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PTU NEWS

Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union

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TSA SHOULD BE ABOLISHED

PTU News Reporter

Since last year, PTU has been collecting frontline teachers' views on Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) by means of questionnaire, focus-group interviews and Tea-time Sessions with our President. We have found that the objectives of TSA have already been mutated, and the learning of school children has been totally distorted. We therefore disclosed this worrying situation to the public in our press conference held in November. We met with Dr Catherine Chan, Deputy Secretary for Education, together with representatives of other education bodies, to urge the authority to resolve this predicament.

First, we proposed to the Bureau that they should strive for keeping TSA as a low-stake assessment, so that the culture of TSA training could be abolished, and we believed that this could not be achieved under the new arrangement where TSA would be held in alternate years. Some frontline teachers even pointed out that their school would still focus on training their Primary 5 students with TSA materials and Primary 6 students with Pre-S1 papers. Scope of training would not be minimized, not to mention the fact that the new arrangement would not include Primary 3 school children. Therefore, we urge the government to solicit views on TSA and completely review the loopholes of the policy. Moreover, if the review and improvement measures for TSA take no effect, we would suggest that TSA be totally abolished, so that the TSA training can be stopped.

TSA Training starts in Primary 1

From our survey results, we found that the training provided for Primary 6 students to deal with TSA was overdone to an extent that their normal learning life was affected and even their emotional health was harmed, and therefore we strongly suggest scrapping the TSA training, so that TSA will no longer be mutated. From our survey on TSA training, we found that schools not only focused on their training of Primary 3 and 6 students, but also around 20% to 35% of interviewed schools even provided Primary 1 school children with supplementary exercises for TSA training. We could estimate that on average every primary school child could even buy 16 workbooks of supplementary exercise during their primary schooling for their TSA training, and on-line supplementary exercises, school's workbook and parents' supplementary workbooks had not yet been counted. Therefore, as you could imagine, the time and energy spent on training would be incredible.

The number of hours spent on tuition sessions is another indicator of students' tension. On average primary 3 and 6 students spend around an extra 5 and 5.6 sessions per week respectively for the TSA training. Students even sacrifice their pre-school or after-school time, recess time, lunch hour, school holidays or even hours for extra-curricular activities for the TSA training. School curricula, teaching schedules and even formats of school examinations also need to be adjusted so that all can be aligned with TSA. If the authority still claims that TSA is a low-stake assessment, they are either ignorant or deceiving themselves.

Training for TSA results

We believe that the Education Bureau has played the most important role in turning TSA into a high-stake assessment, because even the

Bureau officials have been abusing the TSA results. Our colleagues revealed that all Bureau officials, including those for school inspections, external reviews and internal evaluations, or even other school sponsoring bodies would tend to assess school performance simply by the TSA results. The School Boards of Directors were also misled to believe that TSA was a tool to assess school teachers and school heads. Then we understand why TSA could not put schools at ease. Therefore, we propose that the Bureau should establish a set of guidance for using the TSA results and data, so that their officials would not abuse these data to assess school performance. Moreover, the Bureau should review whether the overall passing rates of TSA should be released to schools, so that the destructive competitions among schools could be minimized.

Moreover, TSA was introduced in 2004 when the education sector was also confronted with the fall of the population of school children and the policy of school closures, which therefore produced hundreds of surplus teachers. Even though the Authority had mentioned that TSA was a low-stake assessment, results of TSA are still treated as a reference point for school performance and school place allocation. TSA has already become a high-stake assessment, which therefore determines the future of schools and teachers. Despite the alleviation of the situation of the decreasing students' population, schools still feel insecure if the Bureau does not clearly announce that TSA would not affect the results of school place allocations. We believe that the Bureau's official announcement will be a relief for teachers' and students' pressure of TSA.

Another factor for the overdone training is that the TSA papers are becoming more and more difficult. In a survey conducted by the Chinese University and HK Institute of Education, it was revealed that the increasing number of questions and the higher level of difficulty of the TSA papers exceeded the basic competency of Primary 3 or 6 children. For students to handle such an enormous amount of difficult questions within a limited time span, there is simply no alternative but intensive training. In order to achieve good results, students need to sacrifice their normal time for learning and extra-curricular activities, which would consequently lower their learning motivation and affect their emotion in the long run. Therefore, we strongly urge the Bureau to review the length, relevancy, and levels of difficulty of the TSA papers, so that primary school children will not be over-trained for the assessments.

Review TSA or Abolish it?

Though the Bureau made a positive feedback towards our suggestions, such as reviewing the design of the questions and the levels of difficulty of the assessments, we must reiterate that the mutation of the objectives of TSA has already produced such great tension for teachers and students that it should immediately be stopped. The officials should not turn a blind eye to the grave situations in schools and refuse to admit the defects of the TSA policy, deceiving themselves into naively believing in the "low-stake" ideology and harmlessness of the implementation of the TSA policy. In short, all TSA tests should be abolished and frontline teachers' professionalism and autonomy should not be interfered with.



Notice of change in opening hours

Chinese New Year Holiday

On 22 - 26 February 2012 (5 days)
all services will be closed.

Normal services will be resumed on
27 January 2012.



The 20th Election of Members' Representatives (2011-2013)

All secondary schools, primary schools, kindergartens, nurseries and special schools must complete all election procedures and return the election result to the PTU by the end of January 2012.

Election of representatives for principal members and tertiary institute members were completed on 23 December 2011. Votes were also counted on 7 January, 2012. For enquiry, please contact the Organization Department (Tel:27807337).

ZOJIRUSHI

Rice Cooker

GJE-NS-RNQ10

- 1L

GJE-NS-RNQ18

- 1.8L

\$487.8



KENWOOD

Jug Kettle

JKP300

- Mesh filter traps lime scale,
removes for easy cleaning

- Two level safety operation

- 1.6L

\$362



PANASONIC

Vacuum Cleaner

MC-CG301

- 1400W

\$464



KENWOOD

Mini Oven

MO286

- 1100W

- Multifunction - toast , bake and grill

- 30-minute timer, auto cut-off with
audible signal at end

\$304



PANASONIC

Thermo Pot

NC-HU301P

- 3L

\$947

Self pick-up after
order confirmation.



KENWOOD

Toaster

TTM320A

- Polished compact metal toaster

- two deep variable width slots

- electronic browning control
(Defrost/Reheat/Cancel)

cool wall body

- 750W

\$236



PANASONIC

Thermo Pot

NC-PF30PV

- 3L

\$687

