

Response to the Consultation Paper on Continuing Professional Development of Principals

Submitted by Executive Committee,
Hong Kong Association of Heads of
Secondary Schools (AHSS) April 2002

Since its inception in 1965, the Association of Heads of Secondary Schools (AHSS) has been promoting principals' professional development, viewing such an endeavour as one of its goals. Ever since the release of the Consultation Paper on Continuing Professional Development of Principals, the Association has held two Happy Hour Forums for our Members (serving secondary school principals) and our Associate Members (serving secondary Vice-principals) to tap comments from a wide spectrum. After much thorough discussion, we would like to put forward the following suggestions for your consideration.

1. The AHSS recognizes the need of principals for continuing professional development, and supports the proposal to set up a Principals' Institute. As early as 1996, it proposed to the then Director of Education to set up such an institute. AHSS did submit a proposal to Quality Education Fund for the setting up of a Principals' Centre. The proposal was not successful on the grounds that AHSS does not have a permanent registered address.
2. The AHSS supports the idea of setting up a Steering Committee on Principals' Professional Development (SCPPD), and is willing to take part in the work of the Committee in order to contribute to principals' professional development.
3. The proposed SCPPD should be established as soon as possible so that it may shortly make known to Sponsoring Bodies (SSBs) and School Management Committees (SMCs) the professional development courses and activities held in the three-year period prior to September 2002, including their duration, which are recognized by the Education Department. This will help eliminate any discrepancies and prevent any misunderstanding arising from differing standards adopted by various Sponsoring Bodies and School Management Committees.
4. The Consultation Paper suggests that the serving principals should have full discussion with the SSBs/SMCs to make an appropriate decision about the distribution of CPD hours and draw up their professional development plans. Some of our members have expressed worries about possible disagreements between the two parties, and the possibility of the SSBs/SMCs exerting unnecessary pressure on their principals to meet the expectations of the SSBs/SMCs, instead of allowing them to pursue CPD primarily for their own professional development to meet their personal needs as well as those of the school and society. This is against the spirit espoused in Paragraph 4.3 of the Paper.

5. While the AHSS affirms the distinct role played by the SSBs/SMCs in supporting the CPD of their principals, it urges the Education Department to strengthen the training of School Managers in order to enhance their capacity for coordination and professional judgment. This may help reduce disagreement on CPD between the SSBs/SMCs and serving principals.
6. A principal's own proposed scheme of CPD, e.g., an offshore training course, may not materialize as planned since it is dependent on various factors operating to bring it about. Therefore, the AHSS considers it more appropriate to include the principal's own CPD in the school profile instead of the annual school plan.
7. The AHSS agrees that needs analysis does help serving principals plan for their personal professional development. The ED should provide them with the needs analysis instruments as soon as possible rather than wait until September 2003. The instruments already available in the market should be provided to serving principals for reference so that they may draw up their own plans by September 2002.
8. The AHSS proposes that whenever a principal undergoes professional development continuously for three days or more, the ED should provide additional resources to enable the school to arrange for substitution.
9. Vice-principals are important partners of serving principals. To ensure the overall development of schools, the ED should also provide in-service training to vice-principals who do not intend to become principals so as to enhance their professional competence in management and in teaching.

We sincerely hope that the above points can be fully considered in your final report on implementation of the Principals' Continuing Professional Development Framework. The AHSS is always ready to rally support in whatever capacity we may deem fit.

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