Background of this Bulletin

To enable public sector schools to enhance the effectiveness of their administration, the Education Bureau (EDB) has since the 2011/12 school year implemented in some public sector schools the Pilot Project on Strengthening Schools’ Administration Management (Pilot Project), under which assistance and support are provided to schools to review their operation, and improve or streamline their structure and procedures, with a view to establishing a more effective administration management mechanism and unleashing teachers’ capacity.

Since the launch of the Pilot Project, schools have tried out various items covering a number of areas, and valuable experience and insights have been gathered in the process. The Pilot Project has therefore won the recognition and support of participating schools as well as the school sector at large. While the experience and achievements of the Pilot Project have already been shared through different channels and on different occasions, we would like to step up our promotional efforts by publishing this thematic Bulletin, which will further explore improvement measures and implementation strategies under different topics in a bid to encourage discussion and experience sharing among school management personnel and stakeholders, and identify ways to enhance administrative effectiveness and school administration.

Document Management

School documents, as a record of the course of school development, are instrumental in implementing school policy, transferring knowledge and enhancing efficiency. As such, more and more schools are procuring different kinds of electronic document management systems under the Pilot Project. We have visited two of these schools and have consolidated their experience in system selection and implementation for other schools’ reference.

(1) Experience Sharing by Participating Schools

Schools Participating in Phase I of the Pilot Project

Tai Po Old Market Public School (Plover Cove)

Background and Objectives:

With a history of over 50 years, the school has a huge pile of documents. The school wished to set up a system with enhanced security features for centrally organising important documents, such as correspondence with the government, minutes of meetings and subject panel papers, to ensure proper retention of all documents and facilitate succession and development.

Major Concerns:

- How documents should be organised and kept to free up storage space?
- How to heighten teachers’ awareness of document security and foster a culture of document sharing?

Schools Participating in Phase II of the Pilot Project

Yan Chai Hospital Wong Wha San Secondary School

Background and Objectives:

Graduates from time to time apply for replacement of school attendance certificates, transcripts, reference letters, etc. for the sake of further studies or job seeking. It is time-consuming to retrieve such documents as they are stored separately and some of them are even placed in the storeroom. The school wished to keep student records in digital form to save storage space and improve efficiency in the retrieval of student records.

Major Concerns:

- How documents should be organised and kept to free up storage space?
- How to improve efficiency in information retrieval?
### Key Points to Note in Selecting a Document Management System

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<td>● In addition to hiring an executive assistant for document digitalisation, the school has commissioned a firm to digitise school documents of three to five years so as to speed up the process.  ● The firm charges differently according to quantity and type of documents (sorting service included).</td>
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<td>● The school has procured one-stop service from the system supplier to digitise old student records and input the data to the system.  ● Fees are charged on a piece-rate basis, and surcharges are payable for particular document condition (e.g. documents of varying sizes or stapled documents).</td>
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| After-sale Service | Prompt and satisfying maintenance service and technical support |  |
Figure 1: Viewing/tracking the number of revisions, identity of revisers and date of revision

Figure 2: Full text searching

Figure 3: Keyword searching

Figure 4: Online viewing or updating of electronic document management system
(III) Schools’ Implementation Experience

Tai Po Old Market Public School (Plover Cove)
Lofty Vision and Progressive Approach

1. Forging a Consensus and Implementing in a Progressive Manner

At the initial stage of implementation, school staff had diverse views on organising files and naming folders. The school considered that the record structure should have standardised classification to facilitate access, and ensure the system’s sustainability and the transfer of knowledge. Eventually, a consensus was reached under the leadership of the project co-ordination team.

The first level of folders started with the school’s administration section, and the subsequent levels were created by subject panels by year, class or type of information (see figure on right). This not only facilitates the allocation of access right by role but also allows each subject panel to have an appropriate level of autonomy.

2. Striking a Balance and Adapting Flexibly

As the operation mode of the system is different from that of the traditional data server, staff members inevitably have to change their usual practices of processing documents. For example, they cannot revise a document and save it directly on the system. Instead, they have to “sign out” the document first and then “sign in” upon revision to save all the information on the system. Another example is that staff members cannot copy an entire folder from the server onto the system. What they need to do is to “sign in” the documents one by one for placing them on the system. It is indeed quite time-consuming. Hence, the school considers that there is a need to strike a balance between document security and easy access.

Nevertheless, the “sign out/sign in” procedures are able to assure staff members that documents saved on the system are only those that have been properly revised/updated, and eliminate the likelihood that excessive drafts or unfinished works are saved on the system. This not only saves storage space, but also ensures the accuracy and reliability of documents. The school finds it worthwhile to continue implementing the measures as they will, in the long term, help enhance teachers’ awareness of document security and foster the culture of document sharing. As for secret documents such as personnel records, they have to be kept by the principal as before and will not be uploaded to the system.
3. Aiming High While Being Realistic

With the rapid advancement of information technology, the operation of a system may be affected by the modification, upgrading or discontinued provision of its software and hardware (e.g. scanner, web browser and word processing software). As such, apart from costs, schools have to take particular note of the compatibility between the system and suitable software and hardware, and to estimate the expenditure arising from software and hardware upgrading. Take Tai Po Old Market Public School (Plover Cove) as an example. The system has been in use for four to five years and the school is now working with the supplier to see how to streamline document access procedures and make possible the saving of files in video format through software upgrading, thereby further expanding the application of the system and working towards the ultimate goal of standardised record management.

On implementation and management, the school stresses that a project should be taken forward on a team basis to minimise the impact of staff turnover. Finally, the school adds that ambitious planning should be avoided as there are not many products in the market that meet the school budget and requirements and corporate version of high-end software is unaffordable.

Documents have to be uploaded to the system one by one and moving the entire folder to the system is not allowed.
Be Receptive and Flexible

1. Making Comparisons and Selecting Carefully

Yan Chai Hospital Wong Wha San Secondary School considers that in selecting a system, schools should not only take account of such basic functions as security, classification and searching, but also have to understand thoroughly how the features of different systems address their needs. As such, the school has sought advice from other schools participating in the Pilot Project and made reference to their experience so as to gather more information.

The school points out that a document might be saved in another format upon uploading to the electronic document management system, and it can only be opened by the supplier’s dedicated software. In other words, once the school stops using the system, the electronic documents already stored can no longer be opened (see figure below). Therefore, when selecting a system, schools have to know about the data processing procedures of the system and select one with higher compatibility, i.e. a system that converts documents into such common formats as Word or PDF to facilitate retrieval, re-construction and export of documents in case of system failure or replacement.

![](image)

Digitalisation of documents → Discontinued service of document management → Deriving data from electronic documents

2. Timely Review and Adjustments

In the course of implementation, timely actions have to be taken to deploy resources and adjust strategies in light of unexpected circumstances. For example, it was the initial plan of the school to hire an executive assistant and procure a high-speed scanner for digitalising old student records. However, after checking the data volume involved, the school realised that the task could not be finished on its own. It then decided to commission a professional firm for document digitalisation. The professional firm is to sign an agreement on data protection with the client and take security measures to prevent leakage of information.
Conclusion

Apart from the two schools visited, there are other participating schools that use free cloud platforms to set up document management systems for achieving the desired results. We believe that there is no best system or strategy, but there are practices that can cater for the circumstances and needs of a school. Many schools are in fact using document management systems and this Bulletin only introduces the practices of two. These two schools are chosen not because the functions of their systems are the best and the most comprehensive, but because their experience can illustrate how different approaches can be adopted to suit different backgrounds and to deal with different issues. Such experience is an invaluable source of reference for other schools. What is more, in the course of project implementation, both schools have demonstrated competent management with conscientious and comprehensive planning, timely review and a considerable degree of flexibility.
(IV) Summing Up

The Pilot Project attaches great importance to professional interaction and respects the school-based principle. According to our observation, success does not hinge on how innovative or unique a try-out item is, but instead on the spirit of school administration and the strategies and planning for carrying out reforms. The experience accumulated since the implementation of the Pilot Project is a valuable asset. We hope to exchange and share such invaluable experience with people in the education sector through different channels. Education is a process with continuous improvements. It is our wish that the Pilot Project will put together the wisdom and experience of education workers, strengthen school administrative management, and incessantly enhance the quality of education services.

This Bulletin aims to facilitate professional exchange for enhancing public sector schools’ administrative management. As such, instead of introducing/recommending commercial products/entities, this Bulletin presents ideas from users’ perspective with the focus on schools’ implementation experience. For details of the operation and application of the systems mentioned, please directly approach the schools visited. For other issues, please contact the School Administration and Management Section (Tel No: 2863 4606/2863 4624).

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Yan Chai Hospital Wong Wha San Secondary School
MAN Ka-yin (Vice Principal)  FUNG Nga-yee (Executive Officer)

This Bulletin is available on the following website, where you can also find information about other try-out items under the Pilot Project:


Acknowledgements:
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Yan Chai Hospital Wong Wha San Secondary School:
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