

Education
and
Manpower
Bureau



Quality Assurance Inspection



2002 - 2003

Annual Report

Kindergartens

Introduction

This Annual Report summarizes the major findings of Quality Assurance Inspection (QAI) conducted in the 2002-03 school year. All the statistical data and analyses pertain only to the 30 kindergartens inspected. The Education and Manpower Bureau intends to draw public attention to the quality of early childhood education in Hong Kong and to identify the distinctive features of outstanding kindergartens.

The 30 kindergartens were selected from a stratified random sample, of which 70% were kindergartens receiving subsidy and / or rent / rate reimbursements (see Appendix 1).

Each inspection lasted for three to four days, depending on the size of the kindergarten. The inspection team assessed the performance of kindergartens on the following domains: (1) Management & Organization; (2) Learning & Teaching; and (3) Support for Children and School Culture.

The inspectors used the Performance Indicators of the Quality Assurance (QA) framework in assessing the performance of those kindergartens. The performance were classified at four levels:

- Grade 4 - **“excellent”** (An exemplary level of performance which can be used as a reference 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.)

After inspection, kindergarten staff were invited to give their opinions on QAI by filling in the post-QAI questionnaires. Generally, most of the kindergartens appreciated the efforts made by the Inspection team and confirmed that QAI had revealed their strengths and weaknesses, and it facilitated their improvement on formulating appropriate objectives for future plans (see Appendix 2).

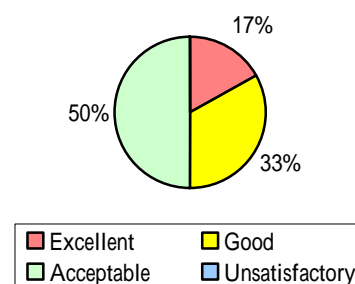
The Education and Manpower Bureau sincerely hopes that QAI can help kindergartens have a better understand on how to make use of performance indicators in school self-evaluation, so as to achieve the goals of school self- improvement.

Major Findings

(1) Management and Organization

For the 30 kindergartens inspected, the average number of classes was only 10. The number of staff was limited, the administration was usually simple and clear. Among the inspected kindergartens, over 50% were rated as excellent or good in the area of leadership (Figure 1). The management of these kindergartens gave sufficient encouragement and support to their staff and maintained an adequate communication with them. The administrators encouraged teachers to plan the curriculum and school major events in concerted effort. On the whole, most kindergartens were able to establish a **collaborative culture** among staff.

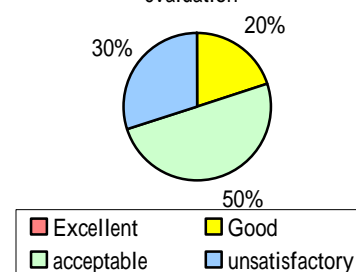
Figure 1:
School performance in
"Leadership"



Kindergartens attached importance to **teachers' professional training**. Among the kindergartens inspected, 80% of the schoolheads were holders of Certificate in Early Childhood Education or above, including Master of Education and Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood. The teachers were appropriately trained and the majority of them had obtained the status of qualified kindergarten teacher (QKT). Some teachers had completed Certificate in Early Childhood Education Courses, whereas some were attending such courses or bachelor degree courses. Teachers were always willing to participate in various professional development activities such as peer lesson observations. The Bureau is pleased to note that kindergarten practitioners are eager to engage in continuous professional development in order to cope with the changing needs of the society. The Bureau also attaches importance to the effectiveness of school-based management. The management should provide a professional leadership role and offers abundant opportunities for professional development of their teachers. Through professional activities such as peer lesson observation, collaborative lesson planning, action research etc., team work is thus nurtured and the kindergartens' pursuit for excellence is greatly facilitated.

School self-evaluation is a critical part of the QA framework. Although QAI for kindergartens has been in place for three years, among the kindergartens inspected this year, only 20% had established a comprehensive self-evaluation system (Figure 2). Most kindergartens were still at the initial stage of self-evaluation, e.g. teachers made self-reflection after teaching, schools reviewed the effectiveness of their major events, and the inclusion of self-evaluation in the teacher appraisal system. However, the evaluation was fragmented and casually conducted. We hope that kindergartens would conduct a more systematic self-evaluation and teachers' involvement should be enhanced. The management should work out short and long-term development plans. Through constant evaluation, the continuous advancement and self-improvement of schools would be achieved.

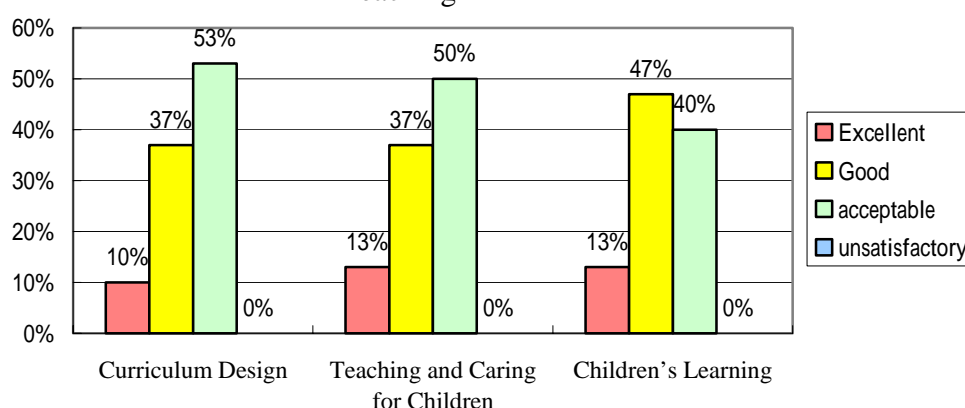
Figure 2:
School performance in "Self-
evaluation"



(2) Learning and Teaching

Kindergartens were committed to promote curriculum development. Teachers strived to provide diverse learning opportunities for children. Among the kindergartens inspected, 10% were rated as excellent in the area of “Curriculum Design”. In respect of “Teaching and Caring for Children” and “Children’s Learning”, 13% of the kindergartens were rated as excellent. The number of kindergartens rated as good in the above areas also accounted for 37% to 47% (Figure 3). The good practices of these kindergartens have been uploaded in the EMB Homepage.

Figure 3 : Performance in the domain of Learning and Teaching



Most of the kindergartens tried to implement curriculum reform by introducing new teaching approaches with a view to developing children’s active learning attitude, creativity and problem-solving skill. However, some kindergartens failed to take full account of children’s needs, interests and the levels of development. There was overloaded curriculum and the curriculum was implemented within a tight schedule that inhabited children’s learning. Some teachers still adopted a teacher-centered and expository approach to teach children and failed to observe children’s needs. As regards curriculum organization, kindergartens rated as excellent were always able to create an exploratory learning environment and allocate sufficient time for free play. Children could therefore have meaningful learning experiences while participating in different activities.

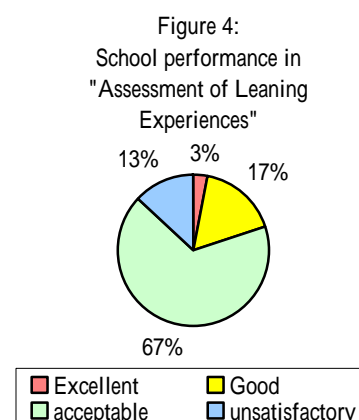
When revamping the curriculum, some kindergartens arranged group-based learning for children. This approach, on one hand, could strengthen the interaction between teachers and children and foster children’s intellectual and language development. On the other hand, teachers could have more time to observe and cater for children’s individual differences. However, some kindergartens still stuck to the whole-class teaching and expected all children to have the same progress in learning. Kindergartens should organize small-group learning and group activities as far as possible so as to enhance children’s learning.

The main focus of **pre-primary language programme** is to design a rich language environment so that children can develop their language abilities through experimentations, explorations and social interactions. Most teachers were able to develop children’s listening and speaking skills through conversation, story telling and singing nursery rhymes. They developed children’s

reading abilities with the use of storybooks, pictures, word cards and real objects. They prepared children to write through pre-writing games and eye-hand coordination exercise. However, 80% of the kindergartens still put much emphasis on writing skill training, giving excessive drilling and copying assignments to children. Some kindergartens even required children to memorize and dictate words. Children did not have much chance to use the language in authentic situations. Being constrained by a packed curriculum, teachers had no time to develop children's creativity and communication skill. For kindergartens rated as excellent in the provision of language programme, teachers demonstrated as good models. They could create a suitable language environment for the children. Open-ended questions were asked that could guide children to think creatively. Some kindergartens employed native-speaking teachers to teach Putonghua and English with an aim to provide accurate language modeling and expose children to another language naturally. However, there were teachers who just relied on a didactic approach without frequent interactions with children. Some even required children to spell and dictate English words. The learning effect was found to be undesirable.

Kindergartens should formulate assessment policies that can cater for children's individual differences.

As such, schools should adopt a continuous observation strategy to assess individual children's performance. Children should not be compared with one and other. However, many kindergartens adopted teaching approaches that accorded teachers with little time to conduct continuous observation of children. Some teachers had not yet mastered the skill of making valid child observation records. As a result, most of the schools still relied heavily on examinations; continuous observation was only conducted sporadically. Only some kindergartens had fully adopted continuous observation for assessment. There were 20% of the kindergartens which were rated as excellent or good in the "Assessment of Learning Experiences" (Figure 4).



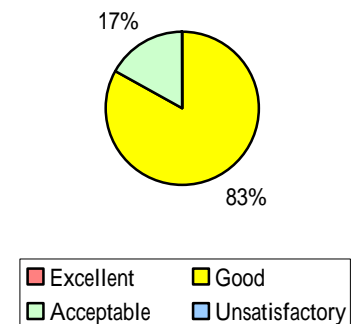
(3) Support for Children and School Culture

Supporting programmes were arranged for the newly admitted children and their parents.

Most of the kindergartens organized parent meetings before the school term started. They would arrange a transitional period for the newly admitted children. During the transition period, the school hours would be extended gradually from short to normal school hours so it helped the new comers easier to adapt. However, kindergartens should pay more attention to children's individual differences. The younger their age, the greater is the children's diversity in physical, social, language and cognitive development. With shorter attention span, their emotions are usually less stable. Kindergartens, therefore, should arrange a longer transitional period for the newly admitted children and there is no pressing need to urge them to learn subject matters. In the transitional period, games and activities should be introduced as they help children build up their confidence and the habits for learning.

Kindergartens attached importance to build up close relationship with parents. Among the kindergartens inspected, 20% of them had already set up the parent-teacher association, and over 80% had maintained a good relationship with parents (see Figure 5). As kindergarten education lasts for only two to three years, it is not an easy task to form a parent-teacher association. And yet, many kindergartens organized parents' groups flexibly to assist in school activities and the outcomes were desirable. e.g. assisting the school in launching reading activities. Most of the kindergartens were able to meet the needs of parents by inviting professionals to conduct seminars on parenting such as workshop for child rearing, parent-child communication etc. Some kindergartens were also able to make good use of community resources by co-organizing parent education activities with other voluntary agencies.

Figure 5:
School performance in
"Links with Parents and
External Bodies"



Schools and families both play important roles in supporting children's learning. They must work hand in hand so as to perform the best in helping their children. Schools and parents must have common conviction towards education. However, many kindergartens adopted an overloaded curriculum only to satisfy the demands of parents who had limited knowledge of early childhood education. We hope that schoolheads can take a stronger professional lead to educate parents about children's development. By organizing lesson observation and activities, schools can tell parents what is the appropriate curriculum for young children. Parents will then recognize that the learning process is more important than its outcome and the uniqueness of every child should be respected. Parents and schools should work together to explore children's potential and aim at their all-round development.

Conclusion

Among the 30 kindergartens inspected, good performing schools attached importance to staff communication and building of a collaborative culture. They focused on developing children's active learning, promoting their thinking ability, enhancing their creativity and problem-solving skill. Much attention was drawn to build up good teacher-child interaction, developing children's multiple intelligence and catering for children's individual differences. The use of continuous observation to assess children's learning is also the new focus. Kindergarten valued home-school co-operation and worked hard in strengthening parents' understanding on early childhood education. But, some commonly encountered problems have yet to be solved. Kindergartens should eliminate drilling exercises and assessment in the form of written examinations. Kindergartens should establish a comprehensive self-evaluation mechanism and work on review for improvement. Through appropriate allocation of manpower, arrangement of more small-group learning and the design of suitable learning content, enhancement of the quality of education for young children would be achieved.

List of Kindergartens Inspected in 2002/03

- BETHEL KINDERGARTEN
- * # BUDDHIST TO CHI FAT SHE YEUNG TAM YUEN FONG KINDERGARTEN
 - # CHRISTIAN ALLIANCE CHEN LEE WING TSING MEMORIAL KINDERGARTEN
 - * # CHRISTIAN ALLIANCE L C K L KG
 - DISCOVERY BAY INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL (KG SECTION)
 - HEEP YUNN SCHOOL PRIVATE KINDERGARTEN
 - * # HK YWCA ATHENA KINDERGARTEN
 - * # HO YAN KINDERGARTEN (SPONSORED BY SIK SIK YUEN)
 - CCC CHEUNG CHAU CHURCH KAM KONG KINDERGARTEN
 - * # LEE ANDREW MEMORIAL ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN
 - LING YAN SCHOO
 - * # LOK SIN TONG CHEUNG YIP MOU CHING KINDERGARTEN
 - MAY NGA KINDERGARTEN (BRANCH)
 - * # MCC LITTLE ANGEL (TIN SHING) KINDERGARTEN
 - MORNING SUN KG
 - # ORCHARD KINDERGARTEN
 - * # PLK TAI SO SHIU WAN KINDERGARTEN
 - * # SHARON LUTHERAN CHURCH KINDERGARTEN (TSZ OI BRANCH)
 - ST CLARE'S PRIMARY SCHOOL (PREPARATORY PRIMARY SECTION)
 - * # ST JOHN'S LUTHERAN KINDERGARTEN
 - ST LORRAINE KINDERGARTEN (YUEN LONG)
 - ST MATTHEW'S CHURCH KINDERGARTEN
 - * # THE SALVATION ARMY PING TIN KINDERGARTEN
 - * TSUEN WAN BAPTIST CHURCH KINDERGARTEN
 - * # TWGH HUNG WONG KAR GEE KINDERGARTEN
 - * # TWGH WONG WU LAI MING KINDERGARTEN
 - # YIU ON ESTATE BODHI SIKSA ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN
 - * # YIU TUNG BAPTIST KINDERGARTEN
 - * # YIU WING ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN
 - * # YUEN LONG MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION KINDERGARTEN

Note: * under the Kindergarten Subsidy Scheme
receiving Rent and/ or Rates Reimbursements

Appendix 2

Statistical Analysis of Post-inspection Questionnaires on QA Inspection

Number of Schools Inspected		Number of Questionnaires Issued		Number of Questionnaires Returned		Response Rate (%)	
30		373		297		80	
		Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	No opinion/ not applicable (%)	Void (%)
I Pre-inspection							
1.	I am clear about the procedure of the QA inspection.	16.2%	76.8%	5.4%	0.3%	1.3%	0.0%
2.	I am clear about the scope covered by the performance indicators.	11.8%	80.5%	4.7%	0.0%	3.0%	0.0%
3.	The amount of documents and information requested by the QA inspection team is appropriate.	18.2%	68.0%	2.7%	0.0%	10.8%	0.3%
4a.	The preparatory visit has increased my understanding of the QA inspection.	18.5%	67.0%	3.0%	0.0%	3.4%	*
4b.	The preparatory visit has helped dispel my worries about the QA inspection.	12.5%	57.6%	11.4%	0.3%	9.1%	*
* Teachers who did not attend the briefing session during the preparatory visit are not required to answer the question.							
II During Inspection							
5	Inspectors observed an appropriate number of the various types of school activity.	10.4%	75.1%	7.7%	1.0%	3.7%	2.0%
6.	The frequency of meetings and interviews held by inspectors with me was appropriate.	15.2%	72.1%	5.7%	1.3%	4.0%	1.7%
7.	Inspectors chose an adequate sample of students' assignments for scrutiny.	11.1%	69.7%	3.0%	0.3%	13.5%	2.4%
8.	The QA inspection did not affect much my daily teaching duties.	11.1%	51.2%	17.8%	4.4%	13.5%	2.0%

		Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	No opinion/ not applicable (%)	Void (%)
III Post-inspection							
9.	The QA inspection can identify my school's strengths.	22.6%	62.6%	4.7%	0.7%	8.4%	1.0%
10.	I agree with the key issues for action identified in the inspection report.	14.5%	64.6%	6.4%	0.7%	12.5%	1.3%
11.	There is adequate time for the school to prepare its written response to the draft inspection report.	8.8%	54.5%	7.1%	1.0%	26.9%	1.7%
IV Overall Evaluation							
12.	The entire QA inspection processes were open and transparent.	17.2%	67.3%	5.4%	0.7%	8.1%	1.3%
13a.	The questionnaires issued were appropriately designed.	8.1%	74.4%	3.7%	0.3%	12.1%	1.3%
13b.	The questionnaires issued could effectively collect teachers' views about the school.	8.8%	67.0%	7.7%	0.7%	14.5%	1.3%
14.	Inspectors' attitudes were sincere and friendly.	35.7%	56.9%	1.3%	0.0%	5.7%	0.3%
15.	Inspectors were professional in their work.	33.7%	54.5%	2.0%	0.3%	9.1%	0.3%
16.	Inspectors could objectively listen to views expressed by school staff in interviews.	25.3%	58.9%	4.0%	1.0%	10.4%	0.3%
17.	I had adequate opportunities to express and exchange views with inspectors.	17.5%	61.6%	10.4%	0.7%	9.4%	0.3%
18.	The QA inspection did not exert much pressure on me.	5.4%	30.0%	42.1%	13.5%	8.4%	0.7%
19.	The scope covered by the performance indicators was adequate.	7.1%	58.2%	8.1%	1.0%	24.9%	0.7%
20a.	The scope covered by the performance indicators was adequate.	20.9%	67.3%	5.1%	0.3%	6.1%	0.3%
20b.	I think that the QA inspection can facilitate our school's formulation of its future goals and plans.	19.2%	62.0%	5.4%	0.7%	12.1%	0.7%
21.	I am satisfied with the operation of the QA inspection.	12.8%	60.9%	3.0%	1.0%	21.5%	0.7%

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