

COMMUNITY SPORTS COMMITTEE

Initial Review of School Sports Programme Coordinator Pilot Scheme

Purpose

This paper aims to report on the implementation progress of the School Sports Programme Coordinator Pilot Scheme (the Scheme) and the initial review of its effectiveness.

Background

2. To further promote a sporting culture in schools, to provide students with more opportunities to participate in sports and to provide a career change and on-the-job training platform for retired athletes, the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) jointly launched a three-year Scheme in September 2012 with support from the Education Bureau (EDB) and the Hong Kong Sports Institute (HKSI).

3. The Scheme is run on a trial basis with 15 quotas open for application by all government and aided secondary schools. Interested schools were required to submit their sports development plans (the plans) for the coming three years. Each successful applicant school will be granted a maximum subvention of \$300,000 per annum (a total of \$900,000 for three years) from the Arts and Sport Development Fund to organise the programmes set out in its plan and to employ a retired athlete as its School Sports Programme Coordinator (SSPC), who will assist in programme implementation. The monthly salary of the SSPC is \$15,000 for the first year, which is increased to \$16,000 and \$17,000 respectively in the second and third years. The main objectives of the Scheme are:

- (a) to promote the School Sports Programme and enhance students' participation in sports;
- (b) to encourage students to develop a habit of playing sports regularly;
- (c) to help identify students with sports potential; and
- (d) to provide an on-the-job training platform for retired athletes to gain sports-related work experience for further career development.

Implementation

4. We sent invitation letters to more than 400 government and aided secondary schools in Hong Kong in February 2012, and held a briefing session in March to explain the details and application procedure. Applications were received from 41 schools, from which 15 were selected by the Working Group formed by representatives from the HAB, the LCSD, the EDB and the HKSI according to a marking scheme. Assessment was based on whether the aims of the plans were in line with the objectives of the Scheme, the percentage of student beneficiaries, the impact on the sports development of the schools, the feasibility and sustainability of the plans, and career development and training opportunities for the SSPCs. The HKSI recommended suitable retired athletes for engagement as SSPCs and arranged pre-service training for them. The Working Group then paired the athletes with the successful participating schools, taking into account the preferences of the former and the plans of the latter. As at August 2013 (end of the first school year), there were altogether 14 retired athletes serving as SSPCs. When three of them later left the employment of the schools, we immediately took action with the HKSI and filled the vacancy for one of the schools concerned. Temporary Organisers with experience in organising activities were employed by the other two schools on short-term contracts while the HKSI was looking for suitable replacements. The two SSPC vacancies were subsequently filled. In February 2014, an SSPC was made available to the 15th participating school. Thus all 15 SSPC openings under the Scheme were filled.

5. Major projects under the plans of the 14 schools participating in the Scheme in the 2012-13 school year included:

- (a) acquisition of sports equipment (e.g. fitness equipment, exercise bikes and table tennis serving machines) for enhanced physical training for students and better results;
- (b) organisation of diversified activities, such as promotion activities (e.g. sports exhibitions, talks and exchange camps, sports corners, sports demonstrations and fun days), training programmes and competitions, to arouse students' interest in sports;
- (c) provision of training for new sports and formation of school teams for such sports; and
- (d) organisation of other activities, e.g. fitness schemes launched by the Chinese YMCA College and Tin Shui Wai Methodist College (the former's scheme being tailor-made for students with Body Mass Index (BMI) above the normal range) to improve students' physique and health through exercise and training and enhancement of nutritional knowledge. Some schools also arranged their SSPCs to gain experience in organising activities through short-term attachment to recreational venues, or held sessions for the SSPCs to

share their experience in training and major competitions with students.

Some schools fully utilised the athletic skills of their SSPCs to promote a sporting culture. For instance, Yuen Long Catholic Secondary School strengthened its efforts in the promotion of badminton, while Pui Ching Middle School and Leung Shek Chee College added cycling and squash respectively to the range of activities offered at school.

6. To help the SSPCs settle in quickly, the Working Group required that the schools appoint one or two mentors to advise the SSPCs on their usual duties. The HKSI provided the SSPCs with pre-service and on-the-job training on organization of activities, interpersonal communication, leadership and team building, writing and presentation, problem-solving, administrative management, basic computer skills, etc. Most of the SSPCs pursued further studies after work, and the courses undertaken were mainly related to sports management. Some of these SSPCs received education subsidies from the HKSI or the Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China. The schools also facilitated the SSPCs' studies by allowing them to work flexible hours.

7. As a measure to monitor the implementation progress of the Scheme, the SSPCs were required to submit a report one month after completion of each programme or activity. The schools, on their part, had to submit an annual report on the activities organised and the expenditure incurred, as well as accounts audited by accountants upon completion of the Scheme. Working Group members visited participating schools to meet the principals, the SSPCs and their mentors. Sharing sessions were held to learn about the work of the SSPCs and how they felt about their job. Support was given as necessary to the SSPCs to address their needs. In addition, the Working Group conducted a questionnaire survey in July 2013 to collect the students and the SSPCs' views on the Scheme.

8. The three-year pilot scheme costs a total of about \$13.5 million. In the 2012/13 school year, a subvention of about \$3.9 million was given to 14 participating schools.

Initial review

9. With the Scheme launched for more than a year, the participating schools submitted annual reports on the activities organised and their implementation progress during the first school year under the Scheme. The schools' reports as well as the views collected during school visits, sharing sessions with SSPCs and school representatives and the survey conducted on students and SSPCs gave us an initial understanding of the effectiveness of the Scheme. It is found to have initially achieved the intended results of promoting a sporting culture in schools, encouraging students to take a more active part in sport activities, improving students' sports standards and identifying athletes with potential, and helping retired athletes with

career development. The details are given below:

Promoting a sporting culture in schools

10. During the first school year under the Scheme, the SSPCs of 13 participating schools implemented most of the activities under the Scheme with the guidance of their mentors and the Working Group, despite the lack of experience in activities organisation on the part of most SSPCs. Only a few planned activities were not implemented due to venue or schedule issues. As for the remaining school, only about half of the planned activities were organised, mainly due to the inability of its SSPC to adapt to the working environment of the school and master the administrative work involved in activities organisation. The SSPC in question left the employment of the school concerned in September 2013. On the whole, a total of 179 activities were organised by the 14 participating schools in the 2012/13 school year, accounting for nearly 90% of the planned activities. The Scheme provided students with more opportunities to participate in sports. More than 40 000 students, including 1 175 students who were physically less active, took part in sports activities. In addition, the SSPCs brought new sports knowledge and training methods to the schools. They introduced students to new types of sports and helped with the formation of school teams. Since the introduction of the Scheme, a total of 51 school teams were formed. The schools agreed that the newly acquired sports equipment and more diversified activities could enhance students' interest in sports. Moreover, with their experience and perseverance in pursuing sporting excellence, the SSPCs served as role models for students and helped promote the sporting atmosphere in schools.

Raising students' sports standards and identifying athletes with potential

11. Although new school teams were formed few months only, the physical capabilities and skills of the members of school teams were enhanced through the intensive training and equipment-aided exercises designed by the SSPCs (e.g. the Total Resistance eXercise (TRX) introduced by the SSPC of the Chinese YMCA College). Some of the teams even won awards in inter-school competitions. In the 2012/13 school year, a total of 30 awards in swimming, rowing, rugby and rope skipping were won by the new school teams formed under the Scheme. Furthermore, 13 students with potential in rowing, basketball, squash and table tennis were identified by the SSPCs and recommended to relevant national sports associations for further training.

Retired athletes' future career development

12. We learnt from the school visits, sharing sessions and the questionnaire survey that under the meticulous guidance of their mentors and the Working Group, most of the SSPCs were able to adapt to the work environment in their schools and gain experience in sports administration. The vocational training provided by the HKSI met their needs at work and would be highly beneficial to their future development. The SSPCs also pursued further studies in their spare time to equip themselves for future career development. Most of them hoped to contribute to the

sports community by embarking on a career in the field of recreation and sports services.

Stakeholders' views

13. The views of SSPCs, schools and students towards the Scheme are as follows:

- (a) Given their lack of work experience, most SSPCs considered tolerance and encouragement on the part of school principals and practical guidance from mentors to be vital, and looked to them for continued assistance in various aspects. Moreover, SSPCs generally opined that having got used to the administrative work and mastered the skills of communicating with students, they were able to gain satisfaction from their work. While they agreed that the Scheme was an ideal platform for retired athletes to make a career change and start a new career, they hoped that the HKSI would further enhance the on-the-job training provided for SSPCs. The trial nature of the Scheme and its uncertainty made it difficult to recruit retired athletes to work as SSPCs. SSPCs very much hoped that the Scheme would be run on an on-going basis so that they could see a clear way forward without worrying over life after retirement.
- (b) School principals expressed that, with extra resources obtained through the Scheme, the schools bought additional sports equipment and organised more sports activities that met students' needs, thereby not only facilitating sports development in the schools, but also encouraging students to exercise regularly and adopt a healthy lifestyle. Some of the principals suggested streamlining the administrative procedures for funding allocation and raising the salary of SSPCs. As for the funding, after deducting the salary of the SSPC (including Mandatory Provident Fund contributions), expenses on employees' insurance and audit fees, each school had only around \$100,000 of its annual subvention left for organising activities. Taking into account the inflation factor, some principals considered that the amount of funding had a restrictive effect on the planned activities and hoped that the Government could increase the subvention under the Scheme.
- (c) Most of the students being interviewed agreed that the Scheme helped to improve their sporting knowledge and skills by enhancing their interest in and opportunities for sports activities. The industry and perseverance of athletes-turned-SSPCs also had a positive impact on the students.

14. The participating schools and SSPCs shared the view that the Scheme

should continue and be extended to other schools. Some school principals further suggested extending the Scheme to private schools in order to benefit more schools and students.

Follow-up Action

15. In the light of the views received, we refined the mode of operation of the Scheme at the beginning of the second school year under the Scheme by streamlining the fund allocation procedures, allowing schools greater flexibility in the use of programme funds, and providing more on-the-job training that met the needs of SSPCs (particularly in the areas of computer software application, activities organisation, management and interpersonal skills). Schools were also asked to further publicise the Scheme and the work of SSPCs to students so as to encourage their participation in activities organised under the development plans.

Way Forward

16. Taking into account the effectiveness of the Scheme and the feedback from SSPCs, schools and students, we are of the preliminary view that the Scheme is worth developing into an on-going programme. The HAB and the LCSD will conduct a comprehensive review of the Scheme after the second year of its implementation and prepare a paper setting out its long-term development direction, mode of operation and resource requirement for Members' discussion.

Presentation

17. Members are invited to note and comment on the initial review of the Scheme.

Community Sports Committee Secretariat
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