

Survey on Arts Subjects in 334 Curriculum: Arts Teachers

Executive Summary

December 2010

- 1.1 In March 2010, the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (ADC) sent out questionnaires to all 574 secondary schools in Hong Kong, launching the *Survey on Arts Subjects in 334 Curriculum*. Teachers currently teaching the New Senior Secondary (NSS) arts curriculum were invited to provide information with respect to the offering of related curriculums in schools, which included elements such as considerations, subject selection by student, teaching quality, and arrangements for school-based curriculums. The project concurrently invited visual arts and music teachers to provide feedback on the overall development of arts education, which will help serve as reference for the ADC in the promotion of arts education development. The survey collected 410 questionnaires from 169 secondary schools.
- 1.2 The music teachers came from 128 secondary schools, forming 44% (181 questionnaires) of the total responding figures, nearly 40% of them had teaching experience of 5 years or less, while approximately 81% of them were required to teach other subjects concurrently. Close to 95% of the music teachers felt that the NSS curriculum is able to provide more time for students to widen their vision of the arts. About 47% of the music teachers were required to teach the *Aesthetic Development Learning Experience*. Of the 181 music teachers responded from 25 secondary schools, 30 of them (about 17%) were teaching NSS elective subject.
- 1.3 The visual arts teachers came from 151 secondary schools, forming 56% (229 questionnaires) of the total responding figures, more than 30% of them had teaching experience of 5 years or less, while approximately 64% of them were required to teach other subjects concurrently. Close to 88% of the visual arts teachers felt that the NSS curriculum is able to provide more time for students to widen their vision of the arts. About 51% of the visual arts teachers were required to teach the NSS *Aesthetic Development Learning Experience*. Of the 229 visual arts teachers responded from 118 secondary schools, 156 of them (about 69%) were teaching NSS elective subject.
- 1.4 Presently, data from the *Survey on New Senior Secondary Subject Information* conducted by Education Bureau has indicated that during the 2009/10 academic year, a total of 93 secondary schools offered music subject and a total of 335 secondary schools offered visual arts subject under the NSS curriculum¹. In other words, the 25 responding schools which offered Form 4 music subject formed 26.9% of all secondary schools which offer music, and the responding schools which offered Form 4 visual arts subject formed 35.2% of all secondary schools which offer visual arts. The response rate from schools which offer Form 4 visual arts elective subject fell within expectations, while the response rate from schools which offered Form 4 music elective subject was slightly lower than the expected 30%.

¹ With regard to the 93 schools which offered Form 4 music subject, it includes subject offered by the own schools or by numbers of networking schools, course provided by The Hong Kong Institute of Education under the commissioned programme of Education Bureau, and course offered by the Arts & Technology Education Centre. Source: Education Bureau and Government Press Release, January 6, 2010. (<http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201001/06/P201001060151.htm>)

Understanding the NSS Curriculum

1.5 The Survey found out that:

- The interviewed teachers generally expressed a good grasp of the NSS arts curriculum and confidence in implementing it.
- Panel heads were more confident in their teaching ability with respect to the NSS arts electives, as compared to other arts teachers. In contrast, the confidence in teaching the NSS arts electives, for teachers who were required to concurrently teach other subjects, showed a negative correlation.
- Music and visual arts teachers still had reservations on whether the new curriculum can raise students' interest in participating in arts activities.
- Arts teachers feel that the support in areas such as teaching staff, financial aid, teaching guidelines, external support and the school administration's coordination, are most needed in the implementation of the NSS arts curriculum.

1.6 Be it music or visual arts teachers, they generally expressed confidence in implementing the NSS arts elective curriculum. The subject areas where the lack of confidence was more strongly indicated were the sessions of music composition and music arrangement. Be it music or visual arts teachers, most felt that the schools are still providing insufficient resources for the NSS arts curriculum, and especially so for music teachers. Among the teachers who felt that the schools are providing insufficient resources for the implementation of the NSS arts curriculum, the top five areas in which they want more support are as follows (in descending order):

- (a) Teachers/teaching staff allocation/teacher-student ratio (29%)
- (b) Student subsidies/funding for activities/financial assistance (21%)
- (c) Teaching material guidelines/resources/references/teaching examples (20%)
- (d) Residence programs/school-based curriculum/external professional trainers/other external support (20%)
- (e) School support/implementation and execution/administrative coordination (19%)

1.7 Overall, teachers who were required to teach the NSS arts curriculum tended to agree with the supporting resources and assessment criteria of the NSS curriculum. As can be seen, teachers with relevant teaching experience, after half an academic year, were gradually gaining confidence over the implementation of the NSS arts curriculum.

Offering NSS arts subjects

1.8 The Survey found out that:

- Compared with the 2008/09 academic year, the number of schools introducing the NSS music and visual arts curriculum has increased, though more schools introduced visual arts as compared to music.

- More than half of the teachers felt that students' interest and management's intention were respectively the primary and secondary factors with respect to whether the NSS arts electives will be introduced or not.
- 1.9 Compared to the previous academic year, there was an increase in the number of schools introducing the NSS music and visual arts subjects. Among the schools which introduced music subject, 40% indicated an increase in student numbers. For the schools which introduced visual arts subject, the increase and decrease in student numbers off set each other.
- 1.10 Out of the factors considered with respect to the introduction of arts electives, more than half of the arts teachers felt that students' interest and management's intention were respectively the primary and secondary factors. After a data analysis of some related factors which were expected to be considered, such as school type, students' results, requirements for teachers to teach other subjects and their seniority, it was discovered that they were not significantly related to the schools' introduction of various types of arts-related subjects and the introduction of arts subjects after the implementation of the new 334 curriculum for Form1-4. Students and school management are also stakeholders to the NSS curriculum, but as the current focus involves only the collection of the teachers' opinions, the influence of each stakeholder on the schools' introduction of arts-related subjects is therefore yet to be fully understood.

Teacher Staffing Arrangements

- 1.11 The Survey found out that:
 - 70% of the arts teachers were required to teach other subjects, with the proportion of music teachers required to teach other subjects being significantly higher than that for visual arts teachers.
 - In schools where Form 1 students with lower banding, arts teachers were more often required to teach other subjects, and had less time to focus on arts subjects.
 - Teachers teaching the NSS arts electives and the NSS *Aesthetic Development Learning Experience* tended to engage in specialized teaching and possess more experience.
 - During the first year of the new academic system's implementation, arts teachers from schools where Form 1 students with higher banding tended to be required to teach the NSS *Aesthetic Development Learning Experience*. On the other hand, in schools where Form 1 students with lower banding, teachers tended not to be required to teach the NSS *Aesthetic Development Learning Experience*.
- 1.12 Proportionally, more music teachers were required to concurrently teach other subjects. About 81% of the music teachers were required to teach other subjects, while 64% of the visual arts teachers were also required to do so. Even among panel heads or arts subjects coordinators, 60% and 53% of them were respectively required to concurrently teach other subjects. 65% of these teachers pointed out that

mainly because of their teaching capacity had not reached full.

- 1.13 The analysis discovered that teachers of higher seniority, or those who were not required to teach other subjects, or those who held arts panel head/teaching coordinator positions, tended to be required to teach the NSS arts electives, hence it can be seen that teachers who teach the NSS music/visual arts electives possess more experience, and tended to engage in specialized teaching.
- 1.14 As for teachers teaching the NSS *Aesthetic Development Learning Experience*, they tended to possess more teaching experience, or were holding arts panel head/teaching coordinator positions. As the NSS *Aesthetic Development Learning Experience* only requires arrangements for 5% of the total lesson hour to be completed within three years, the analysis discovered that, during the first year, the curriculum tended to be implemented in schools where students with higher banding.
- 1.15 Although at present, 63% of the teachers' schools was planning to invite artists or arts organizations in providing arts learning activities for students, 20% of the teachers felt that more external support will be required. The importance of external support when implementing the NSS arts curriculum was obvious.

Recommendations and Expectations regarding the Promotion of Arts Education and the Popularization of the Arts

- 1.16 The final section of the questionnaire contained open-ended questions, which gathered teachers' opinions on the promotion of arts education and the popularization of the arts. Many of the responses included recommendations and expectations regarding the implementation of arts education by the Government, which will at the same time require attention from a number of departments and units. To summarize it, the areas most often proposed includes the following four categories:
- 1.17 Increase the number of arts programs/activities
- (a) Encourage and arrange artists/arts organizations to support arts activities in schools, this may be coordinated to meet the schools' requirements
 - (b) Organize community groups to provide community-based arts activities for schools
 - (c) Organize arts talks, workshops and study tours which are suitable for students
 - (d) Organize more exhibitions/performances which are suitable for the general public, so as to popularize the arts.
- 1.18 Provide funding, offer students financial aid
- (a) Direct subsidies to schools for organizing art activities
 - (b) Set up funds for schools to apply for organising arts activities
 - (c) Take care of students living in remote area, provide free tickets and transportation allowance
 - (d) Arts groups should allocate special discounted tickets
 - (e) Provide financial support for students' creations and performances

1.19 Support teachers in arranging activities/reducing workload

- (a) Partner with arts organizations/arts museums and arrange dedicated staff assisting teachers to lead activities, which will solve issues such as venue, transportation and program arrangement
- (b) Assist teachers in designing the NSS music curriculum
- (c) Arrange arts activities during school holidays, so as to avoid affecting the regular teaching time for teachers and students
- (d) Arts activities should be scheduled to avoid students' family days
- (e) Produce VCD/multimedia teaching resources with local bands/arts groups for teachers' reference/usage

1.20 In addition, arts teachers also provided recommendations and opinions that have direct relevance to ADC:

- (a) Increase the number of Arts Ambassadors-in-school in each school, or expand the programme such that each artistic talent field will have a respective ambassador
- (b) Provide arts-related information (such as arts policies) which will allow students to understand the hardware and software components of the local arts development
- (c) Provide information on artists or arts groups (background, introduction of their works), thus allowing schools to select/contact suitable artists to cooperate with
- (d) Increase the number of artists-in-schools programs to meet schools' needs
- (e) Provide information on the planning and preparation of arts activities
- (f) Coordinate with Education Bureau and other arts resources and groups to launch comprehensive programmes

Limitations of this Survey

1.21 This survey is primarily a quantitative study targeting mainly arts teachers; hence the research results only reflected the teachers' perspective and did not include other stakeholders who are equally important to the implementation of the curriculum, such as the opinions and considerations of school management, students and parents.

1.22 Although the *Survey on New Senior Secondary Subject Information* conducted by Education Bureau provides information on the number of schools which offered the arts elective subjects in the first year of the NSS curriculum, further information regarding the number of different banding schools which introduced the new arts curriculum was not known; therefore the weighting method could not be reliably applied for the statistical analysis of the independent variables, and significant correlations with different dependent variables often could not be found.

1.23 Questions such as: [Reasons for introducing NSS arts electives] (Question 20) and [Information on regular arts classes] (Question 15), were respectively answered by 50% and 80% of the respondents and the section of Question 15 which enquired about the increase or decrease in the number of teachers had an exceptionally low response rate. This could be attributed to the unwillingness of the interviewed

teachers in disclosing such information, or the teachers' lack of timely and accurate information with respect to the increase or decrease in manpower, or other considerations. To avoid deviations when the independent variables are used, the factor concerning the increase or decrease in teaching manpower was eliminated during the analysis of the statistical results.

- 1.24 As the NSS curriculum was still within its first year of implementation when the questionnaire survey was conducted, the teachers were still uncertain over the response of students and the effect of the new curriculum. For some questions such as [Has the new academic system raised students' interest to participate in arts activities?] (Question 22) and [Experience regarding arrangements for students to enjoy various types of arts programs] (Question 23), most of the teachers answered [Not sure] or [Remains to be seen].

Follow-up and Recommendations

General Principles:

- 1.25 Under the NSS curriculum framework, all students are required to complete 135 hours of *Aesthetic Development Learning Experience* within three years; compared to the preceding academic system, more students are indeed able to obtain exposure in various types of art forms through activities involving arts appreciation, creation and performances. If the arts activities are coordinated appropriately, with a wider scope and variety of content, which will result in more opportunities to raise student's exposure levels to the arts.

However, the arts is not merely a formal or technical discipline and should not be restricted to the cultivation of individuals within a narrow scope of the fine arts in areas such as painting, instruments playing, performing, design and so on. The content and context of artistic expression encompasses a social dimension, hence general topics such as social values, history & culture, appreciative and aesthetic perspectives, may be understood through the arts, which will serve a role in integrating knowledge, developing critical thinking, cultivating a sense of aesthetics, and developing positive values and attitudes. Therefore, during the schools' implementation of the *Aesthetic Development Learning Experience*, they should ensure that students not only participate in and appreciate activities such as arts programs or exhibitions, but also learn from these activities through reflections and discussions.

On another note, the Head of Universities Committee (HUCOM) issued a statement in October 2008 which confirmed that *Other Learning Experience* will serve as a reference for university admission; this represented the society's recognition of the ideologies behind the new curriculum, and was an important step to its effective implementation, it will also help parents and students to alter their traditional attitudes towards subject selection. To have the society view arts education as an important component reflecting a holistic education philosophy, it must be promoted, publicized and have its results shown to the community through various channels, so that their values and attitudes will gradually improve. ADC undertakes the responsibility of promoting arts education and popularizing the arts, and shall continue to raise the level of public participation and arts appreciation through various channels and with various institutional partners.

With respect to the survey results, arts teachers' experience in the implementation of the NSS curriculum, and their recommendations and expectations regarding the promotion of arts education, ADC gives the following recommendations:

1.26 **School Level**

- (a) Consider deployment of teaching/program assistants, who will assist arts teachers to plan visits, organize teaching materials, hence allowing arts teachers to devote more resources to post-activity discussions and reflections.
- (b) Ensure that arts teachers understand the assessment criteria and carry out school-based assessment work.
- (c) Ensure that specialized teachers are teaching their respective subjects, thus improving the issue of arts teachers bearing insufficient teaching capacity and properly utilizing the available expertise.

1.27 **Education Bureau Level**

- (d) Review online sources regularly, ensuring that teachers (including those teaching in special schools) are provided with examples and teaching resources which are more diverse and covers more learning levels; and provide reference materials for the preparation of school and external arts activities, which will assist teachers in obtaining up-to-date information.
- (e) Review teachers training programmes, including support for special schools teachers, and training opportunities for teachers in the music composition and music arrangement.
- (f) Provide teaching materials for the arts promotional activities in collaborating with the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, so as to facilitate the compiling of educational materials for discussions.
- (g) Consider deploying or increasing non-school resources, support students in participating *Other Learning Experience* with subsidies, assist schools in solving issues such as venues, transportation and activities arrangement.

1.28 **ADC Level**

- (h) With respect to the teachers' positive responses and recommendations for its *Arts Ambassadors-in-school Program*, the ADC will review and strengthen the said programme, extending the influence of arts education from school to the community level.
- (i) Encourage arts workers/arts groups to provide a more diverse range of activities and programs for schools and students to select from.
- (j) Impending release of the *Publication on Partnership between Schools and Teaching Artists*, which will serve as a reference for arts educators, arts groups and schools. On one hand, this will assist arts educators/arts group to accurately grasp the new direction of the arts education curriculum, understand the requirements and expectations of the schools, and thus promote communication and raise cooperative effectiveness. On the other hand, this will also assist schools and teachers to understand changes of the ecology of arts education, alter their concept of education management, and introduce suitable arts education models.
- (k) Cooperate with Education Bureau to organize conferences/seminars for schools' management to understand the latest local and foreign arts curriculum development, educational theories and practical examples, thus actuate the

schools' implementation and support of the NSS curriculum.

- (l) Actively conduct more research projects related to arts education.
- (m) Seek new resources, and maintain strong partnerships with organizations such as Education Bureau, educational training institutions, social service organizations and the mass media, provide information on the arts sector, promote and popularize arts education.

In the event of discrepancies between the Chinese version and the English version of this report, the Chinese version shall prevail.