

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)506/00-01
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

LegCo Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Tuesday, 31 October 2000 at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

- Members Present** : Dr Hon YEUNG Sum (Chairman)
Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon David CHU Yu-lin
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Prof Hon NG Ching-fai
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon SIN Chung-kai
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
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
Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung
Dr Hon LO Wing-lok
Hon WONG Sing-chi
- Members Absent** : Hon Eric LI Ka-cheung, JP
- Public Officers Attending** : Hon Antony LEUNG Kam-chung, GBS, JP
Chairman, Education Commission

Mrs Fanny LAW
Secretary for Education and Manpower

Mr Matthew CHEUNG
Director of Education

Mr Raymond YOUNG
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower

Mr CHENG Man-yiu
Assistant Director of Education (Education Services)

Mr K S LEE
Assistant Director of Education (Planning and Research)

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

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2000 were confirmed.

II. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[Appendix I to LC Paper No. CB(2)120/00-01]

2. The Chairman suggested that members should inform the Clerk of any items they wished to propose for discussion at the regular meeting scheduled for Monday, 20 November 2000 and the Clerk would follow up with the Administration accordingly.

(Post-meeting note : With the concurrence of the Chairman, the meeting to be held on 20 November 2000 will discuss the following items -

- a) School-based management;

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- b) Modification to Direct Subsidy Scheme;
- c) Education (Amendment) Bill; and
- d) Composite Furniture and Equipment Grant.)

III. Reform proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)120/00-01 (01) and (02)]

3. The Chairman welcomed Mr Antony LEUNG, Chairman of the Education Commission (EC), and representatives of the Administration to the meeting.

4. Members noted that the Administration had provided a paper setting out its planned implementation timetable and detailed arrangements for the education reform measures put forward by the EC. Members also noted the written submission from the Education Convergence.

5. At the Chairman's invitation, the Chairman of EC said that the report entitled "Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong" was compiled after three rounds of consultation. In his Policy Address on 11 October 2000, the Chief Executive (CE) had announced that the Administration had accepted all the reform proposals put forward by the EC and undertook to provide necessary resources for their implementation. He stressed that the main focus of the education reform was on the academic structure, the curricula, the assessment mechanisms and the interface between different stages of education. The spirit of the reform proposals was to create more room for frontline educators to concentrate on their core functions of teaching and learning. These reform proposals also sought to provide a diversified and multi-channel education system for people to pursue life-long learning in their areas of interests. The ultimate target was to enable students to have all-round development.

6. Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM) said that the education reform proposals put forward by the EC covered all stages of education from early childhood education to continuing education and implementation of the proposals would have to be carried out incrementally. The implementation timetable of the reform proposals was outlined in the leaflet entitled "planned implementation timetable for the education reform" which was tabled at the last meeting on 13 October 2000 [LC Paper No. CB(2)276/00-01].

7. The Chairman invited questions from members on the reform measures for the education system. The gist of discussion was summarized in the following paragraphs.

Enhancing learning opportunities

8. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong declared that he was a member of EC and was involved in writing parts of the report. Mr CHEUNG expressed concern about the financial implications of providing tertiary education to 60% of secondary school leavers, which would mean an increase of 27 000 tertiary places in the next 10 years. He pointed out that the additional \$2 billion recurrent expenditure was budgeted for the various education initiatives as set out in the CE's Policy Address 2000, and not for the proposed increase in tertiary places which was not mentioned in the EC's report. Mr CHEUNG understood that the majority of those additional tertiary places would be offered on a self-financing basis. He cautioned that since the students enrolled in tertiary programmes funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC) were required to pay only 18% of the programme costs, the 27 000 students who would pursue the new tertiary programmes might consider it unfair to pay the full costs in the future.

9. SEM responded that the disparity in subsidizing tertiary programmes offered by different institutions was not a new phenomenon. She pointed out that the level of fees charged by private schools were in general higher than those of public sector schools. Many existing diploma and associate degree programmes were also operated on a self-financed basis. Given the limited resources on education, the demand for places in UGC-funded tertiary education institutions would inevitably exceed supply. The Government had already committed to ensure that no one would be deprived of the opportunity to receive education or continuing education for a lack of financial means. Needy parents and students could apply for full remission of the programme fees, or low-interest loans or non-means-tested loans provided by the Students Financial Assistance Agency or other institutions.

10. SEM further said that materialization of the policy objective in the long-term would depend on the supply and demand of tertiary places in the next ten years, as well as the support of the community as a whole. An Education Reform Liaison Team, consisting of experienced frontline educators and education experts, had been established to liaise widely with schools and major stakeholders in the education community to ensure that the reform measures were effectively implemented.

11. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed support for the policy objective of providing tertiary education to 60% of young persons. However, he maintained that the substantial difference in level of fees between Government-subsidised and self-financed programmes might create a potential source of conflicts between parents, students and Government in the future. He questioned the rationale for

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giving 82% subsidy to UGC-funded tertiary programmes and nil to other non-UGC-funded tertiary programmes. He pointed out that the 27 000 students would be required to pay full costs because their academic achievements in public examinations were slightly lower than their counterparts enrolled in UGC-funded programmes. These students might consider that they were being unfairly treated. Mr CHEUNG added that such disparity in subsidizing tertiary programmes at present had not posed a potential conflict because so far the proportion of non-subsidized programmes was still a minority. It would not be the case when those 27 000 tertiary places were provided. Referring to paragraph 30 of the CE's Policy Address, he urged the Administration to widely consult the stakeholders' views and carefully plan the course of implementation to avoid possible conflicts in the future.

12. SEM responded that the Administration would consider Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's views and would implement the proposal in a cautious and gradual manner. She pointed out that the target of providing 60% of students with tertiary education would have to be adjusted in the light of the learning ability of students, the manpower demands of the community and the community's commitment to the nurturing of talents in the next ten years. The Government would make use of the additional \$2 billion recurrent budget mainly to improve basic education so that students would be better prepared for tertiary education.

13. The Chairman of EC said that although EC had not discussed the target of providing tertiary education for 60% of secondary school leavers, he personally supported setting such a target. He explained that it was necessary to nurture the necessary talents for the growth of the community in the face of a knowledge-based economy. He pointed out that Hong Kong was lagging behind some developed countries such as the United States and even some Asian cities such as Shanghai and Beijing where more than 60% of secondary school graduates were provided with tertiary education. In order to maintain her competitive edge in the course of time, Hong Kong had to catch up in the next ten years. The Chairman of EC said that with an increase of 27 000 tertiary places, the Government would have to review its subsidy policy and re-deploy resources for tertiary education in the light of implementation experience. However, Government had no obligation to provide free tertiary education to all students since receiving tertiary education was not a basic human right.

14. Mr SZETO Wah said that the provision of tertiary education to 60% of students had not been discussed in the light of the reform proposals for improving basic education. He suggested that the Administration should re-examine the proposals to examine whether the increase in tertiary places would affect the interfaces between different stages of education.

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15. The Chairman of EC responded that the proposed increase in tertiary places should not affect the reform measures which were targeted at enhancing basic education. As highlighted in its report, EC would set up a working group to examine the feasibility of implementing a three-year structure and curriculum for senior secondary education. The working group would consider the proposed increase in tertiary places and recommend appropriate transitional strategies and arrangements for achieving the target increase in 10 years' time. The working group would submit its recommendations to the Government in 2002.

16. SEM supplemented that the proposed increase of tertiary places was in line with the EC's proposal to encourage the development of a private sector in higher education. With the emergence of privately-funded programmes, the higher education system could be more diversified and vibrant. She stressed that the Administration had not fixed a rigid target of providing 60% students with tertiary education, but would aim to provide variety in tertiary education to suit different abilities and interests. She pointed out that community colleges were common and accounted for about 33% of the total number of tertiary institutions in the United States. These colleges provided a wide variety of sub-degree programmes to cater for the needs of different talents and personalities. She added that since the EC had set the general directions for the reform, the Administration should formulate policies and timetable for implementing the reform targets.

17. Prof NG Ching-fai said that while he supported the provision of tertiary education to 60% of students, he doubted the feasibility of increasing the supply of tertiary places without Government subsidy. He also considered that the quality of primary and secondary education should be enhanced to match with the increase in tertiary places in the coming decade. Prof NG was of the view that similar to organizations which sponsored staff to attend in-service training, the community should subsidise education of its manpower resources for the purpose of enhancing its future development.

18. The Chairman of EC responded that tertiary education was a personal investment which would enhance abilities and competence. He considered the existing provision of financial assistance in the form of fee remission, low-interest and non-means-tested loans appropriate for tertiary students of different background. He pointed out that the cost-recovery rate of 18% for UGC-funded programmes compared favourably with overseas countries. He added that as organizations would determine the number of eligible employees to be sponsored for training, the community as a whole should determine the level of subsidy for tertiary education in the light of its economic developments and manpower needs.

19. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that in view of the substantial increase in tertiary places in the next 10 years, the Liberal Party was concerned about the

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long-term standards of tertiary graduates. He pointed out that unlike universities in the United States, almost 99% of the local university students could graduate. Mr CHEUNG maintained the view that quality of tertiary education should be given equal weight in the course of implementation.

20. SEM said that in promoting the development of the higher education system, the Administration would give equal weight to the importance of the quality of students and the curriculum. The EC would discuss with the UGC-funded institutions and form a working group to review issues relating to the implementation of the proposed 3-year senior secondary education and the 4-year first degree programmes. The working group ought to resolve relevant issues on the basis of not requiring an increase in recurrent public subsidy or affecting the quality of the programmes. In line with the objective to establish a diversified, multi-channel, flexible and interlinked system of higher education, the future university admission system should allow students to join, suspend or continue their higher education studies at any stage in their life according to their own needs and circumstances. On condition that the total number of students entering universities each year was not reduced, universities should be allowed more flexibility to take in students and adjust the number of students at various years of university studies. For example, meritorious graduates holding higher diplomas or associate degrees could be admitted into the second year of university studies. In this connection, the working group would review the current funding mechanism to allow for such flexibility.

21. The Chairman of EC said that when more tertiary institutions such as community colleges had developed, private and UGC-funded universities should be more willing to enrol diploma and associate degree holders in their degree programmes at the second or third year of study. He anticipated that the university admission system would be revised so that the admission requirements would be relaxed but the graduation requirements would be more stringent.

22. Mr Tommy CHEUNG urged the Administration to review the existing university admission system to facilitate the enrolment of applicants without adequate formal academic qualifications, particularly long-service employees in industries such as the catering industry. SEM said that the Administration would follow up with individual industries, such as the information technology, the financial services and the catering industries, on arrangements for providing tertiary programmes for their experienced workers.

23. Mr YEUNG Yiu-chung declared that he was a member of EC. Mr YEUNG asked whether the Administration would review the existing proportion of secondary six places to secondary five students to ensure that all capable students would be provided with secondary six places. He pointed out that if the current

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ratio of one secondary six place to three secondary five students remained unchanged, the keen competition for secondary six places would continue. Mr YEUNG also asked whether the Administration would give an undertaking to provide secondary six places to all secondary five students who had the ability to continue their secondary six education.

24. SEM responded that in line with the recommendations of the EC's reform proposals, the Administration would provide more diverse opportunities for life-long learning at senior secondary level and beyond. She pointed out that not all secondary school graduates were suitable for receiving university education. While the community had already expressed concern about the quality of university graduates, the abilities of students and criteria for university admission would play a part in determining the number of secondary six places to be provided. The Administration would monitor the supply and demand of secondary six places on a continuous basis.

Strengthening remedial and enhancement measures in school education

25. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that given the current quality of secondary school graduates, he was concerned about the quality of university graduates if 60% of secondary school leavers were provided with tertiary education. He considered that the proposed new grants of \$250,000 for schools with 18 classes or less and \$300,000 for schools with 19 classes or more were insufficient to strengthen remedial and enhancement measures. He asked how the Administration could improve the quality of education in schools, given the fact that most schools were operating classes of fairly large size.

26. SEM responded that the current system of education overwhelmingly emphasized on imparting knowledge, and that assessment of students' performance was predominately based on results in public examinations. As proposed by the EC, the future education system should aim to equip individuals with abilities for life-long learning. Everyone should have a fair opportunity to pursue life-long learning. To achieve the objective, senior secondary education should provide diversified curricula to cater for different abilities and interests. Students with zero marks in Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination might pursue studies in non-academic subjects and realise their potentials in other areas of learning. She reiterated that the expansion of tertiary education would not be at the expense of quality.

27. SEM said that although smaller classes would provide a better learning environment, a recent study in London had indicated that the two most important elements of quality education were the professional competence of teachers and

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their teaching methods. She pointed out that while some popular schools had operated larger classes, they were able to maintain the quality of their education.

28. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that although he agreed that teachers should play a crucial role in promoting the quality of education, teachers were already overloaded under the existing school education system. He pointed out that under the nine-year compulsory basic education, many secondary students were promoted to higher classes regardless of their academic standards. These students would lose the interest to learn when they could not catch up with their fellow classmates. He urged the Administration to work out measures to relieve teachers' workload and improve the quality of school education.

29. The Chairman of EC acknowledged that under the nine-year compulsory basic education, many low achievers were promoted to higher classes regardless of their standards of achievements. With the abolishment of the Academic Aptitude Test, the Administration would introduce the Basic Competency Assessments (BCA) in Chinese, English and Mathematics at various stages of basic education by phases starting from 2001-02. Such arrangements would create more room for students to realise their potentials and to attain a basic level of competence in various aspects for pursuing life-long learning. The Student Assessment of the BCA could be conducted at any time during the school year. It would enable teachers and parents to get a better picture of students' progress in learning and to provide timely assistance. The System Assessment of the BCA would be centrally administered for students at the levels of primary three, primary six and secondary three. The assessment would show whether students in all schools had reached the basic standards in the key learning areas. The information obtained would facilitate assessment of the effectiveness of teaching and could be used for comparison with the standards in other countries.

30. The Chairman of EC further said that there were a number of factors contributing to the quality of education in schools. He pointed out that many schools in the United States had smaller class sizes but not necessarily provide education of quality. In comparison with Hong Kong, schools in Singapore and Korea had larger class sizes and were considered providing education of better quality. The Chairman of EC pointed out that schools might consider reducing the number of compositions, tests, etc. to create more room for teachers to concentrate on teaching work. He suggested that schools should review the existing teaching and learning methods to enhance better utilization of resources.

31. Miss Emily LAU enquired whether the Administration would provide additional resources and support to schools which were less successful in providing education of good quality. She considered that schools admitting a

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large number of low achievers should be allowed to operate smaller classes to improve the learning environment.

Adm 32. SEM responded that schools with a large intake of low achievers would be provided with additional resources and professional support. ED would consider the class sizes of these schools flexibly and would examine each case individually. ED would also provide appropriate support for remedial measures. ED Officers would visit these schools and advise on ways to improve the teaching and learning methods, and school-based curriculum, etc. They would co-ordinate for schools and teachers to exchange and disseminate successful experiences through district school and teacher networks. At Miss Emily LAU's request, SEM undertook to provide a written response on the additional resources and professional support provided.

33. The Chairman of EC said that parents, teachers and principals should contribute to enhance the quality of education in schools. The Chairman said that he agreed that parents played a crucial part in promoting the quality of education in schools. He therefore was of the view that all school management committees should have at least two parent and two student representatives in order to enhance the transparency and accountability of school management.

34. Miss Emily LAU asked whether the Administration would give priority to schools with old design in allocation of new school premises. She also asked whether the Government would allocate more sites for construction of new schools.

35. The Chairman of EC and SEM expressed appreciation of Miss Emily LAU's support for allocation of more sites for construction of new schools. SEM suggested that the Panel could discuss the issue with members of the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works, and relevant bureaux and departments at a future meeting. Miss Emily LAU expressed support for the suggestion.

36. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung asked why primary schools were provided with a recurrent grant significantly higher than that for secondary schools. He also asked whether schools would be provided with guidelines on the use of funds.

37. DE explained that the recurrent grant was proposed having regard to the fact that secondary schools had hitherto been allocated with more resources than primary schools. The proposed allocation was supported by secondary school councils and principals. Schools would be able to use the recurrent grant to hire more staff or procure various services to relieve teachers' workload so that they could focus on their core functions of teaching, with particular emphasis on catering to the diverse learning needs of students, curriculum development and

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enhancing students' language abilities. In line with the spirit of school-based management, schools would be given a free hand to determine the use of funds. The Chairman of EC expressed support for the principle of giving schools the autonomy in the use of funds.

38. Miss Emily LAU shared the view of the Education Convergence that the Administration had the responsibility to establish a monitoring mechanism for declaration of interest in school administration and management [LC Paper No. CB(2)120/00-01(02)]. She considered that given the new recurrent grant for all public sector schools from the 2000-01 school year, the operation of such mechanism should be made more transparent and accountable.

39. Director of Education (DE) responded that while schools were allowed to flexibly deploy the allocated resources under the spirit of school-based management, they would be required to put up detailed proposal on the use of funds, and to ensure that there would not be any conflict of interest. Regarding accountability for the use of funds, schools would be required to incorporate the proposed usage in their annual school plans which would have to be endorsed by the school management committees. In addition, schools were required to report to parents annually the progress of implementing the plans, and to submit to the ED an annual report covering, among other things, an evaluation of the achievement against the performance targets. ED would work in partnership with schools in developing and implementing the school plans. It would conduct a review in 2002-03 to evaluate whether the grant had been effectively used to create room for teachers. The review would also cover the cost-effectiveness of the funding arrangements.

40. DE informed members that subject to the approval of the Finance Committee, ED would proceed to disburse the grant to schools according to the proposed criteria. Miss Emily LAU said that the Administration should specify clearly in the financial proposal to be submitted to the Finance Committee the mechanism for declaration of interests and the enforcement arrangement.

Early childhood education

41. Miss Emily LAU referred to the submission of the Education Convergence which mentioned that around 50% of a person's intellectual development would have taken place before the age of five to six. Miss LAU considered that the Government should put in more resources to improve the quality of early childhood education.

42. DE responded that the Working Group on Promoting Parent Education established under the Board of Education was working on the development of

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early childhood education, with particular emphasis on parent participation in the process of developing a habit of reading among children. The Chief Executive had announced in his Policy Address 2000 that a sum of \$50 million had been set aside to support activities relating to parent education and home-school co-operation. In collaboration with parents, the SWD and Department of Health and ED would co-ordinate among themselves to encourage children before the age of five to actively participate in "learning to read" and "reading to learn" programmes and activities. He added that the ED would brief the Panel on the progress of the programmes in due course.

43. The Chairman of EC said that EC attached great importance to early childhood education. However, full subsidy did not necessarily guarantee good quality. The existing system of not providing full subsidy to early childhood education could promote diversity in and quality of early childhood education. The priority of allocating new resources should be accorded to improving the direct assistance for parents. The Government must ensure that no children would be deprived of pre-school education due to financial difficulties. He held the view that the Administration should allocate additional resources to upgrade the professional competence of teachers and encourage parent participation in early childhood education. While pre-school education was crucial to healthy development, young children should not be forced to pursue learning beyond their developmental stage.

44. SEM said that the Administration would ensure that all children had equal opportunity to receive quality education during their early ages. She pointed out that scientific and medical researches had revealed that the intellectual development of children from birth to three years old was fast and crucial. In collaboration with the Department of Health, a variety of child care and education services were provided to parents to enhance healthy development of their children. To follow up on EC's reform proposals, the Administration would draw up a timetable for principals and teachers of kindergartens, and supervisors of child care centres to attend the necessary professional training.

Promoting parent education through better utilization of public resources

45. Mr Tommy CHEUNG suggested that the Administration should make better use of public libraries and community resources so that parents particularly those with financial difficulties could participate in students' learning programmes such as the English and Chinese Extensive Reading Schemes for students. He held the view that provision of a conducive environment was the key to promoting parents' interest in reading with their children. He therefore suggested that the Administration should increase the varieties of books, improve facilities and

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extend the opening hours of public libraries to improve services and promote parent participation.

46. SEM responded that ED had taken the initiative to liaise with related bureaux and departments for better utilization of public libraries and community centres. The Board of Education had also set up a task force to review the implementation of the existing reading schemes. In addition, the Administration had set aside \$50 million to promote parent education and home-school co-operation. Starting from the current school year, the Administration would provide a grant of \$20,000 to each non-profit-making kindergarten and child care centre for the purchase of library books. These kindergarten and child care centres were encouraged to make reference to the list of quality books as recommended by the Hong Kong Institute of Education.

47. The Chairman of EC shared Mr Tommy CHEUNG's view that public library resources should be fully-utilized with a view to promoting life-long learning among the community. He pointed out that public libraries in Hong Kong were originally established more for public leisure than for life-long learning. He suggested that to foster a culture of life-long learning among the community, more life-long learning centres should be established at the district level.

Curriculum reform

48. In response to Mr. SZETO Wah's enquiry about the scope and strategy of the forthcoming curriculum reform, DE said that the Curriculum Development Council would consult the public and the education sector on a framework for and specific arrangements of the curriculum reform towards the end of the month. The reform would aim at achieving all-round development, a broad and coherent curriculum and enhancing positive attitudes in preparation for life-long learning. To provide a flexible subject framework, all existing subjects would be re-grouped into eight key learning areas to enable students to gain a balanced exposure. Professional support would be provided for schools to develop their school-based curricula with reference to the subject framework. ED would co-ordinate the exchange and dissemination of successful experience through the networks of schools and teachers. ED would also set up online databases of teaching resources to provide schools with information on teaching resources, support services, etc. The ED's curriculum support teams for primary and secondary schools would strengthen its services to help schools develop their school-based curricula.

49. Mr SZETO Wah was of the view that while schools would be allowed to develop their own curricula, the provision of appropriate resources and professional guidance was vital to successful implementation of the reform proposals. He stressed that ED must work in partnership with the schools to

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implement the curriculum reform step by step. He also urged that the Administration must give due regard to teachers' existing workload in implementing the reform measures.

50. SEM said that she agreed that implementation of curricula reform should be carried out on an incremental basis and be supported by professionals. ED would make use of the "model schools" to enhance exchange and dissemination of good practices of curricula reform among schools. She added that the Quality Education Fund would provide financial assistance to innovative proposals.

IV. Any other business

Proposed terms of reference

[Appendix III to LC Paper No. CB(2)120/00-01]

51. Members endorsed the proposed terms of reference of the Panel.

Visit to the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIE)

52. The Chairman informed members that HKIE had extended an invitation to the Panel to visit its premises on 14 November 2000. Some members opined that it would be more useful for the Panel to visit schools with poor learning environment and facilities. Members further noted that the proposed time of the visit also clashed with a regular meeting of the LegCo Panel on Home Affairs. The Chairman therefore suggested and members agreed that the clerk should write to HKIE declining the invitation.

53. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:20 pm.

Legislative Council Secretariat

14 December 2000