017 Policy Address to set up different task forces to conduct review on the eight key areas of education, including school-based management (SBM). Upon invitation of the EDB, the Education Commission (EC) established the Task Force in November 2017 to study the current implementation of the SBM policy in aided schools¹ and based on the results of study, to make recommendations on the optimisation of SBM. The Task Force was chaired by the EC Chairman, with its membership from school sponsoring bodies (SSBs), school councils, parent associations and teacher organisations as well as experienced educators.

3. During the course of the review, the Task Force widely consulted the education sector and stakeholders from June to September 2018 through consultation sessions for different stakeholders and release of a consultation paper to invite written submissions. Its review report was submitted to the Government on 8 July 2019 and has been uploaded onto

¹ Given that the Education (Amendment) Ordinance 2004 which came into operation on 1 January 2005 requires all aided schools to set up an incorporated management committee and be managed by it, the current review essentially covers aided schools. However, subject to prevailing circumstances, the Government will consider implementing the recommendations of the Task Force in other public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools.

the EC's website² for public access. The Government has fully accepted the recommendations contained therein.

Aim of SBM

4. Through devolution of more authority and responsibility to allow them greater flexibility in school management, resource deployment and development planning, SBM aims to enable schools to formulate school-based policies that can better meet the needs of schools and students, develop school characteristics and enhance students' learning outcomes in order to deliver quality education. In tandem, schools should increase transparency of its operation and management by involving more stakeholders in school management, development planning, evaluation and decision-making, and enhance accountability for their overall performance and proper use of public funds.

State of Play

5. To tie in with the implementation of SBM, the Education (Amendment) Ordinance 2004 establishes a school governance framework, requiring aided schools to set up an incorporated management committee (IMC) which comprises representatives from the SSB, the principal, teachers, parents, alumni and independent members, and be managed by it. Moreover, schools should operate in compliance with the rules and regulations under the Education Ordinance, Education Regulations, Codes of Aid, other related Ordinances, instructions and circulars issued by the EDB from time to time and guidelines from the respective SSB and their IMC Constitution.

6. Given enhanced flexibility and autonomy in their daily operation with SBM, schools with an IMC are required to put in place school self-evaluation (SSE) under the School Development and Accountability Framework, which is a core element of SBM and essentially aims at promoting schools' continuous self-improvement through the process of a systematic Planning-Implementation-Evaluation cycle³. In addition to SSE, school inspections and external school reviews are conducted by

² The report is available at the EC's website:

https://www.e-c.edu.hk/en/publications_and_related_documents/education_reports.html

³ In gist, schools will plan/formulate their development focuses and strategies for the 3-year school development cycle, devise implementation details and report the progress/results on an annual basis, and conduct a holistic review at the end of their school development cycle to inform forward planning.

the EDB to benefit schools from the feedback and suggestions for improvement from different perspectives with a view to facilitating their sustainable development.

7. The respective roles and responsibilities of the EDB, SSBs, and IMCs are summarised below:

- (a) The EDB enforces the relevant legislation, formulates policies and guidelines on education, sets and monitors the standard of education services and provides resources and professional support to schools.
- (b) The SSB sets the vision and mission for the school(s) under its sponsorship and gives general directions to the IMC(s) in formulating education policies of the school(s), oversees the performance of the IMC(s) and ensures that the mission of the school(s) is realised through SSB managers.
- (c) The IMC manages the school, formulates policies in accordance with the established vision and mission set by SSB, undertakes planning and management for the human resources and funding, curriculum design and delivery and is accountable for school performance to the EDB and SSB.

Illustration of the mutual relationship among the EDB, SSB and IMC is at **Annex 1**.

Key Observations

8. After examination, the Task Force considers that the Education Ordinance has clear provisions about the functions and responsibilities of SSBs and IMCs (detailed at **Annex 2**), and that SSBs and IMCs generally have a clear understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities under SBM as well as their relationship with the EDB. They will seek assistance and support from the EDB where necessary to provide education services that suit students' needs. The Task Force appreciates that with the implementation of SBM for some years, schools are in general familiar with the operation under SBM and have gathered relevant experience. The majority of schools are operated in a smooth and systematic manner.

9. However, the Task Force reckons that there is still room for

improvement in SBM and major issues include: some school managers of individual schools lack the required knowledge and skills necessary for managing schools, which affects the quality of school governance; school managers may not be able to spare time for every training programme as most of them are in full-time employment; some SSBs and IMCs have difficulty in recruiting suitable persons to serve as independent and/or SSB managers; principals and teachers have to handle a large amount of administrative work; and the communication and consultation mechanisms in some schools should be enhanced to ensure adequate participation of major stakeholders in school governance.

Recommendations

10. Taking into account the foregoing and stakeholders' views collected, the Task Force has finally put forward 27 recommendations with a view to (i) improving the quality of governance, (ii) strengthening the administration capabilities of schools and unleashing the capacity for teachers and principals, and (iii) enhancing the participation of major stakeholders in school governance, which includes recommendations for optimising the mechanism on handling teachers' complaints. The recommendations are set out at **Annex 3**. Salient points of the Task Force's deliberations and recommendations are delineated, in gist, in the ensuing paragraphs.

Improving quality of governance (Recommendations 1-10 of Annex 3)

11. The Task Force is of the view that the performance of IMCs is closely related to whether the school managers have a clear understanding of their respective functions and responsibilities, and whether they are ready to serve as school managers with the required capability and enthusiasm. Besides, education is a profession. School managers need to be conversant with school operation and the latest developments in education that enable them to take a leading role in promoting the sustainable development of schools, improving the quality of teaching and enhancing the learning effectiveness of students. The Task Force also advises that the EDB's visits specifically for IMCs should be enhanced to strengthen support and facilitate detection and early intervention of potential problematic cases.

12. In order to facilitate school managers (including supervisors) to gain a deeper understanding of their roles and functions and to strengthen their competence in school governance, the Task Force considers that

training is important to school managers. Manager training provided by the EDB should be enhanced in contents and diversified in delivery modes (including developing online self-learning packages and optimising the SBM webpage) to suit different training needs of school managers and facilitate them in exploring the relevant issues according to their own pace and time. In addition, the Task Force encourages SSBs to form learning circles and discussion groups, etc. for enhancing exchange and support among school managers and fostering a sharing culture.

13. Stakeholders reckoned that the prevailing circumstances need to be taken into account when formulating training threshold for school managers though they considered by and large that training could enable school managers to better perform their governance-related functions. In this respect, stakeholders were generally of the view that supervisors and managers serve the IMCs on a voluntary basis and their backgrounds, experience and training needs vary among different categories of school managers. Having regard to the actual situation at present and the difficulties in recruiting school managers, the Task Force considers that a step-by-step approach is preferable in setting training targets for school managers, and therefore considers more advisable to recommend at this stage certain soft training targets⁴ and to rely upon the tripartite collaboration among SSBs, IMCs and the EDB for providing diversified training for school managers. SSBs and IMCs may make adjustment to the proposed training targets in accordance with their actual circumstances and to have them implemented on a trial basis for four school years commencing the 2019/20 school year while the EDB is advised to conduct interim and overall reviews to map out the way forward.

Strengthening administration capabilities of schools and unleashing capacity for teachers and principals (Recommendations 11-18 of Annex 3)

14. Having examined in detail the existing situation of school administrative work and the corresponding provision for schools in this respect, the Task Force reckons that the tasks related to school administration have significantly increased and become increasingly

⁴ In gist, the recommended soft training targets for school supervisors and managers are:

	Newly registered	Serving/ re-nominating
Supervisors	At least a total of six hours' training in the first year of service	A training programme of at least two hours every year
School managers	At least a total of three hours' training in the first year of service	A training programme of at least two hours every year

complex, and the existing school administrative support which is mainly rendered by clerical grade staff is grossly inadequate to meet the prevailing needs of schools in terms of the number of staff and their capability. The Task Force considers it necessary to provide schools with additional resources so that they can recruit more capable administrative staff to coordinate and handle the administrative work, and strengthen the administrative support for IMCs. This will help release principals and teachers from non-teaching duties and enable them to focus more on teaching and taking care of student development.

15. Besides, the EDB should continue to conduct its regular review to streamline administrative arrangements while ensuring schools' accountability of the proper use of public funds, further refine the existing guidelines/reference materials and strengthen related training for schools, and step up efforts to digitise the forms/reports to be submitted by schools, etc.

16. On the other hand, noting that some SSBs have laid down stringent internal administrative requirements and procedures for their sponsored schools, the Task Force encourages SSBs/IMCs to regularly revisit their internal administrative arrangements and procedures as well as those stipulated in IMC Constitutions with a view to reducing the administrative workload of principals and teachers.

Enhancing participation of major stakeholders in school governance
(*Recommendations 19-27 of Annex 3*)

17. Given the importance of stakeholders' involvement in the participatory governance under SBM, the Task Force opines that IMCs and schools should build a participative culture among stakeholders and maintain close communication with major stakeholders. It is thus recommended that IMCs should from time to time review and strengthen both formal and informal communication mechanisms to facilitate effective dialogue with stakeholders to allow the participative culture to take root. It also expects IMCs, in the light of the prevailing circumstances and needs of their schools, to prudently assess the necessity of setting up committees engaging the school managers with the expertise required and the personnel concerned to handle important matters related to school operation. To enhance communication between the EDB and teachers, the Task Force recommends that teacher representatives should be engaged, through annual district-based small group discussion forums and school development visits, to express their views on education policies and school measures to the EDB direct, and

meanwhile the EDB would collect opinions and clarify misunderstanding (if any) to facilitate professional exchange.

18. Regarding complaint handling, the Task Force notes that the respective roles and responsibilities of schools and the EDB⁵ in handling complaints have been clearly spelt out under the existing “Enhanced School Complaint Management Arrangements”. The Task Force considers that IMCs should, on a regular/need basis, review their school-based mechanisms and procedures for handling complaints and appeals, in a bid to further enhance fairness, impartiality and acceptance of such mechanisms, and ensure that early/timely response is given to complainants and follow-up actions are taken at an opportune time.

19. Given the large number of stakeholders, the Task Force opines that occasionally, disagreement between schools and individual stakeholders is inevitable. As it is often difficult to distinguish between “absolutely right” and “absolutely wrong” in a dispute, the Task Force considers it more desirable for IMCs and SSBs to settle disagreement with stakeholders by mediation as early as possible. In view of the above, the Task Force recommends that mediation should be made an option or consideration in the school mechanism for handling complaints/appeals, so that differences between the two parties could be properly settled at the initial stage. In the spirit of mutual support, respect and understanding, and by means of candid discussion, the parties involved should be able to seek common ground while accommodating differences and work towards an agreed solution. Schools/IMCs would, depending on the nature of a case, appoint an independent person to conduct mediation, with the goal of mediating and assisting the dispute parties to reach a solution.

Follow-up of Task Force’s Recommendations

20. The EDB attaches great importance to the effective implementation of SBM. Having thoroughly considered the review

⁵ As a general practice, complaints from parents, students or the public about schools’ daily operation or internal affairs should be handled by the schools concerned in accordance with their school-based mechanisms and procedures, and an appeal avenue should be provided. In the event that such complaints are lodged to the EDB, with complainants’ consent, the EDB will refer the cases to the schools concerned for follow-up actions, and the schools will then give the complainants direct replies. For complaints lodged to the EDB by school staff or complaints other than those mentioned above (for example, those pertinent to the Education Ordinance, education policies and services directly provided by the EDB), and those referred by other departments/statutory bodies (for example, Office of the Ombudsman and Legislative Council), they will be dealt with by the EDB.

report submitted by the Task Force, the EDB has decided to accept all the 27 recommendations contained therein and implement them gradually starting from the 2019/20 school year. Of the 27 recommendations, 15 and 11 of them are related to the EDB and IMCs/SSBs respectively while one recommendation (i.e. soft training targets for school managers) will be jointly implemented by the EDB and IMCs/SSBs.

21. The EDB has earlier adopted the Task Force's preliminary views and announced that starting from the 2019/20 school year, all public sector schools (including special schools) and schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme would be provided with additional resources for the implementation of two of the recommendations (i.e. the 'One Executive Officer for Each School' policy and SBM Top-up Grant). The expenditure involved is around \$570 million each year.

22. Besides, the EDB puts in place relevant measures gradually to implement 13 other recommendations. For example, we have already conducted 38 sessions of focus group discussions with supervisors, school managers and professionals on the enhancement of training for school managers with a view to understanding their training needs, their views on training modes as well as their issues of concern; and have been implementing the new series of training courses for school managers since November 2019. Through the revamped SBM webpage, we launched the "SBM Learning Channel" which covers "Essential Information of SBM", "Progressive Learning Journey for School Managers", etc. in October 2019 to enable school managers (including supervisors) to browse and learn the required information at their own pace. As for the recommendation on the expanded scope of review by the Panel of Review Boards on School Complaints (Panel), we have issued a circular letter informing schools that starting from 10 February 2020, the Panel's scope of review has been expanded to cover school-related complaints lodged by teachers. In addition, the newly developed/revised reference materials on handling of school complaints have been uploaded onto the EDB website.

23. Regarding the 11 recommendations related to SSBs or IMCs, the EDB has issued circular letters calling on them to deliberate, plan and carry out the relevant recommendations as soon as possible, including reviewing the existing mechanisms/procedures and discussing with SSBs/sponsored schools as appropriate so as to make collaborative efforts in putting in place appropriate arrangements and formulating specific details for implementing the relevant recommendations. We will continue to keep close contact with them to understand the progress

and provide support where necessary.

24. As regards the recommendation on implementing the soft training targets on a trial basis, we have in our aforesaid circular letters called on IMCs/SSBs to set the training targets and draw up the training plans for school managers according to their actual circumstances, and make good use of the SBM Top-up Grant to provide appropriate training for school managers to meet the targets. They have also been requested to record details of the training activities/programmes undertaken by school managers to facilitate the provision of data and information to the EDB for an interim and overall review in the 2021/22 and 2023/24 school years respectively with a view to mapping out the way forward.

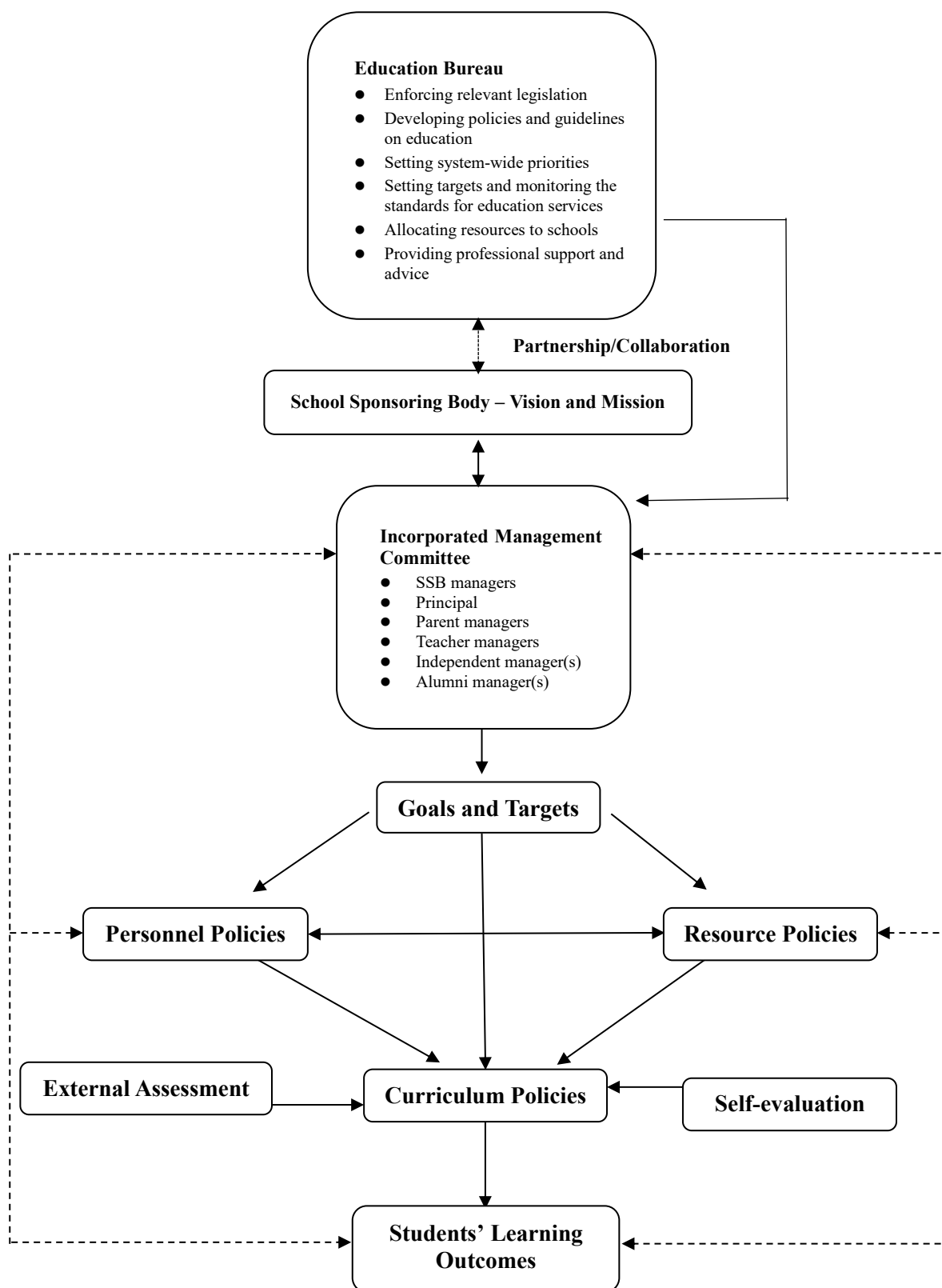
25. It is anticipated that through the implementation of the Task Force's recommendations, the effectiveness of school governance and management will be further enhanced for schools' sustainable development. The EDB will conduct constant review on the implementation of SBM and continue to monitor and provide support as and when required.

Concluding Remarks

26. Members are requested to note the recommendations put forward by the Task Force and the follow-up actions of the EDB.

Education Bureau
May 2020

Illustration of Mutual Relationship among the EDB, SSBs and IMCs^{Note}



Note: Extracted from the Review Report of the Task Force on School-based Management Policy (July 2019).

Legal Provisions on Functions and Responsibilities of SSBs and IMCs

Cap. 279

EDUCATION ORDINANCE

01/01/2005

40AE. Functions of sponsoring body and incorporated management committee

- (1) The sponsoring body of a school shall be responsible for—**
- (a) meeting the cost of furnishing and equipping the new school premises of the school to, where applicable, standards as recommended by the Permanent Secretary;
 - (b) setting the vision and mission for the school;
 - (c) maintaining full control of the use of funds and assets owned by it;
 - (d) deciding the mode of receiving government aid;
 - (e) ensuring, through the sponsoring body managers, that the mission is carried out;
 - (f) giving general directions to the incorporated management committee in the formulation of education policies of the school;
 - (g) overseeing the performance of the incorporated management committee; and
 - (h) drafting the constitution of the incorporated management committee.
- (2) The incorporated management committee of a school shall be responsible for—**
- (a) formulating education policies of the school in accordance with the vision and mission set by the sponsoring body;
 - (b) planning and managing financial and human resources available to the school;

- (c) accounting to the Permanent Secretary and the sponsoring body for the performance of the school;
- (d) ensuring that the mission of the school is carried out;
- (e) ensuring that the education of the pupils of the school is promoted in a proper manner; and
- (f) school planning and self-improvement of the school.

(PART IIIB added 27 of 2004 s. 16)

**List of Recommendations^{Note} by
Task Force on School-based Management Policy**

(I) Improving the quality of governance

The Task Force is of the view that the quality of governance of IMCs is closely related to whether the school managers have a clear understanding of their respective functions and responsibilities, and whether they are ready to serve as school managers with the required capability and enthusiasm. Its recommendations in this connection are as follows:

Recommendation 1

The EDB is advised to further elaborate to SSBs and IMCs how crucial school managers' broad knowledge of school governance is, and encourage SSBs and IMCs to motivate and help school managers (including potential, newly registered and serving managers) to make plans for the pre-service, induction and continuous training to strengthen their understanding of SBM. This helps to achieve synergy through stakeholders' participation in school governance and put in place checks and balances to facilitate more effective implementation of the SBM policy.

Recommendation 2

The EDB is advised to set up focus groups to study the concerns of different stakeholders and the genuine needs of school managers for the purpose of providing appropriate and diversified training for school managers.

Recommendation 3

To meet the training needs of school managers, the EDB should enrich training contents, adopt diversified delivery modes and offer more training places, and ensure that training is primarily knowledge-based and practical, supplemented with case studies for illustration. These will enable school managers to discharge their responsibilities in a more effective manner when they have acquired a better understanding of the functions of SSBs, IMCs and the EDB, the roles and responsibilities of school managers, the intent of relevant regulations and the importance of observing such regulations, and the role of the monitoring and check-and-balance mechanism in achieving effective governance. Moreover, the EDB should produce more online self-learning packages so that school managers may explore relevant issues according to

Note: Extracted from the Review Report of the Task Force on School-based Management Policy (July 2019).

their own needs and pace.

Recommendation 4

The EDB is advised to optimise the SBM webpage and devise handy online tools covering essential information on school administration and governance for the easy reference of school managers, especially newly registered managers.

Recommendation 5

SSBs are recommended to consider providing SSB-based training in collaboration with the EDB, which could optimise the use of EDB’s training resources and motivate more school managers who have the same vision and mission to receive training.

Recommendation 6

SSBs are encouraged to form learning circles and discussion groups to promote cross-school sharing and support among their school supervisors and managers with a view to strengthening their concerted efforts to achieve effective governance; and open up their training programmes to school managers under other SSBs.

Recommendation 7

Soft training targets for school supervisors and managers are proposed as follows:

	Number of training hours		Training programme
	Newly Registered	Serving/ re-nominating	
School supervisor	At least a total of six hours in the first year	One training programme of at least two hours each year	Newly Registered supervisors may select training provided by (i) the EDB, and (ii) SSBs or IMCs. Serving/re-nominating supervisors should enrol for training provided by the EDB for refreshment.
School manager	At least a total of three hours in the first year	One training programme of at least two hours each year	Newly registered managers may select training provided by SSBs, IMCs or the EDB.

			Serving/re-nominating managers should enrol for training that is related to school governance.
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Since schools have different development in provision of training for school managers, SSBs and IMCs may make adjustments according to the actual circumstances. The above recommendations are to be implemented on a trial basis of four school years. The EDB should collect data and feedback on training of school managers during and upon the close of the trial period for the purpose of reviewing the provision of training for managers and mapping out the way forward.

Recommendation 8

The EDB is advised to compile a list of the roles, functions, authority and responsibilities, conduct and ethics, etc. of school managers for the reference of SSBs, IMCs and potential managers. The existing “Information Bank of Persons Who Are Interested to Serve As School Managers in IMCs of Aided Schools”¹ should be enhanced by including, on top of professionals from the selected fields, persons who specialise in educational research or have good knowledge of school administration, and publicity should be stepped up to help IMCs/SSBs identify suitable persons to serve as school managers. In addition, persons who are interested to serve as school supervisors/managers should be encouraged to undertake training in preparation for assuming the role of school manager.

Recommendation 9

The EDB is advised to strengthen school visits specifically for IMCs to offer more in-depth suggestions on major issues such as school governance, financial and personnel management to support the operation of IMCs during face-to-face meetings with school managers and the persons concerned. Through such visits, the EDB may identify potential mismanagement cases and take early intervention measures.

Recommendation 10

IMCs are recommended to make proper plans for succession of school managers, identify suitable successors early and provide, in the light of school-based circumstances, appropriate training for potential and newly registered managers to help them acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for school governance for the discharge of their responsibilities.

¹ The Information Bank contains particulars of several hundred professionals from such fields as law, accountancy, engineering, architecture and surveying, who are interested in serving as school managers.

(II) Strengthening the administration capabilities of schools and unleashing capacity for teachers and principals

The Task Force notes that the tasks related to school administration and management have significantly increased and become increasingly complex, but the existing school administrative support which is mainly rendered by clerical grade staff is grossly inadequate to meet the prevailing needs of schools in terms of the number of staff and their capability. Its recommendations in this connection are as follows:

Recommendation 11

The EDB is advised to provide schools with additional manpower/resources, including additional manpower at the Executive Officer rank, to reduce the administrative workload of teachers and principals and enable them to focus more on teaching and take better care of student development.

Recommendation 12

To ease schools' administrative workload, the EDB is advised to continue to conduct review of the requirements/stipulations for schools on a regular/need basis and streamline procedures to further facilitate schools' administrative work. Meanwhile, schools' accountability for the proper use of public funds should be ensured.

Recommendation 13

The EDB is advised to further refine the existing guidelines and reference materials, enhance the related training, particularly those covering more complex administrative work, and identify and disseminate schools' good operating practices/experience/documents in different administration areas, with a view to strengthening administrative support for schools.

Recommendation 14

To facilitate schools' administrative work, the EDB is advised to make forms/reports to be completed by schools available in an electronic format, and highlight the revisions made in the guidelines/reference materials for easy identification and comprehension of schools.

Recommendation 15

SSBs are encouraged to streamline administrative requirements, including those related to overseeing/monitoring the performance and management of their sponsored schools, and where applicable, assume a coordinating role over such matters as centralising procurement of the goods/services commonly required by their sponsored schools for benefiting from economy of scale and alleviating administrative workload.

Recommendation 16

The EDB is advised to provide schools with additional resources to enhance training for school managers and strengthen administrative support for schools and IMCs. Schools may, following the promulgated procurement procedures, procure from their SSBs such services as training for school managers and administrative support.

Recommendation 17

IMCs are recommended to review and streamline schools' internal administrative arrangements and procedures on a regular/need basis; revisit the contents required for various school documents, especially School Development Plan, Annual School Plan and School Report, which should be kept concise and succinct; and encourage schools to make wider use of information technology to support school administration and reduce workload. Moreover, the EDB could further explore how to assist schools to handle administrative work with information technology tools.

Recommendation 18

IMCs are recommended to, in the light of their operational experience and current situation, review their constitutions and amend provisions and procedures therein as necessary, and identify persons other than principals, teachers or teacher managers for undertaking the secretarial duties of IMCs/committees so as to lessen the administrative workload of the teaching staff. The EDB may provide resources in this regard.

(III) Enhancing the participation of major stakeholders in school governance

The Task Force considers it necessary for schools to put in place effective engagement mechanisms under SBM to ensure the due participation of major stakeholders, such as teachers, parents and alumni, in school governance to enhance transparency and accountability, and for the EDB to strengthen its communication mechanism with teachers to facilitate professional exchange. In addition, both schools and the EDB should optimise their respective complaint handling mechanisms. Relevant Task Force's recommendations are as follows:

Recommendation 19

IMCs are recommended to strengthen their engagement mechanisms to maintain close and effective communication with such stakeholders as teachers, parents and alumni, for instance, by regularly organising school and teacher consultative meetings and arranging gatherings for school managers, teachers and other stakeholders, so as to enable the participative culture to take root

among stakeholders and ensure their due participation in school management and decision-making.

Recommendation 20

IMCs are invited to prudently assess the necessity of setting up committees that comprise school managers, school personnel or other persons with the expertise required to handle important matters related to school operation, such as human resources, financial management and audit. Setting up these committees may also be conducive to the succession of school managers.

Recommendation 21

The EDB is advised to reinstate the annual district-based small group discussion forums² with teachers, during which teacher representatives from various schools may express their views to the EDB officers on education policies and school measures, etc. to facilitate professional exchange.

Recommendation 22

During school development visits, the EDB officers are advised to, not only meet the school management, but also approach teachers directly to find out how they think about education policies and measures, school operation and development, etc. for the purpose of strengthening communication.

Recommendation 23

The EDB is advised to enrich the training programmes for newly appointed and aspiring principals, particularly on major subjects such as professional conduct, core values, and communication skills and culture, so that the principals could better grasp their professional leading role in schools' daily operation and management and acquire the related skills.

Recommendation 24

The EDB is advised to expand the scope of review by the Panel of Review Boards on School Complaints from covering only complaints made by parents, students or the public about schools' daily operation or internal affairs to that made by teachers so that independent, objective and credible review results will be available to both parties, i.e. the complainant or the subject of complaint, and to help stakeholders (including teachers) better understand the prevailing arrangements for handling various types of complaints through different channels.

Recommendation 25

IMCs are recommended to make reference to the Guidelines for Handling

² This arrangement ceased since around 2000 having regard to the establishment of regular consultation channels with educational bodies such as teacher associations and school councils.

School Complaints issued by the EDB in developing/refining their mechanisms and procedures for handling staff complaints. In addition, the EDB is advised to gather information from public sector schools about staff complaints they receive on a yearly basis, in order to get a clear picture of the situation in individual schools and take appropriate follow-up actions when necessary.

Recommendation 26

IMCs are recommended to settle disagreement with stakeholders by means of mediation as early as possible, with a view to working towards an agreed solution in order to prevent the situation from deteriorating and to help the two parties restore mutual trust and maintain a harmonious relationship; and to review their school-based mechanisms and procedures for handling complaints and appeals on a regular/need basis, including complaints made by teachers, in a bid to further enhance fairness, impartiality and acceptance of the handling procedures and ensure that early/timely response is given to complainants and follow-up actions are taken at an opportune time.

Recommendation 27

SSBs are encouraged to settle disagreement between their schools and complainants by means of mediation as early as possible so as to help the two parties restore mutual trust and maintain a harmonious relationship; and to review the mechanisms and procedures for handling complaints and appeals against their schools on a regular/need basis, including complaints made by teachers, in a bid to further enhance fairness, impartiality and acceptance of the handling procedures and ensure suitable persons being assigned to handle complaints or appeals.