

Review of Continuing Professional Development of Serving Principals

Report

1. INTRODUCTION

Research Objectives

1.1 The purposes of the review are as follows:

- a) To obtain information on the types of continuing professional development (CPD) activities undertaken by serving school principals, the rationale for the choice of CPD activities and how such activities are related to the personal needs of principals, needs of schools and society and the six core areas of leadership of school principals;
- b) To find out problems encountered by serving school principals in their pursue of CPD and their perceived impact of CPD;
- c) To examine the involvement and views of School Management Committees in CPD activities of serving school principals.

2. REVIEW FRAMEWORK

Professional development of school principals

Background

2.1 Following the publication of the consultation paper on “Leadership Training Programme for Principals” in June 1999, feedback from stakeholders showed that there was overwhelming support for Government’s effort to upgrade the competence of principals. Nevertheless, reservations were expressed on proposals to provide a uniform programme for all principals and the requirement for all serving principals to acquire a certificate for principalship by September 2007.

2.2 In the 2002 consultation paper published by the then Education Department (ED), a framework for the continuing professional development (CPD) of aspiring principals (AP), newly appointed principals (NAP) and serving principals (SP) was proposed. SMC were expected to play a distinct role in discussing with SP on their CPD

plans, create capacity for SP to undertake CPD and secure financial support for SP to attend quality CPD programmes.¹

2.3 Recommendations on CPD of school principals were accepted by the Government and promulgated in 2002, as follows:²

- a) Starting from the 2004/05 school year, all AP would have to acquire Certification for Principalship (CFP). The CFP process comprised three parts, namely need analysis, a designated course and presentation of a portfolio;
- b) As regards NAP, in their first two years of principalship, they were required, with effect from September 2002, to undergo a designated programme, engage in CPD activities and present a professional portfolio to the SSB/SMC on an annual basis;
- c) For SP from the third year of principalship, they were required, with effect from September 2002, to undertake CPD activities for 50 hours per year and up to a minimum of 150 hours in a 3-year cycle. SP were required to engage in structured learning, action learning and service to education and the community when undertaking CPD. They were required to draw up CPD plans with reference to their personal needs, needs of schools and society and the following 6 core areas of leadership:
 - (i) strategic direction and policy environment;
 - (ii) learning, teaching and curriculum;
 - (iii) teacher professional growth and development;
 - (iv) staff and resources management;
 - (v) quality assurance and accountability; and
 - (vi) external communication and connection to the outside world.

CPD plans of serving principals

2.4 According to the guidelines issued by ED in September 2002, SP's CPD plan should form an integral part of the Annual School Plan starting from the school year 2003/04. The Annual School Plan should be endorsed by SSB/SMC and forwarded to respective Regional Education Office (REO) for record and follow-up support. Starting from the 2002/03 school year, ED would announce at around end June each year CPD activities organized by ED for reference by SP. SSB/SMC would endorse CPD activities to ensure that they were related to the six core areas of leadership and taken in the format of structured learning, action learning or service to education and the community. In 2002/03, SSB/SMC might approve a one-off recognition of not more than 50 hours of CPD activities taken from September 1999 to August 2002. At the end of each year and each 3-year cycle, SP had to submit their CPD record to SSB/SMC for endorsement.

¹ Education Department (2002), *Continuing professional development for school excellence*, consultation paper on the continuing professional development of principals.

² EMB Circular No. 32/2002 dated 17.7.2002, "Principals' continuing professional development".

Starting from the 2003/04 school year, SP may also undergo need analysis to help them reflect on and fine-tune their personal development plans.³

Role of School Management Committees

2.5 In a subsequent “Frequently Asked Questions” issued by ED, based on views expressed by stakeholders in seminars and views-exchange sessions conducted to gauge their views on the guidelines issued by ED in September 2002, the role of SSB/SMC was clearly spelt out. For SP, the responsibilities of SSB/SMC are as follows:⁴

- a) Motivate and monitor principals’ CPD for students’ ultimate benefit;
- b) Approve a one-off recognition of not more than 50 hours of CPD activities undertaken by SP from September 1999 to August 2002;
- c) Advise SP on their CPD plans and render them support;
- d) Advise SP to set a minimum number of CPD hours per year in a 3-year cycle;
- e) Endorse CPD activities and CPD record.

Review approach

2.6 SP are expected to undertake CPD activities for 50 hours per year and a minimum of 150 hours in a 3-year cycle, covering activities in structured learning, action learning and service to education and the community when undertaking CPD. Meeting the quantitative targets should be regarded as a means and not an ends itself. It will thus be useful to examine the contents of CPD activities, having regards to the 6 core areas of leadership.

2.7 Indeed, it was stressed by researchers that professional development programmes of principals should embrace two elements, namely structural elements such as mission, curriculum, instructional approaches and use of time and technologies, and value-driven cultural elements that were central to building a sense of community, commitment and fostering motivation to learn.⁵

2.8 In another study on principals and deputy principals of 130 primary and high schools in New South Wales, Australia and 130 elementary, middle and high schools in Central Japan, researchers found that there were six most important areas covered in in-service training of principals in Australia and Japan, as shown in the table below.⁶

³ Education Department (2002), “Guidelines for principals’ continuing professional development”.

⁴ Education Department (undated), “Frequently-Asked-Questions (FAQ): Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of Principals”.

⁵ Peterson, Kent (2002), “The professional development of principals: innovations and opportunities”, in *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 38(2): 213 – 232.

⁶ Gamage, David T and Ueyama, Takeyuki (2004), “Professional development perspectives of principals in Australia and Japan”, in *The Education Forum*, 69(1): 65 – 78.

Important Areas	Principals in Australia	Principals in Japan
a) Information technology and information management	√	√
b) Ethics, morals and values for educational leaders	√	√
c) Contemporary public issues in educational administration	√	√
d) Assessment of candidate's competency	√	
e) Practicum in educational administration		√
f) Introduction and management of reforms/change		√

2.9 In a similar study conducted on principals in the US, “leadership for information management and change” and “ethics, values and morals for educational leaders” were considered as the most important topics for in-service training.⁷

2.10 Research showed that the existing in-service training should be improved, by allowing more practical orientation with actual school situations and better connections between theory and practice. It was suggested that the in-service training programme should be organized in a more consistent, structured and comprehensive manner, with more emphasis on up-to-date knowledge and practice, and more opportunities for knowledge sharing and learning of best practices.⁸ Similar views were expressed by researchers in a review of professional development programmes for principals in the US, pointing out that many such programmes were not carefully designed for coordinated, long-term learning.⁹

2.11 In the circumstances, although this review is basically a fact-finding exercise, it would be useful to gather not only factual data on SP's CPD activities, but also SP's perceived CPD needs, gaps and problems encountered. In short, the following information is proposed to be gathered in the review:

- a) The contents of CPD, having regards to the six core areas of school leadership;
- b) Training needs and gaps, as well as problems faced by SP in undertaking CPD;
- c) Role of IMC/SMC in CPD of SP;
- d) Impact of CPD;
- e) Suggested improvements to the CPD framework for SP.

2.12 This review will primarily be based on experience of SP in drawing up and implementing their CPD plans in the 3-year cycle covering schools years 2002/03, 2003/04 and 2004/05, as well as CPD plans for the following 3-year cycle starting 2005/06.

⁷ Zu, Zhixin, Gamage, David and Mininberg, Elliot (2003), “Professional preparation and development of school leaders in Australia and the USA”, in *International Education Journal*, 4(1): 42 – 59.

⁸ Gamage, David T and Ueyama, Takeyuki (2004), “Professional development perspectives of principals in Australia and Japan”, in *The Education Forum*, 69(1): 65 – 78.

⁹ Peterson, Kent (2002), “The professional development of principals: innovations and opportunities”, in *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 38(2): 213 – 232.

2.13 While the review approach suggested above is *input* and *process* oriented, an examination of the *outcome* of CPD of SP should not be overlooked. Undoubtedly, CPD is important to SP. It helps maintain morale, professional commitment, sense of professional value and personal worth, and promote creativity and enthusiasm.¹⁰

2.14 There are also numerous studies on the relationship between quality of school leadership and school effectiveness. However, it is recognized that other factors such as the motivation of teachers and the quality of teaching and learning are also important.¹¹ Furthermore, it is noted that CPD would have greatest impact on schools if it could change not only the behaviour of individuals, but also meet the needs of schools and benefit the students. Thus, CPD is not only important to SP, it is also essential to other staff at all levels, in meeting the needs of individual teachers, teams of teachers and the whole school, thereby creating a positive climate where professional development can flourish to the benefit of pupils.¹²

2.15 In other words, if attempt is made to assess the impact of CPD of SP on schools and students, it should also take into account CPD of other school staff at all levels. Such an approach is clearly beyond the scope of the present study. Thus, evaluation of outcomes contained in this report is only based on views of SP themselves. Furthermore, to avoid posing reporting burden on schools, information related to the role of IMC or SMC was obtained through in-depth interviews of SP.

Review methodology

2.16 In conducting the present study, the prime consideration is to avoid causing too much inconvenience and additional workload to SP. Before asking SP to provide information required for the study, attempts were made to analyze information kept by Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB). A computerized database on the CPD activities of SP was obtained from EMB. In this report, statistical information related to 984 SP contained in the database is presented.

2.17 In addition, to supplement information contained in the CPD database, a short questionnaire survey on a representative sample of SP was conducted. A stratified random sample of 305 schools, with the stratification factors being level of schools and years of experience as principals, was selected. The factor of stratification was chosen on the grounds that the number of CPD hours was related to years of experience. Furthermore, a systematic sample is adopted as the method of selection, with the list of SP sorted by types and district of schools. By selecting a systematic sample (which was

¹⁰ Chapman, Judith D (2005), *Recruitment, retention and development of school principals*, publication of International Academy of Education and International Institute for Educational Planning.

¹¹ Bush, Tony and Jackson, David (2002), "A preparation for school leadership: international perspectives", in *Educational management and administration*, 30(4): 417 – 429.

¹² UK Department for Education and Skills (2005), *Leading and coordinating CPD in secondary schools*

also a random sample), schools of different types and located in different districts will be selected.

2.18 The sample selection plan and the response rate are shown below. Out of a random sample of 302 SP, completed questionnaires were received from 172 SP, representing a response rate of 57%. The questionnaire used in the survey is given in Appendix. In this report, findings of the questionnaire survey are also presented.

Years of experience	Primary Schools		
	No. of valid sampling units	No. of SP responded	Response rate
5 or below	41	24	58.5%
6 – 10	40	25	62.5%
11 – 15	40	20	50.0%
16 – 20	15	11	73.3%
21 or above	16	9	56.3%
Total	152	89	58.6%

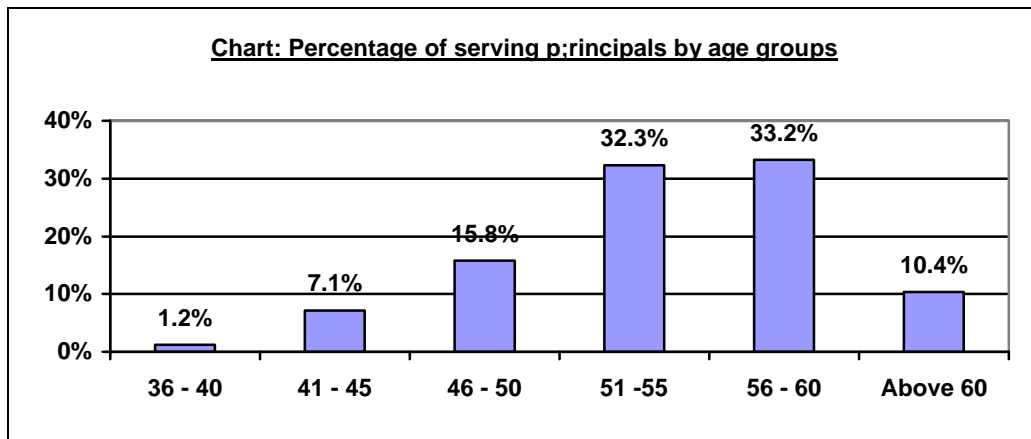
Years of experience	Secondary Schools		
	No. of valid sampling units	No. of SP responded	Response rate
5 or below	33	20	60.6%
6 – 10	33	20	60.6%
11 – 15	35	19	54.3%
16 – 20	31	17	54.8%
21 or above	18	7	38.9%
Total	150	83	55.3%

2.19 Findings presented in report are primarily based on the CPD database provided by EMB. Where applicable, information obtained from the short questionnaire survey is included. In addition, in-depth interviews were also conducted with SP of 15 primary and 15 secondary schools. Views expressed by SP during the interviews have been incorporated into the present report. Unless otherwise specified, statistics refer to those compiled from the CPD database.

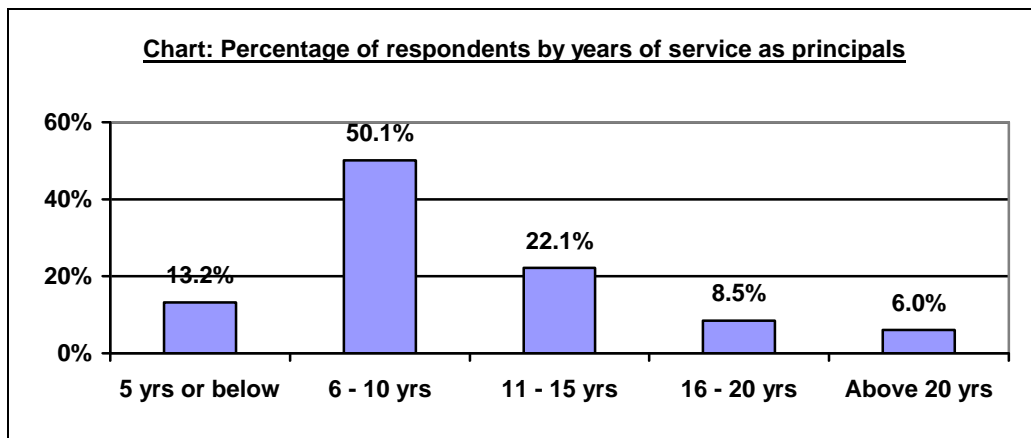
3. FINDINGS

Profile of SP

3.1 About 61% of SP were male and the balance 39% female. 56% were serving in primary schools and 44% secondary schools. As shown in the chart below, the majority of SP was aged 51 or above.



3.2 More than half (63%) of SP had been serving as principals for 10 years or less, and a further 22% for 11 – 15 years. Only about 15% had been serving as principals for 16 years or more.

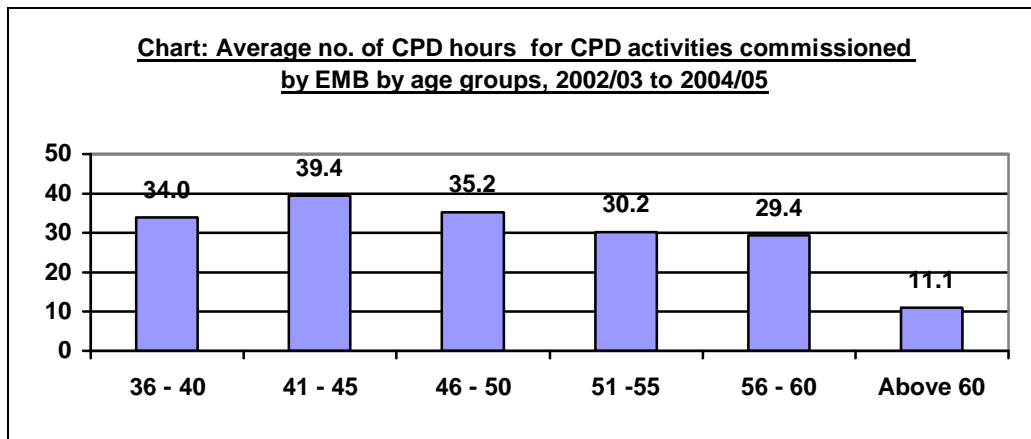


CPD activities

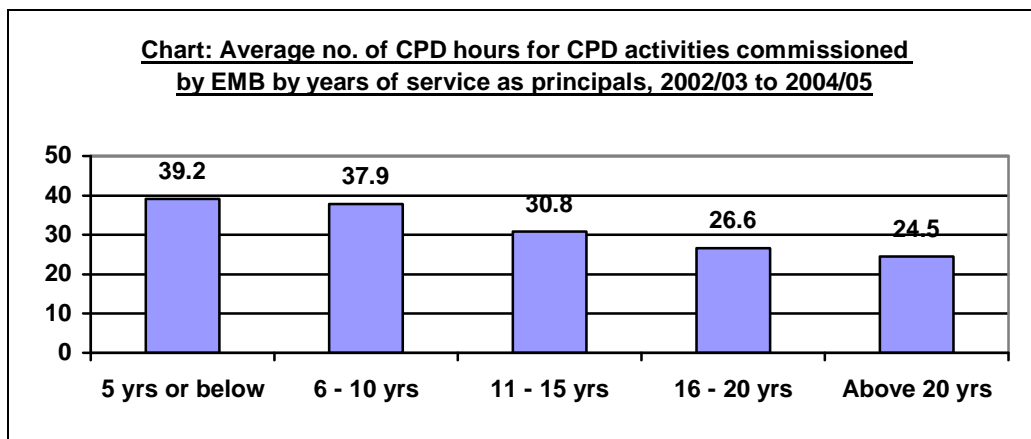
CPD activities commissioned/organized by EMB

3.3 Based on database maintained by EMB, during the 3-year period from 2002/03 to 2004/05, about 90% of SP had undertaken CPD activities organized or commissioned by EMB. Among them, 59% were male and 41% female. The average number of CPD

hours undertaken was 31.1 hours; the average was 26.9 for male and 34.6 for female SP. On average, SP in the age group 41 – 45 had undertaken more CPD hours commissioned by EMB. The average was lower for SP in the younger and older age groups.



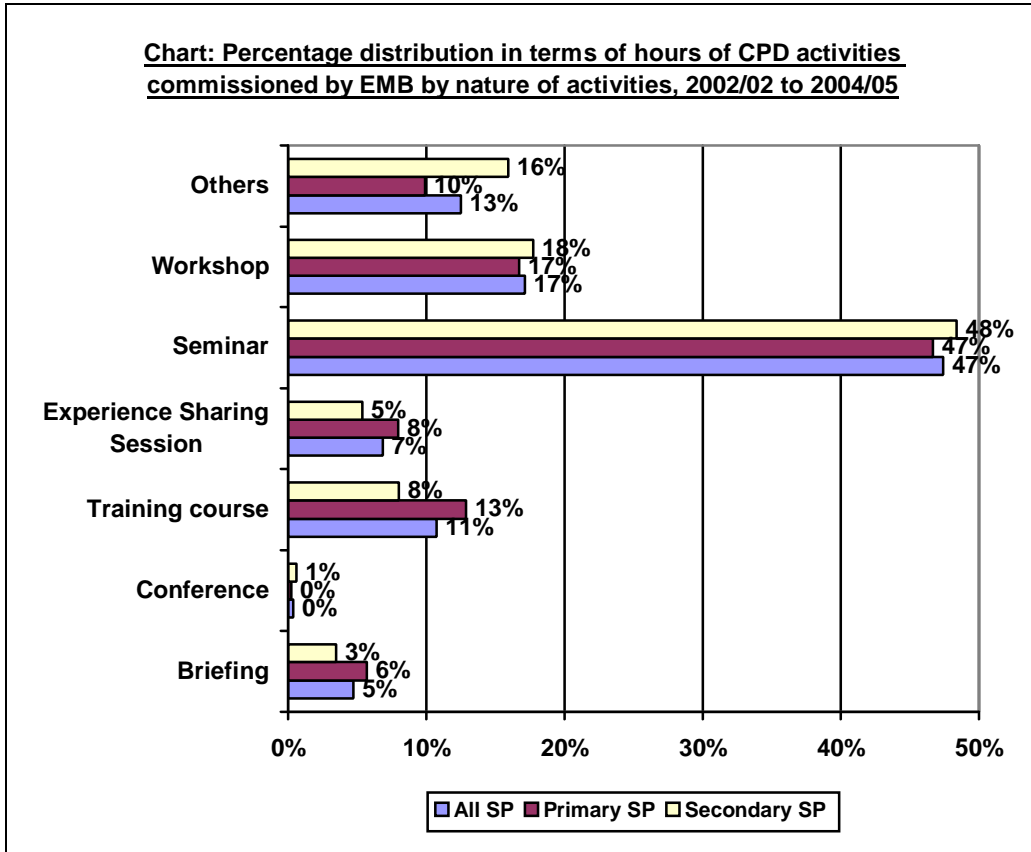
3.4 As expected, SP with fewer years of experience as principals had undertaken more CPD activities, in terms of time. The average CPD hours for SP with less than 6 years of experience as principals was 39 hours in 2002/03 – 2004/05, as compared with only 25 for those with more than 20 years of experience as principals.



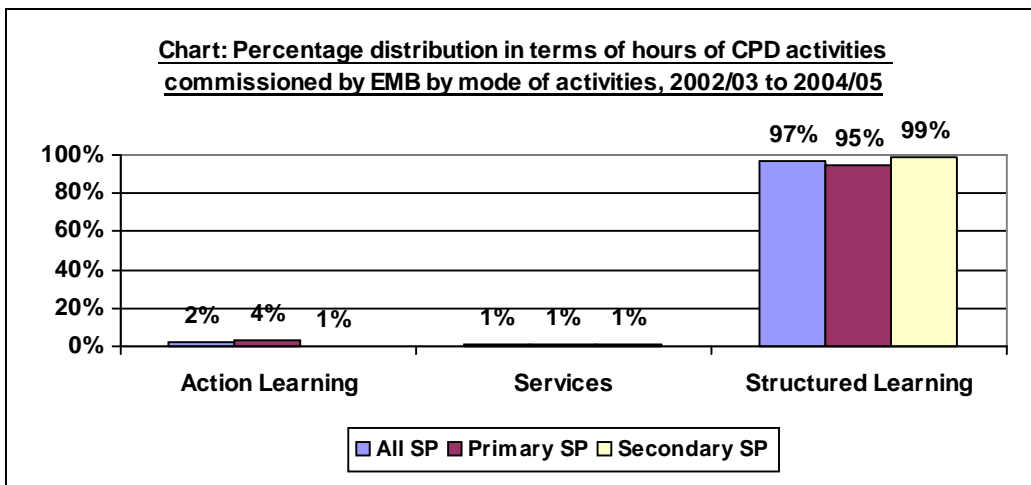
3.5 During discussions with SP, it was pointed out that the number of CPD hours recorded through the e-service and contained in the EMB’s database was much lower than the actual number of CPD hours. Indeed, findings of the questionnaire survey show that in the school year 2005/06 SP on average had undertaken 65.3 hours of CPD activities organized or commissioned by EMB. The number was slightly higher for SP of secondary schools (at 72.4 hours), as compared with that for SP of primary schools (59.9 hours)

3.6 When analyzed by the nature of CPD activities commissioned or organized by EMB, nearly half (47%) of CPD hours undertaken by SP were in the form of seminars and a further 17% workshops. Training courses accounted for another 11% of CPD hours

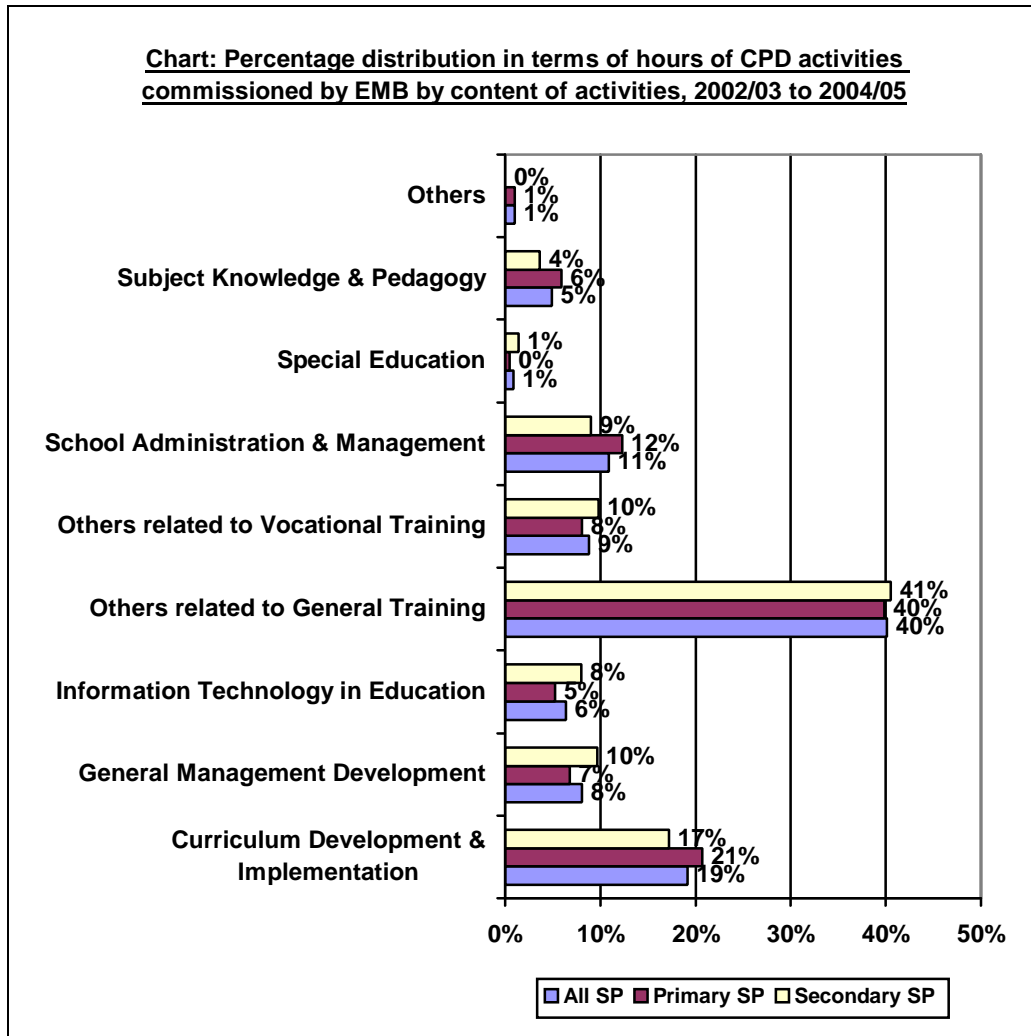
and experience sharing sessions, 7%. The patterns for SP of primary schools were quite similar to those of SP of secondary schools.



3.7 When analyzed by modes of CPD activities commissioned or organized by EMB, structured learning accounted for the bulk (97%) of CPD hours undertaken by SP. Other modes of CPD activities were action learning (2%) and services to the education sector and the community.



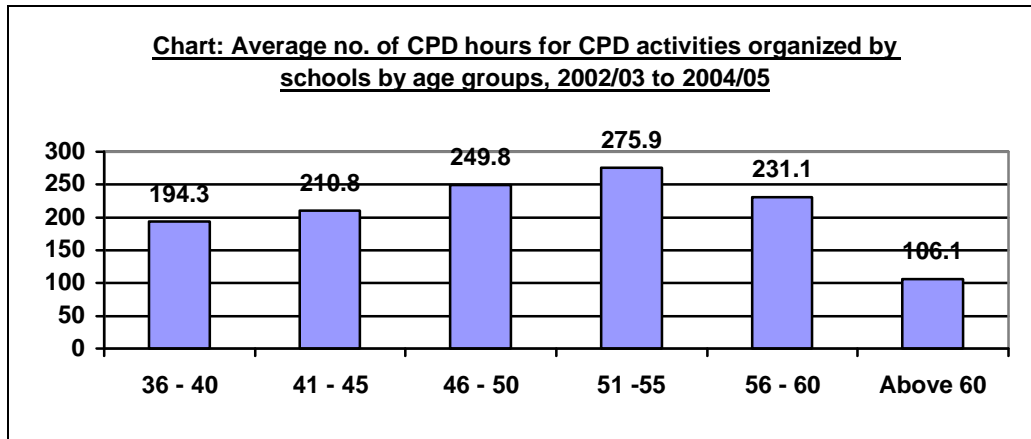
3.8 When analyzed by contents of CPD activities commissioned or organized by EMB, about 40% of CPD hours undertaken by SP were related to general training and a further 19% related to curriculum development and implementation. School administration and management accounted for another 11% of CPD hours. The patterns for SP of primary schools were quite similar to those of SP of secondary schools.



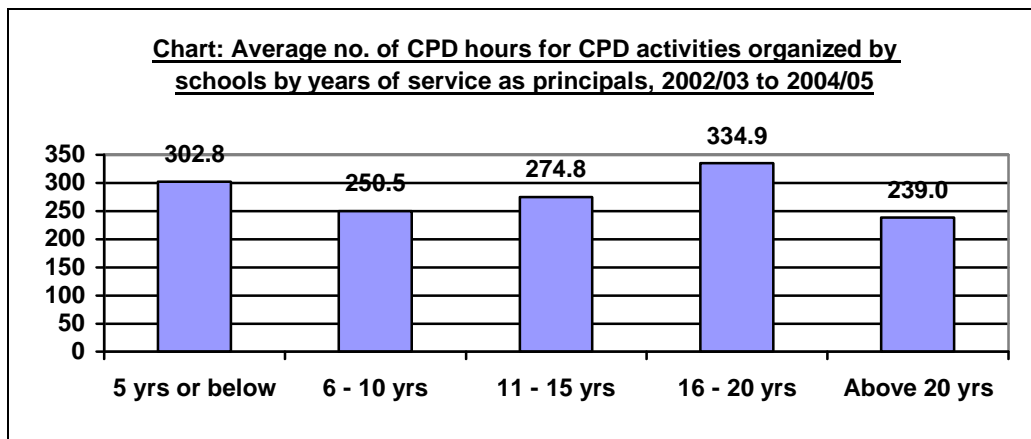
3.9 Admittedly, the nature, modes and contents of CPD activities were determined to a certain extent by the supply of such activities. Nevertheless, it was also indicative of demand for CPD on the part of SP. The statistics presented so far indicated that SP pursued a diverse range of CPD in terms of nature and contents. This reflected the diverse training needs of SP, spanning curriculum development, pedagogy, IT in education, school management and special education. It is noted that the bulk of CPD activities organized by EMB was structured learning. While opportunities for services to education and the community were quite readily available to SP, there might be a need to explore the desirability and feasibility of arranging action learning for different groups of SP, on issues of particular interest and importance to groups of SP concerned.

CPD activities organized by schools

3.10 During the 3-year period from 2002/03 to 2004/05, only about 41% of SP reported to have undertaken CPD activities organized by schools. Among them, 53% were male and 47% female. The average number of CPD hours undertaken was 245 hours; the average was 214 for male and 279 for female SP. On average, SP in the age group 51 – 55 had undertaken more CPD hours organized by schools. The average was lower for SP in the younger and older age groups.

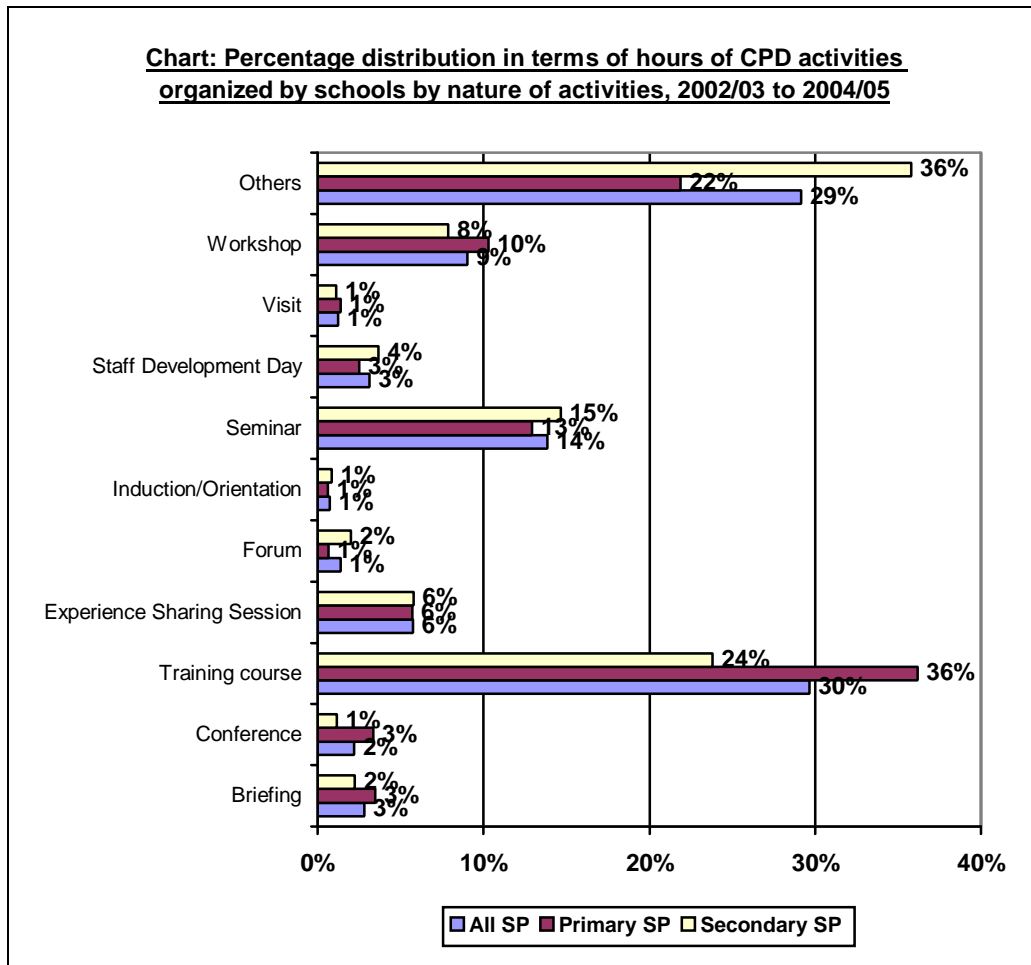


3.11 As expected, SP with fewer years of experience as principals had undertaken more CPD activities, in terms of time. The average CPD hours for SP with less than 6 years of experience as principals was 303 in 2002/03 to 2004/05 and 335 for those with 16 – 20 years of experience as principals, as compared with only 240 for those with more than 20 years of experience as principals.



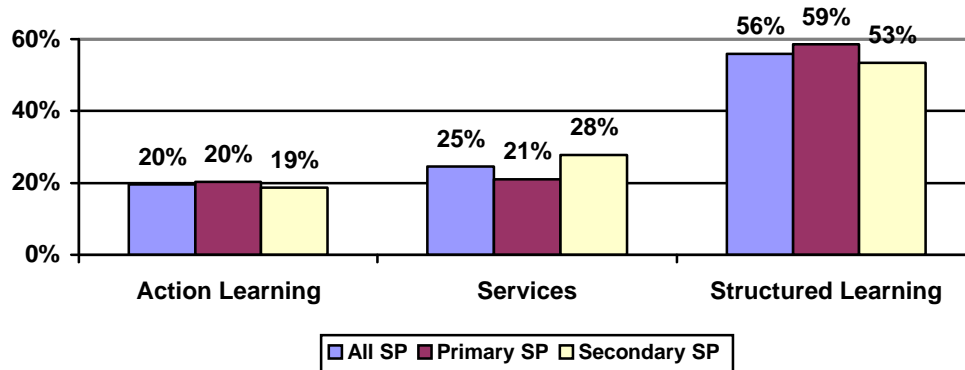
3.12 It is suspected that while information on CPD activities organized by schools, as contained in EMB training database, might have been under-reported. Findings of the questionnaire survey, on the other hand, show that in the school year 2005/06 SP on average had undertaken 64.5 hours of CPD activities organized by them or their schools. The number was higher for SP of secondary schools (at 84.4 hours), as compared with that for SP of primary schools (49.7 hours)

3.13 When analyzed by nature of CPD activities organized by schools, about 30% of CPD hours undertaken by SP were in the form of training courses and a further 17%, seminars. Workshops accounted for another 9% of CPD hours and experience sharing sessions, 6%. The patterns for SP of primary schools were quite similar to those of SP of secondary schools, except that a higher proportion of CPD hours of primary SP were undertaken by attending training courses.



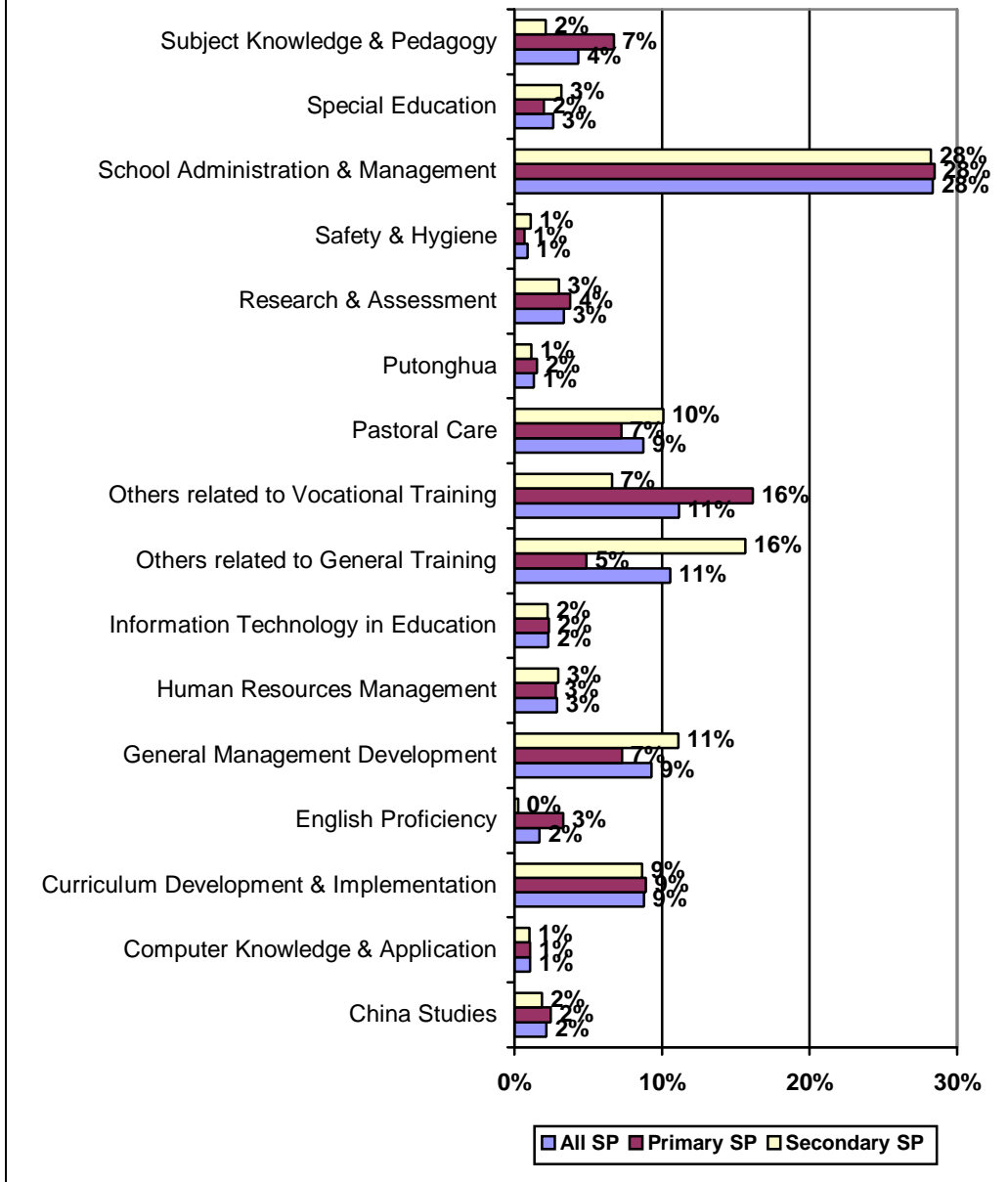
3.14 When analyzed by modes of CPD activities organized by schools, structured learning accounted for more than half (59%) of CPD hours undertaken by SP. Other modes of CPD activities were action learning (20%) and services to the education sector and the community (25%).

Chart: Percentage distribution in terms of hours of CPD activities organized by schools by mode of activities, 2002/03 to 2004/05



3.15 When analyzed by contents of CPD activities organized by schools, about 28% of CPD hours undertaken by SP were related to school administration and management, 11% related to vocational training and another 11%, general training. Curriculum development and implementation, general management development and pastoral care each accounted for 9% of CPD hours. The patterns for SP of primary schools were quite similar to those of SP of secondary schools, except that the proportion of CPD hours of primary SP devoted to vocational training and subject knowledge and pedagogy was higher as compared with that of secondary SP.

Chart: Percentage distribution in terms of hours of CPD activities organized by schools by content of activities, 2002/03 to 2004/05



Total CPD hours undertaken in 2005/06

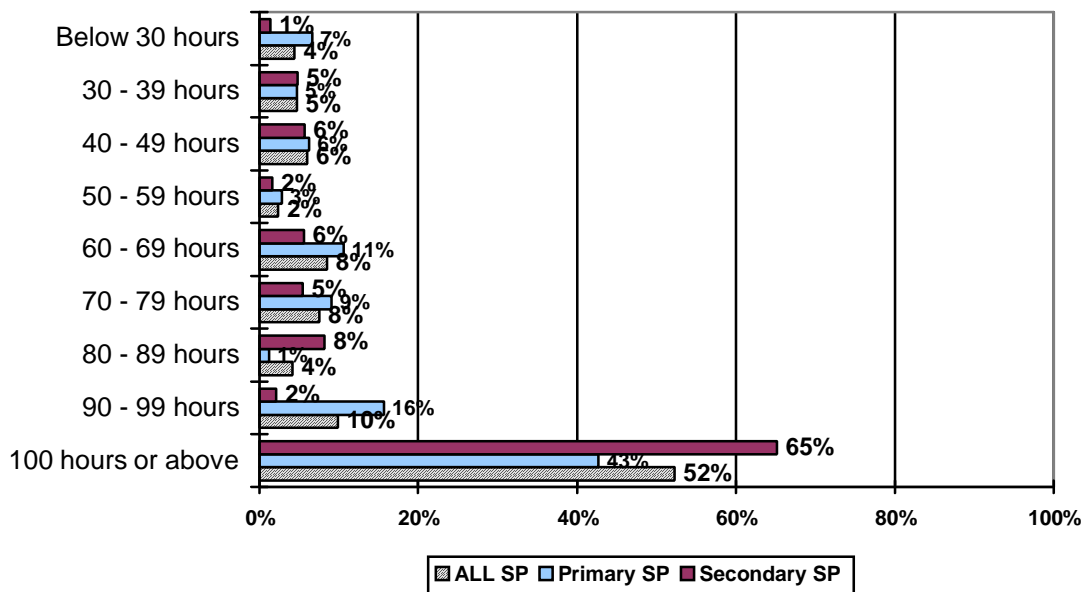
3.16 As pointed out above, based on information provided by SP in the questionnaire survey, the total number of CPD hours undertaken in 2005/06 was much higher than the average CPD hours undertaken per year in 2002/03 – 2004/05 as recorded in EMB training database. During discussions with SP, several SP pointed out that there was every likelihood that the e-service of EMB had not captured all CPD activities

undertaken by SP. In the paragraphs below, information gathered in the questionnaire survey for the 2005/06 school year is presented.

3.17 Counting all CPD activities undertaken by SP, including those commissioned or organized by EMB and those organized by schools, SP on average undertook 129.8 hours of CPD in 2005/06. The number was higher for SP of secondary schools (at 156.8 hours) and lower for SP of primary schools (109.7 hours).

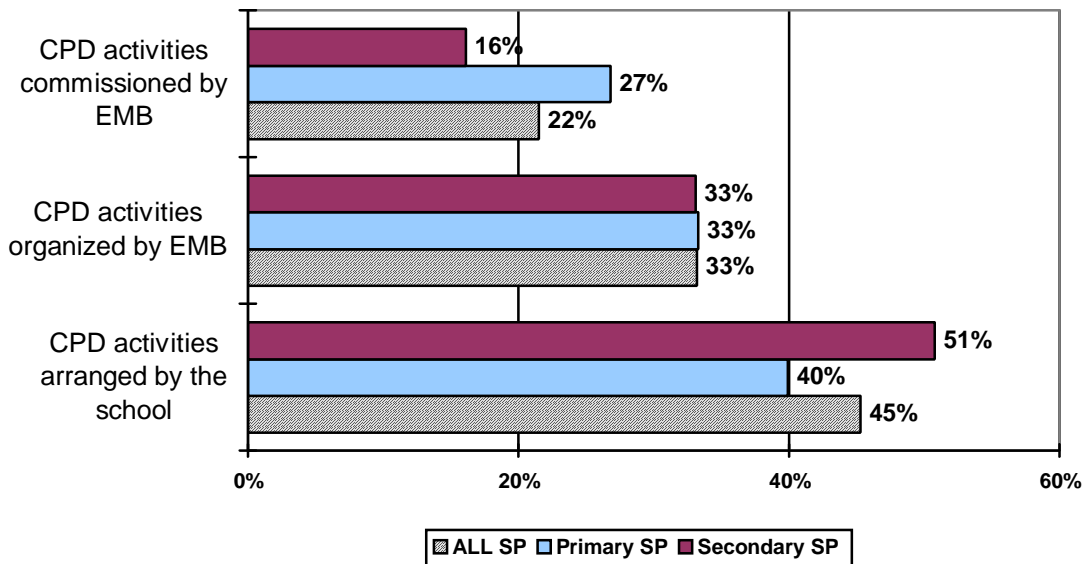
3.18 More than half of SP (52%) had undertaken 100 hours or more of CPD activities in 2005/06. The percentage was much higher for SP of secondary schools (at 65%) as compared with that for SP of primary schools (43%). Only a very small proportion of SP (4%) had undertaken less than 30 hours of CPD activities in 2005/06.

Chart: Percentage distribution of SP by total CPD hours undertaken in 2005/06



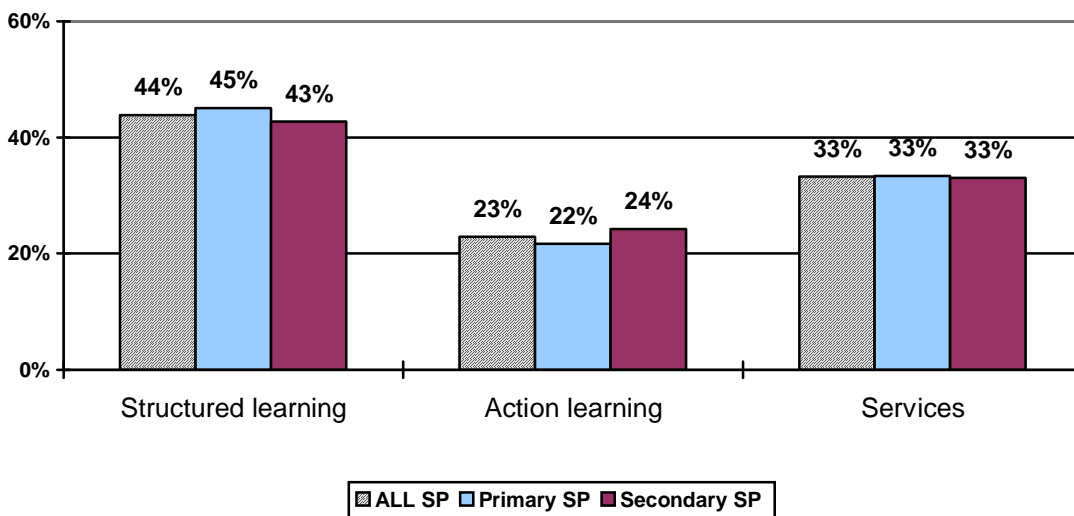
3.19 CPD activities organized by schools accounted for 45% of all CPD activities of SP, in terms of time spent. A further one third was accounted for by CPD activities organized by EMB, and the remaining 22% by CPD activities commissioned by EMB. In general, SP of secondary schools devoted more time to CPD activities organized by schools (accounting for 51% of total CPD hours), as compared to SP of primary schools (40%).

Percentage distribution in CPD hours undertaken by SP in 2005/06 by organizers



3.20 When analyzed by the modes of CPD activities undertaken by SP in 2005/06, structured learning accounted for about 44% of total CPD hours undertaken by SP. Other modes of CPD activities were action learning (23%) and services to education and the community (33%).

Percentage distribution of total CPD hours undertaken by SP in 2005/06 by mode of activities



3.21 During discussions with SP, several of them opined that there were plenty of opportunities for structured learning available to SP, including attending seminars related to education reform measures and other major education initiatives.

3.22 For action learning, however, SP might not have the time to personally involved in conducting action learning, though they might, if they wished, participate in designing or leading action learning in their schools jointly with other teachers. There were certainly many opportunities for teachers and principals to engage in action learning. For schools that were “moving” ahead, as remarked by several SP, there were bound to be many new initiatives being implemented to enhance quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning. In addition, there were new policies related to say the New Senior Secondary Academic Structure, liberal studies, External School Review, moral and civic education, integrated education, the use of TSA results, etc., not to mention those (e.g. the policy on the medium of instruction) that would affect schools in the coming few years. Schools had to take on board these new changes properly through careful planning and experimentation. SP would inevitably be involved leading a team of teachers in each and every new initiative.

3.23 It was noted nevertheless by a few SP that there was wide diversity in the standards and practices of action learning. Some principals had a habit of writing papers or research articles, whilst others preferred to spend more time “hands-on” and have less documentation. A few others might largely assume a management role in research learning projects. In general, most SP admitted that they could not afford spending too much time working “hands-on” or writing papers in any one action learning project in their schools. SP had to plan the best use of their time on research learning as well as many other school management tasks which had much higher priority over their own CPD. It was also remarked by a few SP that it was difficult to quantify the time spent by SP in these action learning projects. Besides, the amount of learning could hardly be represented by the number of hours spent on any CPD activities, rendering any attempt to quantify precisely the amount of time spent on CPD activities not so meaningful.

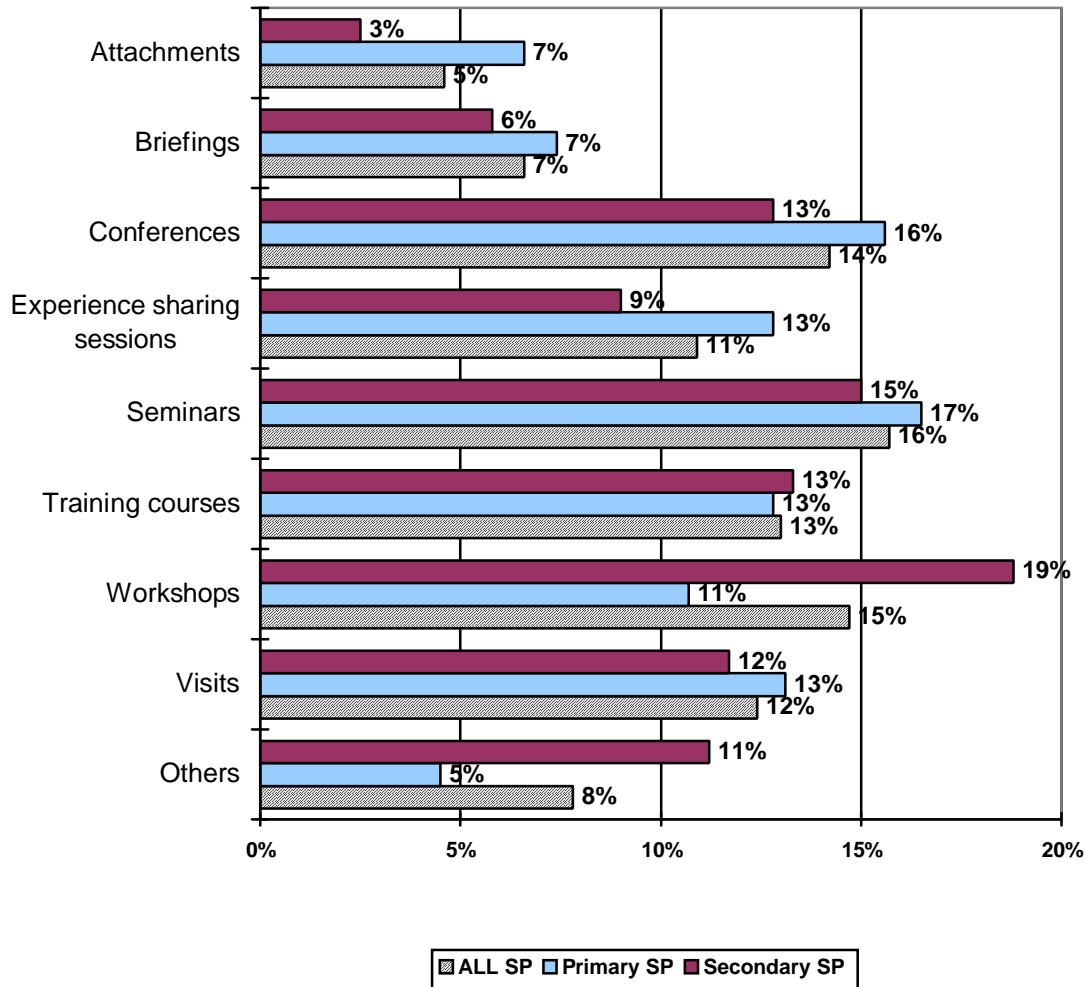
3.24 For services to the education sector and the community, while opportunities were plentiful, much depended on priorities and needs of individual schools and individual preferences of SP. Some SP might prefer, for example, devoting more time to teaching and learning in their schools or in building up an effective team of teaching staff, than participating in activities of educational bodies or community organizations.

3.25 A number of SP pointed out that there were grey areas in classification of CPD. For instance, attending seminars or briefing sessions on education reform or major initiatives could be regarded as part of SP’s work, even though it might be considered as CPD. As regards services to the education sector and the community, some activities might not have any professional contents.

3.26 When analyzed by the nature of CPD activities organized by schools, it may be seen from the chart below that SP pursued a diverse range of CPD activities. A higher proportion of CPD hours undertaken by SP was in the form of attending seminars (accounting for 16% of total CPD hours), workshops (15%), conferences (14%) and training courses (13%). Visits accounted for another 12% of CPD hours and for

experience sharing sessions, 11%. The patterns for SP of primary schools were quite similar to those of SP of secondary schools.

Percentage distribution of total CPD hours undertaken by SP in 2005/06 by nature of activities

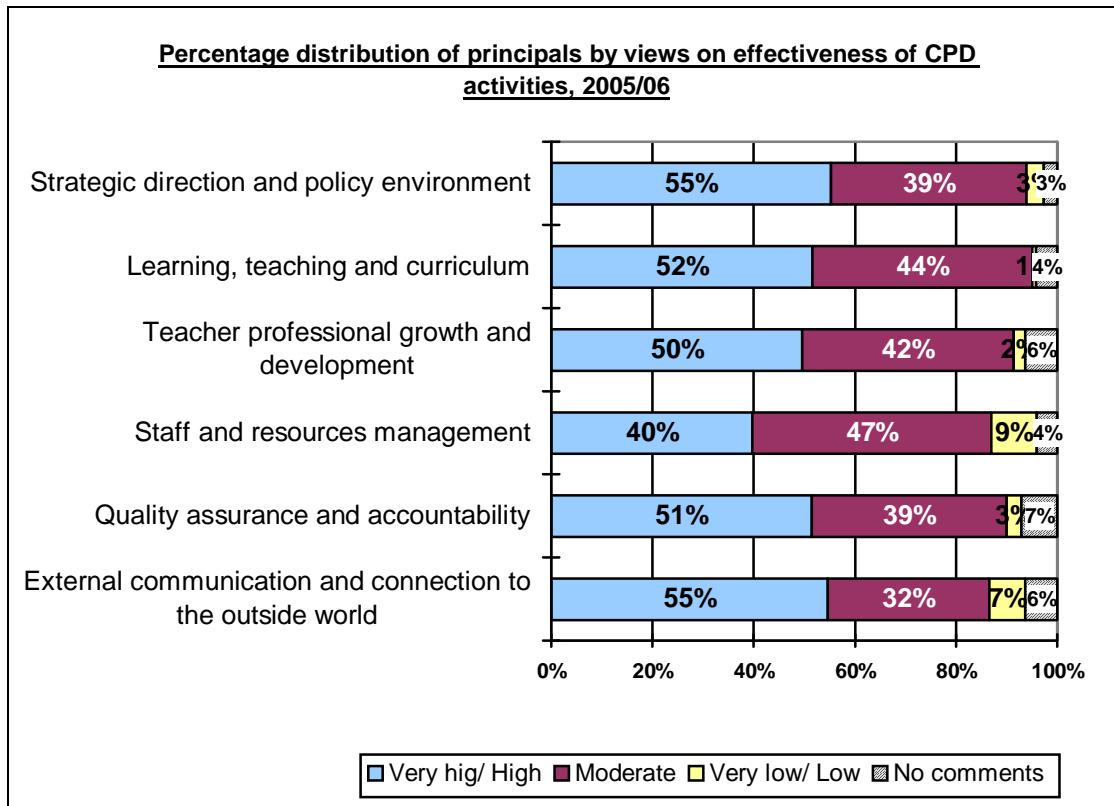


3.27 Needless to say, as remarked by all SP interviewed, SP had to adjust their CPD activities periodically, taking into account the priorities of their schools and their own professional training requirements. Setting too rigid a requirement applicable to all SP is clearly not in the best interests of SP and schools, as CPD is a means rather than an ends.

Quality of CPD activities

3.28 The great majority of SP considered the CPD activities undertaken by them were highly effective or moderately effective. More than half of them considered that CPD activities were highly effective in the core leadership areas of strategic directions and

policy environment (55%), external communication and connection to the outside world (55%), learning, teaching and curriculum (52%) and quality assurance and accountability (51%). The percentage was lower for staff and resources management (40%), indicating that there was scope for further enhancement in the quality, including relevance, of training in this area. In general, only a small proportion of SP considered that the effectiveness of their CPD activities was low or very low, indicating that on the whole SP were satisfied with the quality of CPD.



3.29 During discussion with SP, it was pointed out by the quality of CPD activities organized for SP varied considerably. Some were quite “superficial” without much in-depth treatment of the subject matters, especially in view of the fact that many SP were very experienced and had post-graduate qualifications. A number of seminars or briefings, which counted towards CPD hours, were merely opinion gathering sessions, whilst others were mainly for the purposes of explaining new education policies, offer nothing new compared to what had already been explained in circulars issued by EMB. It was suggested that considerations could be given to inviting more experts from outside Hong Kong and possibly outside the education sector to give talks that were more stimulating, including those on new ideas that challenges commonly accepted thinking within the school sector.

3.30 For action learning, a few SP opined that there was little monitoring or control by EMB on the quality of action learning conducted by SP. Quite a number of SP did not know anything about action learning, and there was little guidance or assistance from

EMB on how to conduct proper action learning. In their opinion, the term “action learning” was too high sounding, and it was doubtful if it had any practical use for SP.

Role of SMC/IMC

3.31 During discussions with SP, all of them indicated that their CPD plans and reports were submitted to SMC/IMC. Almost without exception, SP’s plans and reports were supported and endorsed by SMC/IMC. As remarked by most SP, there were regular communications between SMC/IMC and SP, on all matters related to running of the school including CPD of SP. In most cases, SMC/IMC had trust on the professionalism of SP and hence seldom raised any queries on SP’s CPD plans, though a few SMC/IMC members who were more active had from time to time provided advice to SP related to SP’s CPD. Most SP reckoned that SMC/IMC played an important monitoring role in ensuring that SP would pursue CPD to the benefits of schools.

3.32 Several SP pointed out that their actual CPD activities would inevitably deviate from plans drawn up several months or a year ago. Sometimes, SP were so busy to attend seminars of their choice. Sometimes, it was difficult to find suitable courses or seminars to attend. Besides, there were new courses or areas of training needs unforeseen of when the plans were drafted. Most SP said that their SMC/IMC expected that SP should accord first priority to school matters and had to postpone or even give up planned training activities, if required, in order to devote more time to dealing with school affairs. Thus, their CPD plans were at best an indication of intention. Thus, it was desirable to avoid devoting too much time to the preparation of CPD plans.

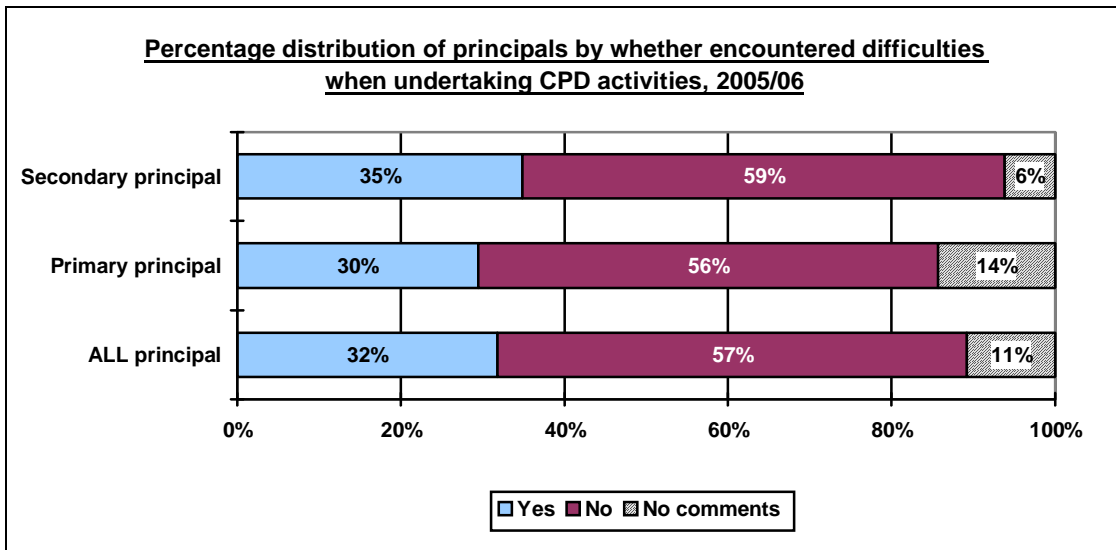
Impact of CPD of SP

3.33 During discussions with SP, most of them were of the view that CPD of SP had a positive impact of SP as well as their schools. CPD helps SP update their professional knowledge, widen their outlook, learn about good practices in other schools and other countries, and most important of all, offered a chance to stimulate their thinking and reflect on what they had been doing for many years. Their CPD also had a positive impact on teachers, by fostering the spirit of a learning community and serving as an example for teachers to follow.

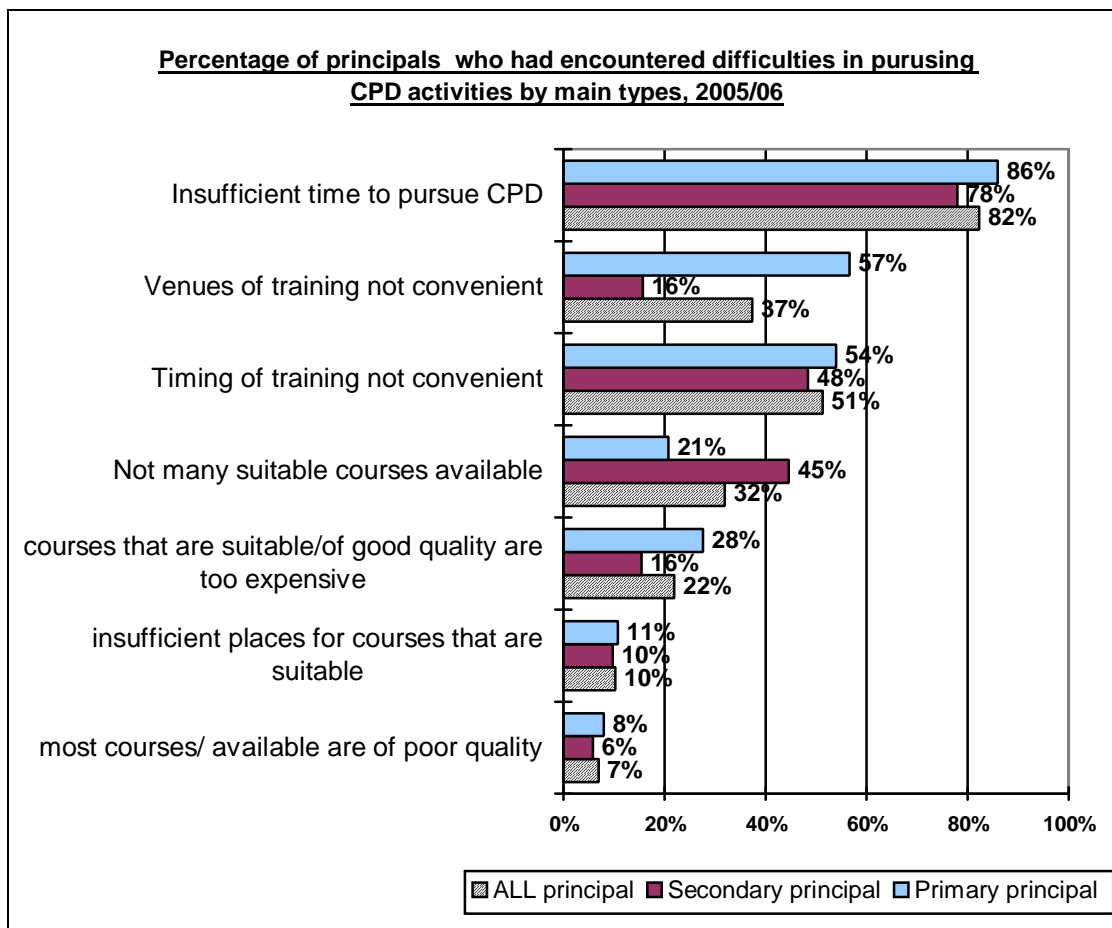
3.34 Nevertheless, a few SP opined that it was difficult to quantify the impact of CPD. They also cautioned that what mattered was not pursuing CPD (say attending a seminar) per se, but rather how SP could, through exposure to new ideas and knowledge, reflect on their work and applied what they had learnt to practice. Learning and continued professional development indeed took place inside and outside classrooms or lecture rooms, with or without CPD.

Difficulties in encountered in pursuing CPD

3.35 Slightly less than one third of principals indicated that they had encountered problems in pursuing CPD. The percentage was higher for principals of secondary schools (35%) as compared with that for principals of primary schools (30%). On the other hand, more than half of principals did not have any problems pursuing CPD.



3.36 Problems encountered by principals in pursuing CPD were mainly that they did not have sufficient time to pursue CPD (accounting for 82% of principals who had encountered problems), the timing of training not convenient (51%), the venues of training were not convenient (37%), not many suitable courses were available (32%) and courses that were suitable and of good quality were too expensive (22%).



Training needs and gaps

3.37 It was pointed out by a few SP that the training needs, and gaps if any, varied considerably among different SP. Some SP devoted more attention to being the leader of curriculum of the school would undoubtedly like to pursue more CPD related to say the curriculum reform. For those SP who considered that they could contribute to their school more as an agent of change (e.g. changing the school culture and teachers' attitude), they might like to spend more time pursuing CPD related to management.

3.38 As discussed above, the topics of CPD varied considerably among SP, depending on SP's individual training needs and needs of schools. For instance, a number of SP devoted more time to pursue CPD related to quality assurance and data collection methods or conduct action learning on small class teaching, if ESR, self-evaluation or small class teaching were the areas of concerns for their schools. A few SP placed more emphasis on curriculum development if the development of school-based curriculum was one of their schools' priority areas.

3.39 Several SP suggested that more CPD activities should be organized in the following areas:

- a) Marketing and branding of schools;
- b) Interactions with different stakeholders such as parents, including ways and means of building up good relationship with, and mobilizing resources and rallying support from parents and the community;
- c) School leadership, especially with regards to management of a multi-disciplinary team comprising teachers, social workers and other professionals (notably in special schools) and support staff, and the tackling of issues like stress management by and mental health of teaching staff, dealing with diversity of ability among teachers and other motivational issues;
- d) Financial management;
- e) Legal matters, especially those related to school operations following the establishment of IMC, personal data protection and professional indemnity;
- f) Use of IT in teaching and learning, designed for school principals given that most training programmes in this area catered mainly for teachers rather than school principals;
- g) School-based management. A few SP opined that there were not many seminars or training courses on this topic and they were not sure if SBM was implemented properly by schools and had achieved the desired benefits;
- h) Integrated education. It was reckoned that many schools did not know how to deal with students with special educational needs well;
- i) Topics other than education (e.g. hot issues facing the world), the purpose of which was to simulate thinking;

Suggestions for changes to CPD Policy

3.40 Most SP interviewed considered that the CPD policy for SP was a good one. It allowed sufficient flexibility for SP to tailor their CPD according to their training needs and needs of schools. Given that the great majority of, if not all, SP realized the importance of CPD and were taking the initiatives of pursuing CPD activities, which in turn were having an impact on schools, the objectives of this policy were considered to have been achieved. Unless there were very good and compelling reasons, there should not be any significant changes to the policy, especially if such changes would result in additional workload and work stress on SP. In the final analysis, the focus should be placed on having an impact on quality of education, not CPD per se.

3.41 It was reckoned by a number of SP that there were many training courses and many training providers from which SP could choose from, based on their individual training needs and the needs of schools. There were also communication channels through which SP could make suggestions and comments to EMB. As long as EMB was willing to listen, most SP should be happy with the present arrangement.

3.42 All SP interviewed were of the opinion that SP should have little difficulties meeting the hour requirement for CPD, especially in view of the fact that many training

activities, including participation in seminars and briefing sessions, could count towards CPD. A number of them suggested that there should be stricter control over the quality and standards of CPD. In addition, it would be advisable to require, on a compulsory basis, SP to attend CPD activities in specific topics (e.g. the New Senior Secondary Academic Structure for secondary SP), which could be updated from time to time.

3.43 The majority of SP interviewed, on the other hand, was of the view that nowadays SP could not afford not to pursue CPD. While there was still a need for the current CPD policy to remain in force, EMB should refrain from interfering too much with CPD activities of SP. There should be more support and assistance, rather than interference and control from EMB. If SP chose CPD activities that could best help them meet the quantitative targets, it would be counter-productive. The policy should best be implemented in the spirit of mutual trust, and not on the presumption that a few, if any, SP might cheat and did not follow the guidelines. Besides, there were other control and quality assurance mechanisms in place such oversight by SMC/IMC, regular visits by REO and ESR, ensuring that SP would undertake CPD based on their individual training needs and the needs of schools.

3.44 A few SP suggested that if EMB wanted to devote more resources to CPD of SP, they could consider various support measures for SP rather than additional means of policing the implementation of the policy by SP. For instance, EMB could help organize action learning on different issues of interest to different groups of SP, with assistance if required from tertiary institutions. By doing so, experience of different schools could be shared. For SP who were not familiar with action learning, such arrangement could help them develop proper framework and research methodology. The additional burden could also be shared among a number of SP. It might also be useful if a databank on cases of action learning could be developed by EMB for shared references by all schools. Nevertheless, several SP remarked that CPD of SP should not be a priority area for increased attention or resources on the part of EMB.

3.45 During the course of the study, it transpired that not many SP published their CPD plans and reports in their school sites, even though they all kept proper records of their CPD plans and activities. For those SP who published their CPD plans in the schools' Internet websites, the usual practice was to prepare a highly abridged version of their plans. Most SP interviewed did not see the need for publication of their CPD plans, as parents and other external stakeholders would not be interested. Indeed, a few SP remarked that if they were to publish their CPD plans, they would most likely under-report the amount of CPD activities, to avoid giving external stakeholders an impression that SP were spending too much time pursuing CPD. Besides, EMB apparently did little in enforcing this requirement. In the circumstances, many SP interviews expressed doubt on the rationale of and the need for such a requirement.

3.46 A few SP added that documentation of CPD activities took up their time, which could be more productively spent on other more important tasks. They questioned the need to have detailed classification of different CPD activities, according to their nature, modes and contents. Very often, a course or seminar belonged to more than one category

in terms of contents or nature. A few SP said that the e-service of EMB was not quite user-friendly. The response time was sometimes quite slow. Besides, the computer system did not cater for school staff working in both primary and secondary sections of a school.

3.47 Most SP did not enter their CPD records through the e-service of EMB by themselves. Some delegated this to their school staff whilst others simply did not regularly do so. As all SP had their own school-based, computerized or manual system for recording and reporting CPD activities of SP and teachers, they considered inputting their CPD records again into the e-service a duplication of efforts.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

CPD policy of SP

4.1 Most SP are supportive of the CPD policy for SP, as revealed from in-depth interviews with SP. They consider it is a good policy, with sufficient flexibility given to SP in tailoring their CPD to meet their training needs and needs of their schools. The questionnaire survey also indicates that the great majority of SP have exceeded the target number of CPD hours. Only about 4% of SP have undertaken less than 30 hours of CPD activities in 2005/06. From views expressed by SP, their CPD has a positive impact on them and their schools.

4.2 Apparently, the objectives of CPD of SP should be regarded as having been accomplished. Thus, unless there are very good and compelling reasons, which are not apparent from the study findings, there should not be any significant changes to the policy, especially if such changes would result in additional workload and work stress on SP. In the final analysis, the focus should be placed on having an impact on quality of education, not CPD per se. Besides, what matters is not pursuing CPD (say attending a seminar) per se, but rather how SP could, through exposure to new ideas and knowledge, reflect on their work and apply what they have learnt to practice. Learning and continued professional development indeed takes place inside and outside classrooms or lecture rooms, with or without CPD.

Policy implementation

4.3 While there is little justification for changing substantively the policy on CPD of SP, there are a number of enhancements that could be considered in policy implementation, based on the study findings. These are summarized below:

- a) The study shows that the bulk of CPD activities organized by EMB are structured learning. While opportunities for services to education and the community are quite readily available to SP, there is a need to explore the desirability and feasibility of arranging more action learning for different groups of SP, on issues of particular interest and importance to groups of SP concerned. By doing so, experience of different schools could be shared. For SP who are not familiar with action learning, such arrangement could help them develop proper framework and research methodology;
- b) Furthermore, consideration could be given to developing a databank on cases of action learning for shared references by all schools;
- c) While the great majority of SP considered the CPD activities in such areas as strategic direction and policy environment, external communication and connection to the outside world, and learning, teaching and curriculum were effective, only 40% considered that CPD activities on staff and resources

management were effective. This is scope for further enhancement in the quality, including relevance, of training in this area;

- d) In addition, more CPD activities are suggested to be organized in the following areas:
 - 1) Marketing and branding of schools;
 - 2) Interactions with different stakeholders such as parents, including ways and means of building up good relationship with, and mobilizing resources and rallying support from parents and the community;
 - 3) School leadership, especially with regards to management of a multi-disciplinary team comprising teachers, social workers and other professionals (notably in special schools) and support staff, and the tackling of issues like stress management by and mental health of teaching staff, dealing with diversity of ability among teachers and other motivational issues;
 - 4) Financial management;
 - 5) Legal matters, especially those related to school operations following the establishment of IMC, personal data protection and professional indemnity;
 - 6) Use of IT in teaching and learning, designed for school principals given that most training programmes in this area catered mainly for teachers rather than school principals;
 - 7) School-based management. A few SP opined that there were not many seminars or training courses on this topic and they were not sure if SBM was implemented properly by schools and had achieved the desired benefits;
 - 8) Integrated education. It was reckoned that many schools did not know how to deal with students with special educational needs well;
 - 9) Topics other than education (e.g. hot issues facing the world), the purpose of which was to simulate thinking;
- e) In order to reduce burden on SP in recording their CPD activities, including entering information into the e-service of EMB, consideration could be given to simplifying the categorization of CPD into different nature, modes and content types.