

Education and
Manpower Bureau



*Quality
Assurance
Inspection*

Annual
Report
(Kindergartens)

2001/02

FOREWORD

In the 2001/02 academic year, 30 kindergartens selected from a stratified random sampling were inspected by the Quality Assurance Division. This Annual Report summarizes the performance of these kindergartens in different domains, including kindergartens' strengths and areas of concern, and the statistical data of the areas and aspects inspected.

This Annual Report only summarizes the major findings, but the good practices identified can provide useful reference for other kindergartens. The key issues identified can be common areas of concern for other kindergartens. The chapter on 'Reflections and the Way Forward' identifies the major issues and also reflects the direction of our kindergarten inspection. We hope that this Report can draw the attention of education practitioners and thus pursuing appropriate measures in further promoting the quality of pre-primary education in Hong Kong.

This Report is a joint product of the QA inspection teams and the kindergartens involved. It is hoped that with the mutual co-operation of the inspection teams and Hong Kong pre-primary institutions, we can work towards providing quality education for our young children.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In the 2001/02 academic year, 30 kindergartens selected from a stratified random sampling were inspected. Each inspection lasted for three to four days, depending on the size of the kindergarten.
- 1.2 The performance of kindergartens was assessed on the three domains of (1) Management & Organisation; (2) Learning & Teaching; and (3) Support for Children & School Ethos. The fourth domain of “Children’s Development” was not assessed as the charting of children’s development could not be achieved without an on-going process of continuous observation and documentation of various aspects of their development. Given that each Quality Assurance (QA) inspection visit to a kindergarten lasts only a few days, accurate assessment of this domain is impossible. Kindergartens should take it as their responsibility to employ appropriate means to children’s development.
- 1.3 In assessing the quality of education provided by these schools, the QA inspection teams used the Performance Indicators that were developed as part of the QA framework. Four levels of performance were used:
 - Grade 4 — **“excellent”** (An exemplary level of performance which can be disseminated as good practices and regarded as a direction for the development of pre-primary institutions.)
 - Grade 3 — **“good”** (A good level of performance with major strengths identified in various aspects, but there is still some room for development.)
 - Grade 2 — **“acceptable”** (A generally satisfactory level of performance, but there is much room for improvement.)
 - Grade 1 — **“unsatisfactory”** (A generally unacceptable level of performance which requires immediate action for improvement.)
- 1.4 **The findings in this annual report only pertain to the 30 kindergartens inspected and are not meant to be generalized across the kindergartens in the territory.**
- 1.5 A statistical summary of the inspection findings and the schools’ responses is at the **Appendices**.



MAJOR FINDINGS

Respective Domains



Chapter 2

MAJOR FINDINGS : RESPECTIVE DOMAINS

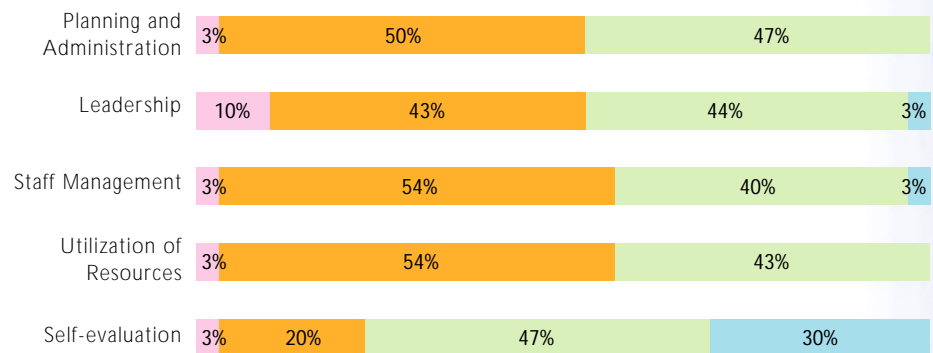
2.1 Summary of Major Findings

- The major inspection findings in the 2001/02 academic year revealed that kindergartens' performance in the domain of *Support to Children and School Ethos* was better than the other two domains, with the weakest in the domain of *Learning and Teaching* (Figure 1).
- In the domain of *Management and Organisation*, the performance in the areas of "planning and administration", "leadership", "staff management" and "utilisation of resources" was good, whereas the area "self-evaluation" was the weakest.
- Among the four areas in the domain of *Learning and Teaching*, the area on "children's learning" was rated the highest, whereas kindergartens' performance in the area of "assessment of learning experiences" was the weakest.
- In the domain of *Support to Children and School Ethos*, the strongest area was the "school climate", whereas kindergartens' performance in the area of "caring and supporting services" was relatively weak.

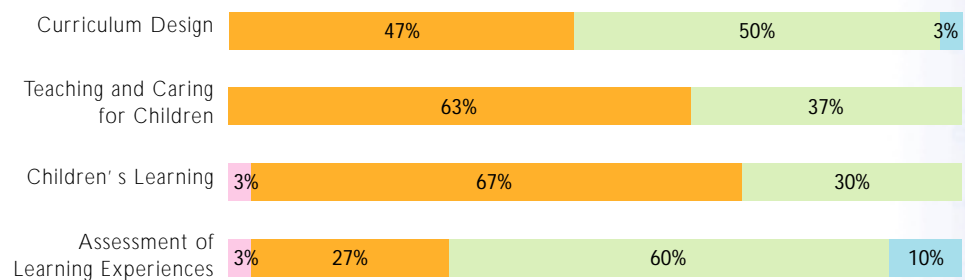


Figure1 : School Performance (by Area - Kindergartens)

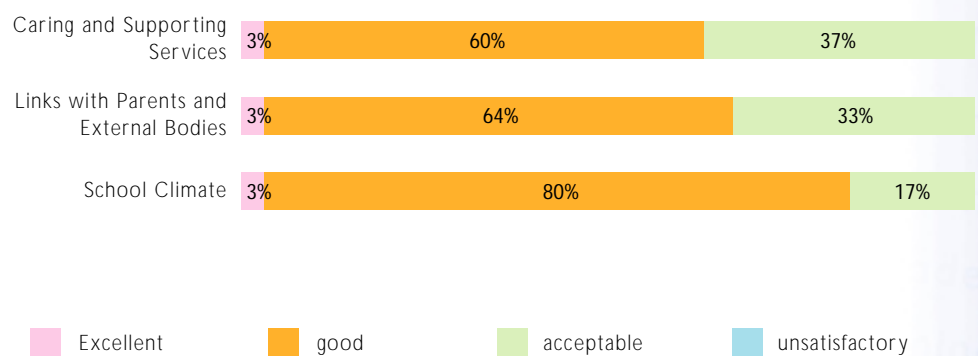
Domain: Management & Organisation



Domain: Learning & Teaching



Domain: Support to Children & School Ethos





2.2 Management & Organisation

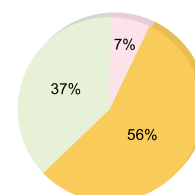
Observations regarding the individual aspects in this domain are presented as follows:

(1) Planning and Administration

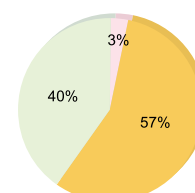
- In the area of “Planning and Administration”, kindergartens showed outstanding performance in “school administration”. 63% of the kindergartens were rated as good or excellent (Figure 2). The major strengths included:
 - comprehensive documentation and handbooks that provided clear guideline and relevant information for teachers
 - specific safety rules and guidelines on crisis management available
 - good arrangement of daily work with smooth and effective operation
 - effective filing system
- With regard to “management framework”, over half (60%) of the kindergartens were rated as good or excellent. They had a well-defined management framework and organization, and had developed procedural manuals or guidelines on administration work. Moreover, staff duties and responsibilities were also well-defined.
- More than half (54%) of the kindergartens were found to have room for improvement in “school policy”. In general, the school aims were aligned with their mission statements and aims of early childhood education in Hong Kong. In most schools, annual school plans were formulated. However, most of the school plans failed to set out the priority of actions and criteria of success, thus affecting the effectiveness of these plans.

Figure 2:
Planning and
Administration

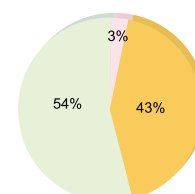
School Administration



Management
Framework



School Policy

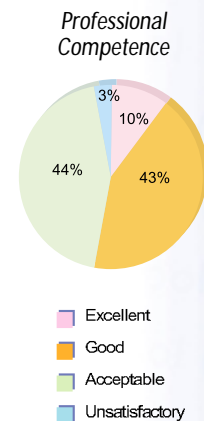




(2) Leadership

- 53% of the kindergartens were rated as good or excellent in “professional competence” (Figure 3). The following were the major strengths:
 - The management was committed, being able to understand the school conditions and demonstrating effective monitoring
 - The management was conscientious with rich experience in administration, and good leadership in staff management and school administration
 - The management valued professional development and was keen to promote staff development
 - The management was familiar with new trends in education and able to promote innovation in a planned and systematic way
 - The management viewed parents as working partners in promoting early childhood education together
- 44% of the kindergartens were rated as acceptable in “professional competence”. Only 3% were rated as unsatisfactory. The major weaknesses included:
 - some of the principals managed a large number of kindergartens. They had taken up too much work, thus failing to provide quality input to the administration of internal affairs
 - failed to communicate effectively with the staff, and to involve them in making decisions on school matters
 - inadequate attention being paid to the staff’s level of tolerance to workload. It also failed to co-ordinate staff’s duties effectively

Figure 3
Leadership



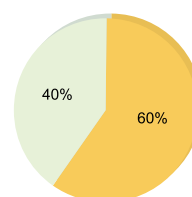


(3) Staff Management

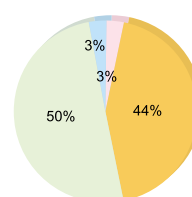
- Most kindergartens (60%) were rated as good in “staff qualifications and duties” (Figure 4). Their major strengths included:
 - possessing a high ratio of professionally trained teachers
 - assignment of duties based on the schools’ needs and the expertise of the staff
- Regarding “staff development and appraisal”, 47% of the schools were rated as good or excellent while 3% of the schools were rated as performing unsatisfactorily. Schools of good performance attached importance to the professional development needs of their staff. They formulated staff development plans, encouraged lesson observation among teachers and arranged sharing with members of other pre-primary institutions. All these helped to enhance teachers’ professional standard. Kindergartens which were rated as unsatisfactory failed to arrange training for teachers according to their professional development needs. They also failed to provide adequate support in assisting newly appointed teachers to settle in. Most of the schools inspected had established a staff appraisal system for assessing staff’s working performance and in promoting professional development. Nonetheless, a fair and open appraisal system had yet to be developed in some of the schools.
- 67% of the kindergartens were rated as good or excellent in “staff co-ordination and liaison”. Teachers were provided with sufficient opportunities for discussions and sharings on teaching. Staff relationship and co-operation were effectively fostered to demonstrate team spirit. 3% of the kindergartens were rated as unsatisfactory. In the aspect of promoting staff communication, they could not

Figure 4
Staff Management

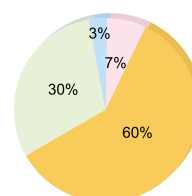
Staff Qualifications and Duties



Staff Development and Appraisal



Staff Co-ordination and Liaison





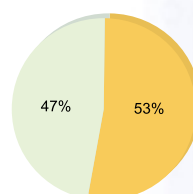
provide adequate communication channels in disseminating information and collecting views from staff.

(4) Utilisation of Resources

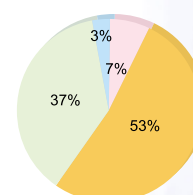
- Kindergartens generally performed well in this area of work. 53% and 60% of the kindergartens demonstrated good or excellent performance in “organisation and use of school premises” and “organisation and use of resources” respectively (Figure 5). The key strengths included:
 - provision of a safe, hygienic, neat and tidy learning environment with adequate lighting for children
 - flexible use of space for arranging various learning activities
 - good utilisation of classrooms and corridors for displaying children’s works
 - adequate provision of different varieties of teaching resources
 - effective use of resources tapped from the community and parents to support learning and teaching
 - proper storage of teaching resources with systematic records for easy retrieval
- 3% of the kindergartens were rated as unsatisfactory in “organization and use of resources”. The major weaknesses of schools in this aspect included:
 - the schools were rated as unsatisfactory in hygiene. The provision of equipment was found not to serve teaching purposes
 - the lack of systematic storage of teaching resources and teaching aids

Figure 5
Utilisation of
Resources

Organisation and
Use of School
Premises



Organisation and
Use of Resources



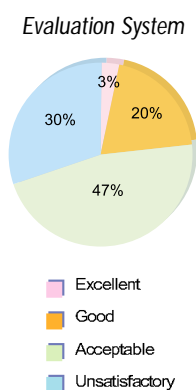
■ Excellent
■ Good
■ Acceptable
■ Unsatisfactory



(5) Self-evaluation

- In the domain of management and organisation, the performance in “self-evaluation” was the weakest area of all the schools inspected. The performance of kindergartens with regard to “self-evaluation” had much room for improvement. The finding was similar to that of last year. Only 23% of the kindergartens were rated as good while 30% of the kindergartens were rated as unsatisfactory (Figure 6).
- The major weaknesses of kindergartens included the following:
 - Failure in implementing specific procedures to monitor and evaluate different areas of work in school
 - Failure in designing clear assessment criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of school work
 - Failure in making use of evaluation results to design action plans and annual objectives of the coming year

Figure 6
Self-evaluation





2.3 Learning & Teaching

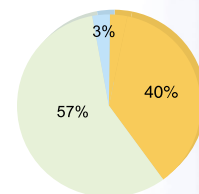
Observations regarding the individual aspects in this domain are presented as follows:

(1) Curriculum Design

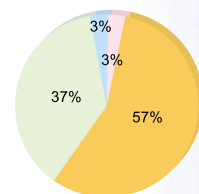
- Schools performed slightly better in “curriculum management” than in “curriculum organisation”. 60% and 40% of the kindergartens were rated as good or excellent in the above two areas respectively (*Figure 7*).
- Schools formulated their curricula in line with the aims of the Guide to Pre-primary Curriculum. The overall curricula were able to take into account children’s development in the physical, intellectual, linguistic, emotional, aesthetic and social aspects. However, schools tended to place undue emphasis on the academic aspect.
- For those kindergartens whose performance was rated as good or excellent in “curriculum organisation” and “curriculum management”, their key strengths included:
 - the establishment of a well-organised curriculum management framework. More experienced teachers took up the role of co-ordinating the design of learning activities and teaching materials. Reviews on learning activities were conducted frequently
 - the setting up of a proper mechanism to monitor curriculum work. Implementation of curriculum was effectively monitored by the management through attending teachers’ meetings, scrutinizing teaching plans and lesson observation
 - children’s abilities, interests and needs being considered in setting up an interesting and stimulating learning environment to provide them with diversified learning experiences

*Figure 7
Curriculum
Design*

*Curriculum
Organisation*



*Curriculum
Management*





- Effective use of teaching resources in support of the implementation of curriculum. There was proper utilization of community resources by arranging visits for children to enrich their learning experiences. Parents' support were also appropriately tapped to facilitate the implementation of curriculum
- In the same areas, however, weaknesses were identified in some schools. They included:
 - The curriculum was overcrowded and implemented at a pace that did not match with children's developmental needs.
 - failing to provide a balanced daily schedule with adequate time for musical and physical activities as well as self-initiated activities
 - requiring children to write before they were ready in eye-hand co-ordination and fine motor control
 - undue emphasis on the training of reading, writing and computing skills
 - inflexible scheduling of curriculum with excessive activities prepared by teachers, thus failing to promote an active learning attitude among children
 - failing to cater for individual differences of children

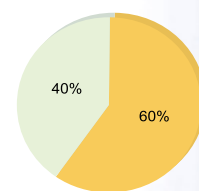


(2) Teaching and Caring for Children

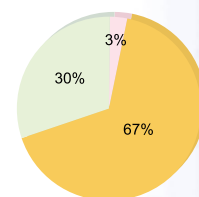
- Kindergartens performed well in this area. 60% of the kindergartens were rated as good in “strategies and skills”, and 70% were rated as good or excellent in “attitude and knowledge” (Figure 8).
- The major strengths of the performance of those teachers rated as good or excellent included:
 - lessons were well-prepared, and the learning environment and teaching aids were arranged in accordance with teaching objectives
 - being conscientious in teaching. They were amiable and were concerned about the children’s emotional needs
 - providing daily opportunities for children to experience individual learning, group learning and whole-class learning
 - the ability to stimulate children’s interests in learning through play and interesting activities
 - demonstrating good communicative skills in encouraging and praising children. Teacher-pupil relationship was good
 - The ability to cultivate children’s good hygiene, self-care habits and table manners through routine training
- Some teachers had the following weaknesses in teaching:
 - being inflexible in teaching
 - unable to cater for individual differences of children
 - delivering too many instructions and not providing children with opportunities for development and creation
 - using lecturing as the major mode of instruction in whole class teaching. Insufficient opportunity was provided to children for oral expression

Figure 8
Teaching and
Caring for
Children

Strategies and Skills



Attitude and
Knowledge





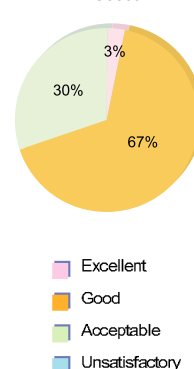
- poor questioning technique which failed to inspire thinking or imagination from children

(3) Children's Learning

- With regard to areas under "Learning and Teaching", kindergartens did best in "children's learning".
- In "performance and progress in the learning process", most kindergartens (70%) were rated as good or excellent (Figure 9). Children found learning pleasurable. They actively participated in various kinds of activities.
- Inspection findings revealed that:
 - children were interested in learning and willing to participate in various activities
 - children were active in communicating with others, willing to answer questions raised by teachers and were active in expressing themselves
 - children could follow teachers' instructions in completing various tasks in group activities. They could meet teachers' requirements and participated in free-choice activities independently and actively
 - children were active in play and learning and they exchanged ideas with their peers and experienced the pleasure of group life
 - good living habits and self-caring skills were developed. They were well-behaved and well-disciplined in obtaining materials for activities and tidying up after use

Figure 9
Children's Learning

Performance and Progress in the Learning Process



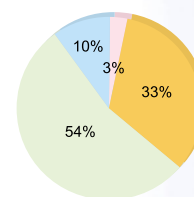


(4) Assessment of Learning Experiences

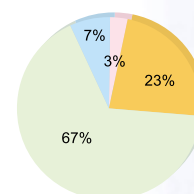
- Kindergartens' performance in "assessment of learning experiences" had great room for improvement. Only 36% of the kindergartens were rated as good or above in "assessment policy and system" (Figure 10). The assessment policies of these kindergartens were appropriate to children's overall physical and psychological development. Continuous assessment was adopted to evaluate children's development.
- A majority (54%) of the kindergartens were rated as acceptable and 10% of the kindergartens were rated as unsatisfactory in "assessment policy and system". The major weaknesses included:
 - Assignments being mainly of mechanical writing type
 - Reliance on tests and examinations to assess children's abilities
 - excessive emphasis on the assessment of rote learning
- Kindergartens' performance was unsatisfactory in "use of assessment information". Only 26% of the kindergartens were rated as good or above. 67% were rated as acceptable and 7% were rated as unsatisfactory.
- On the whole, parents were regularly informed of their children's development. Records of children's performance were systematically kept. However, a considerable number of kindergartens did not demonstrate a full understanding of the concept of continuous assessment of children's development. Children's assessment information was not fully utilized to review the effectiveness of teaching.

Figure 10
Assessment of
Learning
Experiences

Assessment Policy
and System



Use of Assessment
Information



Excellent
 Good
 Acceptable
 Unsatisfactory



2.4 Support to Children & School Ethos

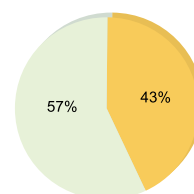
Observations regarding the individual aspects in this domain are presented as follows:

(1) Caring and Supporting Services

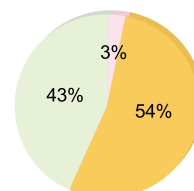
- 43% of the kindergartens were rated as good in “provision of services to children with special educational needs” (Figure 11). 57% of the kindergartens were rated as good or excellent in “provision of support to children”.
- The major strengths displayed by kindergartens with good performance in “caring and supporting services” included:
 - accepting children with special educational needs and keeping close contact with parents in order to provide timely assistance and referral services
 - devising appropriate arrangement to help newly admitted children to adapt to school life
 - providing upper kindergarten children with effective support to prepare them for primary school life
- There was still room for improvement in nearly half of the kindergartens. On the whole, schools created a warm and caring atmosphere. They were willing to provide service to children who had special educational needs. However, schools could pay more attention to children’s individual differences, and try to devise suitable curricula and learning progress for the gifted, newly arrived, newly admitted and those with learning difficulties.

Figure 11
Caring and
Supporting
Services

Provision of Services
to Children with
Special Educational
Needs



Provision of Support
to Children



Excellent
Good
Acceptable
Unsatisfactory

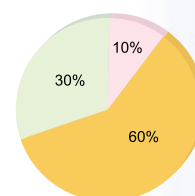


(2) Links with Parents and External Bodies

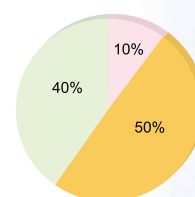
- Similar to the inspection result last year, most kindergartens (70%) had good or excellent performance in “home-school co-operation” (Figure 12). Various communication channels were explored to maintain close links and establish mutual trust with parents. Parents trusted the schools and supported their policies. With respect to “links with external bodies”, 60% of the kindergartens were rated as good or excellent.
- Kindergartens that had good or excellent performance in “home-school co-operation” showed the following major strengths:
 - good in maintaining links with parents through various channels, and keeping parents well-informed of their children’s performance and the school’s development. Parents’ opinions were collected through questionnaires for school improvement
 - parents being offered the opportunity to take part in school activities and to assist in conducting school activities, so as to promote parents’ understanding of children’s activities in school, thereby enhancing home-school co-operation
 - establishment of parent-teacher associations for the promotion of home-school communication and support to the school development
 - active promotion of parent education which facilitated parents to support their children’s growth at home
 - a good partnership between schools and parents to bring about healthy development of children

Figure 12
Links with
Parents and
External
Bodies

Home-school
Co-operation



Links with External
Bodies





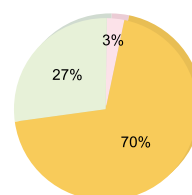
- Kindergartens that showed good or excellent performance in “links with external bodies” displayed the following major strengths:
 - good utilization of external resources to support school activities, and to enrich children’s learning experiences
 - close links with various organisations in the community, and reaching out to other schools for sharing of good practices in order to promote effectively the professional development of teachers

(3) School Climate

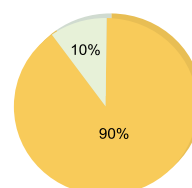
- More than 70% of the kindergartens (73%) were rated good or excellent in “school atmosphere” and 90% were good in “interpersonal relationship” (Figure 13). In general, schools with good school atmosphere usually performed well in the aspect of “interpersonal relationship”. The major strengths of these kindergartens included:
 - open communication, mutual respect and harmonious relationships existed between and among the management and staff
 - staff understanding and sharing the schools’ educational beliefs, showing support and a sense of belonging to the school
 - staff being conscientious and displaying team spirit through mutual support and working in collaboration with each other
 - care for children being adequately given
 - a good rapport being established among children who enjoyed their school life
 - parents giving support to schools and actively participating in school activities

Figure 13
School Climate

School Atmosphere



Interpersonal Relationship





GOOD PRACTICES AND KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED



Chapter 3

GOOD PRACTICES AND KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED

3.1 Good Practices Identified in Schools

Inspection findings as reported in Chapter Two have revealed that the schools inspected displayed obvious strengths in the domain of *Support for Children & School Ethos*. Good practices were identified in such aspects as “home-school cooperation”, “links with external bodies” and “support for children”. Some schools performed well in the aspects of “professional competence”, “staff co-ordination and liaison” and “organisation and use of resources” under the domain of *Management & Organisation*. Though the performance of most schools in “assessment of learning experience” in the domain of *Learning and Teaching* was only acceptable, individual schools performed well in this aspect. This chapter will only present the most specific and best practices identified in schools with outstanding performance in the above-mentioned aspects.

(1) Management & Organisation

- Professional Competence
 - The management adopted an open attitude and was well aware of the situation and resource allocation. Staff opinions were valued and development plans of the schools were drawn up carefully. The staff were led to implement systematically and make evaluation on the effectiveness of various tasks.
 - The management led the staff to launch various projects. Support was adequately provided for the staff. The management valued the concerted efforts of the staff and had expectations on them. Staff were encouraged to initiate new ideas. And their effort in the development of the schools was also recognized.
 - The management maintained a harmonious relationship with the staff and attended to their needs. Welfare and award systems were set up to enhance a sense of belonging among staff.



- Staff Co-ordination and Liaison
 - The management provided its staff with a clear picture of the schools' policies and development plans. Staff could speak to the heads and the level co-ordinators at any time and expressed their opinions through regular meetings and questionnaires. The management took the initiative to address the problems raised by the staff and rendered appropriate support. Staff opinions were properly handled and followed up for the improvement of the schools.
 - Some schools organised activities such as social gatherings and fellowship meetings so that staff were able to express their views and enhance communication among themselves in a relaxed manner. They could also make use of such opportunities to establish closer links by encouraging and helping each other.
 - Individual schools had established effective welfare systems. Apart from the basic benefits offered, cash reward and subsidies were also provided to staff.
- Organisation and Use of Resources
 - A mechanism was set up to plan for the development and use of resources. Task forces were formed for the procurement, updating and maintenance of teaching resources.
 - Catalogues of teaching resources were compiled with specification of the location, quantity as well as methods and guidelines for the use of teaching resources. Staff were informed of the most updated resources at regular intervals. Systematic records on the use of teaching resources were also properly kept.

(2) Learning and Teaching

- Assessment of Learning Experience
 - Assessment policies were formulated to match children's overall physical and psychological development. Areas of assessment were designed in accordance with the content and progress of the curriculum. Teachers adopted continuous assessment by making observation and recording children's performance at various stages. The schools conducted regular reviews on the assessment policies and systems, particularly on the use



and content of the assessment tools.

- Schools adopted proper formative and summative assessments to evaluate children's learning experience in various aspects. Teachers made observations on children's performance in class activities, recorded their learning progress, organised and analysed their works, and compiled learning records or portfolios for children. Summative assessment was made on children's development in the cognitive, self-care, linguistic, physical, emotional and aesthetic aspects.
- Clear and specific assessment guidelines were provided to facilitate teachers' mastery of the skills and methods in assessing children's development and making objective observation on children's performance. Relevant information on various aspects of children's development was organised and analysed so that suitable guidance could be given to children.
- Parents were informed at timely intervals of their children's learning performance and progress in different aspects through various means (e.g. parents' meetings, interviews, children's handbooks, class observations and children's development reports. Schools and parents could jointly develop children's potential and provide proper guidance for children according to their learning portfolios and development records.)

(3) Support for Children and School Ethos

- Home-School Cooperation
 - Schools paid due recognition to the importance of home-school cooperation and established partnership as well as good communication with parents. Parents were enthusiastic in helping schools to organise various kinds of activities.
 - Most of the schools attached importance to parent education. Resource corners/centres for parents were set up to provide them with reading materials, audio and visual teaching materials and computer software on education. Talks, seminars and parent-child workshops, etc. were also organised to help parents acquire knowledge of early childhood education and enhance their understanding of the early childhood curriculum. Individual schools could cater for the needs of parents and organise diversified activities such as "parents' schools" to actively promote parent



education. These schools also concluded “Home-School Cooperation Charter” with parents so as to make concerted efforts for the healthy development of children.

- Most schools were able to build up a support network of parent volunteers to assist in promoting school activities, including visits, story telling, snack-preparation demonstration, production of teaching aids as well as library services. With such a network, parents could provide additional manpower resources to the schools.
- Parent-Teacher Associations were formed in some schools to involve parents in advising on school policies and teaching matters as well as the planning and organising of education activities.
- Links with External Organisations
 - Schools maintained close contact with external organisations and made good utilisation of community resources to enrich children’s learning activities. Visits and tours were organised according to the learning needs of children so as to broaden their horizon.
 - Most schools could make good use of community resources such as the Quality Education Fund to support the schools’ development.
 - Schools had regular links with other bodies in the educational sector and other community organisations. They paid visits to the local, mainland and oversea educational establishments for professional exchange. Such activities could provide more learning opportunities for teachers so that their professional competence could be enhanced to better support the schools’ development.
- Support for Children
 - Child-centered policies were formulated to provide systematic and appropriate support to children. Activities including the arrangement of adaptation periods for newly admitted children and children admitted with middle of the school term. Visits to primary schools and adaptation programmes were organised for upper kindergarten children. Talks were also held for parents to assist children in adapting to the learning environment and school life.
 - Schools provided support to children with family problems and the newly



arrived children. Some schools would conduct home visits to get to know children's family situation. Individual schools had social workers to render support to the families in need and provide them with professional guidance services. Some schools even set up a hardship fund and offered textbook assistance for families with financial difficulties in order to minimize their impact on children's learning.

- Individual schools maintained continuous links with the school leavers and their parents so as to provide encouragement and support to them and enhance their sense of belonging to the alma maters.



3.2 Key Issues for Schools

For the 30 kindergartens inspected, the key issues identified for action were all in the domains of *Management & Organisation* and *Learning & Teaching*. A summary of these key issues listed in a descending order of predominance is given below:

(1) Management & Organisation

- Kindergartens should establish a **self-evaluation mechanism**. Effective and reliable tools and procedures should be formulated. The results of self-evaluation should be followed up to best match the needs of schools by drawing up development plans with short and long term goals.
- A clear, fair and open **staff appraisal system** should be instituted to assess the performance of the staff so as to have a better understanding of their development needs. Self-evaluation could be carried out by staff and self-improvement was encouraged to promote professional development.
- **Communication and co-ordination** between the management and staff should be strengthened in building up good working relationship. Good working relationship which is conducive to cooperation under mutual trust, respect and understanding should be established to enhance team spirit. In addition, channels of communication should be used appropriately to foster the two-way communication between the management and staff and to allow wider staff participation in decision-making.
- Schools should take into account the workload of the staff and **set priorities of tasks** in formulating policies and action plans and in the distribution of work to allow sufficient time for adaptation and adjustment.
- After analysing and reviewing the training needs of the staff, a school-based **professional development plan** should be formulated. Professional sharing of good practices should be promoted among teachers.
- The **school premises** should be fully utilised so as to increase more space for children activities.



(2) Learning & Teaching

- The amount of **assignments for children** should be reduced and mechanical writing exercises should be avoided. A greater variety of tasks for children to observe, explore and collect should be designed to foster creative thinking and the joy of accomplishment.
- **Assessment modes on children's learning experiences** should be reviewed. Continuous observation and recording should be more widely adopted to assess the various aspects of children's performance and development. Findings of the assessments should be used to review the effectiveness of teaching in order to formulate appropriate measures to facilitate children's learning.
- The comprehensiveness, balance and appropriateness of **curriculum design** should be reviewed so as to match with children's abilities, interests and needs. Diversified activities should be devised to enrich children's learning experiences and to promote their all-round and balanced development.
- The allocation of time on **free-choice activities** should be increased to provide children with more opportunities to freely express themselves and to play an active role in exploration and problem-solving, so as to cultivate an active learning attitude among them.
- **Fine motor development** and **eye-hand co-ordination** of children in nursery classes should be strengthened through play and activities. Nursery Class children should not be asked to do writing.
- Flexible arrangement and adjustment on the implementation of activities to cater for children's developmental needs, abilities and interests. A balanced **daily schedule** should be provided.
- The management should strengthen its **professional role in the planning and management of the curriculum**. Through regular class observation and curriculum review, the effectiveness of teaching could be enhanced.
- Schools should make good use of the results of curriculum review to **adjust the curriculum content** and design of activities in order to match children's abilities and needs.



REFLECTIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD



Chapter 4

REFLECTIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

4.1 Reflections on Inspection Findings

QA inspection has been implemented in kindergartens since the 2000/01 academic year with 50 kindergartens inspected up to now. As this number represents only 6% of the kindergartens in Hong Kong, cautions should be taken to generalize the inspection findings. However, similar strengths and key issues identified over these two years of inspection spoke for some common phenomena among kindergartens in Hong Kong.

(1) Management & Organisation

- The annual report revealed that kindergartens' performance in the domain of Management & Organisation was good. Despite considerable variations among Hong Kong private kindergartens in respect of school premises, resources and number of teachers and pupils, etc. Schools were operated according to the guideline issued by the Government and in compliance with legislations related to education.
- The simple and clear administration and management framework without too many personnels facilitated easy communication and collaboration among teaching staff, hence fostering team spirit and a sense of belonging to schools. However, due to the limited number of teaching staff, teachers mostly had to participate in a number of functional teams resulting in heavy non-teaching workload.
- The school management possessed good vision in education and were keen to enhance professional knowledge for school development. Schools attached importance to teachers' professional development. Teachers showed eagerness in participating in various educational seminars and workshops. An increasing number of schools had built up the culture of lesson observation to promote professional sharing among teachers.



- Most of the schools managed to set up an appropriate environment with a variety of facilities to cater for children's learning. In spite of the demand of additional resources, some schools were effective in exploring further resources from parents and community to enhance teaching effectiveness and facilitate school development.
- School self-evaluation (SSE) is a critical part of the QA framework. Yet, the performance in the area of "self-evaluation" was the weakest in schools. In response to this, effort will be made to promote the establishment of SSE culture in schools. Schools with good performances in SSE will be selected and invited to disseminate relevant materials and good practices to their peer schools. To help teachers setting up a self-evaluation mechanism in schools, training will also be provided to acquaint them with the procedures and approaches of self-evaluation, and to better use of performance indicators. Through SSE, schools can identify their own strengths and key issues of concern for the purpose of self-improvement. It is anticipated that teachers and the management, with enhanced professional knowledge and skills, will lead the schools to the way of innovation and advancement whereby schools' overall quality in education will be upgraded.

(2) Learning & Teaching

- Learning & Teaching is the most important domain of QA Inspection. Yet, as compared to the other two domains, there is still room for improvement in this respect. As specified in the Education Commission Report "Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong", the objectives of early-childhood education include:
 - children are expected to be curious, proactive in seeking knowledge and enjoy learning;
 - children are expected to experience enjoyable and colourful group life in which a sense of responsibility and a respect for others is to be cultivated in them with a balanced development in the moral, intellectual, physical, social and aesthetic aspects; and
 - children are expected to play an active role in self-initiating and exploration, to equip themselves with the skills to face and solve problems, and to build up self-confidence and healthy self-consciousness.



The effort and progress of schools in achieving the objectives of early childhood education were appreciated. However, the inspection results revealed that while the curricula of most schools could cover various aspects of children's development, undue emphasis was placed on the delivery of knowledge and the learning content was overloaded and difficult. Kindergarten teachers were enthusiastic in teaching with professionalism. They were amiable and in good rapport with the children. However, they tended to adopt a teacher-centred approach in teaching. Their skills in cultivating a spirit of exploration, self-confidence and creativity in children had yet to be enhanced.

- As professional leadership is an integral part of curriculum implementation, training programmes for kindergarten principals are essential to enhance the professional capacity of school management. At the same time, the requirements on teachers' qualifications and training have been raised with a view to enhancing teaching quality in schools. It is recommended that tertiary training institutions could make appropriate responses in this aspect to ensure the programmes they offered are relevant to the professional needs. Furthermore, briefing sessions and seminars on quality education will continue to be held for kindergarten principals and teachers to synchronize with the latest developments in early childhood education, and to help them face the challenges brought about by curriculum reform.
- Schools' performance in the area of "assessment on learning experience" was the weakest. The assessment mode which emphasised memorization and rote learning was still employed in some kindergartens. Such approach could easily undermine children's interest in learning and all-round development. To eliminate this inappropriate practice, it is necessary to develop the continuous assessment mode of children's learning experiences, and to strengthen parent education. Besides, research-and evidence-based pedagogical messages are also to be disseminated widely through parent associations in schools as well as regional seminars.
- In order to strive for survival under the difficulties brought about by a declining birth rate, schools have to pander to parents' demands by treating English, Putonghua and computer learning as the core studies, and offering an advanced



and difficult curriculum to canvass for bigger enrolments. Such practice definitely runs counter to the objectives of early childhood education. In fact, what should be the most appropriate curriculum for our children? In what ways can schools help to build up a proper concept on early childhood education in parents? Has the linkage between kindergarten and primary curricula been taken into account in the primary one curriculum? These are some questions that call for our serious consideration and discussion.

(3) Support for Children and School Ethos

- In the past two years, the inspection findings revealed that schools' performance was the strongest in this domain, particularly in the aspect of "school climate". As compared to primary and secondary schools, kindergartens are small in scale with a relatively small number of teaching staff, pupils and parents, and are therefore conducive to the development of positive interpersonal relationships and a sense of community.
- Schools attached due importance to parents' views. Adequate communication channels were provided to parents with close links. Schools were also eager to offer support and caring services to families with difficulties. In general, parent-and-child activities, parents' gatherings as well as seminars for parents were actively organised by schools to help parents understand the proper approaches to teach their children. However, undue emphasis was placed on this aspect in some schools which allowed themselves to take the role of community centres and teachers the role of parents and family counsellors. This would leave the teaching staff with increasing heavy workload and might consequently interfere with their teaching. Serious consideration should be given by schools in this respect in order to achieve a better balance in their provision of support to parents and quality education to children.



4.2

Support for Schools

In addition to carrying out QA inspections, there are also support services offered to schools and good practices identified in inspections are disseminated with a view to helping schools enhance their quality of learning and teaching.

- **Professional support service** was provided for the 30 kindergartens inspected in the 2001/02 academic year. **Workshops on post-inspection action planning** were conducted by the Quality Assurance Division. The principals and teachers of these kindergartens found the workshops useful in enhancing the quality of education they provide.
- The **good practices** identified during QA inspections have been disseminated through experience-sharing seminars. In 2001/02, three seminars on quality pre-primary education were organised for principals and teachers. They were attended by a total of 704 participants. Response was favourable and comments were positive. 99% of the participants were satisfied with the seminars and over 80% rated the content as good or excellent. To further promulgate the good practices identified during QA inspections, a site has been created on the Education and Manpower Bureau¹ (EMB) homepages and six contributions from kindergartens have been uploaded. In 2002/03, good practices will continue to be disseminated to pre-primary educators through experience-sharing seminars and the QAI web page.
- **Support services** provided to the kindergartens were stepped up in the 2001/02 academic year. There were one seminar and three workshops on SSE with about 1,100 participants. In addition, inspectors conducted upon request various thematic seminars for kindergarten sponsoring bodies with a view to upgrading the professional standard of teachers.

¹ ED has merged with EMB since January 2003 to form the new EMB



4.3 New Developments

The following are the new developments for QA inspection to kindergartens:

- Starting from the 2002/03 academic year, a wider range of kindergartens will be covered for inspection. The selected schools cover various types of kindergartens in different districts, namely, kindergartens with Chinese as the medium of instruction (MOI) and other international kindergartens with different MOI so that inspection findings can reflect the state of pre-primary education in Hong Kong.
- The development of performance indicators were based on the philosophy of early childhood education and the education objectives set out in the “Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum” with the aim to promoting the development of quality education in early childhood. Kindergartens and child care centres under EMB and Social Welfare Departments (SWD) respectively are committed to and accountable for the caring and nurturing of children below school age. To keep in line with the harmonization of kindergartens and child care centres, EMB works closely with SWD to carry out joint studies and co-ordinate the development of **performance indicators of pre-primary institutions**. The Performance Indicators (First Edition) will also be reviewed by stages to formulate a set of performance indicators applicable to both kindergartens and child care centres.
- The refinement of the Performance Indicators (Pre-primary Institutions) on the domains of *Management & Organisation* and *School Culture & Support for Children* was completed in September 2002 with two levels of evidence of “excellent” and “acceptable” performance provided. Together with the domain of *Learning & Teaching* revised last year, **evidences of performance on the three domains** are provided for pre-primary institutions as reference for external evaluation and self-evaluation. Refinement on the domain of *Children's Development* has begun and is expected to be completed in 2003. Besides, kindergartens are encouraged to formulate school-based performance indicators for self-evaluation.
- Starting from the 2001/02 academic year, **the quality assurance inspection**



reports of the kindergartens are uploaded onto the EMB homepage to provide parents and the public with the information on schools' performance.

- Successful implementation of **school self-evaluation (SSE)** is crucial to self-improvement in providing quality pre-primary education. To help schools in conducting SSE, EMB will render them such support as the organisation of **in-service training programmes**, dissemination of good practices through seminars, sharing sessions and district networks. It is anticipated that through SSE, schools not only seek continuous and self-initiated improvement, but also gain an understanding of their own stages of development. In the long run when all schools are fully accustomed to SSE, QA inspection will only serve to validate a school's evaluation of its own performance. By then, the inspection cycle can be shortened.



SEEDLING



Appendix 1

List of Kindergartens Inspected in 2001/02

- Annunciation Catholic Kindergarten
- Buddhist Chi Lam English Kindergarten
- Cannan International Kindergarten
- * Christian & Missionary Alliance Church Union Tseung Kwan O Alliance Kindergarten
- * Christian & Missionary Alliance Joyful Peace Kindergarten
- * Church of Christ in China Hoh Fuk Tong Kindergarten
- Elite Kindergarten
- * Fung Ying Seen Koon Yan Shing Kindergarten
- Hill Road St Albertus Kindergarten
- * HK & Macau Lutheran Church Shek On Memorial Kindergarten
- HK Toaist Association Yuen Yuen Kindergarten (Tung Tau Estate)
- * Living Grace Lutheran Kindergarten
- Long Ping Estate Sing Yan Kindergarten
- Lung Kong World Federation School Limited Lai Tang Yuen Kaw Kindergarten
- Ming Wai Kindergarten (North Point Branch)
- * Oi Kwan Road Baptist Church Lui Kwok Pat Fong Kindergarten
- * Po Leung Kuk Ting Mau Kindergarten
- Semple Kindergarten
- * Sham Shui Po Baptist Church Kindergarten
- * Shan King Estate Baptist Kindergarten
- St Gatwick Kindergarten
- * St James Lutheran Kindergarten
- St Joan of Arc Primary School (KG Section)
- St Maria Kindergarten
- * St Peter's Church Kindergarten (Stanley)
- St Stephen's Girls' College Kindergarten
- Tsuen Wan St Dominic Savio Kindergarten
- * Tsung Tsin Mission Graceful Kindergarten (Ma On Shan)
- * Tung Wah Groups of Hospitals Nickon Kindergarten
- Yuen Long Church (CCC) Ltd Tin Shui Wai Chan Kwong Kindergarten

- * *under the Kindergarten Subsidy Scheme*



Appendix 2

Schools' Responses to QA Inspection

It is an established practice that schools can express their views regarding the main findings and the key issues for action identified in the QA inspection reports. The response of each school inspected in the 2001/2002 academic year was appended in its entirety to the respective QA inspection report, and a full set of the inspection reports is kept in the kindergarten Inspection Section, 12/F., Wu Chung House, Wanchai.

Generally, schools' responses were focused and clearly made with reference to the unique circumstances of the schools. The schools made good use of the opportunity to further exchange views with the inspection teams on the observations made and follow up the points and issues raised. Owing to the wide variations and the individual contexts of the schools, the remarks that were specific to the schools are not included in this report. Other than these remarks, the main points made in the responses are summarized as follows:

- Most schools appreciated the efforts made by the inspection teams and treasured their professional advice given in the QA inspection reports.
- Schools mostly confirmed that QA inspection reports reflected the actual situations of the schools inspected. The findings and key issues for action identified could facilitate schools' improvement and development, and further enhance the quality of early childhood education.
- Many schools thanked the QA inspection teams for their recognition of the schools' good performance. The findings helped affirm the schools' strengths as well as their achievements. Such recognition was a great encouragement to the staff of the school.
- Some schools admitted that QA inspection could facilitate schools' self-review on their curriculum planning and teachers' reflection on their pedagogy with a view to keeping abreast of the current curriculum reform.
- Some schools would like to strengthen parental education so as to enhance parents' understanding of early childhood education in meeting curriculum reform, and to work collaboratively in promoting children's development.
- Most schools were ready to take immediate steps to address the areas of concern identified by inspection teams.
- The school self-evaluation could be actively promoted through the implementation of QA inspections.



Appendix 3

Statistical Analysis of Post-inspection Questionnaires on QA Inspection

Number of Schools Inspected 30		Number of Questionnaires Issued 343		Number of Questionnaires Returned 285		Response Rate (%) 83.1	
I	Pre-inspection						
		Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	No opinion/ not applicable (%)	Void (%)
1.	I am clear about the procedure of the QA inspection.	23.9	69.5	5.3	0.0	1.3	0.0
2.	I am clear about the scope covered by the performance indicators.	19.7	69.8	7.4	0.0	3.1	0.0
3.	The amount of documents and information requested by the QA inspection team is appropriate.	20.3	68.8	2.3	0.0	7.5	1.1
4a.	The preparatory visit has increased my understanding of the QA inspection.	29.7	66.1	1.3	0.4	2.5	*
4b.	The preparatory visit has helped dispel my worries about the QA inspection.	18.0	65.7	9.6	0.0	6.7	*
II	During Inspection						
5.	Inspectors observed an appropriate number of the various types of school activity.	10.6	79.3	7.4	1.3	0.7	0.7
6.	The frequency of meetings and interviews held by inspectors with me was appropriate.	13.8	76.6	3.8	1.3	4.0	0.5
7.	Inspectors chose an adequate sample of students' assignments for scrutiny.	14.8	71.5	4.2	0.0	9.0	0.5
8.	The QA inspection did not affect much my daily teaching duties.	8.8	63.6	15.6	1.3	10.2	0.5

* Teachers who did not attend the briefing session during the preparatory visit are not required to answer the question.



III Post-inspection

	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	No opinion/ not applicable (%)	Void (%)
9. The QA inspection can identify my school's strengths.	20.9	70.5	2.7	0.3	5.1	0.5
10. I agree with the key issues for action identified in the inspection report.	14.9	71.2	5.2	0.3	8.0	0.4
11. There is adequate time for the school to prepare its written response to the draft inspection report.	10.3	64.2	6.7	0.6	17.8	0.4

IV Overall Evaluation

12. The entire QA inspection processes were open and transparent.	21.6	68.2	4.2	0.3	5.2	0.5
13a. The questionnaires issued were appropriately designed.	7.9	79.6	3.9	0.3	8.0	0.3
13b. The questionnaires issued could effectively collect teachers' views about the school.	12.4	69.8	7.8	0.0	9.2	0.8
14. Inspectors' attitudes were sincere and friendly.	42.3	50.4	3.5	1.4	2.3	0.1
15. Inspectors were professional in their work.	42.5	50.5	2.8	0.7	3.5	0.0
16. Inspectors could objectively listen to view expressed by school staff in interviews.	31.9	56.5	4.9	1.1	5.6	0.0
17. I had adequate opportunities to express and exchange views with inspectors.	20.1	64.1	10.2	0.0	5.4	0.2
18. The QA inspection did not exert much pressure on me.	2.1	37.0	40.1	11.3	9.3	0.2
19. The scope covered by the performance indicators was adequate.	8.1	64.1	8.8	0.7	18.1	0.2
20a. I think that the QA inspection can point out our school's strengths and key issues for action.	24.2	69.5	2.8	0.0	3.5	0.0
20b. I think that the QA inspection can facilitate our school's formulation of its future goals and plans.	25.6	66.3	2.8	0.4	4.9	0.0
21. I am satisfied with the operation of the QA inspection.	15.1	71.2	4.9	0.7	8.1	0.0