

Section 5: Admission Mechanism

(1) Reform of the Primary One Admission System

Target

To avoid using children's abilities as an admission criterion so as to reduce the incentive for drilling children in early childhood education, and enhance the fair opportunities for parents in choosing schools.

Last Year's Progress

- The implementation of the short-term Primary One Admission (POA) mechanism was started in September 2001 to process applications in the 2002/03 school year. Results of the allocation of discretionary places were released on 3 December 2001.
- Out of the 63,978 applicants for discretionary places, over half (33,799, 52.8% of all applicants) were offered a place. The corresponding percentage for the last year was 56.3%.

Tasks Ahead for the Coming Year

- (i) To conduct the central allocation under the short-term POA mechanism to allocate remaining places to those applicants who have not secured a discretionary place.
- (ii) To strengthen communication with parents and the public to enhance their understanding of the new allocation system.

(2) Reform of the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System

Target

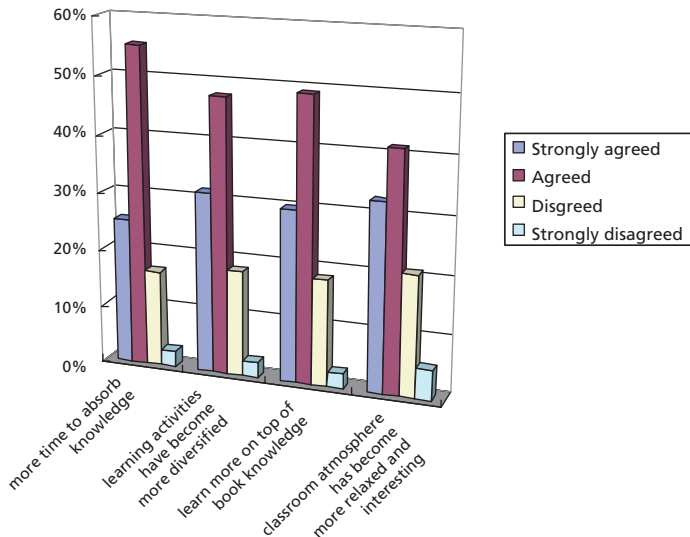
To remove the obstacles to learning in the nine-year basic education arising from the public assessment implemented for school place allocations; to reduce the labelling effects of allocation bands on schools and pupils; and to promote the adoption of more diversified admission criteria for allocating Secondary One places.

Last Year's Progress

(i) Abolition of the Academic Aptitude Test (AAT)

- The AAT was abolished in 2000 and the new interim SSPA mechanism was implemented.
- According to a study commissioned by the Government, most schools made use of the room created by the abolition of the AAT to enhance the all-round development of students, such as by strengthening project learning, extra-curricular activities and language learning. The majority of students stated that learning in schools had become more interesting and diversified, and they were better able to grasp the content.

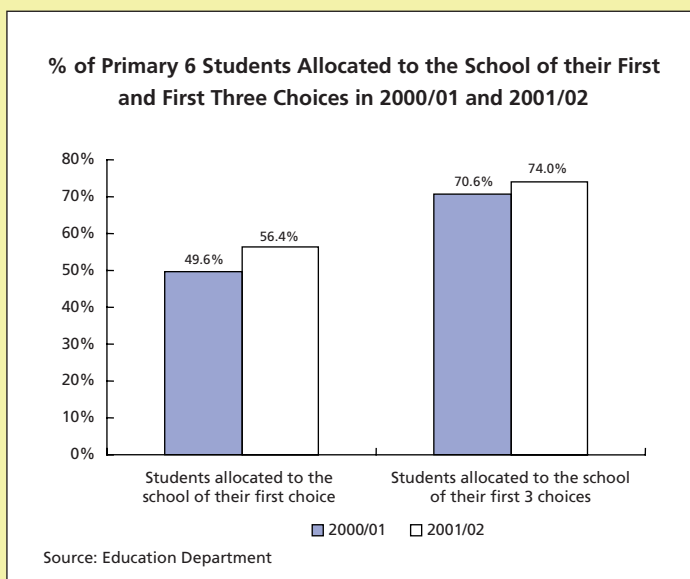
Changes in Classroom Learning as Perceived by Students after Abolishing the AAT



Source: Study on the effect of abolishing the AAT on teaching and learning in primary schools conducted by the Faculty of Education of HKU

(ii) Students'/Parents' Choices

- The percentages of students allocated to the school of their first choice and their first three choices have increased to 56.4% and 74% respectively in 2001 (the corresponding percentages in 2000 was 49.6% and 70.6% respectively). This indicates that more students were allocated to their preferred schools under the new mechanism.



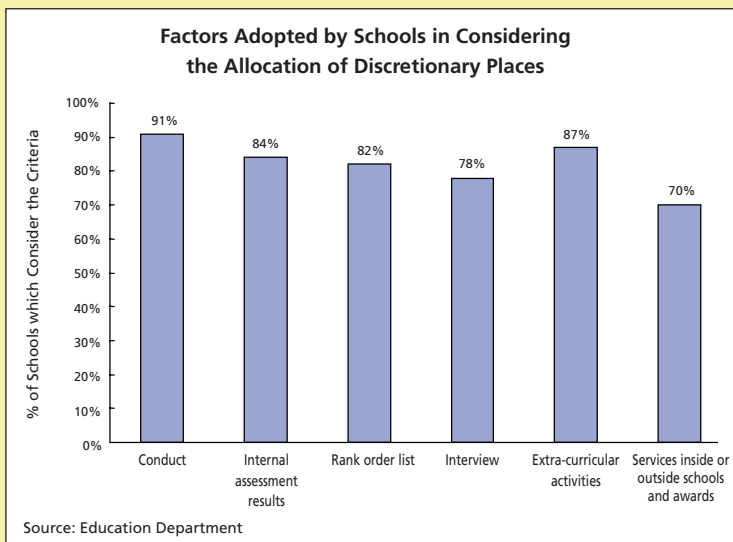
(iii) Diversity of Student Ability

- Under the new mechanism, the number of allocation bands has been reduced from five to three. At the same time, the percentage of discretionary places has been increased from 10% to 20%, which has increased the chances of schools directly selecting students according to the schools' culture and circumstances.
- Prior to the reduction of allocation bands, the ability range of students within secondary schools, on average, spread across three bands out of the old five bands. Therefore, schools have already accumulated some experiences in handling the diverse abilities of students.

- According to actual statistics —
 - In 2001, the ability range of students in the majority of schools (about 70%) remained more or less the same as in past years. Among them:
 - about 20% of schools had no change;
 - the ability range within about 20% of schools was reduced;
 - the ability range within the remaining 30% of schools has been slightly widened, but the extent of change was within one band of the old five bands.
 - The diversity of student ability in the rest of the schools (about 30%) was widened, and some people expressed concern about the effects of this change on the quality of education. Nevertheless, according to actual statistics, the number of students involved was usually rather small. About 20 schools which used to admit mainly Band 4 students in the past have received some students belonging to the old Band 5 this year.
- The Education Department provided support to schools in need, so as to help them cope with the diverse abilities of students. These included providing additional manpower resources to schools which admitted a large number of academically low achievers, providing on-site support to these schools, as well as assisting them in curriculum tailoring.

(iv) Diversified Admission Criteria

- Guidelines were issued to all primary and secondary schools to remind them to pay attention to the relevant ordinance(s) and to abide by the principles of fairness, justice and openness when setting their admission criteria.
- In April 2001, a survey on “Handling Applications for Secondary One Discretionary Places” was conducted by the Education Department. The findings indicated that secondary schools considered the following factors in setting their admission criteria:



Tasks Ahead for the Coming Year

(i) Conducting Research

To conduct studies to monitor the impact of the new SSPA mechanism on students and teachers of primary and secondary schools. This would facilitate the provision of appropriate support measures to both schools and students, and pave the way for the interim review to be conducted in the 2003/04 school year.

(ii) Internal Assessments

To encourage schools to adopt a diversified mode of assessments in schools. Apart from publishing a Guidebook on Internal Assessments in January 2002, in which exemplars will be used to elaborate the new concepts for assessments, the Education Department will also invite all core subject teachers to participate in relevant seminars to be held in February 2002. Moreover, the Education Department will also encourage and assist different educational bodies and professional associations to organize relevant workshops to promote experience sharing among schools and educators.

(iii) Changes to the SSPA

To comply with the Court's Judgement in June 2001, the SSPA system will be revised to remove the three gender-based features with effect from 2002.

(3) "Through-train" Mode

Objective

To strengthen collaboration between primary and secondary schools having the same education philosophy, and to enhance continuity in the curriculum so as to improve the learning effectiveness of students and promote their all-round development.

Last Year's Progress

- At present, there are four pairs of primary and secondary schools adopting the "through-train" mode.
- Through the 1999, 2000 and 2001 School Allocation Exercises, 18 additional pairs of primary and secondary schools adopting the "through-train" mode will come into operation in the coming years.
- After conducting public consultations, the guidelines on the arrangements for implementing the "through-train" mode were announced in January 2002 to facilitate schools in considering whether or not to apply to form "through-trains".
- Taking into account the views received during the public consultation, the Education Commission decided that the deadline for those existing feeder/nominated schools which have fulfilled the requirements for forming "through-trains" to indicate their intention should be changed from 31 May 2002 to 31 May 2005. This was to allow these schools to have more time to make consideration and to take into account the results of the interim review on SSPA to be conducted in the 2003/04 school year before making a decision.

Tasks Ahead for the Coming Year

- To provide assistance to those schools which have taken the lead to adopt the "through-train" mode to consolidate and disseminate their experiences.
- To monitor the implementation of the "through-train" mode, and to provide support to these schools through the Regional Education Offices and the Curriculum Development Institute.

- To work together with those feeder/nominated schools which currently do not fulfil the requirements for forming “through-trains” to formulate feasible solutions during the 10-year period from 2002 to 2012.

(4) University Admission

To encourage the all-round development of students, local universities are encouraged to review their own admission criteria and procedures so as to give due consideration to students' all-round performance and select the most suitable candidates for the relevant programmes.

Last Year's Progress

- As shown by the preliminary statistics on university admission for the 2001/02 school year, the number of students admitted through non-JUPAS increased notably by 22% as compared with last year. These students generally possessed academic qualifications equivalent to HKALE, or had demonstrated outstanding performance in non-academic fields. At present, about 10% of the student intake of the universities come from non-JUPAS admissions.

Tasks Ahead for the Coming Year

- The University Grants Committee will continue to rally the active participation of local universities in and support for implementing the reform measures. A review on the development of higher education is underway and a report will be submitted to the Government in the first half of 2002.