

# Introduction to School-based Management



## I. Why should we implement school-based management?

1. With the introduction of school-based management, the Government devolves more responsibilities to the schools and provides them with greater autonomy and flexibility in their daily operations, resources management and planning for school development. As the quality of school education has a direct impact on students' learning outcomes, the quid pro quo to additional autonomy is that schools have to be more transparent in their operations and accountable to the community for their performance and proper use of public funds.
2. It is essential to introduce a participatory governance framework involving the school sponsoring body(SSB), the principal, teacher(s), parent(s), alumni and independent community member(s), as direct participation in school decision-making and different input of these key stakeholders help enhance transparency and accountability of school governance and contribute to more effective school operation.
3. To promote quality education, a school should adopt a model of teaching and learning and a management framework that best suit the needs of the students and the community. Through school-based management, the school develops its own characteristics, establishes its culture and identity, seeks self-improvement and pursues excellence.
4. To ensure key stakeholders of aided schools have direct participation in school management, the Government has introduced legislation to lay down rules and regulations governing its implementation. Under the Education Ordinance (Ordinance), every aided school is required to set up an incorporated management committee (IMC) to manage the school. To protect managers from civil liabilities, the Ordinance also provides that a manager shall not incur any civil liability in respect of anything done by him in good faith in the performance of any function of office as the manager of an IMC school. Moreover, the Education Bureau (EDB) has offered support measures to help schools put in place this new model of governance.
5. Participation of stakeholders in school management and policy-making is a world-wide trend. The implementation of school-based management brings the education system of Hong Kong into a new era to tie in with global developments, with the aims to contribute to the personal growth of students; build a competent workforce to sustain the social, economic and cultural development of Hong Kong; and further enhance our competitiveness on the world stage.

# School-based Student-centred Quality-focused

Over the past decades, education systems all over the world have been evolving from largely centralized structures to more decentralized ones. This has become the general trend in school management.

School-based Management is a management framework which is **school-based, student-centred and quality-focused**. Its purpose is to devolve the decisions on student learning and resource deployment to the school to enable it to make school-based policies which better meet the needs of students and enhance their learning outcomes.

## II. Principles to be followed in implementing school-based management



**There are two basic principles in implementing school-based management:**

1. School-based management seeks to provide schools with enhanced flexibility and autonomy in their daily operation and resources management according to the needs of their students.
2. School-based management seeks to enhance transparency and accountability in the use of public funds and school operations by providing a participatory decision-making mechanism where all key stakeholders are involved.

### III. Roles and responsibilities of EDB, SSBs and IMCs

Under the school-based management policy, the respective functions and responsibilities of EDB, SSBs and IMCs are well delineated, as summarised below:

#### EDB

Enforcing relevant legislation; developing policies and guidelines; setting targets and monitoring the standards of education services; allocating resources to schools; and serving as schools' professional partner through the provision of support and advice.

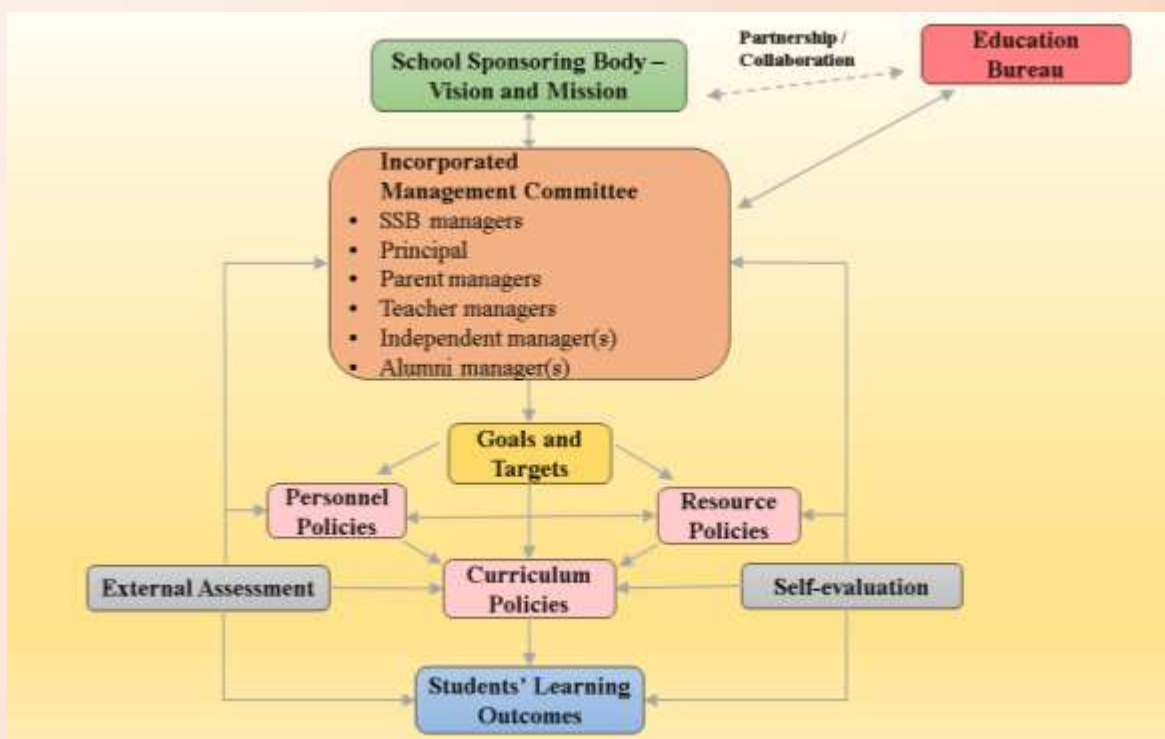
#### SSBs

Setting the vision and mission of schools; giving general directions to IMCs in respect of school policy formulation; monitoring the performance of IMCs; and ensuring the accomplishment of mission through SSB managers.

#### IMCs

Managing schools; formulating school policies in line with the vision and mission set by SSBs; undertaking the planning and management of finance, human resources, curriculum design and delivery, etc.; and answering to EDB and SSBs for the performance of schools.

### Illustration of Mutual Relationship among EDB, SSBs and IMCs



## **IV. Accountability Mechanism**

Under school-based management, it does not mean that schools are not subject to any control. As a matter of fact, schools are required to operate within a framework of governance and accountability prescribed by the Government and comply with the Education Ordinance, the Education Regulations, other related ordinances, the relevant Code of Aid, instructions given by the EDB from time to time, guidelines issued by SSBs and the constitution of IMCs. Schools are also required to appoint auditors under the Ordinance to examine their accounts. Since the performance of schools is subject to public monitoring, both internal and external accountability mechanisms should be put in place.

### Internal Accountability Mechanism

- Given the financial flexibility available under school-based management, an effective internal control mechanism has to be installed to prevent malpractices for selfish ends and to ensure proper use of resources in accordance with the relevant regulations and guidelines.
- Schools should examine their school plans regularly to see if they are in line with the actual circumstances as well as the direction of school development. Adjustments should be made accordingly, when necessary.
- Through a systematic and regular self-evaluation system, the quality and effectiveness of different initiatives can be assessed, thus promoting self-improvement and continuous school development.
- Schools should make use of school reports and school functions to inform stakeholders of the performance of the schools and their students.
- The participation of different stakeholders in the decision-making process helps enhance transparency of school management on the one hand and provides internal checks and balances on the other.

### External Accountability Mechanism

- The management committee shall ensure that the Education Ordinance, other relevant laws and guidelines are complied with.
- Schools in receipt of government grants and subsidies must comply with the relevant Code of Aid and the terms and conditions of the grants.

- School development strategies should meet the requirements of the government education policies.
- An annual school account audited by a registered certified public accountant (practicing) should be submitted to the EDB every year.
- External school reviews, arranged by the EDB, are conducted to validate the school self-evaluation from the perspective of a critical friend.

## **V. Key elements of school-based management**

1. Defining responsibilities: Preparation of a constitution for the management committee of the school, setting out the composition of the management committee, the term of office of the managers, their roles and responsibilities, their nomination and election, the selection of school supervisor and office bearers, as well as the standing orders and procedures for participation of stakeholders in policy-making.
2. Widening participation: Giving stakeholders the chance to participate in school management, planning and development and in the evaluation of school effectiveness.
3. Developing professionalism: Development of formal procedures for staff appraisal and provision of resources for staff professional development according to teachers' needs.
4. Setting goals: Setting school goals and preparing school profiles, and producing school development plans, school reports, school budgets and financial reports.
5. Evaluating effectiveness: Annual evaluation of the progress of school programmes and preparation of evaluation reports at the end of the school year for follow-up actions.
6. Developing characteristics: Displaying fully the spirit of school-based management by adopting flexibly a school-based model designed specifically according to the actual circumstances of the school, and developing a culture and characteristics unique to the school.

## **VI. Implementation of school-based management**

Since 1999, the Government has carried out a number of reform measures to facilitate schools' implementation of school-based management, including the streamlining of administrative procedures and the devolution of more responsibilities to schools in personnel management, financial matters and the design and delivery of curriculum. All these measures are to create more room for schools to develop quality education with their own characteristics and provide schools with more flexibility in the use of public funds.



### **Personnel matters**

As the employer of all staff members of the schools, the IMC of the school has to handle the matters in accordance with the Education Ordinance, the Education Regulations, the Code of Aid, the Employment Ordinance, the Sex Discrimination Ordinance, the Prevention of Bribery Ordinance and other laws of Hong Kong. The committee also has to formulate a set of open, fair and formal procedures for handling personnel management in different areas, including staff appointment, promotion and succession planning, disciplinary action and termination of service, performance management, professional development, complaint handling and effective communication channels, so as to strengthen the sense of belonging among staff and build up a collaborative school culture.



## **Financial matters**

The Government has provided schools with more resources for the implementation of school-based management and school development programmes. With effect from the 2000/01 school year, the Government introduced the Operating Expenses Block Grant (OEBG) for schools so as to facilitate their implementation of school-based management and formulation of long-term development plans. By consolidating various non-salary recurrent grants, the OEBG enables schools to deploy their resources more flexibly to implement long-term strategic planning. Furthermore, starting from the same year, the Government has provided schools with a Capacity Enhancement Grant for contracting out services or employing additional staff on top of the approved establishment. The purpose is to relieve teachers' workload so that they will have enhanced capacity to implement the initiatives of the education reform, such as developing school-based curriculum, enhancing students' language proficiency and coping with the diverse and special learning needs of students. Besides, schools are allowed to retain any unspent provision of the OEBG and use the grant flexibly on special school programmes, such as measures to improve the teaching and learning environment. Moreover, schools can collect fees from students for special purposes so as to provide them with additional educational services.



Aided schools with an IMC would be given the Expanded Operating Expenses Block Grant which replaces the OEBG. It aims to provide greater flexibility to school in deploying resources to meet the education needs of the students.

Other streamlining arrangements include (i) revising the tendering and purchasing procedures and (ii) devolving to schools the autonomy in the use of non-government funds for teaching or school purposes.

## **Curriculum matters**

Schools should, having regard to their own circumstances, devise a broad, balanced, flexible and coherent school-based curriculum in line with the objectives of education in Hong Kong. The curriculum should provide students with essential learning experiences, a happy and open learning environment, proper support measures and diversified learning activities to ensure all-round and healthy development of students.

Teaching should be student-centred, with clear objectives to help students construct knowledge, stimulate thinking, learn how to learn and develop positive attitudes and values.

To facilitate progress in learning, schools should design a clear assessment policy whereby effective methodologies are used to gauge and reflect the overall performance of a student. Schools should also make good use of the assessment results to provide students with different feedback with the aim of enhancing the effectiveness of learning and teaching.



## VII. Governance framework of school-based management

The Government undertook to amend the Education Ordinance (Ordinance) to implement a participatory governance framework with transparency and accountability in aided schools. The amended Ordinance, which came into force on 1 January 2005, gives legal backing to the school-based management governance framework. It provides for the establishment of an IMC and sets out its composition, operation, functions and powers so that stakeholders can participate in school governance according to the law.

The composition of an IMC includes SSB managers, the principal (an ex-officio manager), elected teacher managers, elected parent managers, elected alumni manager(s) and independent manager(s). Furthermore, the Ordinance makes provisions for the constitution and operation of the IMC, the selection of the principal and the functions of the supervisor, etc. For information on the related provisions in the Ordinance and the implementation details, please refer to the reference materials in the EDB website.





## **Functions of an IMC**

An IMC shall be responsible for –

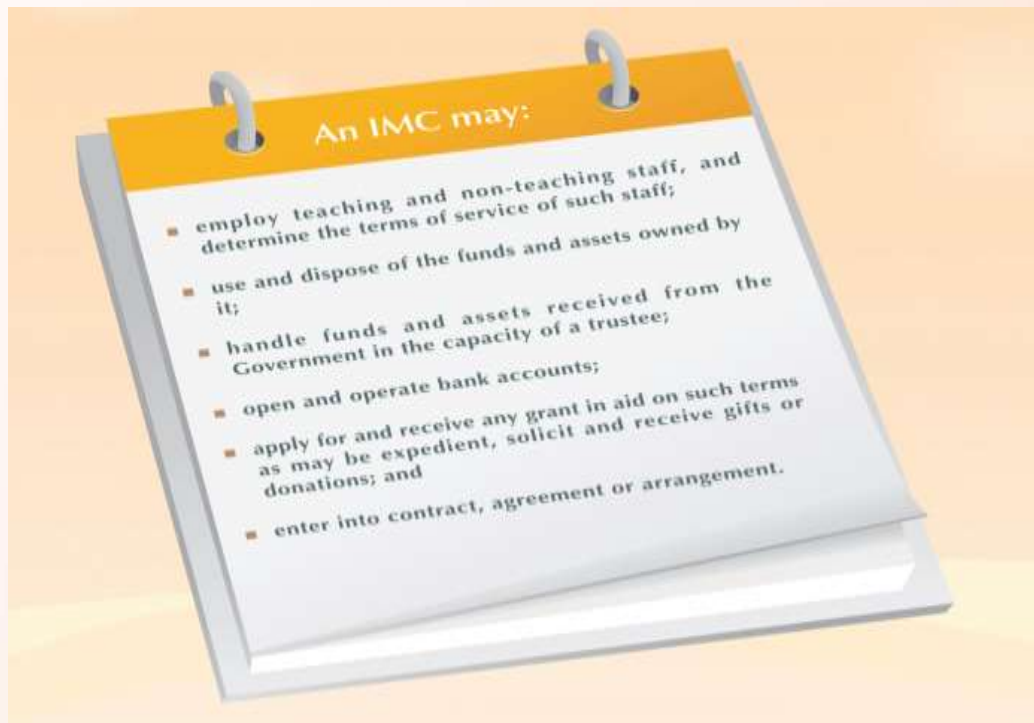
1. formulating education policies of the school in accordance with the vision and mission set by the SSB;
2. planning and managing financial and human resources available to the school;
3. accounting to the Permanent Secretary and the SSB for the performance of the school;
4. ensuring that the mission of the school is carried out;
5. ensuring that the education of the pupils of the school is promoted in a proper manner; and
6. school planning and self-improvement of the school.



## **Powers of an IMC**

1. take on lease, purchase or otherwise acquire, and hold, manage and enjoy property of any description, and sell, let or otherwise dispose of the same;
2. employ such teaching staff and non-teaching staff as it thinks fit and determine the terms and conditions of service of such staff;
3. engage the service of such professionals or other persons as it thinks fit and determine their remuneration;
4. use and dispose of the funds and assets owned by it;
5. handle funds and assets received from the Government in the capacity of a trustee;
6. open and operate bank accounts and invests its funds in such manner and to such extent as it thinks fit;
7. borrow money in such manner and on such security or terms as may be expedient;
8. apply for and receive any grant in aid on such terms as may be expedient;
9. solicit and receive gifts or donations, whether on trust or otherwise, and act as a trustee of moneys and other property vested in it on trust;
10. enter into any contract, agreement or arrangement; and
11. do such other things as are necessary for, or incidental or conducive to, the furtherance of the object of the school.

## Support measures for schools to set up an IMC:



1. organising briefing and sharing sessions;
2. preparing relevant sample documents, guidelines and forms;
3. setting up a school-based management website for provision of relevant information;
4. producing web-based tools to help school managers grasp the essence of school-based management.
5. arranging training programmes for school managers and potential school managers;
6. taking out liability insurance for the IMC and its managers;
7. allowing IMC schools to have greater flexibility and autonomy in financial management (such as provision of the Expanded Operating Expenses Block Grant and Teacher Relief Grant) and personnel management.
8. providing a recurrent School-based Management Top-up Grant to each public sector school; and
9. providing a school executive officer to each aided school.

## VIII. Conclusion

Through school-based management, schools have more autonomy and assume greater responsibility to create an environment that is conducive to continuous school improvement and to put in place a self-evaluation mechanism to assure the quality of learning and teaching. The ultimate aim of school-based management is to improve the standard of teaching and students' learning outcomes through the concerted efforts of the key stakeholders, the leadership and commitment of frontline educators and the support of the Government.

With the aim of attaining quality education, the Chief Executive actively listens to the views of the education sector and various stakeholders. In addition to the implementation of a package of priority measures in the 2017/18 school year, other education areas have been identified for further review and action, and one of which is school-based management, which aims at removing encumbrances for the education sector to provide more room for studies and exchanges on education policies. The Education Commission accepted the invitation of the EDB and formed the Task Force in November 2017 to study the current implementation of the school-based management policy in aided schools and based on the results of the study, to make recommendations on the optimisation of school-based management. The Task Force submitted its review report to the Government on 8 July 2019. Having thoroughly considered the review report, the EDB decided to accept all the 27 recommendations contained therein, and take them forward starting from the 2019/20 school year. The “Review Report of the Task Force on School-based Management Policy” can be viewed on the EC website. [path: <https://www.e-c.edu.hk> > Home > Publications and Related Documents > Reports > Review Report of the Task Force on School-based Management Policy].



Information on school-based management is also available at the website of the EDB at <https://www.edb.gov.hk/sbm>.



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