Chapter 6  Education

Policy Objective

6.1 The policy objective of special education is to provide a conducive learning environment for students with special educational needs (SEN) so as to facilitate their education, help them develop their potential to the full, enhance their independence and enable them to become well-adjusted individuals in the community.

Background and Existing Services

6.2 Under the existing special education policy, students with SEN are encouraged to study in ordinary schools if they can benefit from the ordinary school setting. For those students with severe SEN or multiple disabilities, they are placed in special schools for intensive support services.

6.3 According to statistics, there are about 10 000 students with SEN(1) receiving education in ordinary schools in the 2005/06 school year. Besides, there are about 6 500 students enrolled in the 55 special schools. Of these schools, two are for children with visual impairment, four for children with hearing impairment, seven for children with physical disabilities, 41 for children with intellectual disabilities and one hospital school.

6.4 To achieve the above policy objective, a series of support services are provided for students with SEN based on five guiding principles, namely early identification, early intervention, whole-school approach, home-school cooperation and cross-sector collaboration. The support services include the followings:

(1) These students refer to those with intellectual disabilities, hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorders, specific learning difficulties and/or speech and language impairment, who require special education support.
Identification, Assessment and Placement Services

- Based on the results of the assessment conducted by the Child Assessment Centres of the Department of Health and Hospital Authority as well as other professionals, students with SEN are placed in the appropriate types of schools for education;

- Ordinary schools are requested to make use of the Observation Checklists for Teachers developed by the Education Bureau (EDB) to identify students’ SEN as early as when they are in Primary One; and

- To ensure that appropriate remedial services are provided for students in need, the EDB provides audiological, speech/language and psycho-educational assessment services as well as educational support and placement services;

Support Services and Additional Resources

- The EDB provides special schools with adequately trained teachers and allied health personnel so that they may develop appropriate curricula, rehabilitation services and individualised education programmes for their students;

- To support ordinary schools to implement integrated education, the EDB has put in place various support programmes, such as the New Funding Mode and Educational Psychology Services, etc. Through these programmes, ordinary schools would receive additional manpower and resources as well as professional support on curriculum adaptation, assessment accommodation and teaching strategies; and

- Ordinary schools are encouraged to adopt a whole-school approach (WSA) in implementing integrated education. Schools should set up a Student Support Team to help formulate school-based support strategies, coordinate support measures, effectively deploy school resources, collaborate
with parents and arrange systematic school-based support for
students with SEN;

Teacher Training

- The EDB provides special education training and organizes
  workshops, seminars and sharing sessions, etc. for teachers so
  as to enhance their professional capacity and equip them with
  more effective learning support strategies. Moreover, the
  EDB develops teaching resources for use by teachers and sets
  up special schools cum resource centres, resource schools and
  professional development schools, which would share
  professional knowledge and skills with other schools;

Quality Assurance

- The EDB encourages schools to formulate a school-based
  policy in supporting students with SEN, conduct year-end
  evaluation and report results in the annual school report. EB
  officers also conduct school visits to advise on the support
  measures, deployment of resources and school self-evaluation,
  etc.;

Public/Parent Education

- The EDB organizes seminars, workshops, briefing sessions
  and talks from time to time for parents of students with SEN to
  help them better understand their children’s learning
difficulties and the ways to provide remedial support. The
  rationale of integrated education and the importance of
  home-school cooperation are promoted to parents through
  various publicity means and the EDB homepage;

Cross-sector Collaboration

- The EDB will continue to collaborate with relevant
  Government departments/bureaux, NGOs, the business sectors,
  field professionals, schools and parents on matters relating to
assessment, educational support, post-school placement opportunities and continuing learning, etc. for students with SEN;

School Facilities

- To eliminate the physical barriers to integration of students with SEN in ordinary schools, the EDB provides schools with resources to improve the access facilities, including the installation of lifts, ramps, accessible toilets, handrails and signages, etc. These access facilities have also been included in the design of a standard school;

Post-school Placement

- To facilitate students’ smooth transition from school to training, working and adult life, special schools usually refer prospective school leavers to the Vocational Training Council (VTC) for assessment to determine which types of post-school institutions are more suitable for them; and

- Exit pathways available to special school leavers include further studies or training in the skills centres under the VTC, the integrated vocational training centres, integrated vocational rehabilitation services centres, sheltered workshops, supported employment service and On-the-Job Training Programme for People with Disabilities provided by the Social Welfare Department. Moreover, the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education, the VTC School of Business and Information Systems, and the training and development centres of the VTC welcome applications from persons with disabilities. The Continuing Education Fund also provides subvention for adults who have the incentive and capability for further studies.
Directions for Sustainable Development

6.5 In line with the latest developments in education, the Administration will continue to provide appropriate support for students with SEN. Further efforts will be made in the following directions:

- empowering teachers;
- establishing school networks to promote professional sharing;
- enhancing professional support;
- helping schools inculcate an inclusive culture;
- promoting parent education and involvement; and
- promoting cross-sector collaboration.

Specific Measures Proposed

6.6 Specific measures proposed for enhancing the education services for students with SEN include:

- developing a new senior secondary (NSS) curriculum to suit the diverse ability range and needs of special school students with intellectual disability, to implement the Research and Development Project on the related curriculum, and to pilot the adapted Applied Learning (formerly named Career-oriented Studies) courses to pave way for the future implementation of NSS for students with intellectual disabilities. As for special school students pursuing the ordinary curriculum, they should aim to achieve the same learning outcomes of the NSS curriculum as their counterparts in ordinary schools;

- working closely with teacher training institutions in the implementation of the planned 5-year teacher training
framework so as to enhance teachers’ training on special education and to build up their professional capability in supporting students with SEN;

- continuing to encourage primary and secondary schools to adopt WSA in catering for students with SEN, to strengthen the support network provided by special schools cum resource centres, resource schools and professional development schools, and to promote a culture of sharing and collaboration among schools;

- continuing to develop special education teaching resources, especially those for supporting students with autism spectrum disorders and specific learning difficulties;

- better facilitating smooth interface between primary and secondary education for students with SEN and further promoting good practices among schools in nurturing an inclusive school culture;

- compiling operation guides on integrated education for schools and parents respectively. The former helps schools formulate policies on supporting students with SEN and the latter helps parents know how to take care of their children with SEN and how to make school choices;

- continuing to collaborate with the social and rehabilitation services sector as well as NGOs in enhancing the relevant support services and promoting parent education;

- collaborating with the Department of Health and the Hospital Authority in providing co-ordinated assessment services and strengthening parent education so as to encourage parents to give consent to the disclosure of their children’s SEN to schools. This would allow schools to better understand these students’ needs and provide them with the necessary support to help them adapt to the school environment;
• continuing to closely communicate with parents and schools; and

• continuing to facilitate the smooth transition of special school leavers to post-school training, working and adult life.