

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)302/01-02
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

LegCo Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 22 October 2001 at 4:30 pm
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

Members Present : Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung, BBS (Chairman)
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum (Deputy Chairman)
Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, JP
Hon LAU Kong-wah
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon SZETO Wah
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP

Member Attending : Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP

Members Absent : Hon Eric LI Ka-cheung, JP
Dr Hon LO Wing-lok
Hon MA Fung-kwok

Public Officers Attending : Mr Peter P T CHEUNG, JP
Secretary General
University Grants Committee

Ms Karen YUEN
Assistant Secretary-General (Capital)
University Grants Committee

Mr Gordon LEUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower

Attendance by Invitation : Council of the Hong Kong Institute of Education

Dr Thomas LEUNG Kwok-fai, JP
Deputy Chairman

Professor Ruth HAYHOE
Director

Professor Paul MORRIS
Deputy Director (Academic)

Mr Norman NGAI Wai-yiu
Deputy Director (Resources and Administrative Services)

Dr PANG King-chee
Deputy Director (Quality Assurance and Educational Services)

Association of Lecturers of the Hong Kong Institute of Education

Mr YEUNG Kim-wai
President

Ms Betty Christine ENG
Secretary

Federation of Hong Kong Higher Education Staff
Associations

Professor SHUM Kar-ping
Chairman

Dr CHAN Che-wai
Vice-Chairman
(*also* Chairman of the Academic Staff Association of the
University of Hong Kong)

Mr W S SZE
Vice-Chairman of the Academic Staff Association of the
University of Hong Kong

Dr Pierre SZETO Kit
Vice-President of the Non-Academic Staff Association of
the University of Hong Kong

Professor KWAN Hoi-shan
President of the Teachers' Association of the Chinese
University of Hong Kong

Mr Aaron LI Wing-yuen
President of the Staff Association of the Chinese University
of Hong Kong

Mr MAN Yiu-mo
Vice-President of the Staff Association of the Chinese
University of Hong Kong

Anti-MIRS Committee

Mr W F YEUNG
Spokesperson

Ms Icy LUI LAU
Spokesperson

Elected Staff Representatives of the Council of the Hong
Kong Institute of Education

Mr WONG Ping-ho

Mr LEUNG Yan-wing

Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union

Mr LAW Ping
Vice-President

Mr CHAN Kwok-kuen
Executive member

Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers

Mr WONG Kwan-yu
Vice President

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)117/01-02]

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2001 were confirmed.

II. Early retirement scheme put forward by the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd)

Meeting with deputations

2. Members noted the submission of the Education Convergence [Paper No. CB(2)132/01-02(03)].

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3. The Chairman welcomed representatives of the seven deputations attending the meeting. At the Chairman's invitation, the deputations presented their views which are summarised in paragraphs 4 to 16 below.

Hong Kong Institute of Education

[Paper Nos. CB(2)102/01-02(01) and CB(2)132/01-02(01)]

4. Deputy Chairman of the Council of HKIEd (Dep Chairman of HKIEd), Dr Thomas LEUNG Kwok-fai, briefed members on the background of the Management-Initiated Retirement Scheme (MIRS), the process and arrangements for implementing MIRS and the current situation of implementation. Dep Chairman of HKIEd highlighted that in line with the Government's commitment to upgrade the teaching profession, the role of HKIEd would need to be changed from providing predominantly sub-degree programmes to degree and postgraduate programmes by 2005. HKIEd would have to upgrade itself so as to achieve its mission and provide the community with the qualified graduate teachers from 2005 onwards.

5. Deputy Chairman of HKIEd further said that MIRS was implemented after careful consideration and a series of staff consultation, and with the full support of the Council. The management had initially decided to relieve staff who were provisionally identified for MIRS of their teaching duties for a short period in order to allow time for them to prepare a challenge to the preliminary decision. He acknowledged that the decision had caused ill-feeling to some affected staff and was not appropriate. The Director of HKIEd had regrets over such arrangement even though it was well-intentioned and had issued an apology for the incident.

6. Director of HKIEd, Prof Ruth HAYHOE, briefed members on the salient points of the submission of HKIEd. She stressed that almost all members of the Institute Review Committee (IRC) were professionals of high academic standing and their integrity and ability to make fair academic and professional judgments were fully recognised by the Council of HKIEd. In particular, the full participation of Professor Amy TSUI, a member of the Council of HKIEd and a chair professor of education at the University of Hong Kong, in the work of IRC had ensured that the decision-making processes were fair and objective. Five of the staff who were provisionally identified for early retirement had successfully convinced IRC of their suitability for the future needs of the Institute.

7. As regards the principle of natural justice, Director of HKIEd pointed out that selected staff for MIRS had the right to lodge an appeal with the Staff Selection and Review Sub-committee of the Council's Staffing Committee. She stressed that the screening process involved academic judgment with regard to the suitability of individual staff members for the future development of the Institute.

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It was not a process in which mechanistic application of criteria could and should be made. In this connection, she drew members' attention to the following remark made by Prof TSUI –

“I would say that the decision-making processes were very fair and objective. Each case was carefully examined and thoroughly debated. The fairness of the process lies in the fact that it is a collective decision made by the entire Committee.”

8. Director of HKIEd expressed apologies to those who were hurt by the decision to relieve them of their teaching duties for a period of two weeks. Once the management learned that some affected staff was upset by the decision, it had provided them with a choice to continue teaching on the following day. She thanked members of the Association of Lecturers of HKIEd for their proactive participation in the implementation of MIRS and support to the staff members identified for the scheme. She stressed that the implementation of MIRS was a painful and difficult experience for the concerned staff, colleagues and the management. She assured members that HKIEd would do its best to meet the needs of identified staff members in respect of their departure time. The management would also provide them with letters of testimony and help them in any possible ways in their future professional pursuits.

*Association of Lecturers of the Hong Kong Institute of Education (the Association)
[Paper No. CB(2)126/01-02(01)]*

9. President of the Association, Mr YEUNG Kim-wai, introduced the submission of the Association. He urged the Council of HKIEd to suspend the implementation of MIRS immediately and re-start negotiations with the Association. He said that the Association considered that MIRS was illegitimate, unreasonable and immoral because it was contrary to the assurance given by the former Director of HKIEd that civil servants who were willing to transfer to HKIEd would be employed on a substantive basis. They would only be made redundant on the condition that there was insufficient number of students. President of the Association further said that the selection criteria for MIRS was unclear and it was unfair that appeals would be considered by the same committee which had proposed the provisional list of staff to be made redundant. He pointed out that the absolute majority of lecturers in HKIEd were desperately disappointed with the implementation of MIRS and some 1200 students had signed to support their actions. In particular, the Association had unanimously passed a vote of no confidence in the leadership, management and decision-making processes of HKIEd at its annual general meeting held on 26 September 2001.

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Federation of Hong Kong Higher Education Staff Associations (the Federation)
[Paper No. CB(2)102/01-02(02)]

10. Vice-Chairman of the Federation, Dr CHAN Chei-wai, introduced the submission of the Federation. He said that it was unfair that staff was forced to retire early because of staff surplus which was the result of poor manpower planning. It was also against the principle of natural justice that the same body i.e. IRC was asked to re-consider its previous decisions. He stressed that HKIEd should provide selected staff with choices on retirement date and take good care of the interests of students in the course of implementing MIRS. He also urged Panel members to follow up the matter.

11. Chairman of the Federation, Prof SHUM Kar-ping, supplemented that the introduction of MIRS to resolve the problem of staff surplus was unfair to serving staff members who were invited to join the HKIEd established six years ago. The management of HKIEd should be held responsible for the problem of mismatch of teaching staff and the future development of the Institute. He stressed that the interest of students should be put in the first place. The approach and timing for implementing MIRS were inappropriate since temporary suspension of classes and change of lecturers at the beginning of an academic year would seriously affect the continuity of teaching and learning activities in classes. The incident had also seriously affected staff morale and jeopardised the mutual trust between staff and management.

Anti-MIRS Committee (AMC)
[Paper No. CB(2)132/01-02(02)]

12. Spokesperson of AMC, Mr W F YEUNG, introduced the submission of AMC. He said that AMC welcomed the upgrading of HKIEd to meet the future needs of education in the community, but considered that the management should be held responsible for the problem of staff surplus in HKIEd. Should the management had carefully planned its manpower needs and re-deploy its manpower resources, HKIEd would not have to implement MIRS in such a hasty and inconsiderate manner. He said that it was astonishing that the Council of HKIEd had expressed support for the management in a high profile. He considered that both the Council and the management team should be blamed for creating the current mistrust between staff and management as well as its failure to recruit staff and support staff development in the light of the foreseeable needs of HKIEd.

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Elected staff representatives of the Council of the HKIED
[Paper No. CB(2)126/01-02(02)]

13. Mr WONG Ping-ho, a staff representative of the Council of HKIED, briefed members on the salient points of the joint submission of the three elected staff representatives of the Council of the HKIED. He pointed out that although HKIED had consulted staff and the Association about the implementation of MIRS, it had all along ignored their oppositions to the implementation of MIRS and the suggestions of the Association to resolve the problem of staff surplus in the Institute. He considered that HKIED had not followed the approved procedure to identify staff for MIRS. As a result, many staff members were made redundant irrespective of whether they had met the screening criterion. In particular, the arrangements for temporary suspension of classes on 17 September 2001 had revealed the identities of the affected staff members and jeopardised their professional dignity, as well as disrupted the learning activities of students.

Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union (HKPTU)
[Paper No. CB(2)129/01-02(01)]

14. Vice-President of HKPTU, Mr LAW Ping, briefed members on the submission of HKPTU. HKPTU considered that in proposing MIRS to replace the voluntary early retirement scheme in March 2001, HKIED had not defined the term "surplus" under MIRS and had never announced the criteria for assessing whether a staff member was "surplus". Based on the 18 complaints received between 17 to 19 September 2001, HKPTU understood that many of the 39 staff members who were made redundant were pursuing doctoral studies and two of them had already acquired doctoral degrees. This reflected that in deciding the staff members for MIRS, HKIED had not followed the criteria that selected staff members should be those who had not attained or moved successfully towards attaining the qualification normally needed to teach at a university level. Furthermore, HKPTU considered that the mismatch of the existing staffing resources and the future needs of HKIED was the result of poor manpower planning on the part of the Institute's management.

15. Executive member of HKPTU, Mr CHAN Kwok-kuen, supplemented that HKPTU had organised a peaceful demonstration at the Institute's campus on 16 October 2001 which was attended by some 270 staff and students. More than 1500 students of the Institute had signed up to support suspending implementation of MIRS. In addition, HKPTU would seek the support of all secondary and primary schools and kindergartens to urge HKIED to suspend MIRS. In essence, HKPTU urged HKIED to suspend implementation of MIRS with immediate effect, re-start negotiations with staff members on an equal and peaceful basis, and provide reasonable assistance to staff members who were identified for MIRS in attaining the qualifications necessary for the future development of the Institute.

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*Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers (HKFEW)
[Paper No. CB(2)137/01-02(01)]*

16. Vice-President of HKFEW, Mr WONG Kwan-yu, introduced the submission of HKFEW. In view of the possible adverse consequences, HKFEW urged HKIEd to suspend the implementation of MIRS and establish an independent committee to review MIRS as soon as possible. Most importantly, HKIEd should try its best to resolve the crisis and enter into agreement with staff members on how MIRS should be implemented so that normal teaching and learning activities at the Institute would not be affected.

Discussion

Upgrading of HKIEd and implementation of MIRS

17. The Chairman invited questions from members on the views and concerns of the deputations.

18. Mr SZETO Wah noted that the Director of HKIEd had expressed regret over the arrangement for relieving staff members on the provisional list of teaching duties for two weeks and said that HKIEd was under considerable pressure to put forward MIRS in order to upgrade itself. He enquired about the role of the Administration and the University Grants Committee (UGC) in the process of upgrading HKIEd as a university from 2004-05 onwards. He also sought clarifications as to whether MIRS was inevitable in the upgrading process.

19. Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower 5 (PAS(EM)5) said that the Administration supported implementation of MIRS but had not exerted any pressure on HKIEd in connection with implementation of the scheme. As highlighted in the Chief Executive's 1997 and 1998 Policy Addresses, improving quality of education and the teaching workforce was one of the major policy commitments of the Government. As an essential step to achieve the policy objective, HKIEd was expected to progressively phase out sub-degree places.

20. Secretary General of UGC (SG/UGC) said that UGC and HKIEd had reached consensus that HKIEd would have to re-deploy its manpower resources in preparation for its upgrading. To achieve the objective, the Institute had to review its staffing profile in the light of its future teaching needs. Bearing in mind that the Institute had been overstaffed in certain teaching areas and understaffed in others, such an objective could not possibly be achieved by way of an early retirement scheme on a voluntary basis. He agreed that the timing of MIRS was not good because of the time-consuming negotiation process between UGC and HKIEd and between UGC and the Administration in respect of the necessary

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financial arrangements for implementing MIRS. He added that HKIEd could not run its programmes at its own discretion. It had a very clear academic development plan which was approved and funded by UGC up to the end of the current triennium in 2004.

21. Dep Chairman of HKIEd said that the Administration had not specified an early retirement scheme and an implementation plan for HKIEd to follow. However, in order to provide the community with professionally qualified graduate teachers for school students from 2004-05 onwards, HKIEd would have to review its manpower resources and work out plans to cope with its future development needs. To achieve such objective, the implementation of MIRS became inevitable.

22. Mr SZETO Wah remarked that setting the target for all graduates of HKIEd to be degree holders from 2005 onwards had already set a deadline and put considerable pressure on its Council and the management. He pointed out that tertiary institutions undergoing the same upgrading process in the past had not implemented a mandatory retirement scheme.

23. Deputy Director (Academic) of HKIEd responded that the Council and the management of HKIEd was under pressure from parents, schools, the community and Legislative Council (LegCo) itself to improve the quality of its teachers. The HKIEd was committed to raising the quality of teacher education so as to meet the community's rising expectations for excellence in the teaching profession. They would have to face the challenges ahead in the course of achieving the mission such as implementing MIRS. He pointed out that unlike HKIEd, tertiary institutions such as the former Hong Kong Polytechnic had continued to provide a significant number of sub-degree courses after upgrading as a university. Overstaffing problem therefore did not arise. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong remarked that HKIEd should consider the need to provide training and developing programmes for serving non-graduate teachers at sub-degree levels.

24. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that improper implementation of MIRS had caused a common dissatisfaction among staff members and students towards the management. He questioned the responsibility of the management in respect of the overstaffing and understaffing in different departments of HKIEd, given that it had the authority to approve financial support for all academic and professional staff to upgrade their qualifications since the early stage of establishment of HKIEd. Mr CHEUNG queried whether the management of HKIEd should be held responsible for misuse of public money and mistake in manpower planning.

25. Deputy Director (Academic) of HKIEd explained that HKIEd took over in 1994 those staff members who were willing to transfer to the Institute from the College of Education and College of Language Education, resulting in

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overstaffing in some areas, such as language and social science disciplines. This had constituted a constraint on its capacity to train and recruit teachers in the areas needed. Nevertheless, the Institute had provided financial support for all academic and professional staff to upgrade their qualifications since the early stage of its establishment. He pointed out that providing support for continuous professional improvement did not imply lifelong employment.

26. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed dissatisfaction with the response of HKIEd. He pointed out that HKIEd should have advised the transferred staff members of the overstaffing situation in 1994 so that some of them might choose to continue their employment with the Government as civil servants. Moreover, the management of HKIEd should not have provided financial support to its staff in pursuit of academic qualifications which did not meet the future development needs of HKIEd. Mr CHEUNG considered that as the management of HKIEd should be accountable for the overstaffing problem, HKIEd should collaborate with affected staff members to work out a feasible staffing plan to resolve the problem.

27. Director of HKIEd responded that HKIEd was well aware of the overstaffing in certain teaching areas and understaffing in others. It had been exploring the possibility of a voluntary retirement scheme. This had proven not feasible in early 2001 since transferred staff (those who opted to join the Institute from the Government in 1994/95) would not enjoy immediate access to their pension rights under a voluntary scheme. In fact, there were understaffing problems in the Department of Information and Applied Technology and School of Early Childhood Education which remained to be resolved. It would be difficult for HKIEd to recruit the required teaching staff if it did not deal with the overstaffing problem.

28. Dr YEUNG Sum said that while he appreciated the background for the existing staffing composition of HKIEd, given the existing hostile atmosphere between the staff and the management, HKIEd should consider suspending implementation of MIRS immediately and re-start discussion with staff members for a workable solution. Dr YEUNG added that the Administration should also consider whether it could be more flexible in determining access to pension rights.

29. Dep Chairman of HKIEd responded that the Council had thoroughly considered the MIRS proposal and the possible consequences of its implementation beforehand. He acknowledged the mistakes in implementing MIRS at the initial stage, but pointed out that the Council had accepted the suggestion of the Association to defer the departure time for selected staff until June 2002 and assist them in finding a new appointment. He considered that immediate suspension of MIRS would mean discontinuation of MIRS as restarting the whole consultation and selection process would take time and might end up

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with similar objection from selected staff who did not agree with the decision of the School Review Committee and IRC. He anticipated that repeating the whole process would simply prolong the problem which would jeopardise the long-term development of HKIEd.

30. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung queried why HKIEd did not consider suspending implementation of MIRS, in view of its adverse effects on staff moral and mutual trust between staff and management.

31. Dep Chairman of HKIEd reiterated that MIRS evolved from a series of consultation with the Association and staff members. The Council's decision to implement the scheme was made after thorough consideration of its effects on the long-term role and development of HKIEd in education. He stressed that the Council of HKIEd had to undergo a re-organisation of its staffing resources to cope with the future development needs of HKIEd.

32. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung asked whether the Administration had consulted HKIEd in requiring HKIEd to provide predominately degree and postgraduate places from 2004-05 onwards. PAS(EM)5 responded that after the long-term vision had been set, the Administration had studied the issue with various stakeholders including UGC and HKIEd.

33. Mr LAU Kong-wah enquired about the views of the Association on how to resolve the current confrontation between staff and management arising from implementing MIRS. He also asked how the management would take up the responsibility to resolve the conflict and restore staff confidence.

34. Mr WONG Ping-ho of the Association responded that the Association strongly recommended that HKIEd should suspend implementation of MIRS immediately and re-start negotiation with staff. It should establish an independent and impartial committee to conduct investigations into the matter on an open, fair and transparent basis. Referring to the vote of no confidence unanimously carried at the meeting of the Association on 26 September 2001, Ms Betty Christine ENG of the Association stressed that there was a strong dissatisfaction among staff with the leadership, management and decision-making processes at HKIEd.

35. Director of HKIEd responded that she shared a responsibility for the current situation and acknowledged her misjudgment in relieving some 5 to 6 selected members of their teaching duties on 17 September 2001. She added that following the incident, she had immediately apologised to all staff and personally explained the intention of the arrangement to the affected staff members. She had also discussed with representatives of staff and students with a view to improving communication and re-establishing trust between staff and management. She said that normal teaching and learning activities had resumed in HKIEd.

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36. Ms Emily LAU said that she fully supported that HKIEd should be upgraded for enhancing the overall quality of graduate teachers. However, the procedures for implementing MIRS should be fair, open and transparent. Given the current situation, she suggested that HKIEd should re-start consultation with staff members for a better implementation arrangement. However, cases involving those who were willing to accept MIRS should be proceeded as agreed. Mr. Tommy CHEUNG expressed a similar view. He added that the community would not consider that there should be a guarantee of lifelong employment for the staff of HKIEd.

37. Messers TSANG Yok-sing and David CHU also expressed support for the upgrading of HKIEd in order to enhance the quality of the teaching profession who played a crucial role to the success of the education reforms. They agreed that to meet these challenges, HKIEd would have to implement MIRS to ensure that the Institute would have a teaching staff with the required expertise and qualifications appropriate to teach at degree and postgraduate levels. However, the management of HKIEd had committed mistakes in implementation of MIRS at the early stages.

38. Mr David CHU asked what would happen if MIRS was not implemented. Director of HKIEd responded that the timing of the scheme was not a matter of preference, but a result of the fact that government approval of MIRS was only given in early September 2001. If MIRS should be implemented in April 2002, about 200 staff would be left in a state of uncertainty for a further period of eight months. Furthermore, since the new Director would assume office in early 2002, it was considered more appropriate to implement MIRS while the existing Director was still in office. Deputy Director (Academic) of HKIEd supplemented that HKIEd would not have the necessary teaching staff essential for its development to provide predominately degree courses for the teaching professionals if MIRS was not implemented.

39. Mr Tommy CHEUNG enquired about the number of staff surplus and shortage in individual schools and departments. Deputy Director (Academic) of HKIEd responded that the School of Languages in Education had a surplus of 12 lecturers while the Department of Information and Applied Technology needed a total of eight additional lecturers. Mr CHEUNG requested the Council of HKIEd to provide relevant statistics of staff surplus and shortage at the Institute and further information on the appeal mechanism of MIRS for members' consideration.

40. Mr Michael MAK noted the vote of no confidence passed at the meeting of the Association. He asked about the actions taken by the Association in reflecting the dissenting views of staff on the implementation of MIRS. He also sought

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clarifications about the allegations of mismanagement as highlighted in the submission of the Association.

41. Messers YEUNG Kim-wai, WONG Ping-ho and LEUNG Yan-wing responded that they had relayed the dissenting views of colleagues on MIRS to the Council, the Directorate and relevant committees on various occasions. They were given the impression that the Council and management of HKIED had chosen to ignore staff feedback on the implementation of MIRS.

42. As regards the allegations of mismanagement, Director of HKIED said that the management team had taken progressive measures to enhance various administrative systems, curriculum structure, academic developments, etc., within the Institute. Deputy Director (Academic) of HKIED supplemented that no concrete evidence had been put forward so far to support the allegation that the screening and selection processes for MIRS were conducted in an unfair manner.

43. In response to members' request to suspend the implementation of MIRS, Dep Chairman of HKIED said that staff representatives of the Council of HKIED and the Association had all along attended the meetings of the Council and Staffing Committee to discuss the concept, development and implementation of MIRS since it was put forward in March 2001. The Council's decision to implement MIRS was made after substantial exchange of views between them and the management. To suspend MIRS would be contrary to the decision made by the Council.

44. Mr TSANG Yok-sing said that he could not agree with the Deputy Chairman of HKIED that the decision to implement MIRS had been made after careful and thorough consideration and planning and should not be overturned. He pointed out that it was not satisfactory that HKIED had taken two years to find out that a voluntary scheme for early retirement of former civil servants was not feasible; and that HKIED had used only six months to complete the whole consultation, screening and selection processes for implementing a compulsory MIRS. Mr TSANG stressed that members had not queried the decision of IRC but they were gravely concerned that due process had not been carried out in implementing MIRS.

45. Dep Chairman of HKIED expressed appreciation of members' concerns in the matter and their suggestions to resolve the staffing problems in HKIED. In the light of members' strong views, he undertook to relay members' views and suggestions to the Council of HKIED for consideration.

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Follow-up

46. In view of members' grave concern about the impact of MIRS, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong moved and Mr SZETO Wah seconded the following motion -

"That, with grave concern about the impact of the MIRS implemented by HKIEd, this Panel urges HKIEd to suspend the Scheme immediately and solve the problems through peaceful negotiations with all its staff; and that a Subcommittee under the Legislative Council Panel on Education should be set up to follow up the responses from the Council of HKIEd."

47. Messers TSANG Yok-sing, Tommy CHEUNG and David CHU expressed reservations on the motion, saying that the LegCo should refrain from interfering with the internal affairs of tertiary institutions. Mr TSANG said that it was acceptable for the Panel to discuss the matter as it provided a forum for all parties concerned to express their views. However, passing the motion might be perceived as exerting pressure on HKIEd by LegCo. Mr CHU added that he did not consider setting up a subcommittee necessary at the present stage.

48. Miss Cyd HO acknowledged that universities were autonomous bodies and LegCo should not interfere with their internal administration. However, the governing body and the management of a university should not be free from scrutiny under the name of university autonomy. In view of the current situation of HKIEd, she considered that there was the need to improve public accountability and transparency of university administration. She considered that the Panel should follow up the issue of whether an Appeals Council should be established to handle staff grievances and complaints within the tertiary sector.

49. SG/UGC urged members to carefully consider the significance of passing the motion as it had implication on the principle of university autonomy. He pointed out that university autonomy in tertiary education sector was a major principle which should not be changed in the light of an isolated incident. He added that UGC was conducting a review of the higher education management and administrative systems. The review would also examine the need to enhance public accountability and transparency of university governance as well as complaint procedures.

50. After discussion, the Chairman ordered a vote to be taken on Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's motion by a show of hands. Six members had voted in favour of the motion, four members against it and two abstained. The Chairman declared that the motion was carried.

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III. Any other business

Additional item for discussion at the next meeting

51. Members agreed that the item “Strengthening the support for the education reform”, as proposed by the Administration, be added to the agenda for the next meeting scheduled for 19 November 2001.

52. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 7:30 pm.

Legislative Council Secretariat
20 November 2001