Quality Assurance Division
Education Bureau

Inspection
Annual Report

2008/09

Contents

Chapter 1   Introduction

- Since the implementation of the School Development and Accountability (SDA) framework in 2003, the Education Bureau (EDB) has been promoting schools' continuous improvement and sustainable development through school self-evaluation (SSE) and external school review (ESR).   The key findings in the first cycle of ESR completed in the 2007/08 school year reflect that good progress has been achieved in the use of a data-driven and evidence-based approach to SSE in schools and that the impact of ESR on school development is, generally, recognised.   With the commencement of the new phase of SDA in the 2008/09 school year, ESR continues to function as a vehicle for fostering schools' improvement and development.   Emphasis is placed on the promotion of strategic planning for enhancing student learning and the embedding of SSE in schools' daily work.   To this end, we have revised evaluation tools and will provide schools with refined data to facilitate SSE.   Further, we have reviewed and fine-tuned ESR procedures and focuses to place a sharper focus on schools' contextual factors and development priorities.

- ESR in the new phase is school-specific and focused.   It gives special consideration to schools' unique contexts, focusing more on their development priorities and the actions taken as follow-up to the recommendations in the previous Quality Assurance Inspection (QAI) or ESR report.   Since the launch of the new phase of ESR, there has been a positive response from the school sector.   The feedback from the front-line educators serving as external reviewers suggests that the mode of ESR in the new phase can better reflect schools' uniqueness and stage of development.   It helps schools to identify their own strengths and, at the same time, delineate the specific areas for improvement that require schools' attention.

- In the 2008/09 school year (hereafter referred to as 'this school year'), ESR was conducted only in primary schools.   To allow more space for the preparatory work for the implementation of the New Senior Secondary curriculum, ESR of secondary and special schools has been scheduled for the 2009/10 school year and the years that follow in the new phase.   A total of 78 primary schools underwent ESR this school year.   Among them, six were government schools and the rest were aided schools.   Most of them were whole-day schools.   Two schools were operating in a mixed mode, comprising an AM section and a whole-day section.   One was an AM school and one was operating in a bi-sessional mode.   About two-thirds of the schools were

operating not more than 24 classes and the number of classes in the rest ranged from 25 to 38.

- Schools' performance, as reflected by the key ESR findings this school year, is generally good. Schools, generally, show a good grasp of the key concepts underpinning SSE, although a majority of them had not experienced ESR in the first cycle and about 85% of them have undergone only QAI. They can make use of data and evidence to inform their internal review and they can implement the SSE cycle of Planning-Implementation-Evaluation (P-I-E) appropriately to sustain their development. Similar to previous ESR findings, schools' overall performance in the domain of 'Student Support and School Ethos' is particularly good. As regards the 'Learning and Teaching' domain, schools, generally, perform well in the areas of 'Curriculum and Assessment' and 'Student Learning and Teaching'. Working towards the curriculum reform goals, a majority of schools have dedicated good efforts to the development of their school-based curriculum as a means to cater for students' needs and they strive to improve the effectiveness of learning and teaching.

- This report gives a summary account of how schools identify their major concerns and plan their priority tasks, based on their understanding of the contextual factors and their specific development needs. It also presents a picture of how schools develop their school-based curriculum and cater for students' different learning and growth needs. Besides, it provides examples of success and good practice for schools' reference.

- Since the implementation of SDA, the EDB has been collecting views of school stakeholders through various channels to review and improve the framework. Schools' views on ESR in the new phase have been, generally, positive (see Appendix 2). According to the post-ESR school survey findings, most teachers are of the view that ESR can promote SSE and teachers' self-reflection, which, in turn, promotes professional exchange among teachers. Over 80% of the teacher respondents agree that ESR has been organised and conducted in a school-specific and focused manner. In their view, ESR can accurately identify schools' strengths and areas for improvement, which helps them formulate their development plan. To keep improving the SDA framework and to refine the design of ESR, we will continue to collect and take heed of schools' views. Apart from providing support services and disseminating good practice, we will sustain our efforts in helping schools promote and embed SSE in their daily work to help foster their continuous improvement.

Chapter 2   Key Findings of External School Review

2.1   Self-evaluation for School Development – Building on Strengths and Facing Challenges

2.1.1   Strengths to Build on and Challenges Facing Schools

- Despite the differences in their vision and mission, development goals, history, culture and students' background, the 78 schools that underwent ESR in the 2008/09 school year demonstrate some common strengths, on which their development and further advancement can be securely built. These include strong support from school stakeholders, a team of conscientious and dedicated teachers, students demonstrating a positive learning attitude, and adequate resource and professional support.

- At the same time, schools are faced with different challenges. To cope with these challenges, schools need strategic planning, staff collaboration and shared commitment. About 30% of the 78 schools reviewed have, during the last five years, experienced either a merger with another school or relocation to another district, and their operation has been changed from a bi-sessional mode to a whole-day mode. Indeed, a few of them have switched to the whole-day mode during this school year. More than half of the schools have, in recent years, experienced personnel changes in the school leadership or middle management and some have had to deal with staff turnover issues. In about 20% of the schools, the incumbent principal has been in service for less than two years and in about 30% of the schools, the vice principal has been newly appointed. Due to reasons such as the retirement of veteran teachers and the need to reduce staff, issues arising from the lack of stability in staffing are affecting about 20% of the schools. In some of these schools, the middle managers are rather inexperienced. The findings suggest that major changes to the mode of school operation and personnel changes will affect team building and a school's stable development. It is also worth noting that catering for learner differences, a major concern of most of the schools reviewed this year, remains as a challenge which requires schools' commitment to improving learning and teaching and addressing students' diverse learning and growth needs.

2.1.2 School-based Planning for Development

- Changes in the school context and the introduction of new education policies are constantly impacting on school development. For sustainable development, clear directions and strategic planning are paramount. Since the implementation of the SDA framework in 2003, schools have formulated their school development plan as a blueprint for a development cycle that lasts about three years. A great majority of the schools that underwent ESR this school year have experienced two cycles of development planning. As part of a strategic planning process, prior to setting development priorities and formulating improvement strategies, schools, generally, conduct a holistic review, analyse their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges, and review what has been achieved in the last development cycle. With reference to the review findings, schools then identify their major concerns to guide planning for the next cycle of development. Towards the end of each school year, schools review the progress of annual key tasks and inform stakeholders of the review findings through the publication of the school report. This approach to planning has been widely subscribed to by schools and it has helped enhance teachers' engagement in the planning process and their shared commitment to their schools' development priorities.

- A school development plan serves to present the major concerns that guide planning in the following few years while the various key tasks addressing the major concerns are set out in an annual school plan. On the whole, schools can identify their major concerns and formulate development focuses that duly address school and student needs. Work focuses, as described in the annual school plan, are, generally, well defined and geared towards the set targets. They are also duly addressed at the panel/committee level, enhancing coherence in planning and implementation across different levels. Some schools demonstrate effective strategic planning through identifying different stages of development and specific improvement targets for the key tasks. This is exemplified by the approach adopted by a school to address its major concern of fostering students' sense of responsibility. With a good grasp of students' development needs, the school can set appropriate annual focuses that help develop students' sense of responsibility progressively, thereby developing their spirit of serving others and sense of commitment.

- In general, the directions and goals set for school development in the schools reviewed this school year tie in closely with a shared focus in their mission, which is to develop students' positive values and attitudes and their generic skills. The development priorities, focuses and implementation strategies formulated in some of the schools address critical issues emerging from their changing and unique school context. These include the switch to a whole-day mode of operation, the need for curriculum adaptation to cater for the learning needs of the increasing number of non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students enrolled, and the need for team building following the recruitment of a considerable number of new teachers. In a small number of schools, through effective planning, the development priorities are well connected and related strategies well integrated. An example is the strategic planning by one school for formulating and integrating strategies for addressing the two major concerns of developing students' higher-order thinking and improving teaching strategies. In the planning process, the two major concerns are seen to be two sides of the same coin. The former requires curriculum adaptation and the use of specific pedagogical approaches, while the latter entails improvement in teachers' questioning techniques and activity design, which is also intended to enhance students' thinking skills.

- Schools, in general, can make good use of SSE findings to inform their development planning and to identify and address specific areas for improvement. Building on their own strengths and experience, a small number of schools can effectively enhance their planning and give impetus to key development initiatives that have shown good progress, thus building momentum for change and continuous improvement. This indicates that these schools are becoming better at building on their own strengths, refining the planning for, and maximising the output of, key initiatives, and developing a good grasp of relevant strategies. One example to illustrate this strength is the promotion of gifted education in one of the schools reviewed. Building on its relevant experience of the last two years, the school has set, as one of its priorities, the enhancement of its gifted education programme. This is intended to cover such focuses as the development of a school-based curriculum that fosters students' thinking skills and creativity. With respect to strategies for curriculum implementation, attention is given to making connections between learning experiences within and outside the classroom so as to broaden students' horizons and strengthen their generic skills. In another

school, in line with its mission, the enhancement of students' understanding of the Chinese culture has been set as one of the development priorities.   Instead of developing a new initiative, the school focuses on strengthening the relevant elements already embedded in the school curriculum.   In another school, in keeping with its Christian mission and building on the experience of implementing life education, the promotion of Christian life education has been identified as its major concern.   Addressing this concern, annual focuses for counselling services are set to help nurture students' positive values.   The schools cited above can strategically enhance the effectiveness of existing programmes and make use of their experience to support the implementation of other related initiatives.

- In response to the changing school context and development needs, good attempts have been made by a few other schools to re-set priorities through integrating or adjusting development focuses.   For example, in a school which has merged with another, the development plan has been revised in a timely way so that priority is given to the handling of challenges arising from the change in the administrative structure, staff management and relationship building.   With timely adjustment, a sharp focus has been placed on building a strong team of teachers and enhancing students' sense of belonging.   This indicates the ability of the school leadership to make sound judgements and to plan proactively for school development.

- On the whole, schools that perform particularly well in the area of development planning demonstrate strategic planning that takes account of their contextual factors.   They understand the importance of building on strengths and relevant experience.   Where long-term improvement initiatives are needed, these schools are able to set specific and staged targets to guide implementation.   They also refine planning to give impetus to, and maximise the output and impact of, the key development initiatives being implemented.   At the same time, they are able to make timely adjustments in response to changes to the school context. Nevertheless, in about 30% of the schools reviewed, the targets set are found to be too broad and the development priorities and focuses unclear. Improvement strategies are haphazardly planned and the implementation of these strategies is loosely coordinated at the panel/committee level, adversely affecting the outcomes of their work.   One common area for

improvement is where the setting of too many targets for a development priority results in a lack of corresponding strategies or appropriate timescales for implementation.   While action is required to implement a long list of key tasks, planning for resource support and measures that cater for teachers' professional development is inadequate.   Under such circumstances, teachers find it difficult to implement or evaluate the tasks concerned.   Another area for significant improvement is where there is a lack of holistic planning to address major concerns.   Without school-level deliberation and coordination, it is difficult to build consensus among teachers, subject panels and functional committees.   In such cases, subject panels and functional committees are left to plan and implement strategies on their own.   In the absence of cross-panel/committee coordination, the various key tasks performed can barely produce the desired impact.

2.1.3   Diversified Implementation Strategies

- While schools reviewed in this school year have their unique contexts, they share very similar development goals and directions.   In general, schools' major concerns address two fundamental goals – enhancing the effectiveness of learning and teaching and developing students' positive values and moral dispositions.   Schools' major concerns in relation to enhancement of learning and teaching effectiveness mostly focus on developing students' generic skills and self-learning ability, and catering for learner diversity.   With regard to nurturing students' positive values and moral dispositions, the development focuses are quite diverse and broad in coverage.   They encompass the development of a caring and harmonious culture, students' sense of responsibility and commitment, self-discipline, a spirit of serving others, a sense of national identity and a healthy lifestyle.   To address these major concerns, schools, in general, are able to adopt diversified implementation strategies, such as developing school-based curricula, improving pedagogy and enhancing student support services.   Schools have also provided appropriate support in administration, resource allocation and professional development, thus making these strategies largely viable and pragmatic.   While most schools are able to devise work plans to address the above concerns, their targets and implementation strategies vary in accordance with differences in their context and stages of development.   Nevertheless, the keys to implementing the strategies effectively and achieving the expected

outcomes are careful planning, good communication and consensus among stakeholders on the direction of school development.

- In devising work plans, most schools in this school year are good at deploying various kinds of resources to facilitate the implementation of key tasks. For example, different types of grants are used to recruit extra manpower to assist in curriculum development and organise extra-curricular activities (ECA). External resources are tapped to arrange service opportunities and learning activities for students, or to improve school facilities. Further, alumni and parents' networks are used to provide students with opportunities to learn beyond the classroom. At the same time, in alignment with their major concerns, schools are able to effectively organise a good variety of professional development activities. To provide training for teachers, besides tapping external support for school-based curriculum development, schools organise a variety of school-based professional development activities. Professional sharing among teachers in schools mostly focuses on the enhancement of student learning and teaching pedagogy. With the sustained efforts made, the quality of in-house professional sharing has improved steadily. This considerably enhances teachers' professional capacity and exchange and, at the same time, helps promote their collaboration.

- School management, in general, has an open attitude and is willing to listen to, and accept, the views of different stakeholders. Teachers' efforts are appreciated and the importance of nurturing a harmonious atmosphere is well understood. To enable teachers to concentrate on priority tasks and teaching, most schools are able to provide appropriate support, such as allocating duties according to teachers' expertise, providing clear guidelines and offering appropriate mentorship programmes for new teachers.

- Schools attach importance to communication with stakeholders. In most schools, various mechanisms and channels have been set up to solicit stakeholders' views, such as involving representatives of different stakeholders in the Incorporated Management Committee and establishing a Parent-Teacher Association. Schools also report on the progress of priority tasks to parents, alumni and members of the community through annual reports, newsletters and web pages to enhance their understanding of school development and gain their support. To secure support for school policies or measures, schools consult teachers through different

forms of internal organisation and meetings. In an open management culture, school work is implemented smoothly and team work is enhanced. A small number of schools place a strong emphasis on building consensus and a shared understanding among the teaching staff of the objectives of the schools' priority tasks. In these schools, ample opportunity is provided for teachers' deliberation of the major concerns. This fosters teachers' shared understanding of the direction for school development which, in turn, facilitates the implementation of the priority tasks and helps enhance school effectiveness. At the same time, this kind of work culture also strengthens team spirit within school. A small number of schools are, however, less effective in implementing priority tasks. Apart from there being too many targets, their development priorities are too broad and lack focus. There is, also, a lack of thorough discussion by teachers of the objectives of the school priority tasks. Teachers do not have an adequate grasp of the expected outcomes or the implementation strategies and are left to attempt their own course of implementation. Because of this, the results are not commensurate with the efforts made by the schools.

2.1.4 Self-evaluation and Follow-up Measures – Adding Impetus to Innovation and Continuous Development

- Schools, in general, are able to adopt a variety of evaluation tools. These include stakeholder surveys, Key Performance Measures, the Assessment Program for Affective and Social Outcomes and school-based questionnaire surveys, to collect and analyse data for identifying areas of improvement. Schools make effective use of data, such as that on student performance in assessment and homework, activity records and outcomes of lesson observation, to evaluate the effectiveness of priority tasks and learning and teaching. Schools with good or excellent performance can systematically analyse and integrate the evaluation results of various subject panels, committees and student performance and conduct a holistic review of the progress of the development focuses. These schools can make good use of the review findings to inform school development planning and subsequently devise specific improvement and follow-up measures. They are able to embed the SSE cycle of P-I-E into school work at different levels and achieve continuous development and innovation by building on their solid foundation.

- Most schools actively follow up the recommendations in the previous Quality Assurance Inspection (QAI) or ESR report and, at the same time, strive for improvement through self-evaluation. Schools mainly incorporate these recommendations into their development plans as major concerns or development strategies and some devise action plans to address individual recommendations. Schools' follow-up measures mostly focus on strengthening self-evaluation, enhancing middle managers' capacity and learning and teaching effectiveness. On the whole, the effectiveness of schools' follow-up work is good, and, in some cases, helps to lay a good foundation for school development.

- To promote teachers' self-reflection, schools incorporate self-evaluation in the staff appraisal system, post-training sharing, and professional exchange after peer lesson observation and collaborative lesson planning. Some schools provide teachers with data, such as the survey results on learning and teaching, records of teachers' continuing professional development and their reflective journals, to help them learn from these SSE findings. Teachers' openness and willingness to strive for improvement and innovation are the key to the establishment of a self-evaluation culture in schools. Teachers of high performing schools attach importance to reflection. Through professional sharing and review of learning and teaching effectiveness on an ongoing basis, teachers in these schools explore and improve teaching pedagogy to promote student learning and the school's sustainable development.

- On the whole, schools have a good understanding of the principle of self-evaluation and its significance in promoting school development and self-improvement. Nevertheless, in some schools, teachers' self-evaluation skills could be sharpened. More attention should be directed to the relation between the set targets and success criteria, and evaluation should focus on whether the expected outcomes in terms of student learning performance are achieved, rather than focusing on routine and administrative work. In particular, schools need to ensure that development tasks and related strategies are implemented at the classroom level and they need to review the effectiveness regularly. In this way, improvement measures to further enhance student learning effectiveness can be devised in a timely manner.

2.2   Diversified Modes of School-based Curriculum with Shared Goals

2.2.1   Planning for School-based Curriculum Development

- Since the commencement of the curriculum reform, schools have been mostly active in promoting the four key tasks and life-wide learning, reinforcing the cultivation of students' critical thinking, creativity and communication skills.   In light of the unique context and different student needs in every school, and the common goal of fostering students' learning abilities, the EDB has been encouraging schools to build on their cumulative experience and strengths and to sustain and improve school-based curriculum development and the use of appropriate learning and teaching strategies in the implementation process.   It is heartening to note that most schools reviewed in this school year can actively develop and implement different school-based curricula in alignment with the objectives of the medium term of the curriculum reform.   In the development process, effectiveness of learning and teaching is reviewed and due consideration is given to their students' abilities and needs. According to the key ESR findings, schools' endeavours have, to varying extents, been successful.   Generally, the school-based curriculum in local primary schools is being developed in a diversified and promising way towards the shared and prominent educational goals of enhancing the effectiveness of learning and teaching, and promoting students' whole-person development.

- Schools are well aware that, to help students attain learning objectives more effectively, they need to flexibly utilise the professional autonomy entrusted to them under the open curriculum framework formulated by the Curriculum Development Council (CDC).   They can design a school-based curriculum geared towards their students' needs and interests, in accordance with their schools' context and pace of development, teachers' readiness and the resources available.   The modes of school-based curriculum design are diversified and the coverage is extensive.   They encompass subject-based and cross-curricular thematic designs, and some focus on learning strategies.   They can enrich students' learning experiences in different areas, help them acquire knowledge and foster their generic skills, positive values and attitudes.

- The key to effective school-based curriculum development lies in comprehensive and thorough planning and appropriate implementation strategies. School-based curriculum development in most schools is initiated and promoted by the school management. It is noteworthy that schools with more remarkable success all begin by building consensus among teachers. Teachers are engaged in reviewing students' needs at the school and subject levels. They have a role to play in setting a clear direction and a well-articulated policy for curriculum development. These schools succeed in building not only teachers' commitment to school-based curriculum development, but also their ownership. They also do well in promoting coordination and in strengthening mutual support among teachers. Among them, a few schools boast a robust culture of collaboration and, through systematic self-evaluation, they commit themselves to an ongoing process of exploring, developing, revising and, ultimately, producing a curriculum with distinctive school-based features. Their practices serve well as examples for other local schools to refer to.

- In the course of school-based curriculum development, schools need to refer to the central curriculum framework and focus on the enhancement of student learning effectiveness. One crucial factor in achieving success is how teachers exercise their professional autonomy. Schools, generally, make good use of the wide range of professional development opportunities and platforms provided by the EDB and tertiary institutions. Through these capacity building strategies, teachers' professional knowledge and skills have been enriched, and professional networks and a culture of sharing and mutual support have been established. These, as a whole, constitute some of the key implementation strategies for promoting school-based curriculum development. Apart from teacher participation in subject-based professional development activities outside school, over 90% of the schools that underwent ESR this school year have joined different modes of professional support programmes. These include school-based support programmes and seed projects organised by the EDB, and collaboration projects and action research with tertiary institutions. Through these, teachers collaborate with specialists in exploring learning and teaching strategies and in designing school-based curricula for different subjects. This not only promotes professional dialogue among teachers, but also enriches their experience in curriculum design and development.

- In view of the differences in the school context and the different degrees of teacher readiness, various strategies and modes are adopted by schools in developing their school-based curriculum. A small proportion of schools has amassed years of experience in curriculum tailoring or adaptation, and is making relatively fast progress in school-based curriculum development. For instance, aligned with the curriculum goals of promoting scientific inquiry and application, the General Studies panel in one of the schools has designed modules and learning materials that emphasise the link between learning and students' daily-life experiences, thus making learning more interesting. Another school builds on its rich experience in providing school-based gifted education and has developed a curriculum focusing on thinking skills and creativity, independent of any subject curricula, to enhance students' generic and higher-order thinking skills. Some schools adopt a progressive approach, choosing a certain subject or level as an entry point and developing their school-based curriculum step by step. With experience, these schools will extend the development to other subjects or levels. Some schools promote curriculum development and adaptation in various subjects simultaneously. Others encourage different subjects to collaborate in addressing school-level major concerns and priorities through the development of a school-based curriculum across different key learning areas (KLA). An incremental approach to curriculum development allows teachers relatively more room for exploring directions and adjusting their implementation methods, whereas a whole-school approach can mobilise and engage a majority of teachers in the curriculum development process, helping to foster a school culture that promotes and values professional development. Every implementation mode has its strengths and limitations, depending on the exact school context in which it is adopted. To more effectively promote school-based curriculum development and achieve the desired outcomes, appropriate holistic planning and self-evaluation are essential factors.

- With respect to administrative support, some schools plan and adopt appropriate measures to create conditions conducive to subject panels' development of school-based curricula. These include optimising grants to employ additional teachers or teaching assistants to reduce teachers' workload. Others hire external experts to offer advice to subject panels and help develop school-based curriculum content. Further, specialised teaching is implemented so that teachers' subject expertise can be fully

utilised. Most schools have set up a curriculum team to plan and coordinate whole-school or cross-KLA school-based curriculum projects and, at the same time, have subject core groups concentrate on subject-based curriculum development. In a small number of schools, ad hoc task groups have been set up to steer school-based curriculum development towards the set focuses and priorities. For instance, in one school, an Arts Education Development Team has been established to launch learning activities spanning various domains of art and serving to enhance students' interest in this area. In some others, education research teams have been set up to promote cooperative learning by providing teachers with teaching designs and sharing good practice. In addition, some schools are skilled in tapping external resources, such as the Quality Education Fund, to fund school-based curriculum projects or to enhance facilities. They procure additional computers, set up a campus TV service, multimedia language centres or infrastructure for web-based distance learning, all with the aim of enriching student learning. In most of the schools, the campus space and environment have been well arranged and used to foster a good atmosphere that facilitates student learning and the implementation of the school-based curriculum. A small number of schools have achieved quite original designs. In some cases they have created a stage for talent shows and trilingual performances. The stage and the activities serve not only as a good platform for students to demonstrate their talents, language skills and abilities outside class, but also as an effective means of strengthening their confidence. A few schools set aside a corner of their campus to be used as a butterfly conservatory or for organic planting. This not only supports the development of a green campus, but also provides appropriate venues for project learning.

- In respect of lesson time, most schools can make suitable adjustments to facilitate school-based curriculum implementation and to create more space for students to acquire rich learning experiences. About 40% of the schools that underwent ESR this school year have created space in their school timetables for programmes, such as curriculum integration week, thematic learning week and life-wide learning week, during which school-based cross-KLA curricular activities are held. These schools arrange a variety of learning activities, on designated themes, to be held inside and outside school. Some of them set aside days for showcasing students' learning outcomes and the impact is good. Students are

provided with opportunities to share their learning experiences by giving presentations or staging performances about what they have learnt and achieved.   In some instances, parents are invited to participate.   Schools, generally, allocate lesson time for morning reading, Personal and Social Education and Life Education lessons, ECA and interest group activities.   They also arrange different activities at recess, after lunch and after school to provide a good range of learning experiences for students.   A small number of schools draw up special plans for using lesson time to facilitate the implementation of their school-based curriculum.   For instance, in a few schools, weekly lessons are conducted on English drama or for English film appreciation.   Others arrange double or triple lessons, focusing on writing in support of the implementation of the school-based curriculum on language development.   In one school, the time for ECA is used to engage all students of a particular year level in creative robotic production activities, as part of the school-based gifted education curriculum.   In some cases, time is set aside for teacher-student conferencing in Personal and Social Education lessons or class teacher periods, as a strategy for promoting school-based Life Education.

- Apart from careful planning of lesson time, schools duly consider teachers' needs and create space for them to engage in curriculum development work.   About half of the schools have timetabled collaborative lesson planning (CLP) periods and have one shorter school day weekly for teachers to engage in school-based lesson study or professional sharing activities.   Even in schools where no special timeslots have been scheduled, CLP and peer lesson observation have been implemented for a number of years.   In addition, teachers' professional exchange has become more and more in-depth and focused. In about one-third of the schools, clear focuses have been set for CLP and peer observation in alignment with those of the school-based curriculum development.   About one-third of the schools also arrange various lesson observation activities, including demonstration lessons, lesson study, sharing of teaching practices and diagnostic classroom observation. They contribute to the refinement of the implementation of school-based curriculum and help enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching. A small number of schools organise school-based or joint-school learning circles, inter-school lesson observation and professional exchange.   They also engage in different types of collaborative work, such as organising learning activities and overseas study trips, all of which help promote

professional exchange among the teachers concerned and enhance their
professional capacity.

2.2.2   Implementation of School-based Curriculum

- As mentioned in the previous section, with respect to school-based
curriculum development, there is no single mode of implementation or
uniform content.   Provided that the curriculum framework and objectives
formulated by the CDC are adhered to, schools can adopt different
approaches and teaching strategies that are suited to their context and pace
of development to cater for the different learning needs, styles and abilities
of their students.   Schools have developed their school-based curriculum
through different entry points and with different focuses.   These include
individual strands of study or focused learning targets at the subject or
KLA level, key tasks of the curriculum reform, or the promotion of
specific learning and teaching strategies.   Some schools organise
cross-subject curricula through curriculum integration at a particular year
level. Some promote curriculum innovations through developing
school-based subjects progressively across the year levels.   These
varying approaches to school-based curriculum development demonstrate
that teachers are actively and confidently exploring different suitable
teaching strategies and that their professional capacity is continuing to
expand.

- At this stage of the curriculum reform, most schools demonstrate a good
grasp of strategies for implementing the four key tasks as focuses for
school-based curriculum development.   In this school year, although
there are still a small number of schools where the key tasks are
implemented as discrete curriculum initiatives, a good number of schools
are inclined to connect the key tasks or, better still, link them with subject
development.   The most common practices include linking the key task
of promoting reading to learn with the development of students' reading
strategies as a focus for the language subject curriculum, fostering their
generic skills by linking project learning with General Studies or
cross-subject thematic learning, and integrating moral and civic education
into project learning to foster students' positive values.   In general,
schools actively promote reading through organising various activities and
award schemes, arranging morning reading sessions and reading lessons to
enhance the schools' reading atmosphere.   In about half of the schools,
instruction in reading strategies is given and reading-related activities are

organised separately, or jointly by language subject panels and the school library, to promote reading to learn. A small number of schools are directing effort towards the promotion of reading across the curriculum. Subject panels contribute reading materials and promote sharing of reading to extend students' scope and reinforce their ability to draw connections between different disciplines. In most schools, the General Studies panel plays a lead role in promoting project learning. This school year, about one-third of the schools adopt a cross-curricular mode of implementation. Approximately one-third of the schools have formulated a framework for the progressive development of students' project learning capabilities across the year levels. Apart from teaching project learning skills in General Studies, some schools specially offer school-based project learning lessons or basic skills curricula to help students undertake project learning. The design of project learning in individual schools is well thought out. Various subject panels collaborate in the design and the learning objectives and topics are well-defined. Upon students' completion of their project work, teachers help them undertake self-reflection and draw up their own plans for extended study, thus reinforcing learning.

- In setting the themes of cross-subject project learning or curriculum integration, schools mostly incorporate values education and suitably adopt life events, transforming them into learning opportunities. Themes more commonly selected by schools for project learning in this school year include the Beijing Olympic Games, China's launch of spacecraft and aerospace science and technology, the Szechuan earthquake and the 60th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Students gain a deeper understanding of current affairs and relevant knowledge whilst, at the same time, learning more about the mainland and enhancing their national identity. Some schools choose themes such as Chinese culture, Chinese art, knowing about our motherland, the past and present of Hong Kong and concern for our community. Through these themes students gain a grasp of the history, development and culture of the mainland and Hong Kong. It is intended that, eventually, they learn about the relationship between self and the community and develop a sense of belonging. Care and concern, health, environmental protection and service are all common themes adopted for cross-subject project learning or curriculum integration. There is often alignment of these themes with the schools' major concerns and development focuses to

inculcate relevant positive values in students.

- Apart from project learning and curriculum integration, schools, generally, offer school-based Personal and Social Education, Life Education or Moral Education lessons to systematically cultivate students' positive attitudes and values and support their whole-person development. The content of these programmes is formulated according to students' development needs at different stages, and can mostly encompass such components as moral, civic, health and environmental education. In a few schools, for example, personal financial management and training in etiquette are included. Schools' emphases in their Personal and Social Education curriculum vary according to their school mission, with some having religion and spiritual education as their keystone. Some schools adopt, as their central themes, personal and social development and academic work. Others take Chinese traditional culture and moral behaviour as their focal points. Schools mostly organise related activities when implementing these curricula, for example, talks on moral education, green cleaning days, national flag hoisting ceremony and mainland study trips. They also make good use of life events to engage students in discussion and to promote their reflection. A small number of schools foster students' moral development through drama. Examples include integrating drama into moral education lessons, introducing theatre-in-education and drama education in personal development. Through performing in situation drama or staging historical events, students are prompted to think empathetically and critically about the issues in question and to suggest ways to solve the underlying problems. This helps develop students' generic skills and, also, their positive values. In addition, a small number of schools guide students to write journals, reflect on issues pertaining to value judgement and express their feelings and opinions. Coupled with teachers' feedback and guidance, the impact of these activities on student learning and development is good.

- Some schools purposely implement service learning to provide students with opportunities to practise what they have learnt in values education. Service learning varies in form. Apart from creating different service posts, schools optimise community resources and opportunities and arrange students to serve in voluntary agencies, homes for the elderly and kindergartens within their districts. Students have their learning experiences significantly enriched, and their sense of responsibility and

spirit to serve others are, thus, enhanced. Some schools have undertaken more thorough planning in that they not only meticulously design multifarious service learning opportunities, but also provide adequate training prior to the service and engage students in post-activity reflection.

- Apart from promoting and implementing the key reform tasks and related work, through school-based programmes, most schools have made subjects their point of entry, and design school-based curriculum according to students' needs. Over 75% of the schools have developed school-based modules or units in the Chinese Language curriculum or the English Language curriculum, or both. About 50% and 20% of the schools, respectively, incorporate school-based components in their Mathematics and General Studies curricula. There are also a few schools beginning to develop their school-based Arts Education curriculum, and to offer a wider range of Physical Education programmes. This demonstrates that schools attach much importance to helping students acquire foundation knowledge in KLA and to enhancing their language abilities.

- Based on the Chinese and English Language Education KLA curriculum guides, relatively more schools emphasise the strengthening of students' training in reading and writing in their school-based curriculum, with a view to enhancing the generic skills of communication, critical thinking and creativity. For English Language, most schools participate in the Primary Literacy Programme – Reading and Writing organised by the EDB, and apply for school-based support services to help with the development of their school-based reading and writing. A small number of schools develop their school-based phonics or reading curricula and some also incorporate elements of drama education in their curriculum. In comparison, school-based Chinese curricula are more diversified. Apart from reading and writing, development focuses cover the refinement of the design of curriculum modules and self-designed teaching materials, training in thinking and creativity, reading of classical poetry, children's literature appreciation, school-based programmes on Chinese culture and moral development, as well as the school-based Hanyu pinyin curriculum in support of the teaching of Chinese Language in Putonghua. With support from external organisations, including the EDB, teachers in schools admitting more NCS students actively develop school-based Chinese foundation curricula or word recognition

programmes to better cater for their students' specific language learning needs.   Apart from enriching the Chinese and English Language curricula, many schools lay emphasis on creating a language-rich environment to enhance students' bi-literacy and trilingual abilities.   Examples of relevant programmes and measures include conducting morning assemblies and producing campus TV programmes in English and Putonghua, and organising English and Putonghua Days.   Coupled with other measures, such as reading and writing activities and the language ambassador scheme, these programmes provide students with more opportunities for application.   With regard to language learning, a major area for improvement in a majority of schools is the need to create a favourable English learning environment to enhance students' interest in English, consolidate their English foundation and help them make the transition to secondary education.   Schools need to make more effort to encourage students to read English books and share their reading experiences.   They also need to use a wider range of learning materials and offer different co-curricular or cross-curricular activities, so that students have more opportunities to come into contact with, and use, English.

- School-based Mathematics and General Studies curricula are mostly linked to enhancing students' problem-solving and inquiry learning. Some of the schools developing school-based Mathematics curricula enlist external professional support for devising programmes to improve the teaching of Mathematics.   External help is also used for conducting action research to enhance students' problem-solving and thinking skills and interest in learning Mathematics.   In a few schools, the focus is on developing their Mathematics gifted programmes and enhancing the interface with the secondary Mathematics curriculum.   General Studies panels accord emphasis to developing students' inquiry abilities.   A small number of schools incorporate information technology (IT) in their school-based curriculum design.   Examples include developing an electronic platform for scientific inquiry and implementing 'Little Scientist' inquiry activities.   The General Studies and IT subject panels in these schools collaborate in implementing inquiry learning programmes, reinforcing students' skills of inquiry, data collection and analysis and their self-learning abilities.   In the process, instruction in higher-order thinking skills and reflection are also emphasised.

- To foster students' generic skills more effectively, about 10% of the schools have designed school-based programmes that complement the learning experiences provided at the subject/KLA level. For example, to reinforce student' critical thinking skills, a training course in thinking is developed with the promotion of discussion of current affairs as a main strategy. Others include gifted education curricula that integrate class learning with diversified co-curricular activities, Life Skills lessons emphasising the training of students in life skills and thinking abilities, and integrated arts curricula that promote aesthetics and creativity through learning different art forms.

- Apart from developing subject-based curricula, schools, generally, actively explore and try out suitable learning and teaching strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of class teaching. In this school year, almost 30% of the schools reviewed have articulated explicit development focuses in learning and teaching, so that subject teachers apply relevant teaching strategies for teaching and for helping students develop learning strategies. The most commonly adopted is cooperative learning, strategies for which help to reinforce class interaction, promote co-construction of knowledge with students, and equip them for their learning tasks. Another measure commonly adopted by schools is the teaching of thinking skills. This is mainly implemented through the integration of a focus on thinking skills development into the curriculum of various subjects. Relevant learning activities and assignments are designed to provide students with opportunities to use specific thinking skills, inside and outside class. Emphasis is also placed on enhancing the quality of questioning so that teachers use questioning more effectively to encourage students to use different thinking skills, thereby fostering their higher-order thinking.

- Formulating school-based curricula that cater for students' abilities and needs and honing students' independent learning abilities are two key objectives for the medium term of the curriculum reform. Most schools attach much significance to enhancing students' self-learning abilities. In a small number, well-defined strategies have been drawn up and various subject panels have made joint efforts in promoting self-learning. Measures commonly adopted by schools in reinforcing students' self-learning include fostering a reading habit, promoting the use of web-based resources, such as school-based online practice, and encouraging the use of materials in the self-learning corner. Some

schools promote students' pre-lesson preparation, information search and processing, and the use of logbooks to record what they have achieved and acquired through self-learning. One of these schools implements an explicit policy that promotes a three-step approach to learning. Such a policy aims to help students develop a habit of pre-lesson preparation, note-taking and summarising what they have learnt, thereby enhancing their self-learning abilities.

2.2.3 Evaluation of School-based Curriculum

- Having a good grasp of the concept of self-evaluation and appropriately integrating the P-I-E cycle into schools' daily work are important factors contributing to continuous development and self-improvement. The planning and implementation of school-based curriculum should be complemented by effective evaluation so that there can be improvement in curriculum design and teaching pedagogy. In evaluating school-based curriculum, schools should avoid putting too much emphasis on reviewing administrative work or teaching progress based on the schemes of work. Rather, to facilitate a holistic review of learning and teaching effectiveness and to inform the setting of improvement strategies and development targets, the focus should be on whether curriculum targets are reached and students are making progress in learning. In particular, evaluation of school-based curriculum should be undertaken more from the perspective of curriculum implementation. Evaluation focuses could include teacher-student interaction in the learning and teaching process, students' mastery of learning strategies, including inquiry skills, independent and collaborative learning, as well as teachers' use of assessment for learning. Schools, in general, have a good sense of self-evaluation. Most of them make good use of their evaluation mechanisms, including CLP, peer lesson observation and panel meetings, to review learning and teaching. To understand students' learning difficulties and their views on school-based curriculum or related policies and measures, teachers attach more and more importance to post-lesson observation discussion. Teachers also pay attention to collecting and analysing students' internal and external assessment data, as well as the results of school-based teacher and/or student surveys. Schools with excellent performance carefully review the outcomes of their school-based curriculum in the light of its objectives, promptly devise appropriate follow-up measures and revise planning in a timely manner. Particularly noteworthy is that teachers in

these schools mostly have a very good understanding of self-evaluation and often reflect on their teaching effectiveness. They share experience with other teachers and refine the design of learning activities together. These practices lead to continuous improvement in the quality of the school-based curriculum.

2.2.4 Leadership in School-based Curriculum Development

- School-based curriculum is highly developmental in nature as it needs continuous refinement and adjustment in response to changes in the school context, students' interests and learning needs. Its development progresses as teachers gain experience and have their professional capacity enhanced. The school management, including the school head, Primary School Masters/Mistresses (Curriculum Development) (PSM(CD)) and panel heads, has a key leadership role to play in school-based curriculum development. On the whole, the heads of the schools reviewed in this school year attach importance to, and adopt a pragmatic approach in, school-based curriculum development. They can make appropriate use of their networking to tap professional support and external resources to promote curriculum development and foster a professional sharing culture. The school heads who play an effective leadership role are able to set clear direction for school-based curriculum development, build consensus and facilitate good communication among teachers. They adopt appropriate implementation strategies in accordance with the schools' pace of development, empower middle managers and encourage teachers to innovate and use their expertise to the full. Some heads take on the role of trainer to coach their teachers and are personally involved in school-based curriculum development. PSM(CD) play an important role in assisting the school head in leading both curriculum planning and the implementation of the plans. They are dedicated and responsible and most can effectively coordinate subject panels' and committees' efforts in implementing curriculum development and monitor their work. Those with excellent performance demonstrate strong leadership and a good grasp of the trend of holistic curriculum development. They also show a clear understanding of the direction of curriculum development and how it is geared towards students' learning needs. They make good use of different kinds of evidence in conducting a holistic review of the school curriculum and they set and implement appropriate improvement measures. They clearly understand teachers'

expertise and support needs and help them give full play to their professional capacity. The effectiveness of the leadership of PSM(CD) hinges on their personal qualities, as well as their experience. With the creation of the rank of Senior Primary School Master/Mistress for deputy heads in primary schools in September 2008, in some of the schools reviewed this year, the post of PSM(CD) is left vacant as the original PSM(CD) has taken up the post of deputy head. Also, in about 20% of the schools, the PSM(CD) has been in post for less than two years and more time is needed for them to accumulate experience and grasp the pulse of curriculum development. Most of the panel heads perform their tasks dutifully, coordinate subject matters systematically and are able to monitor curriculum implementation. In order to promote curriculum development, there is a need for curriculum leaders in schools to make good use of self-evaluation for continuous improvement. At the same time, they should commit themselves to continuing professional development to keep abreast of the latest curriculum development trends. This can also help them build up networks to inform and support curriculum development in school. For those less experienced PSM(CD) and panel heads, the school management needs to provide support to help them build confidence and exercise professional leadership in school.

2.2.5 Continuous Refinement of School-based Curriculum and Promoting Students' Whole-person Development

- The curriculum is a collection of learning experiences that students acquire in school. To foster students' learning to learn ability, there is a need for schools to formulate curriculum development plans with due consideration given to schools' contextual factors, students' learning needs and interests. Schools need to implement the plans, follow them through and strive for continuous improvement. Schools, in general, have given due attention to enhancing students' learning effectiveness and have made commendable efforts in implementing their school-based curriculum. While the effectiveness of school-based curriculum varies, according to school context and stage of development, schools in general have made marked progress in providing students' with a variety of learning experiences and in enhancing their learning interest. At the same time, professional exchange among teachers and collaboration with school partners, such as the EDB and tertiary institutions, have also been strengthened.

- In schools where school-based curriculum is implemented effectively, the keys to success are team spirit, strong consensus among staff on the principle and direction of curriculum development, and strategic planning with points of entry appropriately selected in the light of development priorities and teachers' expertise. This is also complemented by the provision of sufficient support measures and professional support. Further, these schools continuously evaluate their curriculum with a sharp focus on students' learning performance, and foster improvement by building on experience.

- For the sustainable development of school-based curriculum, schools should commit themselves to the enhancement of professional leadership and teachers' professional capacity in an ongoing manner. In addition, they should direct attention to the following aspects to further promote school-based curriculum development:

  - Schools should set appropriate development priorities and implementation strategies. This is important because there are different implications for manpower and resource deployment, as well as teachers' workload, if schools choose to concentrate on individual school-based curriculum programmes or on launching curriculum programmes in several subjects simultaneously. As to development tasks already implemented for some time, schools could focus on how to help them take root in school, improve and develop continuously. With respect to development tasks about to be or newly launched, schools are advised to ensure that teachers have a shared understanding of the objectives and underlying concepts and to strengthen collaboration so that the tasks can be smoothly implemented at the classroom level.

  - When devising school-based curriculum plans, schools need to direct attention to the use of appropriate learning and teaching strategies to enhance learning effectiveness. Learning activity designs should be closely linked to curriculum objectives. There is a need to avoid focusing attention solely on completion of activities. Instead, emphasis should be placed on students' acquisition of knowledge and development of generic skills and positive values in the learning process.

2.3 Providing Remedial Support and Enhancement Programmes to Realise Students' Potential – Catering for Students' Different Learning and Growth Needs

2.3.1 School-level Planning

- Every student possesses multiple intelligences and students differ from each other in terms of cognitive and affective development, learning abilities and styles, interests and potential. As the discourse on catering for learner diversity has been widely promoted in the education sector, teachers have a better grasp of the issue, schools are becoming more concerned and are exploring various means to cater for students' different learning and growth needs. On the whole, schools reviewed in this school year place great emphasis on catering for learner diversity. To develop and adopt different strategies for realising students' potential and enhancing their learning, schools, generally, see the issue of catering for learner diversity as one of their major concerns. It is dealt with either as a focused improvement area in the domain of learning and teaching or as a priority requiring not only improvement of learning and teaching, but also enhancement of student support services. In addition to the provision of remedial support, most schools accord due emphasis to enhancement, with opportunities inside and outside the classroom to nurture students' multiple intelligences. Schools also offer a rich variety of life-wide learning activities and appropriate support services for students to demonstrate their strengths and abilities in non-academic areas so as to enhance their intrinsic motivation and confidence.

- In general, time, space and resources are aptly used by schools to formulate appropriate measures to cater for learner diversity. The most common measures adopted by schools include arranging remedial teaching for less able students before or after school and, under the Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme (IRTP), launching small group pull-out programmes for those who are struggling to make progress. Despite resource constraints, a small number of schools make the best possible use of their manpower to increase the number of remedial classes to provide the best possible support. Some schools provide remedial teaching in the second term for Primary One (P1) students so that more students in need may benefit from the support measures and a more solid foundation can be laid in good time. To facilitate teachers' adjustment to the teaching content and pedagogy, approximately half of the schools

adopt streaming. Nearly 30% of the schools adopt split-class teaching for Chinese, English and Mathematics to enhance individual support for students through lowering the teacher-student ratio. In accordance with Government policy, the progressive implementation of small class teaching at P1 in primary schools in the public sector should commence in the 2009/10 school year. However, approximately 20% of the schools reviewed in this school year have already made special arrangements for the use of their own resources to implement school-based small class teaching[1] in order to enhance the effectiveness of student learning. Some schools are responding actively to the forthcoming implementation of small class teaching by, for instance, participating in collaborative and research projects with tertiary institutions, organising school-based training programmes and arranging for teachers to receive training in tertiary institutions. Some are encouraging teachers to conduct lesson preparation with a specific focus on promoting learning in classes of a relatively small size.

- A wide range of learning support measures is generally adopted by schools. These include after-school homework remedial classes, bridging courses for children who have newly arrived from mainland China and Chinese tutorial classes for NCS students. Some of these classes are taught by teachers or teaching assistants while some of them are provided through hire of services. This helps to create more space for teachers, whilst also providing support for student learning. Schools with their student intake mainly comprising NCS students are, mostly, able to use related grants. With this support they are able to offer bridging courses and to hire teachers or teaching assistants, with similar cultural/ethnic backgrounds to the NCS students, to assist them in their learning and to facilitate their integration into the school community.

- As for the more able students, ECA and special training opportunities, such as 'Little Reporter', 'Creative Writing', English drama and training for the Hong Kong Mathematics Olympiad, are arranged by some schools. Some of their students are encouraged and recommended to participate in related activities and to receive training provided by external organisations to develop their skills and widen their exposure. With the support of external organisations or the school sponsoring body, a small number of schools launch programmes for the more able, such as an Arts Education

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[1] Referring generally to those classes with a total of less than 25 students

programme for gifted students, and leadership training. Around one-tenth of the schools have their own school-based gifted education curriculum. Relevant elements include the development of higher-order thinking skills, creativity, personal and social skills infused into their daily classroom teaching. On the whole, schools adopt different tiers and modes of gifted education according to student ability and development needs.

- In general, schools formulate appropriate measures to cater for students with special education needs (SEN) in different areas, such as learning support, socialisation and provision of different therapeutic services. Ad hoc committees are established by most schools to coordinate tasks in this domain. A whole-school approach is adopted and human resources are aptly used to provide different support services for students with SEN. These include education psychologists providing training for teachers and parents and conducting assessment of students, arranging teaching assistants to help cater for individual needs in the class, hiring resource teachers to conduct co-teaching with subject teachers, and inviting parent volunteers to conduct shared reading for these students. In more than half of the schools, those upper primary students who are trained to be 'Little Teachers' are assigned to offer assistance to lower primary students who have learning difficulties. Student guidance teachers are able to plan different kinds of support for students with SEN. The support measures include providing small group guidance to help develop students' academic and affective skills, and making use of grants to hire professional services, such as speech therapy services, training in reading and writing, and attention training. In addition to offering support to students, a small number of schools attach great importance to giving support to parents by different means, such as providing information on the school website about how to support students with different SEN, holding parent workshops and organising peer support groups for parents. In one school, a home training programme is launched to observe closely, and enhance support for, student growth through home-school cooperation. To enhance teachers' skills in catering for the needs of students with SEN, schools generally act in accordance with the professional development framework implemented by the EDB for teachers in the field of integrated education, by holding related school-based professional development activities and arranging for teachers to receive training.

- In addition to the above-mentioned support measures tailored for different groups of students, schools endeavour to provide diversified learning experiences for students beyond the classroom. These include outdoor learning, cross-border field trips and other co-curricular activities, such as the 'Chinese Culture Week' of the Chinese panel, 'Campus Orientation' of the Mathematics panel and the 'Science Week' of the General Studies panel. These activities can help extend students' exposure and learning and enable them to discover their interests and their strengths. Through the launch of programmes such as 'Developing Interest in One Form of Art and/or Sport' and 'One Student, One Job', opportunities are provided for students to organise school activities and participate in internal and external competitions to display their multiple talents. Through these learning experiences, schools can help students develop confidence, build a positive self-image, learn to appreciate others and excel by trying their best. Different award schemes are offered by most schools to acknowledge the effort made by their students. The school campus is, generally, well used to display students' work and achievements to enhance their motivation to improve themselves. To promote a caring attitude, mutual support and appreciation among peers, schools are directing much effort to the establishment of a caring and inclusive culture. To this end, a variety of programmes, such as 'Ambassadors of Love' and 'Good Man, Good Deeds', is launched. In schools whose student intake mainly comprises NCS students, good efforts are made to organise different cultural and festive activities to enhance students' understanding of, and respect for, ethnic diversity and cultural differences. Through these measures, students are encouraged to accept and care about one another and join hands to establish a joyful and inclusive learning environment.

- In general, schools have devoted a considerable amount of human and financial resources to the provision of a comprehensive range of support measures to cater for students' different learning and growth needs. Schools need to step up outcome-based evaluation to inform planning, in particular for resource deployment. Questionnaire surveys are administered in some schools to learn about students' views on their learning and after-school support measures. However, there is a lack of review of curriculum planning, assessment design, teaching strategies and student performance to analyse the effectiveness of the related measures and to identify areas for further development. In some schools, the

after-school enrichment or remedial courses serve mainly to prepare students for the Territory-wide System Assessment through drilling. This will put unnecessary pressure on students to such an extent that it may cause them to lose interest in learning. When devising after-school support measures, schools should always put students' interests at the forefront and accord top priority to their learning.

2.3.2 Planning for Curriculum and Performance Assessment

- The extent to which the use of strategies for catering for learner diversity can successfully engage students in active learning and develop their ability to construct knowledge hinges on a number of contributing factors. The most crucial ones include how well the curriculum and the assessment methods are designed, how effectively teaching strategies are used and how specific feedback is given to accommodate the differences in students' capabilities. With regard to curriculum planning, schools reviewed in this school year have, generally, drawn up teaching plans for remedial and IRTP classes. A small number of schools suitably arrange for subject teachers to co-plan lessons with teachers of remedial or IRTP classes. In the process, teachers discuss teaching strategies and activity design and adapt the learning content and focuses of the IRTP. However, in a majority of schools, the teaching plans designed for remedial classes tend to focus on completion of supplementary exercises and worksheets. There is a need for teachers to make good use of the assessment data collected prior to assigning students to remedial classes and to check with subject teachers regularly on students' daily performance and the difficulties they encounter in the course of learning. Based on this, the curriculum could be specifically adapted to assist those less able students to learn more effectively. As to IRTP, there is still a need for most schools to examine the learning needs of their students in greater depth, to adjust the aims and content of the curriculum appropriately, and to use more diversified teaching strategies and a wider range of learning aids and materials. In some of the schools where streaming is adopted, there is, generally, a lack of adaptation in teaching strategies to maximise the potential of students with different abilities. To address this, teachers should make better use of streaming and adapt their strategies and instruction to cater for the needs of students of different ability levels in different classes.

- Assignment design and the modes of assessment are, on the whole, diversified. In addition to summative assessment, students' daily performance in the classroom and in their assignments is measured and reflected by various means. Some schools design and adapt assignments according to the ability of their students by, for instance, designing worksheets with different levels of difficulty. Some schools take into consideration students' needs and difficulties and make appropriate adjustments to their assessment design. Such measures include adjusting the content of dictation and the amount of homework. To further facilitate learning, there is a need for schools to direct more attention to enhancing students' readiness for learning by having them undertake pre-lesson preparation, such as reading assigned materials and collecting information on a given topic. Students could be encouraged to contribute to each other's learning by sharing what they have done in preparation for the lesson. It could help develop students' independent learning attitude and capabilities and also enhance the effectiveness of learning. To stimulate students to think and to stretch students with different learning capabilities, there could be more open-ended questions and tasks aimed at developing students' creative thinking in daily assignments.

- Schools with better performance identify students' strengths and weaknesses through their analysis of internal and external assessment data, and adapt the contents of the curriculum and teaching pedagogy accordingly. There is, however, a need in most schools to analyse students' assessment data in detail and devise suitable follow-up plans with reference to the findings and those of the review of the curriculum and teaching strategies.

- In general, schools draw up Individualised Education Programmes and make suitable adaptations to assessment for students with SEN. Teachers in some schools discuss the learning progress of the students concerned at regular meetings. Under the New Funding Mode, a small number of schools arrange co-teaching between the resource teacher and the subject teacher assigned to a specific class. This allows students to learn in a more positive and inclusive environment and to benefit from more individual attention and support. A small number of schools develop learning profiles for students with SEN to maintain a record of their assignments and to keep these students and their parents better informed of learning progress.

2.3.3 Learning and Teaching in the Classroom

- In the 78 primary schools reviewed in this school year, more than 2,500 lessons have been observed and the overall learning and teaching effectiveness is, generally, good. The classroom learning and teaching effectiveness at Key Stage Two is better than that at Key Stage One. Lessons are, generally, properly organised with clear objectives. Teachers have good communication skills and their presentation is systematic and well structured. They make use of a variety of teaching resources, including IT, classroom and subject resources, to arouse students' interest and to help them develop a grasp of the knowledge and concepts being taught. In most lessons, there is a harmonious learning atmosphere. Teachers and students enjoy a good rapport and classroom routines have been well established.

- On the whole, the modes of classroom teaching are diversified and the adoption of an overly teacher-centred approach is not common. Apart from giving presentations and explanations, teachers pose questions and organise a variety of learning activities for students, such as role play, group discussion and oral presentation, to provide more opportunities for active learning and to allow students of different abilities to demonstrate their potential. As there are more opportunities for students to participate in classroom activities, their generic skills, such as those of communication and collaboration, are suitably nurtured.

- A key strategy for catering for learner diversity adopted by most teachers is the organisation of group activities to promote peer learning. During group activities, teachers monitor students' learning progress and provide individual support. In some lessons, cue cards are used and graded tasks are assigned. Teachers can, generally, employ questioning to enhance classroom interaction. In a small number of lessons, where learning and teaching is found to be very effective, teachers can use questioning skilfully to monitor students' learning progress and to encourage those with different abilities to take an active part. In such lessons, teachers ask a good range of questions. Simple and direct questions can help build the confidence of the academically weaker students, while those questions that provoke thinking, or are challenging in nature, can stimulate the more able students to think from multiple perspectives. These teachers can also suitably re-direct questions or ask probing questions to stimulate other students' thinking and discussion, thus effectively

promoting peer learning. Furthermore, they give specific feedback to facilitate students' improvement. In these lessons, students are particularly engaged. They are active in responding to teachers' questions and eager to express ideas. Nevertheless, in most other lessons, a limited range of questions is asked and the feedback provided by teachers is not specific enough. Schools need to enhance teachers' grasp of classroom formative assessment through school-based professional development activities. There is a need to raise teachers' awareness of the importance of making their expectations of student learning explicit, through highlighting the learning objectives set for the lesson. Teachers need to check students' learning progress and identify their support needs through questioning and observation of their performance in classroom activities, and they need to adjust the teaching strategies, content and pace accordingly. There is also a need to give more specific feedback to help students realise their own strengths and weaknesses, to facilitate their improvement and to deepen their learning.

- In recent years, cooperative learning has been promoted in a considerable number of schools. Teachers, in general, make use of group learning activities to promote peer interaction. In the course of the activities, students are given different learning tasks and roles. They generally demonstrate a collaborative spirit and show a keener interest to learn and participate. A small number of teachers employ heterogeneous grouping effectively, thereby engaging the more able students in helping their peers as a means to promote peer learning and support. However, to bring out the essence of cooperative learning, teachers need to further examine how to use relevant strategies effectively. For example, prior to organising group work, teachers should first guide students to think and prepare well. Upon checking students' readiness, teachers could engage them in cooperative learning activities and support them in their collaborative work, and completion of the assigned group task, by promoting peer interaction, encouragement and positive inter-dependence within the group. A small number of schools have tried out small class teaching at some year levels. Given the smaller class size, there are more opportunities for students to take an active part in the lessons concerned. The learning atmosphere is also livelier when compared with that in regular classes.

- In the lessons that are conducted to cater for the academically weaker students or those who are making slower progress, teachers who perform

better are not only patient, but they also encourage and praise students frequently to help them build confidence. They also adapt teaching materials to address students' learning difficulties. The effective teaching strategies employed include organising the learning content into manageable units or using examples which are intriguing to students to arouse their interest and to help them construct knowledge. However, most teachers of remedial or IRTP classes do not have appropriate expectations of students. In some cases, the design of teaching activities cannot extend students' abilities effectively or consolidate their learning. Schools should explore the use of a variety of teaching strategies, such as beginning with a lower starting point, proceeding in smaller steps, engaging students in more activities, providing feedback more promptly, giving more encouragement and setting appropriate expectations, to foster students' learning interest, habit, confidence and abilities.

2.3.4 Refining Support Strategies to Maximise Students' Potential

- As schools and teachers understand more about how students' diverse learning and growth needs should be catered for, they have paid more attention to the planning and implementation of related programmes. In the past, schools placed more emphasis on providing remedial support for academically low achievers. In recent years, they have arranged a variety of activities for the more able students and provided rich learning experiences to help them develop confidence and realise their potential. Schools are actively exploring different strategies and allocating considerable resources to cater for students' diverse needs. The overall planning has become more and more systematic. On the whole, schools have achieved good progress in providing various learning and student support measures, diversified learning experiences outside the classroom, and establishing a caring and inclusive school culture. Building on this foundation, schools could pay more attention to the following to further enhance the effectiveness of their work in relevant areas:

  − Schools need to enhance teachers' skills in catering for students' diverse learning needs through school-based professional development activities. These could focus on the use of assessment data to analyse students' learning difficulties, adaptation of curriculum content according to students' abilities, use of diversified teaching strategies, and use of classroom formative assessment and specific feedback to facilitate and improve learning. Apart from

setting reasonable expectations and raising students' motivation, teachers should provide suitable challenges and give more encouragement and praise to foster students' learning interest, habit, confidence and abilities. In addition, teachers should direct more effort to helping students develop various learning strategies and to the promotion of self-learning. In order to help students improve, they should also make their expectations clear.

– Considerable resources are allocated to the implementation of measures that cater for students' diverse learning and support needs. Schools should step up evaluation and conduct regular review of the overall effectiveness of the related measures, including the planning of curriculum and performance assessment, the use of teaching strategies, and the planning of diversified learning experiences and support services. Schools should also make effective use of the evaluation findings to inform planning, so that the measures can be refined and the impact improved and sustained.

Chapter 3   Concluding Remarks

- The new phase of the SDA framework has been implemented since the 2008/09 school year.   It aims to promote continuous improvement by giving impetus to the embedding of SSE in schools' daily work and by placing learning and teaching and student's whole-person development at the centre of school development planning.   To meet this aim, the procedures of ESR have been revised and emphasis is placed on the adoption of a school-specific and focused mode.   The complementary role of ESR to SSE has been better defined, in that it has a sharp focus on the development priorities and improvement strategies that schools formulate through SSE.   According to the findings of ESR this school year, overall school performance is good.

- Schools, generally, demonstrate a good grasp of the key concepts underpinning SSE.   They give due consideration to students' and schools' development needs when setting priorities.   In the implementation process, schools can use resources flexibly, place due emphasis on teachers' professional development and provide teachers with support.   Most schools make use of evidence and data to evaluate the effectiveness of key initiatives and follow up on recommendations in the previous QAI or ESR report.   In those schools that perform well, a self-evaluation culture has been developed and teachers are keen to reflect on their teaching effectiveness and share their experience with peers.   This not only facilitates school improvement, but also enhances team spirit.   In these well-performing schools, importance is attached to consensus building and teachers' understanding of the major concerns.   Planning is meticulous and coordination of work is systematic.   As a result of this good effort, the key initiatives are smoothly implemented.

- Schools, in general, are actively engaged in school-based curriculum development and good progress has been made.   In the development process, different pedagogical approaches are explored, with a view to improving learning and teaching effectiveness.   Various modes of, and different approaches to, school-based curriculum development are adopted.   In some schools, a progressive approach to curriculum development is adopted.   It usually begins with school-based curriculum development initiated by a small number of subject panels on specific focuses.   In others, all subject panels are involved simultaneously.   In some others, cross-curricular collaboration is promoted among different subject panels at specific year levels or across all year levels.   Apart from implementing the four key curriculum reform tasks,

schools have launched a range of school-based curriculum initiatives in different KLA and in General Studies. Coupled with diversified life-wide learning activities, these initiatives provide students with rich learning experiences that help broaden their horizons. They also help enhance students' generic skills and develop their positive values and attitudes. Curriculum development is an ongoing process and sustainable curriculum development requires timely review and reflection. To be effective, curriculum review needs to be undertaken with reference to the curriculum goals set and it needs to focus on student performance. The review findings are to be used to support ongoing improvement and to help students learn more effectively. Further, schools need to make more effort to improve the use of teaching strategies, in the process of curriculum implementation, in order to enhance students' ability to learn how to learn.

- Schools have directed much attention to students' learning differences and indeed, in most schools, one of the development priorities is to cater for such differences. There has, generally, been a switch in emphasis from providing mainly remedial support for academically less able students to catering for students' whole-person development.   With this switch, more opportunities are provided for students of different abilities to realise their potential and to experience success.   Different types of remedial support for learning, enhancement programmes and specialised training are provided for students of different abilities, including those academically less able, those with SEN, those of a higher ability level, and those demonstrating strengths in specific areas.   Specific support measures are also adopted to cater for the different special needs of the students enrolled, such as those who have recently arrived from mainland China and NCS children.   To provide better support for learning, schools have made commendable efforts at exploring different teaching strategies.   However, schools need to set appropriate expectations and adapt the curriculum, including the content and the level of difficulty, to cater for students' different ability levels.   There is a need to adopt a wider range of teaching strategies to help build students' confidence and to develop their learning strategies and abilities.   Furthermore, the use of classroom formative assessment needs strengthening.   To facilitate and enhance learning, teachers need to learn more about students' learning progress and attainment of the learning targets through questioning, observing students' performance in classroom activities and providing specific and good quality feedback.

- It is both a core task and a challenge for schools to cater for students' learning and growth needs. In the 2009/10 school year, small class teaching will be implemented in primary schools and the New Senior Secondary curriculum will be launched in secondary schools. Schools, in general, have done much preparation and they are exploring ways to facilitate the implementation of these policies and related tasks so that student learning can be further improved. In the development process, schools are constantly faced with different challenges arising from internal or external factors. In this regard, schools need to further enhance SSE and make use of the SSE cycle of P-I-E to improve their daily work and classroom learning and teaching. By so doing, schools can understand more about their strengths and areas that need improvement and, with this understanding, they can set appropriate directions and clear targets for sustainable development.

Appendices

Appendix 1   Schools Undergoing ESR in the 2008/09 School Year

Primary Schools

AD&FDPOHL LEUNG SING TAK SCHOOL

ALLIANCE PRIMARY SCHOOL,WHAMPOA

BAPTIST (STW) LUI MING CHOI PRIMARY SCHOOL

BAPTIST RAINBOW PRIMARY SCHOOL

BONHAM ROAD GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOL

BUDDHIST CHUNG WAH KORNHILL PRIMARY SCHOOL

CANOSSA SCHOOL (HONG KONG)

CANTON ROAD GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOL

CATHOLIC MISSION SCHOOL

CCC CHUEN YUEN SECOND PRIMARY SCHOOL

CHAI WAN FAITH LOVE LUTHERAN SCHOOL

CHAI WAN KOK CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

CHING CHUNG HAU PO WOON PRIMARY SCHOOL

CONFUCIAN TAI SHING PRIMARY SCHOOL

CONSERVATIVE BAPTIST LUI MING CHOI PRIMARY SCHOOL

CUHKFAA THOMAS CHEUNG SCHOOL

FDBWA CHOW CHIN YAU SCHOOL

FUNG KAI NO.1 PRIMARY SCHOOL

HHCKLA BUDDHIST CHAN SHI WAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

HHCKLA BUDDHIST CHING KOK LIN ASSOCIATION SCHOOL

HK & MACAU LUTHERAN CHURCH MING TAO PRIMARY SCHOOL

HK ENG CLANSMAN ASSN WU SI CHONG MEMORIAL SCHOOL

HK SZE YAP C&IA SAN WUI COMMERCIAL SOCIETY SCHOOL

HKFYG LEE SHAU KEE PRIMARY SCHOOL

HKRSS TUEN MUN PRIMARY SCHOOL

HKTAYYI CHAN LUI CHUNG TAK MEMORIAL SCHOOL

HO SHUN PRIMARY SCHOOL (SPONSORED BY SIK SIK YUEN)

HOLY CARPENTER PRIMARY SCHOOL

ISLAMIC DHARWOOD PAU MEMORIAL PRIMARY SCHOOL

JORDAN ROAD GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOL

KAM TSIN VILLAGE HO TUNG SCHOOL

KOWLOON BAY ST JOHN THE BAPTIST CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

KOWLOON CITY BAPTIST CHURCH HAY NIEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

KOWLOON WOMEN'S WELFARE CLUB LI PING MEMORIAL SCHOOL

KWOK MAN SCHOOL

LAM TSUEN PUBLIC WONG FOOK LUEN MEMORIAL SCHOOL

LI SING PRIMARY SCHOOL

LKWFS WONG YIU NAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

LOK SIN TONG PRIMARY SCHOOL

MA ON SHAN METHODIST PRIMARY SCHOOL

MARYKNOLL CONVENT SCHOOL (PRIMARY SECTION)

MENG TAK CATHOLIC SCHOOL

PENTECOSTAL YU LEUNG FAT PRIMARY SCHOOL

PLK CHEE JING YIN PRIMARY SCHOOL

PLK DR. JIMMY WONG CHI-HO (TSV) PRIMARY SCHOOL

PLK FONG WONG KAM CHUEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

PO ON COMMERCIAL ASSOCIATION WAN HO KAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

PRECIOUS BLOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

SKH KEI FOOK PRIMARY SCHOOL

SKH TSING YI CHU YAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

SHA TIN GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOL

SHA TIN METHODIST PRIMARY SCHOOL

SKH KEI LOK PRIMARY SCHOOL

SKH KEI OI PRIMARY SCHOOL

SKH KOWLOON BAY KEI LOK PRIMARY SCHOOL

SKH LUI MING CHOI MEMORIAL PRIMARY SCHOOL

SKH ST CLEMENT'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

SKH TIN WAN CHI NAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

SRBCEPSA LEE YAT NGOK MEMORIAL SCHOOL

ST ANTHONY'S SCHOOL

ST ANTONIUS PRIMARY SCHOOL

ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI'S CARITAS SCHOOL

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

ST PAUL'S PRIMARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL (AM & PM)

Appendix 2   Post-ESR School Survey Findings in the 2008/09 School Year

No. of ESR Schools	Questionnaires Issued	Questionnaires Collected	Overall Response Rate
78	2866	2561	89%

		Percentage					Don't know / N.A.
		Strongly agreed ⟶ Strongly disagreed					
1a	I am clear about the objectives of ESR.	29.2%	65.7%	3.1%	1.4%	0.6%	0.3%
1b	I am clear about the procedures of ESR.	27.0%	66.0%	4.9%	1.5%	0.5%	0.2%
1c	I am clear about the scope covered by ESR.	23.2%	67.2%	7.3%	1.8%	0.5%	0.3%
2	'Performance Indicators for Hong Kong Schools 2008' encompasses the major areas of work in our school.	15.9%	70.5%	11.3%	2.1%	0.3%	2.0%
3	The Performance Indicators facilitate the review of our school's major areas of work in a more focused manner.	17.7%	70.2%	9.7%	1.9%	0.4%	1.1%
4	In general, the questionnaires in the Stakeholder Survey are effective in collecting stakeholders' views about our school.	16.5%	69.5%	11.4%	1.9%	0.6%	3.9%
5	The information provided by the Key Performance Measures helps us to conduct SSE in our school.	16.2%	73.0%	8.7%	1.6%	0.5%	3.7%
6	The E-Platform for School Development and Accountability enhances the efficiency of collecting and managing our school's SSE data.	16.1%	69.2%	12.6%	1.7%	0.4%	5.2%
7	My involvement in the 'holistic review of the school' has given me a better understanding of our school's overall performance.	20.6%	68.3%	8.8%	1.8%	0.5%	0.8%
8	I take an active part in evaluating the performance of our school.	25.5%	63.1%	9.5%	1.3%	0.6%	0.3%
9	SSE has enhanced professional exchange among staff on how to make continuous school improvement.	21.0%	65.9%	9.7%	2.7%	0.4%	0.5%
10a	The pre-ESR briefing conducted by the ESR team member in June/July of the previous school year enhanced my understanding of ESR.	18.0%	70.8%	8.8%	2.0%	0.4%	4.1%
10b	The pre-ESR briefing conducted by the ESR team member in June/July of the previous school year allayed my anxiety about ESR.	12.1%	54.4%	24.6%	7.7%	1.3%	4.1%
10c	The pre-ESR briefing conducted by the ESR team member in June/July of the previous school year clarified the requirements for ESR and reduced unnecessary preparation work.	11.8%	54.0%	23.4%	8.8%	2.1%	4.1%
11	The ESR team focused specifically on our school context to review our major concerns.	16.3%	66.9%	12.6%	3.9%	0.3%	1.5%
12	The variety of activities observed by the ESR team was adequate.	15.4%	65.6%	13.1%	5.5%	0.3%	1.4%
13	The ESR team demonstrated professionalism in the review process.	18.9%	65.2%	12.4%	2.9%	0.6%	1.3%
14	The attitude of the ESR Team was sincere and friendly.	27.3%	59.6%	9.9%	2.6%	0.6%	0.9%
15	The participation of front-line educator(s) as member(s) of the ESR team enabled our school's performance to be assessed from different perspectives.	17.9%	69.5%	10.0%	2.4%	0.2%	1.8%
16	The ESR team was able to listen objectively to the views expressed by our school staff in interviews/ meetings.	17.6%	65.4%	13.4%	3.1%	0.5%	4.0%
17	Preliminary findings of the ESR team were clearly conveyed to our school staff in the oral feedback session.	19.1%	66.8%	11.4%	2.4%	0.3%	10.3%

		Percentage					Don't know / N.A.
		Strongly agreed ⟶ Strongly disagreed					
18	Having teachers, other than the team responsible for school development, in the oral feedback session has increased the transparency of ESR.	18.9%	69.0%	9.7%	2.0%	0.4%	6.6%
19a	The ESR has given an accurate judgement on the effectiveness of our school's self-evaluation processes.	14.2%	67.4%	15.2%	3.0%	0.3%	1.1%
19b	The ESR has accurately identified the strengths of our school.	20.3%	66.0%	11.2%	2.4%	0.2%	1.0%
19c	The ESR has accurately identified the areas for improvement for our school.	18.4%	64.9%	13.0%	3.4%	0.4%	1.0%
19d	The ESR has helped our school formulate future goals and plans.	20.6%	67.2%	9.8%	2.1%	0.3%	1.6%
20	I agree with the recommendations made in the ESR report.	15.6%	64.6%	16.5%	3.1%	0.2%	1.3%
21	There was adequate time for our school to prepare the written response to the ESR report.	16.3%	64.6%	16.1%	2.4%	0.5%	7.0%
22	There was adequate discussion among our school staff before finalising our written response to the ESR report.	16.5%	64.4%	15.6%	3.1%	0.4%	4.1%
23	ESR helps me reflect on the effectiveness of our school work.	19.6%	68.8%	8.7%	2.6%	0.2%	0.8%
24	The amount of preparatory work done by our school for ESR was appropriate.	11.3%	57.5%	19.7%	9.4%	2.1%	0.7%
25	Pressure resulting from ESR was reasonable.	7.0%	50.7%	25.3%	12.7%	4.3%	0.6%
26	The entire ESR process was open and transparent.	13.6%	66.5%	15.9%	3.5%	0.4%	1.0%
27	On the whole, I am satisfied with the ESR process.	12.8%	63.9%	19.7%	3.1%	0.5%	0.5%