



# REFLECTIONS ON INSPECTION FINDINGS AND WAY FORWARD



## Chapter 6

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### 6.1 Reflections on Inspection Findings

#### 6.1.1 Another perspective to the interpretation of inspection findings

- Unlike previous years when all or most of the schools volunteered for inspection, the schools inspected in the academic year 2001-02 were selected from a stratified random sample. Chapter Two presents the aggregate inspection findings of all schools in different aspects. This Chapter attempts to give another perspective to the interpretation of the data.
- From the description of Chapter Two, we know that the schools inspected displayed lower performance in some of the aspects. Self-evaluation is one example. A breakdown of data on a school-to-school basis revealed that the bottom 5% of this batch of schools underperformed in quite a large number of aspects, such as effectiveness of senior staff, self-evaluation, curriculum management, etc. It is understandable that no school is perfect and some may need improvement in management and organisation while others may perform less satisfactorily in learning and teaching. There is no cause for alarm if the “unsatisfactory” grades are spread across the schools. However, it would carry different implications if the “unsatisfactory” grades primarily clustered in a small number of schools. This raises our concern for the “under-performing” schools in our system. It is opportune to reflect on the problems of these schools and ways in which their performance can be improved, the latter being the ultimate purpose of inspection.

#### 6.1.2 Defining “under-performing” schools

- While school effectiveness is widely considered to be a major consideration to determine whether a school is high performing or low performing, the exact measurement of school effectiveness poses a problem. Most parents



and laymen may simply regard pupils' performance in public examinations as a basis for measuring school effectiveness. Yet, schools' public examination performance is to a large extent related to pupil intake, which is beyond schools' control. Some educators propose to measure school effectiveness in terms of the extent to which a school adds value to pupils' learning. An effective school is thus one that has high value-addedness in pupils' learning outcomes. In Hong Kong, indicators of the schools' value-addedness have been prepared. However, they were not yet used in school inspections in 2001/02.

- In a QA inspection, school performance is assessed against a wide range of performance indicators (PI) (41 indicators in 2001/02). Hence, a more balanced framework of performance indicators covering the four domains of school work is adopted to measure school effectiveness. Ranked in terms of school's ratings in the PIs, it was found that the bottom 5% of the schools inspected in 2001/02 received an "unsatisfactory" rating (i.e. grade 1) on 10 or more PIs.

### **6.1.3 Common features of these "under-performing" schools**

- We can have a rough idea about the common features of these under-performing schools by looking at the distribution of low ratings among the different aspects in inspection.
- All these schools performed unsatisfactorily in the following aspects:
  - effectiveness of senior staff,
  - evaluation tools and procedures,
  - reporting and action,
  - curriculum management, and
  - use of assessment information.
- Besides, most of these schools were rated as performing unsatisfactorily in whole-day primary school operation, staff coordination, working relationship, staff involvement in self-evaluation, curriculum planning and organisation, catering for learner differences and academic attainment.
- Most of these schools also had relatively lower performance in the quality of teaching, with more than 20% of the lessons rated unsatisfactory. These



percentages were high in comparison to the other schools inspected.

- In short, a few consistent attributes were found in these under-performing schools. These included the lack of reflection on their own work<sup>4</sup>, ineffective leadership, ineffective teaching to cater for the needs of the pupils, and underachievement of the pupils.<sup>5</sup>


## 6.2 Way Forward

- Inspection is of good value when it can serve to foster school improvement and development. Yet, given the resource implications, evaluation of all schools through QAI cannot be achieved within a reasonably short period of time. School self-evaluation (SSE) as part of the QA framework for Hong Kong school education is regarded as a concomitant means to hold schools accountable for school performance.
- The existence of the under-performing schools suggests that SSE alone would not be able to hold schools accountable for their own performance. These under-performing schools lack the culture, knowledge and skills to conduct vigorous self-evaluation of their own performance. Without inspection of an external audit nature, the problems of the under-performing schools would probably not be brought to the attention of the stakeholders. To enhance school accountability and to ensure that pupils are provided with quality school education, monitoring and support for under-performing schools will be stepped up.

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<sup>4</sup> The aspects of “reporting and action” and “procedures and tools” subsumed under the area of Self-evaluation, as well as the “use of assessment” can be interpreted as the reflection of the school on its own work.

<sup>5</sup> The ED understands the difficulties of defining an under-performing school. Meanwhile, overseas experiences are consulted and efforts are made to explore whether these common features are the “critical features” of ineffective schools.

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- For most of the schools, SSE and external school review can complement each other in enhancing schools' accountability and fostering schools' continuous development. Efforts will be stepped up to help schools acquire better knowledge and skills for conducting SSE. External validation of schools' SSE will be put in place by phases so that more schools can benefit from an external review within a shorter period of time than is currently available through QAI.
  - As part of SSE, schools will be required to conduct more vigorous school development planning and review. Schools will need to review their own performance, and formulate challenging yet achievable targets for school improvement and development. Schools will also be required, through school review reports, to provide their stakeholders with evidence-based accounts of their performance in different areas. They are encouraged to conduct SSE objectively on the basis of quantitative and qualitative data. To develop a more favourable SSE culture in the school sector, starting from 2003, EMB<sup>6</sup> has provided schools with two tools, namely 'Assessment Programme for Affective and Social Outcomes' (APASO) and 'Schools Value-added Information System' (SVAIS), to help them obtain useful information on students' performance in the academic and non-academic domains.

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<sup>6</sup> The ED has merged with the Education and Manpower Bureau since January 2003.

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