

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)420/01-02

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

LegCo Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 18 June 2001 at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

Members Present : Dr Hon YEUNG Sum (Chairman)
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon Eric LI Ka-cheung, JP
Prof Hon NG Ching-fai
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon SIN Chung-kai
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, JP
Hon LAU Kong-wah
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Dr Hon LO Wing-lok
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP

Members Absent : Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung (Deputy Chairman)
Hon David CHU Yu-lin
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon SZETO Wah
Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung

Public Officers : Item IV
Attending

Miss Janet WONG
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (3)

Mr Gordon LEUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and
Manpower (6)

Mr Matthew CHEUNG, JP
Director of Education

Mr H F LEE
Senior Assistant Director of Education (Support)

Ms Susanna S M CHEUNG
Assistant Director of Education (School-based
Management)

Item V

Mr Matthew CHEUNG, JP
Director of Education

Mr Peter P Y LEUNG
Assistant Director of Education (Special Duties)

Item VI

Mr Matthew CHEUNG, JP
Director of Education

Mr S L MA
Principal Education Officer of Education (Information
Systems)

Item VII

Miss Janet WONG
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (3)

Mr Patrick LI
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and
Manpower (2)

Mr John LEUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and
Manpower (9)

Clerk in Attendance : Miss Flora TAI
Chief Assistant Secretary (2)2

Staff in Attendance : Mr Stanley MA
Senior Assistant Secretary (2)6

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I. Confirmation of minutes
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1829/00-01]

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2001 were confirmed.

II. Endorsement of draft report of the Panel on Education to the Legislative Council
[Paper No. CB(2)1816/00-01(01)]

2. Members endorsed the draft report of the Panel on Education.

III. Paper issued since the last meeting

3. Members noted that no paper had been issued since the last meeting.

Date of special meeting

4. Members agreed to hold a special meeting on Friday, 29 June 2001 immediately after the House Committee meeting held on the same date to discuss the following items -

(a) Review of Kindergarten Subsidy Scheme;

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- (b) Library grant for kindergartens and child care centres;
- (c) Consultation document on arrangements for implementing the "Through-train" Mode; and
- (d) Secondary School Places Allocation System.

[*Post-meeting note* : The special meeting was subsequently re-scheduled for Tuesday, 3 July 2001 at 10:45 am.]

IV. Teaching force for basic education

5. At the invitation of the Chairman, Senior Assistant Director of Education (Support) (SAD of E(S)) briefed members on the salient points of the Administration's paper on the subject [Paper No. CB(2)1827/00-01(01)].

Graduate teachers in primary schools

6. With reference to her question about teaching posts in government and aided primary schools raised at the Council meeting on 9 May 2001 [Paper No. CB(2)1853/00-01(01)], Ms Emily LAU enquired about the progress of upgrading 35% of all primary teacher posts from non-graduate to graduate posts. She expressed concern that as at February 2001, 1 728 out of the 5 675 primary graduate teacher (GT) posts established up to the 2000-01 school year remained unfilled. She asked why these vacancies could not be filled by suitable candidates among the 5 365 serving teachers who had possessed recognised degree qualifications as recorded in the Teacher Survey 2000.

7. In response, SAD of E(S) said that GT posts in primary schools were progressively increased to 5 675 until the 2000-01 school year. The Administration would provide another 1 640 primary GT posts in the 2001-02 school year, bringing the total number to 7 315 i.e. achieving the 35% target. He pointed out that a serving teacher would not be offered a GT post simply because he possessed a recognised degree. A School Management Committee (SMC) had the discretion to decide, having regard to the overall interests of the school, whether to fill a GT post by a serving teacher who had completed a degree course, or to directly appoint a degree holder with teacher training in primary education to fill the post. The Administration would evaluate the impact of the policy on the quality of primary education and then decide whether to increase the proportion of GT posts further.

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8. Ms Emily LAU considered that the 35% target was too low for primary education. While she appreciated that there should be a time lapse for filling the GT posts, she anticipated that the 35% target should be achieved as soon as possible. She suggested that schools should be given a timetable for filling the vacant GT posts.

9. Director of Education (D of E) responded that the Administration would continue to encourage aided primary schools to fill their graduate posts as quickly as practicable. However, it was not considered appropriate to set a timetable at this stage. Further increase of GT posts beyond the 35% target would depend on the results of the review on the quality of primary education. He pointed out that not all serving teachers with degree qualifications were suitable for taking up a GT post. SMCs would consider other factors such as aptitude, character, potentials and experience of individual teachers in respect of their suitability to fill the GT posts. He added that starting from the 2000-01 school year, school heads and deputy heads newly recruited by aided schools should possess a recognised degree and relevant teacher training qualifications.

10. The Chairman shared the view that the 35% target was not satisfactory. He asked whether the 35% target could be achieved within the 2001-02 school year. D of E responded that the Administration had set aside sufficient resources for achieving the target, but schools should be given sufficient time to select the best candidates for GT posts. Ms Emily LAU asked whether some schools had reserved GT posts for some serving teachers who were pursuing a degree course. D of E responded in the affirmative. He said that SMCs should be more familiar with the performance and commitment of individual teachers in their schools. They should be given a free hand to appoint the suitable teachers.

Review of the provision of GT posts in schools

11. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that given the existing policy of providing 35% and 70% GT posts in primary and secondary schools respectively, there would not be adequate GT posts for about 7% and 16% serving teachers in primary and secondary schools who had already possessed degree qualifications. He considered that the Administration should increase the percentage of GT posts in primary and secondary schools with a view to encouraging more serving teachers to pursue degree or further studies on a self-financing basis. Miss Cyd HO shared the view that the provision of more GT posts would motivate serving teachers to pursue continuous professional development and lifelong learning. D of E reiterated that the Administration would review the situation before deciding on the way forward.

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12. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that the proportion of degree holders teaching in primary schools had increased from 6% in 1991 to 42% in 2000, and would probably continue to increase in the years to come. The Chairman urged the Administration to expedite its review of the provision of GT posts in primary and secondary schools in order to enhance quality of basic education.

13. Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (3) (DS(EM)3) responded that in the light of members' strong views, the Administration would review the impact of the policy on the quality of primary education shortly and then decide whether to increase the proportion of GT posts further.

14. Ms Emily LAU questioned the criteria for determining the existing targets of 35% and 70% of GT posts for primary and secondary schools respectively. She considered that the Administration should set higher targets in order to ensure the quality of the teaching force.

15. D of E responded that the Government had started to provide GT posts in primary schools since the 1994-95 school year with an original aim of achieving the 35% target in the 2007-08 school year. In 1997, the timing for achieving that target was advanced by six years to 2001-02. This was a very significant improvement in itself.

Teacher education and development

16. Miss Cyd HO expressed concern that although the qualifications of the teaching workforce in schools had improved in recent years, the overall quality of basic education appeared to exhibit a downward trend. She asked how the Administration would plan relevant education and development programmes to upgrade and make effective use of the teaching workforce.

17. D of E responded that teacher training was crucial to the delivery of quality education. Within the context of teacher education, the ultimate objective was to enhance the professional competence of teachers in ability, authority, skill, knowledge and attitude, etc. To achieve the objective, the development of core competencies defined according to the rank and job nature of teachers could serve as a basis for setting up in-service education policies and allocating resources. The articulation of core competencies and the development of a professional development framework for teachers would ensure that the essential needs of teachers at different stages of their career could be met. In this regard, the Education Department (ED) had already commissioned consultancy studies on teacher competence and career ladder which would be completed by 2002.

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18. Miss Cyd HO doubted whether the current teaching workforce could cope with the required changes in classrooms and the proposed change in paradigm as highlighted in paragraph 8 of the Administration's paper. She pointed out that given the large class size, teachers would encounter a lot of difficulties to teach students with a wide disparity in standards when the number of allocation bands was reduced. She therefore urged the Administration to set reasonable objectives and work out measures to support teachers under such circumstances.

19. D of E acknowledged that to achieve the policy commitment of providing quality basic education, teachers were now required to deal with more difficult situations and problems, such as teaching students with very diverse family backgrounds, abilities and attitudes. In the face of rapidly changing social and economic situations, teachers were now required to meet higher expectations by adapting themselves to new teaching methods, new technologies and new policy initiatives. They needed to pursue career-long professional development, keep abreast of the latest pedagogic studies and teaching methods, as well as improve their professional competence. A coherent policy on professional development embracing pre-service teacher training, induction programmes and in-service development was therefore crucial to ensure continuous enhancement of professionalism. In this connection, the Administration was organising a series of seminars to work out appropriate support measures to assist teachers in coping with the challenges and changes ahead.

Lifelong learning and recognition

20. Ms Audrey EU asked how the Administration would promote lifelong learning and continuing professional development among teachers. She pointed out that with increased workload and challenges ahead, good teachers deserved the respect of the community. She therefore urged the Administration to take an active role to promote a general awareness of the role and importance of teachers to the future of the community.

21. D of E responded that apart from encouraging teachers to pursue lifelong professional development, ED was now formulating a framework to give recognition to teachers' self-enhancement efforts and provide alternative pathways to meeting promotion requirements. He pointed out that not all serving teachers were interested in the work of a school principal. The Administration was considering other advancement opportunities such as senior or special teachers for recognising the enthusiasm of teachers and their outstanding contribution in teaching students. He pointed out that peer support and experience sharing were equally important for teachers. By way of networking, teachers had the opportunities to come together and share and learn from others' experiences. ED had started a two-year pilot District Teacher Network Scheme in March 2000

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which sought to promote outstanding teaching methods as well as action research and class observation among teachers. To promote community respect towards the teaching profession, the tenth of September had been appointed as the Teachers Day and ED had published the quarterly publication "Teachers' Digest" since April 2001 which aimed to promote public awareness of teachers' contributions and importance in education. In the long term, schools should collaborate with local communities and parents to promote community-wide understanding and respect of teachers' role in the education of the next generation and the future growth of the community.

Early childhood education

22. Ms Emily LAU suggested that the Administration should work out measures to attract quality teachers who possessed degree qualification to become kindergarten teachers. The Chairman shared the view. He said that international schools were in a better position in terms of teaching resources to ensure the quality of education. D of E responded that the Administration had raised the entry requirements for kindergarten teachers to five passes in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination from the 2001-02 school year. A pre-service Qualified Kindergarten Teacher qualification would be required from the 2003-04 school year. He stressed that given resources constraints, the kindergarten teaching workforce would have to be upgraded on an incremental basis.

V. Regulation of tutorial schools

23. At the invitation of the Chairman, Assistant Director of Education (Special Duties) (AD of E(SD)) took members through the Administration's paper on the subject [Paper No. CB(2)1827/00-01(02)].

Regulation and enforcement

24. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that many parents and students had suffered financial loss as a result of the closing down of the Hong Kong College of Management because they had made prepayment of school fees. He asked whether the collection of school fees not in accordance with the number of instalments approved by ED was in compliance with the Education Ordinance. He pointed out that there were tutorial schools offering discounts by way of vouchers to attract parents and students to pay tuition fees for a full course or a certain period in advance. Some of these tutorial schools might close down after a certain period of operation. He asked how the Administration would protect the interests of parents and student as well as to stop tutorial schools from collecting schools fees not in accordance with the approved schedule of installment.

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25. In response, AD of E(SD) said that collection of school fees by tutorial schools not in accordance with the number of instalments approved by ED would contravene with the relevant provisions of the Education Ordinance. However, tutorial schools were commercial organisations which would adopt various marketing strategies such as the provision of discount vouchers to promote businesses. Whether it would contravene with the Education Ordinance would have to be examined on a case-by-case basis.

26. AD of E(SD) further said that to safeguard the interests of parents and students, ED had adopted a high profile measure to disseminate information on registered tutorial schools and to advise parents and students to check the school registration and the approved courses and school fees before enrolling. Such information would be made available on ED's homepage by the end of June 2001. In addition, ED had set up a Central Compliance Team (CCT) in May 2000 to take enforcement action against unregistered and serious malpractices of schools contravening the Education Ordinance. The team conducted investigation and prosecution visits, gave warnings to school operators who had breached the Ordinance and instituted proceedings for cases which warrant prosecution. In particular, ED would continue to bar convicted offenders from new registration and keep under-performing operators under surveillance.

27. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong asked how the Administration could prevent operators from taking advantage of the existing loopholes in Education Ordinance. He considered that an operator or a supervisor who deliberately plan to cheat parents and students by way of prepaid vouchers or other methods should be prosecuted and punished accordingly.

28. D of E responded that ED would collaborate with the Department of Justice to examine the feasibility of amending the Education Ordinance to impose tighter control on the operation of tutorial schools. He stressed that ED would not approve the use of prepaid vouchers for payment of tuition fees. He considered that the best way to curb such malpractices was by publicity and education so that parents and students would not be misled by irresponsible operators. In this connection, ED would work closely with the Consumer Council to promote general awareness of these malpractices so as to protect the rights of students and parents.

29. Mr WONG Shing-chi agreed that it was in practice very difficult to maintain effective surveillance against malpractices of tutorial schools. He expressed support that ED should reinforce publicity to alert parents and students of possible malpractices of private schools.

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30. Mr Tommy CHEUNG expressed support that the Administration should proactively take enforcement actions against malpractices of tutorial schools. He asked how ED would supervise and regulate the performance of tutorial schools and how under-performing operators would be monitored. He also asked whether an operator who was found over-enrolling would be given a second chance in operating a tutorial school.

31. AD of E(SD) responded that CCT would conduct regular and surprise visits and inspections on the operation of tutorial schools to ensure compliance with relevant legislation. The team would conduct investigation and prosecution visits, give warnings to school operators who had breached the Education Ordinance and take appropriate surveillance actions. It would consider instituting proceedings for repeated malpractices. A tutorial school who had over-enrolled students was liable to a maximum fine of \$250,000. Depending on individual circumstances, D of E could cancel the registration of the school or the school manager.

32. Mr SIN Chung-kai remarked that tutorial schools had their roles and functions in the community. The Administration should not impose unnecessary control and introduce excessive legislation to regulate their operation.

Role and function of tutorial schools

33. Ms Emily LAU asked whether there was a correlation between the number of private tutorial schools and the quality of school education. She considered that the vast number of tutorial schools in the community had to some extent reflected the problems in school education.

34. AD of E(SD) responded that while some parents agreed that attending private tuition was not that useful, many parents believed that sending their children to private tuition could ensure fair competition with other children. Besides, there were tutorial schools providing child care services for working parents. To meet the needs of these parents, ED was collaborating with schools and the Social Welfare Department to examine the feasibility of providing caring services in schools for primary students after class.

35. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung expressed support that schools should help parents take care of their children after class, particularly working parents who were unable to arrange meals for their children. He urged the Administration to coordinate for the provision of meals to primary students in both full-day and half-day schools. In response, AD of E(SD) responded that ED would coordinate with schools and their parent-teacher associations for such purpose.

VI. Pilot Scheme on the use of information technology in schools

36. At the Chairman's request, Principal Education Officer (Information Systems) (PEO(IS)) briefed members on the results and experience of the pilot scheme on the use of information technology (IT) in schools as set out in the Administration's paper [Paper No. CB(2)1827/00-01(05)]. He highlighted the operational experiences of the pilot scheme which were beneficial to the long term development of IT facilities to aid teaching and learning activities in schools. He pointed out that many practices on the use of IT for teaching and learning had been posted on the Hong Kong Education City.net on the Internet. This information should help streamline workflow for the territory-wide implementation of IT in education.

IT development in pilot and other schools

37. Mr SIN Chung-kai expressed appreciation of the efforts of ED in developing the use of IT in school education. He, however, considered that the 2-year pilot scheme had constructed a concrete infrastructure in the selected 10 secondary and 10 primary schools for the use of IT in education but not other schools. He asked how the Administration would disseminate the knowledge and experience acquired to facilitate implementation of the use of IT in other schools.

38. PEO(IS) explained that given the additional resources required for initial setup of software and hardware components and support, it was in reality impossible to start using IT applications in all primary and secondary schools at the same time. Given the rapid advance in IT technology and the fast reduction in the cost of computer hardware, schools which opted to use IT at a later stage would be able to procure more advanced computers and associated hardware equipment at lower prices. In the light of the success of the pilot scheme, the 20 pioneering schools had identified the problems encountered in the use of IT in education as well as develop facilities for dissemination of information and learning resources to enhance communication amongst students and teachers. In brief, they provided the experience and inspiration which were useful for other schools to start using IT in teaching and learning.

39. With reference to the 8 to 1 average student to computer ratio in pilot schools, Mr SIN Chung-kai asked whether the same ratio would apply to other schools. He also asked about the targeted completion date for the review of the 5-year IT Strategy which was launched in late 1998.

40. PEO(IS) responded that the Administration would review the student to computer ratio on an on-going basis. He pointed out that the costs of computer stations were decreasing and that schools were given the flexibility to use

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surpluses from other allocations to purchase computer hardware and software. The Administration had appointed the University of Hong Kong (HKU) to review the implementation of the 5-year IT Strategy and make recommendations on the way forward. A preliminary report should be ready in August 2001 and the final report would be available in December 2001. The Administration would conduct a comprehensive review on the use of IT in education in 2003. Mr SIN Chung-kai remarked that the comprehensive review should be carried out at an earlier stage. He suggested that the Panel should be provided with the interim report for further discussion in the next legislative session.

41. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong asked about the continuity of the pilot scheme and the role of pilot schools in the future. He considered that the Administration should set out a long-term development policy so that individual schools could decide the directions for future IT development. He pointed out that some schools had successfully obtained funding support from Quality Education Fund (QEF) and were more advanced than the pilot schools in the use of IT. He cautioned that the use of IT in education should not be restricted to the development of central electronic databases made available on the Internet. In this connection, he considered that funding support provided by QEF for IT developments should be extended beyond a three-year period to meet the needs of individual schools.

42. PEO(IS) responded that the interim report of HKU would recommend as to whether the pilot scheme should be continued or discontinued. Given the established infrastructure, the 20 pilot schools should continue their pioneering role in enriching teaching and learning environments through the use of IT. PEO(IS) acknowledged that there were other schools funded by QEF which had achieved very good results in the use of IT in education. These schools should be funded to continue their development in the use of IT as appropriate.

43. Ms Emily LAU asked whether existing schools with old design had sufficient space for the provision of computer rooms. PEO(IS) responded that as the size of hardware had become much smaller, a computer station could now be installed in a standard student desk. In fact, many schools had converted selected classrooms into multi-media learning centres with at least one of them equipped with a classroom management and control system so that teachers could manage, control and monitor individual students' workstations as well as to allow interaction amongst students at designated workstations. D of E supplemented that ED would arrange to construct sufficient computer rooms in schools with old design through the School Improvement Programme (SIP).

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Long-term development of IT in education

44. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung enquired about the Administration's current plan on long-term development of IT in education, given the relatively short lifespan of computer hardware. PEO(IS) considered that after the establishment of the basic infrastructure, the Administration aimed at developing useful software to facilitate the teaching and learning process, and reduction of replacement costs of hardware in the long term. At this stage, ED had developed a central database of learning and teaching resources available at HKEducationCity.net on the Internet accessible by way of platinum III computers (or more advanced models) with appropriate browser and software. The project was funded by the QEF and its goal was to lead, serve and promote quality education and IT culture for life-long and life-wide learning through a broadband network of schools, teachers, students, parents and the public. The web-site would become the de facto information, resource and community centre for teachers, students and parents. Facilities such as I-house, I-club, etc., were now available at the website for sharing of information and experience. With the assistance of applications service providers and educational institutions and publishers, etc., a variety of interactive initiatives in education would be launched on the Internet to enable teachers to share their experience in a cost-effective manner.

VII. Creation of a Senior Principal Executive Officer Post in Education and Manpower Bureau

45. At the Chairman's invitation, DS(EM)3 briefed members on the background and justifications for creating a permanent post of Senior Principal Executive Officer (SPEO) as Principal Assistant Secretary with effect from 15 August 2001 as detailed in the paper [Paper No. CB(2)1827/00-01(06)].

46. Ms Emily LAU expressed concern about the progress of SIP and sought clarifications about the need to provide four permanent non-directorate posts to support the proposed SPEO.

47. DS(EM)3 explained that the proposed SPEO would oversee the work progress of SIP and monitor the progress of capital works to meet the Government's commitments on SIP, whole day primary schooling and senior secondary education. She pointed out that these duties were currently performed by a supernumerary SPEO post created on 15 February 2001 who was currently supported by a Senior Executive Officer and a Personal Secretary I temporarily on loan from the General Grades Office.

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48. Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower (9) supplemented that the proposed four non-directorate posts were essential to provide the necessary executive and clerical/secretarial support required to take forward the various initiatives under the purview of the proposed SPEO post. Specifically, the Chief Executive Officer and Senior Executive Officer would be responsible for liaison with departments and professional bodies/consultants, and monitoring the implementation of the initiatives.

49. Members raised no further queries on the proposal. The Chairman informed the meeting that the financial proposal on the creation of a SPEO post in the Education and Manpower Bureau would be considered by the Establishment Subcommittee at its meeting on 20 June 2001.

VIII. Any other business

50. Members noted the report of the Subcommittee on increase in post-secondary education opportunities [LC Paper No. CB(2)1841/00-01].

51. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:40 pm.

Legislative Council Secretariat

17 November 2001