

**Review of the
Capacity Enhancement Grant
(Final Report)**

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Executive Summary

Introduction

1. This review is based on schools' practices and experience in the use of the Capacity Enhancement Grant (CEG) in 2000/01, 2001/02 and 2002/03. This report presents summary findings on the following:

- a) The benefits of CEG, including its impact on teachers, schools and students;
- b) The use of CEG and the enhanced capacity of teachers for tasks considered critical in the education reform, including curriculum development, enhancing students' language proficiency and coping with the diverse and special learning needs of students;
- c) Methods used by schools in assessing impact;
- d) Consultation by schools on the use of the CEG;
- e) Deployment of CEG funding by schools for various activities and for job creation; and
- f) Schools' views on administrative arrangement, problems encountered and suggestions for improvement.

Review methodology

2. In conducting the review, the following methodology was adopted:

- a) **Questionnaire surveys.** Using a structured questionnaire to collect the views of school principals, teachers and School Management Committees on the CEG;
- b) **Review of plans and evaluation reports** prepared by schools. These plans and reports are prepared on the basis of different practices adopted by the schools on the use of CEG, taking into account the characteristics of the schools and students;
- c) **In-depth interviews and focus group discussions** with key stakeholders including school principals and teachers. In-depth interviews with principals and focus group discussions with teachers will provide a valuable opportunity to probe into issues and problems faced by schools, and their suggestions for improvement.

Benefits of CEG

Impact on teachers

3. According to data obtained from the questionnaire survey of schools in the three-year period from 2000/01 to 2002/03, on average all teachers in about 76% of schools had benefited from the CEG. In around 19% of schools, the majority of teachers had benefited. Only a very small percentage of schools (2%) indicated that less than half of their teachers had benefited, with the remaining 3% indicating that about half of their teachers had benefited. Comparing changes in percentage of teachers benefiting from the CEG over the three-year period, the percentage of school principals who indicated that all teachers had benefited from the CEG had increased from 76% in 2000/01 and 73% in 2001/02 to 80% in 2002/03.

4. From the point of view of teachers, their opinion was quite similar. The majority of teachers agreed that the CEG had helped their teaching work, provided schools with additional resources for curriculum development, relieved their non-teaching duties, improved their quality of teaching and helped teachers cope with the students of diverse abilities and special learning needs. In 2000/01, about 28% of primary school teachers and 22% of secondary school teachers indicated that their workload had increased as a result of the CEG. The corresponding percentages for 2001/02 were about the same, and were lower in 2002/03, at 17% and 16% respectively. On the other hand, in 2002/03, over 63% of primary school teachers and 61% of secondary school teachers indicated that their workload had been reduced as a result of the CEG.

Impact on schools

5. Over 90% of schools were of the view that the CEG had an impact on schools' management. For those schools that considered the CEG had an impact on schools' management, they were of the view that the CEG had helped raise schools' ability in management of resources and schools' management culture.

Impact on students

6. About 99% of schools were of the view that the CEG had a positive impact on students. More specifically, schools considered that the CEG had helped raise students' learning interest and interest in language subjects, encourage more teachers and students to use IT in teaching and learning, improve performance of those students who were relatively weak, and improve students' academic performance, including performance in language subjects.

Use of the CEG for curriculum development

7. The great majority of schools had made use of the CEG for curriculum development. Most of them placed their focus on the integration of IT into teaching and learning, and on academic subjects. About 37% of primary and 29% of secondary schools put their emphasis on cross-subjects teaching and learning, 35% of primary and 27% of secondary schools on non-academic subjects.

8. Nearly all schools had developed yardsticks to assess the impact of the CEG on curriculum development. The majority of schools used yardsticks like "students' interest in school work", "students' satisfaction with school activities", "students' academic performance" and "use of IT by teachers" to assess the impact of CEG on curriculum development.

Use of CEG to enhance students' language proficiency

9. The great majority of schools were of the view that the CEG had provided teachers with enhanced capacity to enhance students' language proficiency. There are noticeable differences between primary and secondary schools on the different approaches adopted in using the CEG. At the primary level, the more common usage was the deployment of Native-speaking English Teachers (NETs) to teach their students and buying services to organize special programs for the students. At the secondary level, the more common usage was the employment of teaching assistants to help English and Chinese language teachers, and the procurement of services to organize special programs for the students.

10. The great majority of schools had developed yardsticks to assess the impact of the CEG on students' language proficiency. The majority of schools used yardsticks like "students' interest in language subjects", "students' reading habits" and "students' performance in language subjects" to assess the impact of CEG on students' language proficiency.

Use of CEG to cope with students of diverse abilities and special learning needs

11. The great majority of schools were of the view that the CEG had provided teachers with enhanced capacity to cope with students with diverse and special learning needs. At the primary level, the focus of most schools was placed on arranging special learning activities for the more capable students and remedial measures for other students who are weak, and more extra-curricular activities. At the secondary level, apart from learning activities for the more capable students, remedial measures for other students who are weak and the arrangement of more extra-curricular activities, the more common arrangement was remedial measures for Secondary 1 entrants who are weak.

12. Nearly all schools had developed yardsticks to assess the impact of the CEG in helping teachers and schools to cope with the diverse and special learning needs of students. The majority of schools used yardsticks like "changes in the performance of students who are relatively weak" and "changes in the learning interest of students who are relatively weak" to assess the impact of CEG in helping teachers cope with the diverse and special learning needs of students.

Methods of assessing impact of CEG

13. The great majority of schools had used different methods in assessing the impact of CEG on teachers, schools and students. Most schools relied on teachers' observations of students' performance in assessing the impact of CEG. Apart from teachers' observations, the more common methods were questionnaire survey of teachers and students, prizes won in inter-school competition and the academic performance of students.

Consultation on the use of CEG

14. Nearly all schools indicated that they had consulted teachers on the use of the CEG. The more common methods of consultation were verbal consultation during meetings with teachers and asking teachers to put up proposals on the use of CEG.

15. Over 80% of teachers surveyed indicated that their schools had consulted them on the use of CEG. The more common methods of consultation were verbal consultation during meetings with school management and asking teachers to put up proposals.

Deployment of CEG funding and employment creation

16. Based on returns from over 900 schools, about one-fifth of CEG expenditure was deployed separately for curriculum development and in organizing activities to enhance students' language proficiency. About one-sixth of expenditure was used in relieving teachers' non-teaching workload, and another one-sixth in activities aimed at helping teachers cope with the diverse and special learning needs of students.

17. In terms of the number of staff employed, a relatively greater number of teaching assistants, IT assistants and clerical staff were employed on a full-time basis. For teachers and other staff, a relatively greater number of them were employed on a part-time basis. In 2002/03, a total of 5,422 teaching and non-teaching staff were employed by schools using CEG funding, of whom 3,220 were full-time staff and 2,202 part-time staff. The corresponding figures for 2001/02 were 5,305, 2,743 and 2,562 respectively.

Views on administrative arrangement

18. The majority of schools were satisfied with the administrative arrangement for the CEG, including procedures for claiming and payment, and accounting arrangements.

Problems and suggestions

19. In 2002/03, some 19% of the 1,196 schools covered in the questionnaire survey indicated that they had encountered problems on the use of the CEG. This percentage is lower than the 27% in 2001/02 and 32% in 2000/01. The more frequently encountered problems were:

- a) Increase in administrative work;
- b) Difficult to hire suitable personnel; and
- c) Amount of CEG not sufficient.

20. When school principals, teachers and SMC were asked to choose suggestions to improve CEG funding arrangement they considered as most important, the following are the suggestions selected by the majority of them:

- a) Schools should be given more flexibility on the use of the CEG; and
- b) CEG should become regular funding arrangement, without the need to submit annual application.

Recommendations

21. To summarize, the following are recommended:
 - a) The CEG should be continued as long as there is a demonstrated need for it;
 - b) To allow schools to plan ahead on their use of the CEG, EMB should make longer-term commitment to schools, though the exact amount has to be determined on a year-by-year basis, taking into account such factors as the change in number of operating classes of schools, price adjustment, etc;
 - c) The present funding arrangements should be maintained, allowing maximum possible flexibility to schools on the use of the fund;
 - d) Schools should consult all teachers, allowing them to participate in planning and decision-making over the use of the CEG. A set of input and outcome indicators should be compiled for monitoring and benchmarking purposes; and
 - e) Schools should make available to the public their CEG plans and evaluation reports (e.g. by uploading the documents to their school websites).