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Honours Project
Education Policy and Leadership

Project title:
The impact of Territory-wide System Assessment on
English teaching: The perception of English teachers

Final Report

Supervisor: Dr. Tang Hei-hang Hayes

Student name: Lee Yuen Tone

Student number:

Introduction

Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) has been launched for 12 years. Opposing voices from different stakeholders against TSA have never faded albeit the implementation of a series of enhancement measures in 2014. Drawing on my personal experiences during school attachment, a primary English teacher mentioned that TSA has interfered English Language teaching, including lesson planning and curriculum development to a great extent. Besides, it is observed that P.3 students have heavy homework loads due to assessment paper drillings during homework tutoring classes. These are not isolated incidents in particular schools. Lots of parents voiced their opinions about the necessity of implementation of TSA on social networking platform. Negative voices triggered an online petition involving 30,000 users calling for abolition of TSA (Hong Kong Free Press, 2015). In addition, surveys about teachers' perception of TSA were conducted by two professional organizations in the Education circles in Hong Kong – Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union (2014; 2016) and Education Convergence (2006) to call for abolition of the assessment. Both surveys reflect negative effects posed on teachers and students by the TSA, sharing the view that TSA creates immense pressure to teachers and students and interferes teaching and learning.

Foci of the two studies are put on the overall impact on both teachers and students. No academic research which focuses on the impact of TSA on English teachers has been done before. This shows a lack of in-depth understanding about the impact on English Language teaching, especially the extent of interference in teaching. To prepare students for the testwiseness skills required for TSA, input and practice must be offered to students in which intervention of lesson and curriculum planning are inevitable. Therefore, the following questions are set to guide my research study. What are English teachers' perceptions of TSA? How does TSA interfere normal English lessons? How does TSA facilitate English Language teaching?

This project studies the two-way relationships between English Language teaching and TSA – how teaching is modified to prepare students for TSA and how TSA improves teaching. It is worthwhile to conduct in order to address both the positive and negative impacts of TSA on English Language teaching. The perspectives of teachers who take a front and significant role in facilitating teaching and learning will be adopted to investigate the impact. The project further studies the interaction between TSA and teaching. There has been much controversy

over the necessity of the implementation of TSA for primary school students. It is hoped that implications for teacher training, curriculum development and planning at subject and school level could be drawn from the study in order to maximize the positive effects of TSA and reduce the negative impacts on English Language Teaching.

2.Literature Review

In this section, policy papers will firstly be reviewed in order to introduce the context and background of English Language Teaching, and the design and nature of TSA. I will then identify the research problem, the impact of TSA on teaching, by studying both positive and negative views of the implementation of TSA based on relevant research papers and surveys.

English Language Teaching in Hong Kong

Curriculum reform took place in 2001 which shaped curriculum and instruction around critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration (Hammond & McCloskey, 2008). Curriculum Development Council (2004) therefore suggested the 9 emphases (see Appendix 1) to serve as entry points and convenient platforms for teachers with respect to the design and implementation of English Language curriculum. Therefore, investigating the impact of TSA on putting these emphases into effect in normal English lessons is purposed in my research project. The extent of TSA's interference in teaching can be revealed through identifying any improvement made or difficulty arises from following the above-mentioned emphases. This requires data collection of real teaching experiences. Understanding of teachers' perceptions can also be deepened through learning more about their teaching experiences of lesson planning and curriculum design.

Territory-wide System Assessment

In 2004, TSA was introduced in the place of Hong Kong Aptitude Test. The official purpose is for school improvement and to provide the Government and schools with information on school standards in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. The assessment is designed to be low-stakes in nature. Only overall assessment results at territory-wide and school level are provided while that of individual students are made unavailable. Assessment items are constructed with references to the Basic Competency Descriptors and the curricula to reveal students' attainment in Basic Competency levels set for the three subjects. After the assessment, each participating school will receive a school report about the performance of

its students as a whole in each skill or dimension of the three subjects, namely, reading, writing, listening and speaking for English Language. In reviewing the results, schools can have better understanding about the overall strengths and weaknesses of students in order to facilitate the development of a school plan and improve learning and teaching (HKEAA, 2015).

Impacts of TSA

Some studies demonstrate successful use of TSA assessment items and results data in enhancing teaching and learning to meet better needs of students. In a case study about incorporating innovative pedagogy to EFL writing (Lee & Wong, 2013), the results of TSA become indicator of the problematic teaching approach and the efficiency of teaching enhancement. The results informed school administration of students' area of weaknesses which triggered teachers' quest for a better approach. Few years later, TSA results illustrated students' improvement in writing performance, which are useful data for evaluating the enhanced teaching approach. Another research suggested that TSA triggers positive backwash effect (which will be discussed later) to Chinese Language Teaching (Liu, 2013). Some of the assessment items involve in higher level of thinking. Drillings of the test paper prompt and promote higher order thinking skills which used to be a rare practice. This view about TSA offers new insight of how TSA benefits students from incorporating the assessment items into teaching. Many researches focused only on the negative impact while neglecting the enhancement on teaching brought by TSA. How teachers make use of the assessment items or results in teaching is proposed to be studied under the English teaching context to give a fair and comprehensive study.

Some scholars identified mismatch of the assessment nature between official claim and the reality. According to Carless (2013), from the perspectives of schools and teachers, TSA shows how well schools are performing and thus it is a high-stake assessment. Wong (2014) even stressed that TSA is nonetheless same as other public examination, classifying schools into different levels according to students' performances and making comparison at school level instead of individual students. Consequently, examination results become great concern for school administration and inevitably transmit stress to students, teacher and parents alike, despite being intended to improve school quality. The view of assessment nature from different stakeholders offered in these researches is generalized. Understanding of this matter

specifying on teachers' perceptions is needed as it directly affects teachers' decisions on lesson planning and teaching.

Apart from the school reputation, heavy workload is another source of pressure to teachers which may in turn transmit to students. Surveys and researches about TSA conducted by Strategic Planning Office of Hong Kong Institute of Education (Lai et. al., 2011), Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union (2014; 2015) and Education Convergence (2006) reported that majority of research participants share the view of posing immense pressure on students and teachers. The research conducted by HKPTU (2014) further suggested another mismatch between students' competency and scores attained in TSA test paper, revealing that TSA had already strayed away from its original purpose. It is found that the level of the test papers is above students' basic competencies claimed by the official. In the latest survey involving more than 1900 Primary school teachers (HKPTU, 2015), only 30% of the teacher participants think that TSA results give a clear and honest picture of students' competency and 70% of them agree that students must receive training to fulfill the requirement of TSA.

The mismatch results in intensive training and teaching modification to make up the gap. The present situation of TSA training in schools was also investigated in the survey, providing valid data of the TSA training in different primary schools. 70% of teacher participants arrange supplementary lessons of TSA training for students which occupied more than 2 hours in total per week. It is noteworthy that supplementary lessons are arranged for P.1 students in some schools. The average number of supplementary exercise for TSA is found to be 3. Teachers are also asked to grade the intensiveness of TSA training on a scale ranging from 1 to 10 where 10 indicates the greatest extent of seriousness. Over 70% of teachers' grading falls in the 'serious' category (ranges from 7 to 10).

Modification of teaching to prepare students for the assessment is a result of backwash effect. According to Alderson and Wall (1993), 'backwash' refers to the notion that testing influences teaching in education circles. Under such influence, testing drives not only the curriculum, but also teaching methods and students' approaches to learning. A research conducted by Liu (2013) identified negative backwash effect as the major impact of TSA on Chinese Language teaching. Liu (2013) also stated two important areas of impact on Chinese Language Teaching - students' learning motivation and curriculum planning. Teacher

interviewees mentioned that TSA test papers become design reference of worksheets and exam paper, striking students' learning motivation. Also, civic and moral education, sensibility and attitudes are neglected in curriculum planning as they are rarely tested in TSA. Despite the difference in the research context, these two views provide new perspective to study the impact on teaching which are worth adopting as election of content of teaching and design of teaching materials directly reflect the impact on teaching.

The policy papers give an overview of the current context of English Language Teaching in Hong Kong which provides a framework to study the interference of TSA on teaching. Regarding the reviewed research papers and surveys, they provide useful concepts about the positive and negative impacts of TSA on teaching. Lee and Wong (2013) suggested that the use of TSA results to reflect on teachers' teaching approaches of writing is a positive impact of TSA, leaving questions about the use of TSA results on improving other 3 language skills for teaching English. Although the focus of Liu's research (2013) has been on Chinese Language teaching, it provides a useful analytical framework to study both the positive and negative impacts of TSA on Language teaching through the angle of 'backwash effect'. The opinion of 'mismatch of assessment nature' pointed out by Carless (2013) and the negative surveys results about TSA (HKPTU, 2014) are also useful concepts and data for my project despite the fact that they are general opinions from school administrators and teachers regardless of the subject they teach.

Therefore, the above-mentioned concepts, which have not been researched from the perspectives of English teachers or leaves questions with respect to English Language Teaching, will be studied in my project to investigate how TSA facilitates and interferes English Language Teaching in normal primary school. Accordingly, the interview questions will cover the following areas— teachers' perceptions on the assessment nature of TSA, positive and negative impacts of TSA on lesson planning and curriculum design, and their personal opinions.

3. Method

The project is a case study of a full-time government funded primary school where I had my teaching practicum for a semester. The school has a good reputation in the district and students come from families with a good socio-economic background. There are 9 English

teachers, including a Native-speaking English teacher. Qualitative research method is employed to study teachers' perceptions of TSA. According to Maxwell (2005), qualitative research involves studying and understanding how things occurs. Understanding of the casual processes is crucial in order to learn how one or more interventions or factors lead to the outcome of backwash effect in English Language Teaching. In my project, teachers' perceptions of the assessment nature of TSA will be studied to find out if any mismatch exists between the official claimed assessment nature and the real practice, and mismatch of the level of test paper and students' abilities. Understanding of the 'how' process is also important for qualitative research. The 'how' process in this research refers to the interference in English Language Teaching and modification of teaching due to coordination with the preparation of TSA. Taking the role of implementer of the curriculum and facilitator of learning, teachers' perceptions are crucial in understanding how TSA affects teaching and learning.

Data will be collected mainly through the interview guide approach. In this type of interview, topics and issues to be covered are set in advance while wording and sequence can be changed in the course of interview (Cohen et. al., 2011). The conversational style of interview allows genuine and detailed data to be collected in a relaxing manner in order to gain in-depth understanding of interviewees' perception of TSA. Judgemental sampling will be the main sampling strategy of the study. As suggested by Cohen et. al. (2011), the uniqueness, the ideographic and exclusive distinctiveness of the phenomenon, group or individuals is emphasized in qualitative research. The participants only represent themselves and nothing or nobody else. Therefore, qualitative research allows collection of unique and distinctive data about English Language teaching and TSA. The sampling size will be 8 teachers, i.e. all English Language teachers in the primary school where I had my teaching practicum for the convenience of data collection. Seven questions will be asked during the interview as shown in Appendix 2.

Results

The whole English teaching team in the target school were interviewed. They have different teaching backgrounds as indicated in the table below. Five of out of the eight interviewees entered teaching before TSA was launched. They expressed opinions on the change of

English language teaching caused by the implementation of TSA. Among the eight interviewees, only two of them have taught in other schools.

Number of teachers	Teaching experiences
1	2 years
2	> 5 years
4	> 12 years (since TSA has been launched)
1	> 15 years

1. Teachers' perception of TSA

The role of assessment in teaching

Interviewees were asked to share their teaching aspiration by telling the three most important elements that constitute ideal English lessons and their opinions of actualizing the elements under the exam-oriented context in Hong Kong. Teachers expressed their views of the role of assessment in teaching in their responses. Three teachers revealed that they teach what is in the syllabus of internal summative assessment. This view echoes the “teaching to the test” phenomenon that teaching is skewed toward elements which are more likely to be assessed (Mastre, 2005). Among the three types of assessments, a teacher pointed out that “assessment for learning” is crucial to teaching as it enables teachers to review their teaching whereas summative assessment should not be over-emphasized.

Low-stake assessment nature of TSA

All the interviewees agreed with the official claim that TSA is a low stake assessment regarding the accessibility and usefulness of assessment results. All of them mentioned that the school administration views TSA as another assessment to measure students' ability and hence provide feedbacks to their teaching. Three teachers thought that students should have low stress due to the inaccessible individual assessment results. Thus, little impact is brought to individual teachers and so to the parents. In view of the use of assessment results, two teachers suggested that TSA serves the purpose as “assessment for learning” since valid assessment data are provided to them about the overall weaknesses and strengths of their students. The view of school administration is also an important factor that determines the actual assessment nature as suggested by a teacher (see Appendix 3 point A). A teacher

remarked that the implementation of TSA aimed at pushing students to meet the expected English standard in view of the deteriorating English standard in Hong Kong. This opinion supports Popham's (1993) claim that measurement-driven instruction is a cost-effective way to improve the quality of public education.

Level of TSA

All the interviewees agreed that their students are able to cope with the four papers in TSA while two described the level as easy. Among the four papers, they generally thought that level of listening and speaking paper are not difficult to students that not much training is needed. However, training of writing and reading paper is necessary. Regarding the reading paper, one teacher commented that the content is a bit difficult to P.3 students as they are seldom exposed to some text types in the reading paper e.g. advertisement and therefore lack vocabulary knowledge related to it. Another teacher advised that the design of questions in reading paper should focus more on assessing students' language skills as some questions involve calculation and logical thinking that makes training inevitable.

Interference to lesson planning

Emphases suggested in the English curriculum guide (see Appendix 1) for teachers to follow in designing and implementing curriculum were shown to the interviewees when they were asked about the interference of TSA in lesson and curriculum planning. Majority of interviewees did not think that TSA interfere either of the planning. Only one teacher mentioned that putting too much emphasis on test paper drilling hinders the adoption of task-based approach in lesson planning.

2. Strategy to prepare students for TSA

TSA training in the school

All interviewees insisted that students receive no heavy TSA training in the school. The training offered to students can be divided into two types, regular training and mock assessment. For the former, three 30 minutes long supplementary lessons for the three main subjects are provided to P.3 and P.6 students in the morning reading session. The supplementary lessons focus on reading skills training and practice of mock paper, which students purchased together with textbooks. In addition, mock assessments are arranged once to students a few weeks before TSA takes place to familiarize students with the mode of

assessment. All interviewees do not consider the training heavy. A teacher supported her view by comparing the training strategies with some schools she knew which organized supplementary lessons to students during holiday.

Curriculum alignment

When asked about how TSA affects curriculum planning and lesson planning, all interviewees mentioned the integration of TSA into school-based curriculum. Such integration is also the direction of how TSA should be treated by the school administration. Half of them mentioned that the testwiseness skills and knowledge for TSA are “what students need to know” and therefore curriculum alignment enriches the curriculum. To achieve so, assessment criteria of internal summative assessments are modified to align with that of TSA, especially in writing and speaking tests. Parts of the listening and reading mock paper are arranged for students to complete as quiz twice per school term. The assessment content which is not covered in the textbook is merged into the school-based curriculum. It is advised that teachers should select and insert suitable assessment items from the past paper into the related unit of English curriculum. With this view, the interviewee attributed the over-drilling problem to the exclusion of TSA from the school-based curriculum (see Appendix 3 point B).

3. Positive impacts

Clear indicator of students’ weakness and strength

All interviewees shared the opinion that TSA results can reflect the areas of students’ weaknesses. Analyzing the poorly performed items enables teachers to review on their own teaching. After the analysis, adjustment and modification can then be made to teaching and exercises based on the weaknesses to strengthen corresponding skills. Majority of the teachers agreed that the results indicate students’ weaknesses in reading and writing paper. A teacher believed that learner-centered teaching can be achieved with pertinent actions taken. An example of how the results improve their understanding of students’ difficulties in learning was given (see Appendix 3 point C). In addition, a teacher found the three-year trend shown in the report useful in reviewing the effectiveness of strategies taken to improve the weak areas.

Change of content of English textbooks

Five out of eight interviewees are eligible to answer the question about the change of teaching before and after the launch of TSA. The shift of focus of textbook content from knowledge to skill are mentioned by three interviewees. All considered the shift a positive impact to teaching. The refinement of textbooks driven by TSA ensures sufficient coverage of the four language skills in the practice provided. A teacher added that the change of the practice of reading skills is the most significant. Another teacher pointed out that textbook publisher incorporated “TSA elements” in the textbooks making the testwiseness skills for TSA transferrable to English language learning.

Facilitating higher order thinking skills

Two interviewees claimed that the challenging assessment items in TSA paper facilitate students’ higher order thinking skills. They suggested that these challenging questions could not be found in textbook before the implementation of TSA. Questions only assessed students’ skills to find answer directly from the given text but the challenging items require students to think a step further. Making use of the items enables teachers to elicit students’ higher order thinking skills through reading (see Appendix 3 point D).

Test paper serves as supplementary learning materials

Four interviewees had the common view that TSA papers are good supplementary exercises for students to strengthen their language skills. As the assessment paper is theme-based, they are good reference for teachers to improve the cohesiveness of exercise. A teacher pointed out that the reading paper increases students’ exposure to different text types. Hence, making flexible use of the assessment papers are important.

4. Negative impacts

All interviewees are aware of the negative impacts stressed by the media representation and populists. Only three of them directly mentioned the negative impacts of stress stemmed from comparison of subject results, increased workload due to TSA follow-up work and tight teaching schedule. An interviewee revealed that the comparison of TSA results between subjects causes stress. As school meetings are held to discuss the results, the teacher felt stressed when the overall results of all three main subjects were announced in the meeting. Two teachers mentioned the tight schedule of teaching due to the mock assessments and the marking.

The increase of workload caused by TSA follow-up work is another negative impact. One of the interviewees mentioned that the analytical work of assessment result increases teacher's workload while none expressed negative voice towards TSA training. A teacher explained the flow of TSA follow-up work. One or two teachers had to attend a seminar organized by the Education Bureau about the analysis of overall TSA results of Hong Kong students. Then, teachers compare students' results with that of the overall performance in Hong Kong to select particular assessment items for analysis. The selection is followed by the analysis of the assessment items including the type of question, the learning difficulties in order to review teaching and strategies.

Discussion

English teachers in this case study have consistently positive view towards TSA which are contrary to the mainstream voices from parents, teachers, professional education organizations and populist who call for abolishment. All English teachers in the school share the view that the positive impacts outweigh the negative ones. The results of this case study and the recent survey conducted by Hong Kong Professional Teachers Union (2015) in which 1950 questionnaires were received are compared. The differences lie in the perception of backwash effect, intensity of TSA training and the use of TSA results.

Perception of backwash effect of TSA

Backwash effect on school-based English curriculum can be observed in the strategy of curriculum alignment. Under this strategy, curriculum planning and assessment are directly influenced by TSA as evidenced in the adjustment of content and assessment criteria of internal summative assessments and the mergence of TSA assessment items and skills which are not included in the textbook. Since assessment items of TSA are used only as supplementary learning materials and exercises to assist teaching of the four language skills, no direct influence is exerted on lesson planning concerning with pedagogy and learning task design. Also, interviewees do not find any conflicts between following the English curriculum guide in lesson and curriculum planning and equipping students with the knowledge and skills required in TSA.

Through interviews with experienced teachers about the change of teaching caused by the launch of TSA, it was found that textbooks play a significant role in catalyzing and inducing the backwash effect on English curriculum. Interviewees hold a positive attitude towards the change of textbook. They mentioned that English language teaching relies heavily on textbooks. For example, the layout of textbook is the major concern of organizing the general teaching schedule. With such heavy reliance, the shift of focus in textbooks from knowledge-based to skill-based is very likely to induce any change of curriculum planning caused by TSA.

In the survey, 70% of the participants notice the backwash effect on curriculum and assessment and they regard it as negative impact to teaching due to the reduction in flexibility of lesson planning. However, in this case study, the teachers generally hold a neutral attitude towards the backwash effect. None of the interviewees expressed negative view while some of them even welcome it because of the challenging question types that promote students' higher order thinking skills and the referential use of the test paper.

Intensity of TSA training

Over-drilling problem is the core of all the negative voices towards TSA. Although all interviewees remarked that the TSA paper is not difficult to their students, training including supplementary lessons and mock assessments is arranged for students on regular basis. Such arrangement premised on the assumption that textbook-based English teaching is insufficient to prepare students for TSA. This view has been shared by 70% of the participants in the survey (HKPTU, 2015) disagreeing with the opinion that students can fulfill requirement of paper without training. The necessity of training does not cause negative attitude but the intensity does.

Teachers in the present study have an opposite view to the general opinion that TSA training is intense and serious. Comparing the average minutes of weekly supplementary lessons of the target school with the average minutes reported in the survey report, the former is 40 minutes fewer than the latter with an average of 130 minutes calculated from the 1950 questionnaires received (HKPTU, 2015). As suggested by the interviewees, the strategy of curriculum alignment is very likely to be the main reason of the relatively low intensity of training. The view of school administrative decision also affects the intensity of training. The

school administration does not orient TSA as a way to boost school reputation but another assessment to provides feedback of teaching and learning. Therefore, not much supplementary lessons are arranged to students.

The use of TSA results

Teachers in this case study found the follow-up work helpful to improve teaching and learning despite the negative comment about the increase in workload. On the contrary, in the survey report, one of the curriculum development leaders commented the follow-up work as a waste of time. This is not a rare view among teachers, supported by the finding of a survey conducted by Liu (2009) to study the TSA training strategy of Chinese Language. Contradiction can be found between teachers' understanding of the importance in analyzing TSA results and putting the analysis into practice. Liu attributed such contradiction to teachers' lack of knowledge in analyzing the results and refining the curriculum accordingly.

On the contrary, the results in this case study do not show such contradiction between understanding and practice as interviewees perceive TSA as a reliable and valid assessment which reflects clearly students' competency. Also, the target school has developed a comprehensive plan for the follow-up work as can be seen in the result. Such plan ensures effective use of TSA results to enhance curriculum planning, illustrated by the example of developing strategies writing skills based on TSA results. Sharing of school cases in analyzing TSA results can be promoted to address the lack of knowledge and skills of teachers in developing effective follow-up plan and analytical skills for results analysis in teachers' pre-service training and teachers' professional development.

Teachers' high level of commitment to school may be the cause of the consistency of opinions. This limits the collection of unique and distinctive data from individual teachers in this case study. According to Glickman (1993), commitment to school manifests itself in identifying with the school and loyalty to the school. It is observed that majority of the interviewees have worked only in one school. Their commitment to the school may result in high level of compliance with the decisions made by the school administration and causes bias and a lack of truthfulness in their answers.

Conclusion

In this project, teachers' perception of TSA, the interference of TSA in lesson and curriculum planning and how TSA facilitates English language teaching and learning are studied. English teachers in the target school think that the TSA assessment nature is low-stake. They do not find any mismatch between the level of test paper and students' competency except the content and complex question types in P.3 reading paper. To prepare students for TSA, the strategies of curriculum alignment, supplementary lessons and mock assessments are adopted which all the interviewees do not consider heavy to students. Some teachers thought that the inclusion of TSA in curriculum avoids over-drilling problem. Backwash effect on assessment and curriculum planning can be observed in the training strategies.

All the interviewees think that positive impacts brought by TSA outweigh the negative ones. The results of TSA indicate students' weaknesses and strengths clearly and the test papers are useful materials to enrich teaching and facilitate students' higher order thinking skills. Only three teachers directly expressed negative view about stress that stemmed from comparison of subject results, increased workload due to TSA follow-up work and tight teaching schedule. English teachers' perception found in this case study does not align with the general view of teachers participated in the latest survey conducted by HKPTU. The differences lie in perception of backwash effect, intensity of TSA training and the use of TSA results. Implication for improving pre-service teacher training and teachers' professional development is drawn to address the lack of knowledge and skills in the follow-up work for TSA.

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1.4 Emphases for Design and Implementation

The following emphases, which are by no means exhaustive, can serve as entry points and convenient platforms for teachers to design and implement their schools' English Language curriculum based on the central curriculum framework:

- *Facilitating the development of a “reading to learn” culture, helping learners acquire effective reading skills and develop good reading habits through the use of language arts materials and texts, incorporating a wide variety of text types to develop their critical thinking skills, creativity and cultural awareness*
- *Developing learners’ generic skills, values and attitudes and exposing them to rich learning experiences through moral and civic education, project learning, reading to learn, information technology (IT) for interactive learning (the four key tasks promoted in the curriculum reform)*
- *Using a learner-centred and a task-based approach in the planning and organization of learning, teaching and assessment materials and activities, ensuring that emphases are put on helping learners master both language forms and communicative functions for use in appropriate contexts*
- *Catering for learner diversity through developing a wide range of open-ended learning tasks and activities, and employing teaching strategies that suit the specific needs of both less able learners and more able learners, as well as the needs of learners with different learning styles*
- *Promoting learner independence through the development of lifelong language learning skills and strategies such as vocabulary building skills, phonics skills and information skills, and providing opportunities for the mastery of these skills through purposeful tasks and in meaningful contexts*
- *Creating a language-rich environment through promoting a cross-curricular approach to learning, and making use of community resources to facilitate learner participation in life-wide learning activities*
- *Promoting assessment for learning in addition to assessment of learning through greater use of formative and criterion-referenced assessment to gain insights into learners’ strengths and weaknesses, to provide feedback informing learners about their performance, and to indicate how to make further progress in their learning*

Appendix 2

Interview Questions

1. What is an ideal English lesson to you? If you are to describe three essential elements, what would you say? To what extent can you actualize the ideal lesson in your real classroom under the exam-oriented context of Hong Kong education?
To know more about teachers' perceptions of lesson planning and lead in the topic of TSA by asking about assessment related topic.
2. What do you think about the assessment nature of TSA? Recalling your own teaching experiences, how does TSA affect you?
To know more about the cause of interference of TSA on teaching.
3. How should the school administration treat TSA?
To know more about teachers' understanding of the purpose of TSA.
4. Do you think that TSA interferes English lesson planning and curriculum design? If yes, how does TSA interfere them? Did you find any difficulties in following the emphases of lesson planning and curriculum design suggested by the Curriculum Development Council? What are they?
To study the extent of interference of TSA on English Language Teaching.

If no, what do you think about the level of the test paper?
A survey conducted by HKPTU shows that in TSA, there exists a mismatch between students' ability and scores attained in TSA test paper. Do you think that TSA results can reflect students' ability of English? How can it be improved?
5. *Can you tell the difference of Curriculum design and English lesson planning before and after the implementation of TSA?
To compare lesson planning and curriculum design before and after the implementation of TSA in order to give a clear picture of how TSA interfere English Language Teaching.
6. How does TSA improve English Language Teaching? Do you make use of the TSA results? How?
To study the positive impact.
7. How does TSA affect English Language Teaching in a negative way?

To study the negative impact.

* only for teachers who have over 12 years of teaching experiences. 2004 is the year when TSA was first launched.

Appendix 3

Extract of insightful opinions in the interview

A. Assessment nature of TSA dependent on the view of school administration

“It really depends on how the school administration orients TSA, whether to merely improve teaching and learning or boost ranking and reputation of the school. We just sees it (TSA) as another ‘ruler’ to measure our students so that we know what to improve in teaching and learning.”

B. Opinions about integration of TSA to the curriculum

“Isolating TSA from English teaching or treating it as an independent matter requires ‘extra effort’ from teachers to prepare students for TSA. If teaching procedures to prepare students for TSA are merged into the curriculum purposefully, TSA won’t be difficult to students and won’t cause over-drilling problem.”

C. The example of how TSA results improve writing

“Reviewing their TSA results and homework, we realized that students lack ideas in writing. With this concern, the teaching team devoted more emphasis on guiding students to generate ideas and enrich ideas through the use of mind map and improving their descriptive skills in teaching writing. ”

D. The example of how TSA assessment items facilitate higher order thinking

“I remembered that there is a question that asking students the date of an event mentioned in a postcard. In the postcard, ‘tomorrow’ and the date of writing are the clues to deduce the exact date of the event. However, many students chose the date of writing postcard. This makes us realize that students are unable think a step further and need more training to facilitate such higher order thinking skills of inference. ”