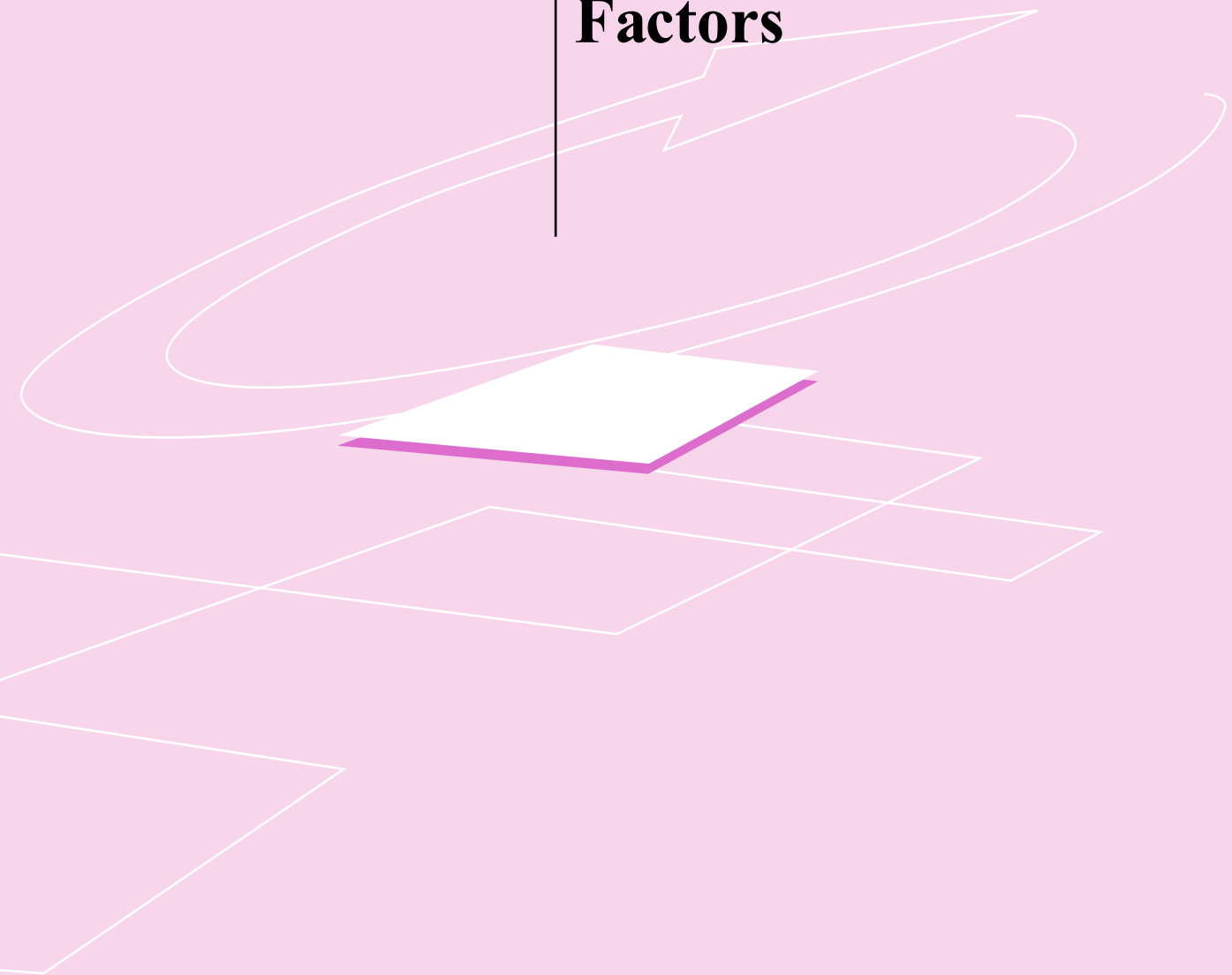# Chapter 2

# Guiding Principles, Development Strategies and Critical Success Factors

The purpose of this chapter is to recommend guiding principles and strategies for achieving the aims of education in Hong Kong through curriculum development, and also to suggest critical success factors to make the strategies work.

## *Guiding Principles*

We have learned from both local and international reform experiences that when there are no clear principles underlying a complex system and communication network, things can easily go wrong. Flexibility of practice and sustainability of change need to be supported by clear guilding principles if they are to be carried through effectively.

1. Our overarching principle is to help students Learn to Learn, which involves developing their independent learning capabilities leading to whole-person development and life-long learning. It is hoped that these will result in an overall improvement in the quality of education. Broadly speaking, the means for bringing this about will include:

   ⇨ the development of generic skills (e.g. critical thinking, creativity, communication, etc.) in the context of Key Learning Areas and other relevant contexts

   ⇨ the use of different methods of learning and teaching to achieve learning targets

   ⇨ the development of students' own interests and potential

   ⇨ the widening of students' learning space for whole-person development

2. All students can learn, and in order to do so they are entitled to

   ⇨ learning opportunities through one curriculum framework

   ⇨ a broad and balanced curriculum in basic education

   ⇨ a broad and balanced curriculum in senior secondary education but with greater choice

3. A learner-focused approach should be adopted. We should understand their needs, learning styles, interests and abilities, in order to decide on appropriate learning, teaching and assessment strategies.

4. We should consider the contexts of Hong Kong (including historical factors and cultural heritage), build on our strengths (such as a very strong learning culture, effective whole-class teaching, high parent expectations, useful curriculum guides in kindergarden, etc.), and

improve further. The positive impact of earlier innovations (e.g. the Activity Approach, curriculum integration, Mastery Learning, the Target Oriented Curriculum(TOC)) should be connected to the latest developments. The experiences gained through the implementation of TOC during the past few years, for instance, have provided good references for the way forward in curriculum development. The TOC spirit and the positive evidence collected have all been incorporated into the development of the primary school curriculum. Among the best TOC practices used are the importance of setting clear learning targets, the emphasis on catering for individual differences and the use of cross-curricular (generic) skills, etc. On the other hand, undesirable practices, such as assessment for recording only and bias towards one particular learning and teaching approach, have been changed and improved. As the good practices from the TOC initiative have now been fully incorporated into the curriculum of primary schools, it is no longer necessary to use the specific term "TOC" anymore.

5.  We should adopt practices that will achieve a balance between:

    ⇨ different purposes

    ⇨ conflicting interests and views

        ◇ the academic, personal, economic and social goals of the curriculum

        ◇ diversified learning and teaching strategies

        ◇ diversified assessment modes for an informed learning process and/or for selection purposes. (Chapter 4)
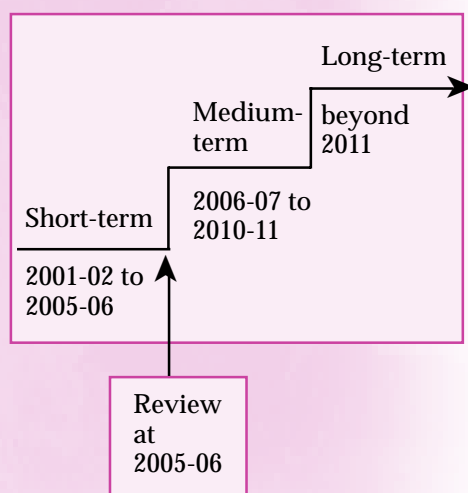
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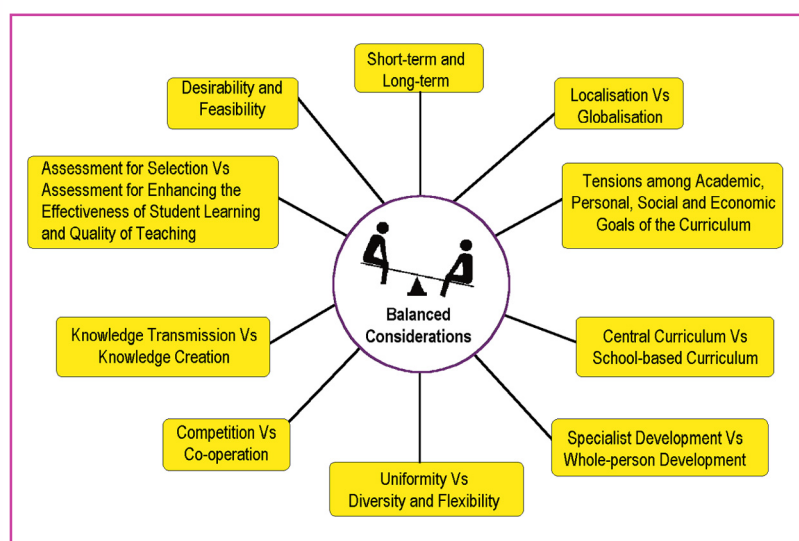


Tension
Balance between considerable factors in Curriculum Development

6. There should be a balance between what students are expected to learn in the curriculum prepared by the CDC, e.g. the curriculum framework and the learning targets, and aspects of school-based curriculum development based on the needs of the students in the schools.

⇨ School-based curriculum development does not mean that the government is abrogating its responsibilities to provide guidelines to schools. (Chapters 4 and 5)

⇨ The CDC and the government will continue to support schools and teachers through review and development of the curriculum framework, set basic requirements in time allocation, issue curriculum guides, review textbooks, and support effective learning and teaching with suitable measures. (Chapters 3,4 and 5)

⇨ As there is no single correct model of curriculum change to improve students' learning capabilities, schools should be given the space, professional autonomy and flexibility to develop their own school-based curriculum in ways best suited themselves.

7. Curriculum development is a continuous improvement process. It is unrealistic to expect to see a marked change in measurable results overnight. It takes more than a decade to produce a new generation, and the literature on the educational reforms of other governments indicates that these are long-term processes. It is quality that matters rather than speed.

8. Positive thinking with patience, celebration of small successes, and tolerance of ambiguity are essential to ensure the continuity of change.

## *Development Strategies*

We have come to the conclusion that in order to raise our students' overall learning capabilities and level of achievement, strategies are needed to steer the direction of change. The following development strategies are recommended:

1. Take gradual steps

⇨ Gradual steps

◇ try-out and review existing practices

◇ make continuous improvement

◇ prevent irreversible and/or undesirable impacts on students

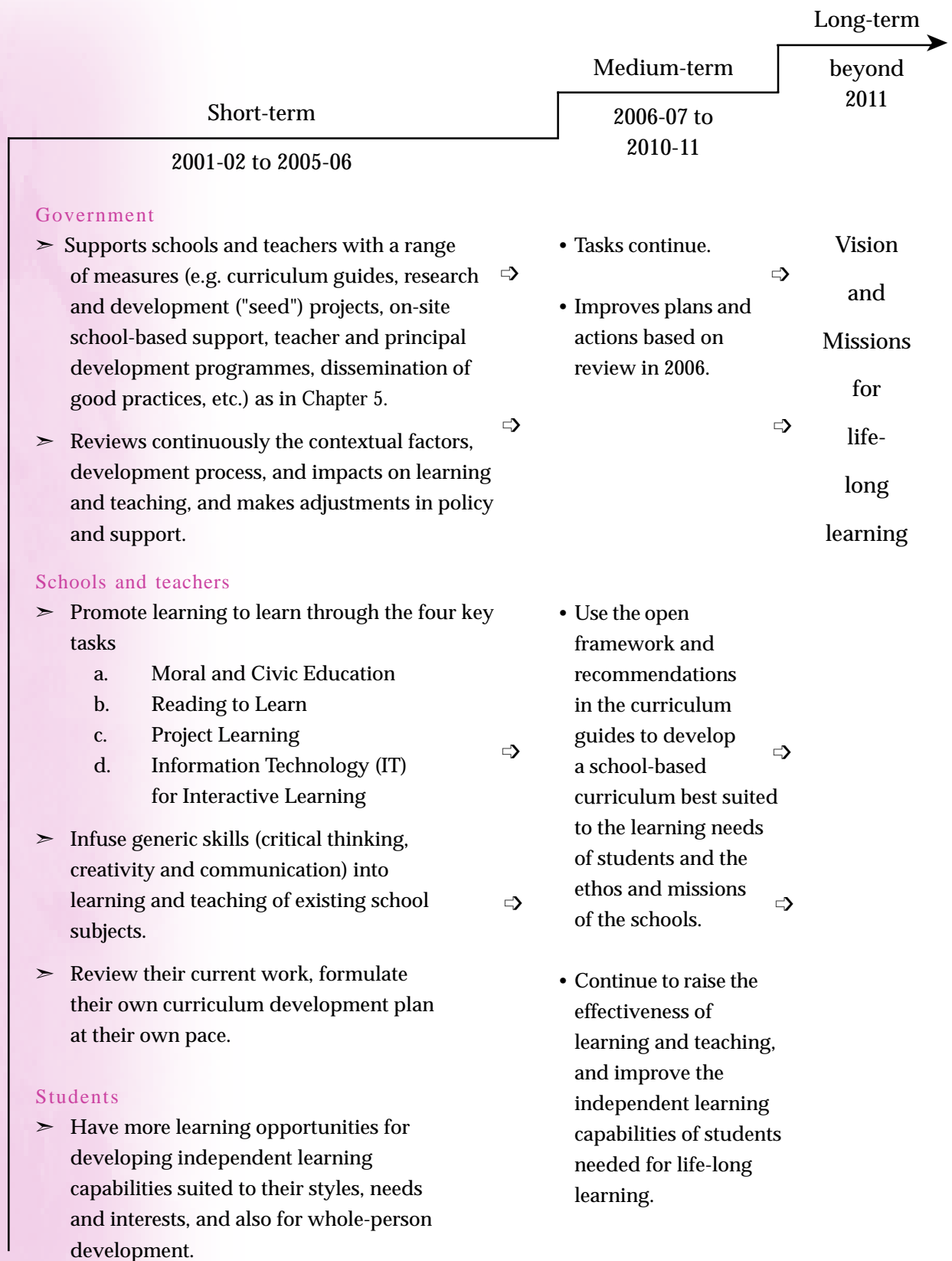Development Strategies:
Three phases including short - term, medium-term and long-term in Curriculum Development

Long-term

Medium-term | beyond 2011

Short-term | 2006-07 to 2010-11

2001-02 to 2005-06

Review at 2005-06

⇨ Gradual changes

  ◇ give all parties (e.g. teachers, government, teacher educators, parents) time to build up the necessary capacity (knowledge, skills, commitment) for change

  ◇ coordinate and focus efforts on improving the quality of student learning

⇨ A ten-year plan has been proposed, with 2001-02 to 2005-06 as the short-term phase, and 2006-07 to 2010-11 as the medium-term phase.

⇨ From 2001-02 to 2005-06, based on their individual strengths and contexts, schools are expected to strengthen students' learning capabilities and change the school curriculum at their own pace. By 2006, schools will be ready to use their professional autonomy to strike a balance between the recommendations of the CDC's new curriculum guides and school-based curriculum development, in matters such as choice of options, contents, flexible use of time and life-wide learning opportunities.

⇨ An interim review of the progress for the period 2001-02 to 2005-06 and a new agenda for 2006-2010 are to be completed by the CDC in 2006.

⇨ From 2006-07 to 2010-11, a broad and balanced curriculum for whole-person development will be provided in schools to meet the needs for life-long learning, and to raise the quality of education further.

⇨ By 2011, we hope that our students will possess life-long learning qualities such as resourcefulness, resilience, motivation, collaboration, critical mindedness and creativity.

# Schedule for implementing the reform

| Short-term<br>2001-02 to 2005-06 | Medium-term<br>2006-07 to 2010-11 | Long-term<br>beyond 2011 |
|---|---|---|

**Government**

➢ Supports schools and teachers with a range of measures (e.g. curriculum guides, research and development ("seed") projects, on-site school-based support, teacher and principal development programmes, dissemination of good practices, etc.) as in Chapter 5.

➢ Reviews continuously the contextual factors, development process, and impacts on learning and teaching, and makes adjustments in policy and support.

⇨ • Tasks continue.

• Improves plans and actions based on review in 2006.

⇨

**Schools and teachers**

➢ Promote learning to learn through the four key tasks
   a. Moral and Civic Education
   b. Reading to Learn
   c. Project Learning
   d. Information Technology (IT) for Interactive Learning

➢ Infuse generic skills (critical thinking, creativity and communication) into learning and teaching of existing school subjects.

➢ Review their current work, formulate their own curriculum development plan at their own pace.

⇨ • Use the open framework and recommendations in the curriculum guides to develop a school-based curriculum best suited to the learning needs of students and the ethos and missions of the schools.

• Continue to raise the effectiveness of learning and teaching, and improve the independent learning capabilities of students needed for life-long learning.

⇨

**Students**

➢ Have more learning opportunities for developing independent learning capabilities suited to their styles, needs and interests, and also for whole-person development.

Vision and Missions for life-long learning

2. Accumulate experiences and build up capacity

⇨ It is more effective to generate useful experiences

   ◇ as early as possible

   ◇ through trying out ideas in practice on a small scale, reflecting on the process and the products and then improving actions

   ◇ through developing a critical mass of curriculum leaders (school teachers, principals) to foster change

than to thin out the effort on a large scale in the short run.

⇨ The capacity (knowledge, skills, application) of all parties involved is built up by accumulation, sharing, dissemination, adaptation of useful experiences and continuous improvement.

3. Work in partnership

⇨ Different parties :

   ◇ government organisations and advisory bodies

   ◇ schools, teachers and principals

   ◇ non-government organisations

   ◇ teacher education institutions

   ◇ parents

   ◇ employers

◇ professional associations

◇ media

all have different capacities to support student learning directly or via schools.

⇨ Partnership and concerted efforts are advocated for all to act together to achieve the common goals.
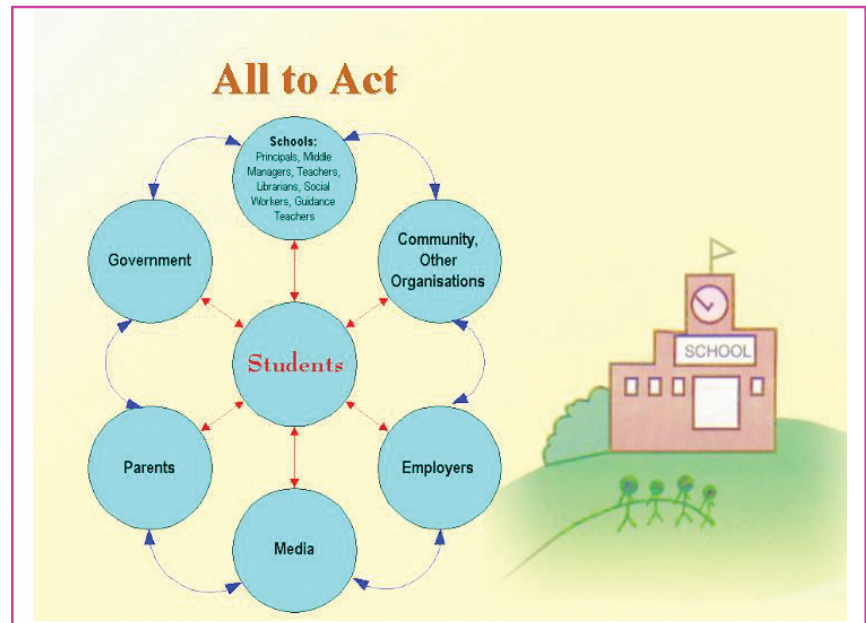


All to Act
Different parties working together for the Curriculum Reform

## *Critical Success Factors*

The understanding and support of all sectors and stakeholders with regard to the following critical success factors are needed to make the strategies of development work and have impact on student learning in the short-term phase (2001-02 to 2005-06):

• Changes in university admission to facilitate the broadening of the senior secondary school curricula

• Parents' understanding and support for schools, teachers and curriculum improvement

• Continuous support from the government to provide resources for school education

• Teacher education programmes for all teachers to be professionally trained and upgrading of teachers

• The goodwill and commitment of community organisations to provide the learning opportunities needed for the five essential learning experiences

- Employers (including the Civil Service) to take into consideration all learning experiences of students

- The media to help disseminate the good practices of schools and teachers

- Assessment reforms in the Hong Kong Examinations Authority (HKEA) and in schools are in line with curriculum change :

  ⇨ introduce Core Competency (criterion-referenced) for English Language by 2004, Chinese Language and large-entry subjects by 2005, and Mathematics by 2006 at HKCEE level

  ⇨ widen the assessment of generic skills, where applicable, through suitable question setting and broadened use of the Teacher Assessment Scheme (TAS) in school subjects

- Support for academically lower achievers