



On 24 January 2008, the seminar “Our Ten Years under the DDO – Moving Forward, Changing Culture” was organized by the Equal Opportunities Commission to review the impact of the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO) since its implementation and to explore the way forward. Participants had raised a number of questions in different sessions of the Seminar. Due to time constraint, many questions were not able to be answered by individual speakers in the Seminar. Questions relating to education are now recorded verbatim (with some translation) and replied as follows:

**We would like to thank the Education Bureau (EDB) for addressing the following education issues. (Note: In the following answers, the term “we” refers to “the EDB”.)**

1. Please clarify whether the funding (\$10,000 or \$20,000) under the New Funding Mode is for the students to apply, or as resources for the schools to help the students. (English Translation)

Details of the New Funding Mode:

Under the present New Funding Mode, primary schools may apply for the Learning Support Grant (LSG) according to the number of academically low achievers or students with special educational needs (SEN). The grant is provided at the rate of \$10,000 per student per annum and \$20,000 per student per annum for those requiring intensive individualized support.



Schools need to apply for the LSG from the Education Bureau (EDB). After vetting the students' information submitted by respective schools, the EDB will allocate the LSG to schools directly. Schools can flexibly use the grant together with other resources to employ additional manpower, purchase teaching materials and educational software, purchase services and organize related learning/teaching activities to support the students with SEN.

2. Please clarify whether parents would be invited to schools to discuss with the Student Support Team about the education needs and support services after the assessments for individual students were done by educational psychologists. (English Translation)

Communication between educational psychologists of the EDB and parents:

Educational psychologists are committed to maintaining good communication with parents in order to facilitate assessment of the students' difficulties and needs and discussing with parents about parental support. The educational psychologists also explain to parents about the assessment findings and invite them to schools for discussion with the school personnel about possible support services.

3. Slow learners (because of academic aptitude issues) are required to leave school after Form 3 and further their studies at other service institutions. Would the EDB provide any counseling service for these students and their parents? (English Translation)

Careers guidance for S.3 students with SEN:

There are careers guidance teachers in all secondary schools. They provide information and advice on further education and employment to school leavers (including students with SEN) and their parents. If necessary, schools may also refer the students to school social workers or educational psychologists for counseling.



4. After the general direction of "inclusive education" having been set, is there any change in government policy and commitment to the "special schools"? (English Translation)

Government policy and responsibility to special schools under Integrated Education (IE):

The current government policy is that children with SEN should, as far as possible, be placed in ordinary schools unless the severity of their difficulties/disabilities merits special school placement for more intensive support. Therefore, under the policy of IE, special schools in Hong Kong still play an important role.

Besides, special schools have expertise and rich experience in special education. With additional resources given by the EDB, special schools serve as resource centres and collaborate with mainstream schools in the support network. At present, there are 18 special schools cum resource centres providing support services to mainstream schools through holding seminars and workshops, providing school-based support, participating in case conferences, providing web-based consultation and sharing of resource materials, etc.

5. Would the EDB commission any independent agency to conduct an in-depth study to understand the difficulties faced by schools, students, and parents under the policy of inclusive education? (English Translation)

In-depth reviews on IE commissioned to independent agencies:

The EDB had commissioned the Hong Kong Institute of Education to review the Pilot Project on IE. It recommended that the whole-school approach to IE should be extended to all schools in Hong Kong. Since 2003, the EDB has also commissioned an independent agency to conduct a longitudinal study on the measures of the education reform (including the “Whole-School Approach to IE”) and collect views from the stakeholders.

Staff of related sections of the EDB (including student guidance officers, educational psychologists, school development officers, special education support officers, and inspectors, etc.) visit schools periodically to collect views from various parties, to understand the needs and difficulties of the teachers, parents and students, and provide them with appropriate professional support.

6. What will the government do to assist the tertiary institutions to improve their facilities (e.g., tactile paths, Braille system, etc.) in order to facilitate the admission of students with disabilities? In addition to the hard



ware support, is there any other support (e.g., training the serving teachers and administration staff) provided? (Note: I am an administration staff in a non-profit-making tertiary institute. The resources of the institute are limited.) (English Translation)

Support to tertiary institutions on access facilities for students with disabilities and staff training:

According to the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO) and Code of Practice on Education, educational establishments (including non-profit-making tertiary institutions) have the obligation to provide an accessible environment to persons with disabilities. Educational establishments are advised to take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure that their employees, contract staff and agents do not commit any of the unlawful acts of discrimination. We believe that these educational establishments will arrange appropriate training to their staff in order to accommodate these students.

The eight institutions funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC) are established under their respective ordinances and have autonomy in management. We understand that the UGC-funded institutions have already formulated their own policies and support measures for the disabled, including support for daily activities within the campus.

In addition, institutions will provide access facilities for the disabled in new premises according to the relevant ordinances. The UGC also provides financial support to the institutions to carry out work projects through two non-recurrent grant schemes, i.e. the Capital Works Programme and the Alterations, Additions, Repairs and Improvements Programme. The work projects under these two schemes include improvement works to the existing facilities or installation of new facilities for the disabled.



7. The crucial issue of inclusive education is not teachers' teaching pedagogies but rather an inclusive, non-discriminatory school ethos. The building of school ethos is built up by all parties involved, including teachers, students, parents, etc. please comment how inclusive school ethos in general are.
8. The Whole-School Approach to inclusive education is in fact a "divided approach". It only provides limited training to teachers and then requires the teachers to provide seminars for students to understand of peers with different abilities. Classes belong to teachers

and students. What is the efficacy of such a divided Whole-School Approach? (English Translation)

In response to question 7 and 8:

The implementation of Whole-School Approach to IE and cultivation of Inclusive School Ethos in schools:

Since the implementation of the Pilot Project on IE in 1997, we have observed that most of the primary schools and some secondary schools have adopted the Whole-School Approach to IE. Many examples of success/good practices have emerged. Some of which include the following



- School staff, members of School Management Committee, students and parents share a common belief of inclusion;
- Cultivating a caring school culture, and strengthening the team spirit of teachers;
- Setting up a Student Support Team to co-ordinate the manpower and resources, formulate goals and develop support strategies, implement the support measures and review their effectiveness;
- Enhancing teachers' capacity in supporting students through professional development activities;
- Differentiating the teaching strategies, making curriculum adaptation and assessment accommodation, using assistive technology, conducting co-teaching and organizing peer support programmes etc.;
- All students, including those with SEN, are equally valued;
- Enhancing the self-esteem of students;
- Encouraging students with diverse abilities to participate in extra-curricular activities, in order to enhance mutual understanding and respect of individual differences; and
- Fully utilizing the support provided by the school management committee, parents and other community agencies, etc.

We will continue to promote these good practices and support schools in implementing

the Whole-School Approach to catering for students with SEN.

9. What kind of services are provided in the special education resource rooms in an ordinary school in Hong Kong? (English Translation)



Resource rooms in mainstream schools:

Schools can use their available resources to procure teaching materials, reference books, equipment and IT facilities, etc. related to SEN. Some schools also set up special education resource rooms for storage of resources and for teachers to conduct individual/group remedial teaching for students with SEN and counselling of parents.

In addition, the EDB operates a special education resource center. It provides a platform for sharing of information and teaching resources on SEN. It also provides the use of computers, multi-media equipments and library service for teachers to access relevant references and produce teaching materials.

10. Should the teachers in special education schools renew their teaching methods, rather than using the same curriculum for ages? Has there any new curriculum that could reflect the societal change being developed? Have the curriculum been assessed every year, in particular, the curriculum used by senior teachers? (English Translation)

Renewal of the curriculum of special schools:

Special schools design their school-based curriculum with reference to the curriculum development in mainstream schools and design Individualized Education Plans to cater for individual needs. Through continuous monitoring of the students' progress, teachers make adaptations in their teaching contents and methods. The teachers also attend training relevant courses on curriculum development, teaching strategies and performance assessment, in order to update the learning and teaching in special schools.

With effect from the 2009/10 school year, the EDB will introduce a new curriculum under the New Senior Secondary (NSS) academic structure in all mainstream



schools. Most of the special schools, which are currently providing an ordinary curriculum, will also provide the NSS curriculum. For the special schools for children with intellectual disability, the EDB has commissioned a consultancy to collaborate with the Hong Kong Examination & Assessment Authority and these special schools in developing a curriculum and assessment guide for the NSS.

11. How do we deal with the negative sentiment of students and parents (e.g., the feeling of unfairness) towards the provision of special accommodations or accommodations made in the assessment to students with SEN (Special Education Needs)? How do we justify the provision of “reasonable accommodations”? How do we explain to parents in general? (English Translation)

Some parents may consider it unfair to the ordinary students if assessment accommodation is provided to students with SEN:

Schools should explain to parents and students that the principles of “impartiality” and “fairness” govern the implementation of assessment accommodation. All accommodations made in the assessment should avoid providing additional hints to the students. For example, if the students’ disabilities affect their writing speed, the students may be provided with extra time or auxiliary equipments during the assessment, but the content of the questions should not be altered. Schools should explain to other parents and students about the above principles and illustrate with examples of assessment accommodation. The EDB has issued ‘Guidelines on Internal Assessment’ and ‘Principles and Strategies for Assessment for Students with Special Educational Needs in Ordinary Schools’ to remind schools of the principles and strategies of assessment accommodation.



12. There are so many different types of disability. How can a school / teacher balance the conflicts between different types of disability who had different special needs that require different expertise vs resources vs specialty so to achieve integrated education?

How to support students with different types of SEN:

Although there are many types of SEN, it is most important for teacher to understand

the students' strengths, weaknesses and learning needs before making accommodation in the curriculum and teaching strategies. In order to enhance the capability of teachers, the EDB has established a teacher professional development framework with training targets for implementing IE. We hope that within the five years from the 2007/08 school year, at least 10% of teachers in each ordinary school will complete the 30-hour basic course; at least three teachers will complete the 90-hour advanced course; at least one Chinese Language teacher and one English Language teacher will complete the Thematic Course on Specific Learning Difficulties; and for other types of SEN which individual schools have to cater for, at least one teacher should have completed the relevant Thematic Course.



According to the number of students with SEN and their needs, the EDB provides schools with additional resources and support through various subvention modes, including the Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme in Primary Schools, the New Funding Mode, and the IE Programme, etc.

The EDB also provides schools with professional/specialist support, including services of educational psychologist, speech therapy, student guidance personnel/school worker etc. Since the 2006/07 school year, a Special Education Support Officer of the EDB has been arranged for each primary school. They visit schools periodically and assist schools to develop an inclusive school culture and an inclusion policy. The EDB also provides additional resources to some mainstream schools and special schools which have success experience in IE to serve as resource centres. They establish support networks, and provide other ordinary schools with professional support on SEN matters.

13. How about extra curriculum activities? When school / universities organize such activities, have they taken into considerations of the disabled students so that they are not excluded?

Opportunities for students with SEN to participate in extra-curricular activities :

Schools should refer to the “Catering for Students Difference ~ Indicators for Inclusion” and consider the following points with regard to extra-curricular activities





for students, e.g.

- organizing a variety of interest clubs and extra-curricular activities to attract all students with different abilities and interests; and
- providing transport arrangements to enable students who have to travel far or have restricted mobility to take part in extra-curricular activities, etc.

Overall speaking, schools should consider the diverse needs of students and make appropriate arrangements when planning and conducting extra-curricular activities.



14. In overseas countries, people with learning disabilities are able to learn with English graded “Readers”. Why do we not develop similar Chinese readers to facilitate the students in Hong Kong?

Development of teaching resources for students with SEN such as Readers:

Recently, some Chinese graded readers similar to the English graded readers have been developed in Hong Kong. They aim at improving students’ reading abilities, e.g. the 《彩虹系列》; 《每日一篇》 of a web-based reading scheme of the Chinese University of Hong Kong; 《愉快閱讀系列》 of the University of Hong Kong, etc. We encourage schools to make good use of these series of readers to support students with dyslexia.

- \*\* In addition to the above, the EDB also has the following response in connection to the confidence of students with SEN :

Confidence of students with SEN:

Enhancing the confidence and self-esteem of students with SEN in school is a major concern of IE. Teachers can help students to gain success experience in learning through differentiated instruction, curriculum adaptation and assessment accommodation. At the same time, schools can also organize circles of friends and extra-curricular activities to nurture students’ self-confidence.

