



23 July 2013

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Mr. Wong Wai Yu

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Chairman

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Ms. Lee Suet Ying

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Concern for the School Value Added Information System (SVAIS)

The Hong Kong Association of Heads of Secondary Schools is an association which aims at enhancing professional development and promoting understanding of education in Hong Kong especially in secondary schools. We have particular interests in studying new ideas and development in education, promoting the exchange of views on educational theories and practices. We have been keeping very close contact with the education authorities of the government, other educational bodies and similar associations. We also organize conferences and seminars on educational matters. At present we have over 400 full and associate members who are principals, vice-principals, former and retired principals of secondary schools.

As we are aware that the Education Bureau has been reviewing and refining the SVAIS to dovetail the implementation of the New Academic System, we hope to contribute our views so that data generated from the system will really benefit schools. A Task Group has been set up to specially discuss the issue and we would like to raise the following points for the consideration of the Education Bureau.

1. We appreciate the rationale and the good will behind SVAIS to provide schools with additional information on top of public examination results. If the system works out well, schools will be provided with more data and at the same time their good efforts which cannot be fully reflected by the examination results can be recognized.



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2. However, throughout the years, there are numerous queries on the reliability and validity of the SVAIS data provided. Its zero-sum game nature and the complication of a number of factors have undermined the usefulness of the tool. Some also believe that the relative comparison of students' ranking is futile if these factors such as Socio-economic Status (SES), sex, school type are not taken into consideration.
3. Many schools are puzzled by the intrigue relationship or lack of correlation between actual examination results and the SVAIS data in most of the cases (e.g. good examination results with low stanine and vice versa). As such, teachers do not find the data user-friendly or useful to provide systematic feedback to teaching and learning. The situation is just like competitors participating in a race. Instead of open lanes, they run in enclosed tunnels and will only know the results after coming through it. To schools, SVAIS is more a judgement than a tool for reflection and improvement. If the EDB can practically illustrate the meaningful utilization of data especially after the experience accumulated throughout the years, that would greatly boost the value of the SVAIS.
4. It is often commented that SVAIS data is one of the assessment tools among many, just like one of the facets of a piece of diamond, to provide information from specific perspectives. If that is the case, schools need to know what other tools we can use together with SVAIS so that a comprehensive picture can be construed to facilitate the loop of Curriculum Planning, Pedagogy and Assessment (CPA).
5. As the SVAIS is only one of the many facets about schools assessments, the Quality Assurance Section should carefully review and change its existing policy about using certain protocol descriptions based on SVAIS data in the External Schools Review to evaluate the performance of schools in the domain of Teaching and Learning.



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6. Besides the front-line practitioners, the EDB should aim at helping other stakeholders and the community to understand the tool and its limitations. This is extremely important for Incorporated Management Committee has been set up in most schools with the participation of various stake-holders. Any inappropriate understanding or interpretation can greatly hamper the development of schools and defeat the original purpose of SVAIS.

It is indeed our intention to be good partners with the EDB so that efforts made really are worth the while and will help schools fare further.

Yours faithfully,


Lee Suet Ying
Chairman