

1. INTRODUCTION

As part of a wide-ranging set of reform proposals to enhance the capacity of Hong Kong's education system to keep up with the environment and the needs of the 21st century, the Education Commission (EC) in 2000 recommended a system of Basic Competency Assessments in Chinese, English and Mathematics at various stages of compulsory education. These proposals were contained in the Education Commission Report (2000) entitled *Learning for Life, Learning through Life*. It was anticipated that the data provided by these assessments would be used in planning curriculum, designing teaching methods and providing assistance to schools and students so as to enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching.

The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) was commissioned in 2001 by the Education Bureau (EDB) to develop and implement Basic Competency Assessments in three subject areas: Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. As recommended by the EC, the Basic Competency Assessments programme has two components: Student Assessment and Territory-wide System Assessment. Student Assessment is an online system to provide instant feedback to students and teachers and is fully operational for Primary 3 (P.3), Primary 6 (P.6) and Secondary 3 (S.3). The web-based Student Assessment system allows teachers to review and improve student progress towards learning objectives and set targets for students.

Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) is a low-stakes survey of the performance of students at P.3, P.6 and S.3 levels in three subject areas. The main purpose of TSA is to provide the Government and school management with information on school standards in key learning areas for the purposes of school improvement and to provide more targeted support to those schools in need of assistance. The TSA began at the P.3 level in 2004, P.6 level in 2005 and S.3 level in 2006. From 2006 onwards, all students at P.3, P.6 and S.3 take part in the TSA.

This report provides a summary of the TSA results for 2008. Chapter 2 outlines the design of TSA and the development of the assessments; Chapter 3 reports on the conduct of the TSA, including the role of the Research Test, on-screen marking of TSA scripts, etc.; Chapter 4 sets out the method used to maintain standards from year to year and reports the proportions meeting these standards; Chapter 5 describes the different types of TSA reports made available to schools; Chapter 6 to Chapter 8 report in detail on the performance of students to the questions on the Chinese Language, English Language and

Mathematics tests. The basic competency level and more capable performances in each subject and each level are discussed in these chapters. Chapter 9 offers some concluding comments on the results of the 2008 survey and the lessons to be learnt from the TSA data.