

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1829/00-01
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

LegCo Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 23 April 2001 at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

- Members Present** : Dr Hon YEUNG Sum (Chairman)
Hon David CHU Yu-lin
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 SZETO Wah
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Dr Hon LO Wing-lok
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
- Member Attending** : Hon NG Leung-sing
- Members Absent** : Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon Eric LI Ka-cheung, JP
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung
- Public Officers Attending** : Item IV
Mrs Fanny LAW, JP
Secretary for Education and Manpower

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

Mr Matthew CHEUNG, JP
Director of Education

Mr Anthony K H TONG
Deputy Director of Education

Item V

Mrs Fanny LAW, JP
Secretary for Education and Manpower

Mr Raymond YOUNG, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (2)

Ms Michelle LI
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and
Manpower (1)

Item VI

Mr Joseph LAI, JP
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 K S LEE
Assistant Director of Education (Planning and Research)

Item VII

Mr Joseph LAI, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (3)

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

Mr Matthew CHEUNG, JP
Director of Education

Ms Lesley Y C WONG
Assistant Director of Education (Finance)

Item VIII and IX

Mr Joseph LAI, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (3)

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

Mr Matthew CHEUNG, JP
Director of Education

Mrs Betty C H IP
Assistant Director of Education (Education Services)

Item X

Dr CHOW Ming-kuen
Chairman, Hong Kong Examinations Authority

Mr CHOI Chee-cheong
Secretary, Hong Kong Examinations Authority

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)1324/00-01]

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2001 were confirmed.

II. Information paper issued since the last meeting

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

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[Appendices I and II to LC Paper No. CB(2)1317/00-01]

3. The Chairman suggested that members should inform the Clerk after the meeting if they wished to propose any discussion item for the next regular meeting to be held at 4:30 pm on 21 May 2001.

[*Post-meeting note* : With the concurrence of the Chairman, the following items were scheduled for discussion at the next meeting -

- (a) Additional support to schools with a large intake of students of lower academic ability;
- (b) Personnel Information Management System;
- (c) Post Secondary College (Amendment) Bill; and
- (d) Switch to use English as medium of instruction at Secondary Four and above by some Chinese-medium schools.]

IV. Education issues in the Report of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China (HKSAR) in the light of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)

[Report of HKSAR in the light of ICESCR, Paper Nos. CB(2)1317/00-01(01) and (02)]

School education for children of ethnic minorities

4. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong referred to the extract of the submission of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) [Paper No. CB(2)1317/00-01(01)] and

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urged the Administration to ascertain whether children of ethnic minorities, such as the Nepalese, were unable to commence primary school education because of language difficulties. He recalled that some Pakistan children particularly girls in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long were found not attending schools because of language difficulties.

5. Director of Education (DE) queried the allegation that children of ethnic minorities were unable to attend primary school because of language problem. He suspected that the allegation was based on isolated cases of non-attendance of school under very exceptional circumstances. DE informed members that there was a total of seven government or aided schools providing basic education for non-Cantonese speaking children of ethnic minorities, who were mainly children of immigrants from Pakistan, India, Nepal, and the Philippines. These schools currently accommodated a total of 3 690 students of different ethnic minorities and had the capacity to operate 23 more classes to meet additional demand. Alternatively, children of ethnic minorities had the discretion to apply for enrolment in ordinary schools. Besides, a 60-hour induction programme organised by charity organisations about Hong Kong's environment was offered to children of ethnic minorities. As regards school places in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long, DE said that the Islamic Primary School in Tuen Mun was one of the seven schools tasked to enrol non-Cantonese speaking children of ethnic minorities.

6. Mr SIN Chung-kai enquired whether the Administration would consider assigning schools for non-Cantonese speaking children in each of the 18 districts. He considered that an additional school should be made available in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long for ethnic minorities.

7. DE responded that the Administration would review the need for additional schools in the light of the findings of the Population Census 2001. He pointed out that the majority of the ethnic minorities from Pakistan, India and Nepal were living in Tuen Mun, Yuen Long and Yau Ma Tei. The Administration would flexibly redeploy the resources to enhance the cost-effectiveness in the use of educational resources. He added that the Administration was considering the provision of additional school places for non-Cantonese speaking children in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long.

8. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that it was likely that some ethnic minorities might not be aware that parents in Hong Kong were required by law to send their children to schools. He urged the Administration to liaise with EOC to ascertain whether there were any children of ethnic minorities who did not attend schools because of language difficulties. Mr CHEUNG and Ms Emily LAU also urged the Administration to promote parents' awareness of their legal obligations in respect of the provision of nine-year compulsory education to children.

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9. DE said that he shared members' view about the importance of promoting parents' understanding of the statutory requirement of providing a nine-year compulsory education for all children. He assured members that ED would reinforce contacts with communities of ethnic minorities, and collaborate with EOC, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and Consuls in Hong Kong to assist children of ethnic minorities to attend schools. He added that because of their cultural values, some ethnic minorities might not consider it important for girls to attend schools.

10. Deputy Director of Education (DDE) supplemented that ED had held regular meetings with the seven public sector schools and NGOs providing educational services to ethnic minorities, and would actively follow up cases of non-attendance to schools including those reported by the media. On financial support, primary and secondary schools were allocated a one-off grant of \$2,750 and \$4,080 respectively for each student of ethnic minorities enrolled. These schools were encouraged to use funds from other sources to enhance the quality of teaching and learning for children of ethnic minorities.

11. Mr SZETO Wah pointed out that children of ethnic minorities might be absent from school for a dislike of the medium of instruction (MOI) adopted by the schools. DE shared Mr SZETO's view, saying that schools for ethnic minorities should provide teaching on English, Cantonese and their native languages to meet the needs of different ethnic minorities, such as Hindi and Urdu for Indian and Pakistani students. Mr TSANG Yok-sing said that as a school supervisor, he received no complaints from ethnic minorities on provision of school places. However, many parents had complaints about children's low attainments in schools which adopted non-native languages as MOI. He agreed that children of ethnic minorities would have a better academic performance if mother tongue was used as MOI.

12. Ms Emily LAU referred to a relevant survey conducted by Yang Memorial Methodist Social Services (YMMSS) in August 2000 and asked about the Administration's remedial measures to eliminate the difficulties encountered by children of ethnic minorities in pursuit of school places. According to the survey, there were about 20 000 South Asian youngsters who should attend schools in Hong Kong and that about 40% of the respondents had been waiting for six to 12 months before they could be allocated a school place. With only 3 690 of them attending the seven government and aided schools, Ms LAU asked about the school placement for the remaining majority.

13. DE responded that ED had discussed with the seven government and aided schools about the findings of the YMMSS, and found that many parents preferred

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their children to be enrolled in schools in the vicinity of their residence. As a result, these children would have to wait much longer before places in the schools of their choices were available. ED would continue to collaborate with schools, NGOs and local communities to facilitate school attendance of these children, despite the difficulties in approaching and liaising with their parents. DDE supplemented that the majority of these children had successfully integrated into ordinary schools. The remaining non-Cantonese speaking children would be placed in one of the seven government and aided schools.

14. Given the fact that some children of ethnic minorities had to wait for months before enrolment to a school, Ms Emily LAU asked whether the Administration would admit that HKSAR Government had failed to meet the requirement of ICESCR on provision of education to ethnic minorities. She asked whether ED could guarantee that every child of ethnic minorities would be allocated a school place.

15. DE responded that he did not agree that HKSAR Government had failed to meet its obligations under ICESCR. He stressed that the Administration had provided sufficient school places and placement services for children of ethnic minorities. As the seven government or aided schools had the capacity to operate 23 additional classes on demand, HKSAR Government should not be blamed for failing to meet the requirement on the basis of some isolated cases of non-attendance to school. In fact, ED was committed to providing all non-Chinese speaking children with a school place.

16. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the Administration should have contacted EOC to ascertain why it had stated that children of certain ethnic minorities were unable to commence their primary school education because of language difficulties. At his request, the Administration agreed to approach EOC and to revert to the Panel on the matter. The Chairman pointed out that the Administration had the duty to follow up any case of non-attendance to schools. At his request, the Administration agreed to provide a paper setting out the number of cases of non-attendance handled, the Administration's measures in handling these cases; and the number of children of ethnic minorities in need of schooling.

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Integrated education for students with disabilities

17. Ms Emily LAU referred to the extract of the submission of the Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor (HKHRM) [Paper No. CB(2)1317/00-01(02)] and said that the Government had not mentioned its steps to ensure that schools built prior to May 1997 would be accessible to children with disabilities, and that the attitudes of some school administrators could be a barrier to the enrolment of students with

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disabilities in schools. Ms LAU asked whether this would constitute non-compliance with ICESCR.

18. Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM) stressed that the Administration's policy was to encourage and assist children with special needs to receive education in ordinary schools as far as possible. She pointed out that HKSAR Government should not be regarded as acting in contravention with ICESCR due to some school administrators' attitude towards enrolment of students with disabilities in schools. She anticipated that the Code of Practice on Education to be issued by EOC in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Ordinance would reinforce public education and promote the awareness of equal opportunities for students with disabilities among the teaching force. She assured members that the Administration would continue to put in efforts and resources to raise public consciousness and promote anti-discrimination measures in school.

19. Ms Emily LAU enquired about the progress of implementation of integrated education for children with disabilities and the number of students with disabilities in Hong Kong.

20. DE responded that apart from a number of non-recurrent and recurrent grants, schools providing integrated education would be allocated with one additional teacher for taking on every five students with disabilities, and a further teacher assistant for every eight students with disabilities. Schools with less than five students with disabilities would be assisted by the advisory services and support provided by ED's inspectors on a regular basis. In addition, the School Improvement Programme which sought to improve access and facilities for accommodating students with disabilities would be completed by 2004-05 school year. The Programme covered 540 primary and secondary schools at a budget of \$10 billion. He added that there were about 7 000 to 8 000 students with disabilities and the policy objective was to provide them with equal opportunities to enrol in ordinary schools. In this connection, the Administration aimed to increase the number of schools providing integrated education at a rate of 25 per year and there would be a total of 140 schools joining the Integrated Education Programme in the 2004-05 school year.

V. Financial proposal on support measures to increase post-secondary education opportunities

[Paper No. CB(2)1317/00-01(03)]

21. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered that the Chief Executive's policy commitment of progressively increasing post-secondary education opportunities for 60% of senior secondary school leavers to have access to tertiary education

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had far-reaching implications on the education system in Hong Kong. Mr CHEUNG referred to his paper [Paper No. CB(2)369/00-01(01)] tabled at the meeting and requested the Administration to provide a written response to the questions set out in his paper. Given the fact that the discussion time was very limited, Mr CHEUNG suggested that discussion on the item should be deferred. In the light that the financial proposals contained many policy issues which needed to be considered by members carefully, the Chairman suggested and members agreed that a Subcommittee should be formed under the Panel to discuss the Administration proposals to support the increase in post-secondary education.

22. SEM expressed support for the establishment of a Subcommittee to examine the subject in detail and acknowledged that the proposals had wide and long-term policy implications. She pointed out that the Administration's paper intended to introduce the conceptual framework and the basic principles adopted by the Administration to increase post-secondary educational opportunities in the next 10 years. The proposals and strategies for implementation would have to be carefully examined and planned. In brief, to foster the development of a diversified higher education system in Hong Kong, as well as to widen students' choices and increase their exposure, the Administration would endeavour to encourage local and non-local institutions to offer more post-secondary educational opportunities in Hong Kong or overseas. As the first step, the Administration would seek the Finance Committee's approval for funds to support existing and new education providers to increase supply of post-secondary places in Hong Kong, including on-line learning opportunities. She stressed that the Administration would address members' questions in a further paper to be submitted to the Subcommittee.

[*Post-meeting note* : The first meeting of the Subcommittee on increase in post-secondary education opportunities was subsequently held on 15 May 2001.]

VI. Two-mode teaching

[Paper No. CB(2)1317/00-01(04)]

23. At the invitation of the Chairman, Assistant Director of Education (Planning and Research) (ADE(P&R)) briefed members on the salient points of the Administration's paper on "Study on enrichment of language learning environment (the Study)".

24. Ms Emily LAU asked about the reason for revising the name of the Study from "Two-mode instruction in secondary schools" to "Enrichment of language learning environment". ADE(P&R) explained that the Steering Committee considered that the new name reflected more accurately the objective of the Study.

Objective and monitoring of the Study

25. Mr Tommy CHEUNG requested the Administration to elaborate on the objective of the Study and the mechanism in place to ensure smooth and successful implementation of the Study for both English-medium (EMI) and Chinese-medium (CMI) schools.

26. In response, ADE(P&R) said that the Study aimed to explore effective support programmes to help students adapt to the English-medium learning environment in EMI schools. It also sought to explore an effective enrichment programme to help students in CMI schools increase their exposure to English. For EMI schools, a survey would be conducted to identify good supporting measures adopted by the existing 112 EMI schools. The good practices would be tried out by three to five interested schools under a more structured support programme for their Secondary one students in the 2001-02 and 2002-03 school year. The two cohorts of students under study would be followed longitudinally as they moved up to higher forms. The support programmes, if proved effective, would be disseminated to other EMI schools. For CMI schools, enrichment programmes consisting of a series of teaching modules (about 30 for each of the two levels) written and taught in English on cross-curricular themes or selected topics from some key learning areas would be introduced concurrently to students at Secondary two and three in the 2001-02 school year. These students would be followed as they proceeded to higher forms so as to gauge the full effect. About 10 - 15 CMI schools would be selected to participate in the Study. The schools would take part in programme development and tryout.

27. ADE(P&R) further said that participating EMI and CMI schools would be visited by research teams regularly to ensure that the respective support and enrichment programmes were implemented properly. An in-depth qualitative study would be conducted to collect information on the implementation process and the impact on students' learning process. Achievement tests and questionnaires on the social and affective domains would be administered and class observations would also be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the support measures for EMI schools and enrichment programmes for CMI schools.

Timetable and selection of schools

28. Mr Tommy CHEUNG noted with concern that the first and second report would not be completed until October 2002 and September 2003 respectively. He asked whether it was possible to expedite the process because there was an urgent need to improve the English standard of students which was found to be rather poor.

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29. ADE(P&R) responded that the existing 112 EMI schools should have developed some support measures to help their Secondary one students switch to learn from a Chinese to an English medium of instruction. The survey on existing support measures adopted by the 112 EMI schools would identify the good practices which would then be disseminated to other schools as soon as practicable. As regards CMI schools, the Administration had introduced a series of supporting measures including additional English teachers and the Enhanced Native-speaking English Teachers Scheme since the implementation of Mother Tongue Teaching in the 1998-99 school year. The enrichment programmes would be developed on a cross-curricular basis. The aim was to enable students to become biliterate and trilingual.

30. In response to Mr Tommy CHEUNG's further enquiry about the selection of CMI schools for the enrichment programme, ADE(P&R) said that all CMI schools would be invited to apply for participating in the Study. The Steering Committee comprising academics and school principals set up by ED in December 2000 would consider the applications based on the following criteria -

- (a) whether the target student groups would be able to benefit from the programme, having regard to their language ability;
- (b) merits of the school's proposed implementation plan;
- (c) teachers' capability;
- (d) adequacy of the support strategies/measures; and
- (e) school's commitment to programme development and tryout.

ADE(P&R) added that schools selected had the discretion to decide the appropriate class(es) of Secondary two and three students to participate in the enrichment programme. Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (3) (DS/EM(3)) supplemented that the above criteria were set on the premises that student's acquisition of subject knowledge would not be affected as a result of their school's participation in the enrichment programme.

Impact of a 3-band system

31. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered that the Study was proposed mainly as a result of the implementation of the new Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) mechanism in 2001. He pointed out that since the previous 5-band system had been replaced by a 3-band system, the new SSPA had created a greater

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diversity of students' learning and language abilities in schools. However, he held the view that enhancing students' language ability would not resolve all the problems arising from implementing the new SSPA mechanism. He considered that the Administration should conduct a comprehensive study on the adverse impacts of the new SSPA mechanism on school operation and devise remedial measures as appropriate.

32. DS/EM(3) said that the Administration had provided additional resources for schools to cope with problems arising from a greater diversity of students' language ability as a result of implementing the new SSPA system in 2001. DE added that ED had introduced a number of measures including the development of teaching kits and the provision of remedial classes to facilitate effective learning and teaching in schools. In addition, the Curriculum Development Council was reviewing the school curriculum with a view to providing schools with a flexible curriculum framework and key elements in different learning areas. By doing so, schools would be able to devise school-based curriculum to suit the interests and abilities of their students.

Support to participating schools

33. Ms Emily LAU referred to paragraph 10 of the paper and asked whether the Administration would provide participating schools with the necessary resources. She expressed concern that the workload of teachers would be increased since participating schools was required to set aside a certain percentage of teaching time (about 5% at Secondary two and 7% at Secondary three) for teaching the modules of the enrichment programme.

34. ADE(P&R) responded that the Administration was aware of the heavy workload of serving teachers. Schools would be invited to join the Study on a voluntary basis and that schools selected would be expected to re-deploy its teaching resources, redesign their class schedules and support strategies for implementing the enrichment programme. ED had set aside \$3 million for implementing and assessing the outcome of the Study and would co-ordinate expert support for participating schools. DE supplemented that the teaching time required for the modules of the enrichment programme would be within, and not in addition to the teaching time originally allocated for the subjects concerned.

35. Mr WONG Sing-chi asked how the Administration would assist participating schools to conduct the enrichment programme. He pointed out that CMI schools adopting English as the medium of instruction for its Secondary four classes should also be provided with additional resources to organise support programmes for its Secondary four students.

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36. ADE(P&R) responded that participating EMI and CMI schools would be visited by research teams regularly to ensure that the respective programmes were implemented properly. A briefing session on the Study would be organised for schools on 28 April 2001. He took note of Mr WONG Sing-chi's view on the need to provide additional resources for CMI schools to operate support programmes for Secondary four students.

Review of language policy

37. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that the Administration should conduct a comprehensive review of its policy in language education. He considered that the development of language ability and a review of curriculum in primary schools were far more important. Instead of conducting the Study which would take years to complete, the Administration should consider implementing immediate measures to improve the language ability of primary and secondary school students. He considered that the support programmes identified for EMI schools and the enrichment programme developed for CMI schools should only be adopted by individual schools on a discretionary basis.

38. DS/EM(3) and DE agreed that good language teaching at primary school education would provide a solid foundation for students to learn in secondary schools. They cited a number of measures which were being used and would be implemented to enhance students' and teachers' language ability in primary and secondary schools. DS/EM(3) added that the Administration had commissioned the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) to conduct a comprehensive review on language strategy with a view to making recommendations to Government on areas of improvement. SCOLAR would consult all stakeholders shortly and would submit the report in 2002. The Chairman requested and the Administration undertook to arrange for the SCOLAR to consult the Panel in due course.

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39. Mr SIN Chung-kai suggested that phonetics should be taught for students at primary one and two classes. DS/EM(3) agreed to relay Mr SIN's suggestion to SCOLAR for consideration.

VII. Proposed creation of a permanent chief treasury accountant in the Education Department

[Paper No. CB(2)1317/00-01(05)]

40. Members noted the proposal to create one permanent post of Chief Treasury Accountant in the Finance Division of ED. Members did not raise any query on the proposal.

VIII. Financial proposal for promoting parent education

[Paper No. CB(2)1317/00-01(06)]

41. Members noted the proposals to strengthen parent education. DE said that the Administration would actively approach parents, who either knew little about the importance of parental influence on children development or who, for various reasons, did not have the time to attend parent education programmes, through organising parent education programmes in the workplace and other outreaching programmes. He added that prospective parents would also be approached through co-operation with the Hong Kong Family Planning Association.

42. Ms Emily LAU suggested that the Administration should educate young persons about the responsibility of parenthood and the duty as parents to create a good learning environment for their children. DE noted Ms LAU's suggestion and said that ED would collaborate with the Immigration Department to approach couples who were about to get married at Marriage Registries.

IX. Financial proposal for school-based uniformed/youth group enhancement scheme

[Paper No. CB(2)1317/00-01(07)]

43. Mr WONG Sing-chi asked whether activities organised by uniform groups (UGs) established by NGOs would be funded by ED. DE responded that apart from school-based units, district-based UG units established by NGOs, the target participants of which were mostly students, would also be funded.

44. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong asked how the Administration would achieve its long-term objective of providing all students with the opportunity to join at least one UG in their school life, given that there were some 500 000 students in secondary schools.

45. DE responded that about 20% of primary schools and 10% of secondary schools at present did not even have a UG unit. This was not in line with the education reform proposal to offer more life-wide learning opportunities for students, which would help students develop positive values and acquire leadership skills. To realise the long-term objective of providing all students with the opportunity to join at least one UG in their school life, the Administration would, apart from providing appropriate funding support, endeavour to foster sufficient leaders to lead UGs. For such purpose, ED would launch publicity campaigns to recruit potential students and to provide them with training on

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generic or leadership skills which would be recognised by all UGs. ED aimed to groom leaders from amongst parents, pre-service teacher trainees and university students over a period of three school years starting from 2001-02.

X. Any other business

Recent incidents of error on examination papers

Preventive measures

46. The Chairman welcomed the Chairman and Secretary of the Hong Kong Examinations Authority (HKEA) to the meeting. He explained that there was an urgent need to discuss the recent incidents of error in examination papers of the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination in the face of the impending Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) in May 2001.

47. At the Chairman's invitation, Secretary of HKEA said that it was an unfortunate incident. He said that HKEA had a proven system on question paper development to prevent errors in public examination papers. The chief examiners and subject officers were responsible for proof-reading examination papers and for papers involving calculations, an independent assessor not involved in any of the previous steps was appointed to work through all the questions as if he/she were a candidate.

48. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed dissatisfaction that HKEA had failed to detect the error in the pure mathematics examination paper even after an error had been found in the history examination paper. He considered that HKEA had not taken adequate measures to prevent recurrence of similar incident.

49. Secretary of HKEA acknowledged that he could not disclaim all the responsibilities. After an error was found in the history examination paper, he had asked subject officers to proof read the examination papers again, but had not specifically asked them to work through the papers involving calculations. He informed members that after the pure mathematics incident, he had issued a letter to all subject officers instructing them to proof read and work through the papers again, where applicable, before the examinations.

Follow-up to affected candidates

50. The Chairman of HKEA informed members that answers for the pure mathematics question concerned would be marked on how the candidates tackled the question rather than on whether they got the right answer. As the error was in

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the second paper of the examination, it was intended to use the candidates' performance in the first paper to adjust the mark for the second paper. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong asked whether candidates would be given the choice to re-sit the examination or accept the marks on paper II derived from their marks in paper I of the examination. He pointed out that candidates who did not believe that the question was wrongly set could have spent more time than those who switched to try another question right away or simply had not tried that question. He suggested that affected candidates should have the option to re-sit the examination for the sake of fairness.

51. The Chairman of HKEA said that HKEA would consider Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's suggestion. He clarified that at the press briefing conducted last Saturday, he had only said that a re-examination of the subject was not preferred, but would be considered as a last resort. He had not ruled out the option of allowing candidates to re-sit the examination. Secretary of HKEA added that re-examination of the subject would have much wider implications. HKEA would consult the relevant subject committee before taking a final decision.

52. Mr WONG Sing-chi enquired about HKEA's measures to ease candidates' psychological pressure and anxieties, particularly those who had to attend other examinations soon. He suggested that HKEA should co-ordinate government departments to provide counselling service for candidates in need.

53. Secretary of HKEA said that he had over the radio advised candidates to remain calm and assured them that HKEA would strive not to let a similar incident happen again. He called upon parents, teachers and all relevant parties to assist the affected candidates to concentrate in preparing for the examinations remained to be held. He would consider liaising with the Social Welfare Department to ascertain whether a hotline counselling service could be provided for the affected candidates.

54. Ms Emily LAU asked whether HKEA would take any disciplinary action against person(s) who should bear responsibility for the incidents. The Chairman of HKEA responded that under the circumstances, HKEA should first of all work out fair and reasonable remedies for candidates who were affected by the incidents and take immediate precautions against any recurrence. The Chairman of HKEA further informed the meeting that HKEA would establish a special committee to examine the causes of the errors, as well as to review the existing system which had been in operation for 24 years. Disciplinary action would be considered when the special committee had submitted its report after the investigation.

55. Ms Emily LAU suggested that HKEA should invite independent persons to join the special committee to examine the causes of the incidents; and that the

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results of the report of the special committee should be released to the public. The Chairman of HKEA undertook to consider Ms LAU's suggestion.

56. The Chairman was of the view that it was very harsh to require candidates to concentrate on the subject again after they had completed the relevant public examination. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that while he appreciated the possible pressure on candidates, he queried the reliability of correlating candidates' performance in paper I and paper II of the examination.

57. Secretary of HKEA said that the coefficient of correlation between paper I and paper II of pure mathematics had hitherto been about 0.85. The Chairman of HKEA added that while the correlation was not perfect, the proposed scheme of adjustment was quite acceptable in the field of examination. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong maintained that to be fair and reasonable, HKEA should give affected candidates a choice to re-sit the examination. Dr LO Wing-lok expressed a similar view, saying that the impact of an error on candidates might vary.

58. The Chairman of HKEA said that HKEA would consider the matter carefully having regard to possible practical problems which might arise if re-sitting the examination was allowed. For instance, university admission programme which would start soon might be disrupted because it was unlikely that the results of re-examination could meet the schedule of university admission programme.

59. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong referred to a newspaper reporting that the question concerned was copied from a textbook on the subject. Secretary of HKEA said that the setter of the question had declared that he/she had not copied the question from any textbook. He added that the question concerned was a typical one in pure mathematics and had appeared frequently in HKEA's past question papers.

60. There being no further business, the meeting ended at 7:15 pm.