

PRESS RELEASE



Ministry of Education

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Greater Support for Teachers and School Leaders

1. Our education system has entered a phase with a greater focus on quality, more than quantity. We have made several refinements to our system to engage our learners in a broader range of learning opportunities while offering greater flexibility and choice. At the 2005 Ministry of Education (MOE) Work Plan Seminar, Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Minister for Education, announced a range of initiatives to take this forward. There are two key thrusts underpinning these initiatives.

2. The first thrust is to give teachers and school leaders more space and support so that they can focus on improving the quality of interaction with their students, both in the classroom and beyond. To prepare our students for life, more than for examinations, teaching must be aimed at touching their hearts and engaging their minds. This is at the core of “Teach Less, Learn More” (TLLM).

3. The second thrust is to continue to provide more flexibility and choice to our learners. Initiatives relating to this are detailed in the press release “Greater Flexibility and Choice for Learners”.

4. In implementing these two thrusts, MOE’s approach is to provide support for bottom-up initiatives from schools. Going forward, quality education will have to be driven by bottom-up initiatives that are school-based and teacher-owned. More support will be given to teachers so that they have the time and space to customise their teaching to suit their students’ learning needs and get to know their students better; and for schools to provide a more nurturing environment for their students to try new things.

5. In line with this spirit of “bottom-up initiative, top-down support”, MOE will encourage schools to prototype different approaches and methods. MOE will provide more resources to schools that are ready to bring in new school practices. The best practices developed in these schools can be subsequently shared, adapted and further customised for different schools across the system.

NEW INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LEADERS

6. MOE will provide the following additional support for teachers and school leaders:

- a. Provide greater space for school-based flexibility in the curriculum by reducing content
- b. Free up an average of 2 hours per week for each teacher by 2010 for professional planning and collaboration, as follows:
 - i. Provide 1 hour 'timetabled' time per week for teachers to reflect, discuss and plan their lessons
 - ii. Recruit Co-Curricular Programme Executives, which will free up on average, another 1 hour of teacher's time weekly
- c. Enhance professional development and mentorship of teachers as follows:
 - i. Strengthen focus on professional development in curriculum customisation, pedagogy and assessment
 - ii. Set up one Centre of Excellence for Professional Development at each of the four zones
 - iii. Offload experienced teachers, such as Senior Teachers or Heads of Department, to mentor beginning teachers
- d. Strengthen development of school leaders by establishing an Education Leadership Development Centre
- e. Give schools more ownership and encourage greater emphasis on character development

PROVIDE GREATER SCHOOL-BASED FLEXIBILITY IN THE CURRICULUM

7. To provide greater space for school-based flexibility in the curriculum, there will be judicious content reduction across subjects so that 10% to 20% of curriculum time can be freed up as 'white space'. Teachers will have the autonomy to use the 'white space' provided to customise lessons, using a variety of teaching and assessment methods to better meet the needs of their students. This will improve the quality of interaction between our learners and teachers in the classroom and beyond, to bring about greater engagement in learning.

8. As a start, 10% to 20% of content will be cut at the primary and lower secondary levels in specific content-based subjects.¹ This will be extended to all content-based subjects at the 'O' levels in subsequent years. By 2010, content cuts would have been made in all content-based subjects from

¹ These do not include subjects such as Physical Education, Music and Art.

primary to secondary levels. The removed portions will not be examined in the PSLE and 'O' Level examinations.

9. Content reduction will be undertaken with care to ensure that our students remain well-prepared for post-secondary education and continue to meet international standards. MOE will provide support and guidance to schools to use the 'white space' effectively for their students.

FREE UP AN AVERAGE OF TWO HOURS A WEEK FOR EACH TEACHER

10. To customise curriculum and programmes well, teachers need time and space to reflect, discuss and plan their lessons. MOE will free up an average of 2 hours per week for each teacher.

11. Teachers will have 1 hour 'timetabled time' per week, without adding to their total 'timetabled' time, for reflection and to plan their lessons. The 1 hour set aside for professional planning and collaboration does not add to their current teaching load. To provide teachers with 1 hour 'timetabled time' per week, MOE is providing more teachers to schools. This is made possible through the recruitment of additional teachers and an improvement in pupil-teacher ratios. Schools will be able to provide for this 1 hour 'timetabled time' in phases over the next few years, beginning with some schools in 2006.²

12. Schools will also each receive a Co-curricular Programme Executive (CCPE) to assist teachers in non-teaching duties, particularly in the administration of Co-Curricular Activities and Community Involvement Programmes. CCPEs are non-teaching staff, and are expected to free up another 1 hour per teacher weekly. All schools will receive 1 CCPE each by 2007.

13. These enhancements in manpower resources are in addition to the current initiatives described in paras 23 – 26.

ENHANCE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MENTORSHIP OF TEACHERS

14. To help our teachers acquire the necessary knowledge and skills, a stronger focus will be placed on professional development in curriculum customisation, pedagogy, and assessment.

15. A Centre of Excellence for Professional Development will also be set up for each zone³ from 2006 to strengthen the sharing of best practices and learning from fellow teachers. This is to promote a culture of professional development that will be impactful and sustainable. Schools will be selected to be these Centres of Excellence for Professional Development from 2006.

16. MOE will also deploy additional teachers to free up the teaching load of experienced teachers so that they can guide beginning teachers and help

² More teachers will be deployed to schools progressively over the next few years. These will comprise adjunct teachers, and teachers recruited as part of the 3,000 additional teachers that MOE will be providing to schools by 2010.

³ There are four zones – North, South, East and West.

them to understand the ethos and values of the profession. From 2006, each school will be able to offload the equivalent of one-third of the teaching load of two experienced teachers.

17. This will allow experienced teachers, such as Senior Teachers and Heads of Department, to mentor beginning teachers. General guidelines and materials will be provided to the mentors to guide them.

STRENGTHEN DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL LEADERS

18. MOE will establish an Education Leadership Development Centre to strengthen the professional development of our potential and current leaders by end-2006. For initiatives by teachers to develop and flourish, we need strong leaders who are well-informed, confident and supportive.

19. The Centre will provide systematic and high-level oversight of leadership development in the Education Service. It will conceptualise, implement and monitor the leadership development processes and programmes in the Education Service. It will also devote resources to conduct research on the latest leadership models and approaches to leadership development. We will leverage on our unique strength of close links among MOE, the National Institute of Education and schools to develop this Centre, by bringing together the perspectives of policy makers, researchers and practitioners.

GREATER SCHOOL OWNERSHIP AND EMPHASIS ON CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

20. Greater emphasis will be placed on character development in schools. However, character development is best shaped at the school level. It requires a whole-school approach, shaped by the school leaders in a way that is most effective for their students.

21. The current Civics and Moral Education (CME) syllabus focuses on values. Both values education and social emotional skills are important aspects of character development. Values education provides our students with the moral compass for actions and behaviour. Social emotional learning equips our students with skills, habits and dispositions that will help them establish positive relationships, and face up to challenges. These have to be delivered as part of both the formal and informal curriculum.

22. MOE has developed a Social Emotional Learning framework. Social Emotional Learning will be integrated into the revised CME syllabus, which will be ready in 2007. CME will remain centred on values, but there will be greater attention paid to developing life-skills, such as helping students to recognise and manage emotions, develop positive relationships, handle challenging situations and make responsible decisions. Schools will take greater ownership in customising CME to their needs, as part of their whole school approach to character development.

ONGOING INITIATIVES TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS

23. MOE announced in 2004 that it would provide 3,000 more teachers to primary schools, secondary schools and the Junior Colleges / Centralised Institute by 2010.

24. As part of this addition of 3,000 teachers, every secondary school will be provided with a full-time school counsellor in 2006 and every primary school and JC in 2008. MOE has been recruiting, training and deploying counsellors to schools for this purpose.

25. An Adjunct Teachers Programme to attract former trained teachers to join the teaching profession was also introduced from late 2004. Recruitment began in 2005 and to date, 550 adjunct teachers have been recruited.

26. MOE also announced this year that Special Needs Officers would be provided to 14 selected mainstream schools to help students with mild to moderate dyslexia and Autistic Spectrum Disorder integrate better into their school programmes. The Special Needs Officers will also complement the support classroom teachers presently provide to students with special needs. To date, 33 Special Needs Officers have been recruited and deployed in these 14 schools.

27. Together with the initiatives detailed earlier, these resources provided by MOE will give teachers more time and space to reflect on their teaching, experiment with new pedagogies and upgrade themselves professionally. This will enable them to come up with new and innovative ways of teaching their students, so as to deepen understanding, spark interest and cultivate a passion for learning.

BACKGROUND

‘Teach Less, Learn More’

28. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said in his inaugural National Day Rally Speech last year that our schools should “Teach Less” so that students can “Learn More”. “Teach Less, Learn More” (TLLM) is a call for all educators to teach better - to engage our students and prepare them for life - rather than to teach more for tests and examinations. This would mean deeper and richer interactions between teachers and students, and more opportunities for students to learn and develop holistically. Better engagement will encourage students to take greater ownership of their learning, and go beyond academic excellence to develop attributes and mindsets they need for life, particularly in having strength of character and being rooted in sound values.

29. The “Teach Less, Learn More” (TLLM) Steering Committee headed by Mrs Tan Ching Yee, Second Permanent Secretary, Education and Miss Seah Jiak Choo, Director General for Education, was set up in Jan 2005. The committee explored how MOE and schools’ efforts to realise TLLM could be coordinated and supported. Over 200 teachers, school leaders and staff from the National Institute of Education were consulted.

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