

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)907/01-02
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

LegCo Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 17 December 2001 at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

Members Present : Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung, BBS (Chairman)
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum (Deputy Chairman)
Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon Eric LI Ka-cheung, JP
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
Dr Hon LO Wing-lok
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
Hon MA Fung-kwok

Member Attending : Hon SIN Chung-kai

Public Officers Attending : Item V

Mrs Fanny LAW, JP
Secretary for Education and Manpower

Mrs Cherry TSE
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (2)

Mr CHENG Yan-chee
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (3)

Mrs Avia LAI
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower (3)

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

Item VI

Mrs Cherry TSE
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (2)

Mrs Avia LAI
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower (3)

Mr Matthew CHEUNG, JP
Director of Education

Mr LEE Kwok-sung
Assistant Director of Education (Planning and Research)

Item VII

Mrs Cherry TSE
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (2)

Mrs Avia LAI
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower (3)

Mr Matthew CHEUNG, JP
Director of Education

Mr LEE Kwok-sung
Assistant Director of Education (Planning and Research)

Item VIII

Mr Matthew CHEUNG, JP
Director of Education

Mr S L MA
Assistant Director of Education (Infrastructure)

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

Staff in Attendance : Mr Watson CHAN
Head of the Research and Library Services Division

Mr Stanley MA
Senior Assistant Secretary (2)6

Action

I. Confirmation of minutes
[LC Paper No. CB(2)681/01-02]

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

II. Information paper issued since the last meeting

2. Members noted that no information 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)668/01-02]

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items as proposed by the Administration at the next regular meeting scheduled for Monday, 21 January 2002 at 4:30 pm -

(a) Harmonisation of kindergartens and child care centres;

Action

- (b) Kindergarten Subsidy Scheme;
- (c) Native-speaking English teachers/English language teaching assistants for primary schools; and
- (d) Re-organisation of the Education Department.

4. Members also agreed to hold a special meeting on Tuesday, 29 January 2002 at 2:30 pm to discuss the following -

- (a) Report of the Curriculum Development Council entitled "Learning to learn - the way forward in curriculum development";
- (b) Regulation of tutorial schools; and
- (c) Issue of students with learning disabilities.

5. Members further agreed that the Census and Statistics Department should be invited to brief members on the data obtained from the 2001 Population Survey which were relevant to the policy areas of the Panel at a future meeting.

IV. Proposed research outline on education voucher system
[LC Paper No. CB(2)645/01-02(01)]

6. At the invitation of the Chairman, Head of the Research and Library Services Division (RLSD) of the Legislative Council (LegCo) Secretariat briefed members on the proposed research outline on education voucher system. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed support for the outline, stressing that the pros and cons of education voucher system should be examined in detail. Mr Tommy CHEUNG suggested that the research should make reference to countries which had considered the application of education voucher system but eventually given up the idea. Ms Audrey EU asked and Head/RLSD confirmed that the research would include an analysis on whether education voucher system would fit in with the Hong Kong environment. Ms EU remarked that in making the analysis, RLSD should bear in mind that the implementation experience of education voucher system for a particular stage of education might not be applicable to other stages of education. In response to Ms Emily LAU's enquiry, Head/RLSD undertook to provide a cost estimate of the research project for members' information. Members in general endorsed the proposed research outline. The Chairman requested Head/RLSD to take note of members' views in conducting the research.

RLSD

Action

V. Enhancing Support for Education and Manpower Policy Making
[LC Paper No. CB(2)668/01-02(01)]

7. At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM) briefed members on the salient points in the Administration's paper. She stressed the need of the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) for additional manpower to implement the Education Reform, prepare for the setting up of the proposed Manpower Development Committee (MDC) and the establishment of the Continuing Education Fund (CEF), as well as to provide better steer to the Support Unit of the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR).

Establishment of directorate staff

8. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed serious concern about the increase of some 6% in directorate staff vis-à-vis a decrease of some 11% in non-directorate staff in the civil service establishment in the past four years. He considered that while he had no query on the proposed creation of one supernumerary post of Administrative Officer Staff Grade C (AOSGC) at D2 rank which would be offset by the cessation of one non-civil service appointment at equivalent rank, LegCo would have difficulties in supporting any proposal to create directorate posts unless strong justifications were provided

9. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that EMB should try to meet the need for additional manpower through redeployment or reshuffling of duties among existing directorate staff. For example, the functions of the Quality Education Fund (QEF) Secretariat would be transferred to the Education Department (ED); housekeeping of the Hong Kong Institute of Education should more appropriately be put under the purview of the Higher Education Division. As a result, one directorate officer could be made responsible for the Division of Teacher Education and Language Education.

10. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong further suggested that alternatively the Administration should consider interdepartmental transfer of directorate posts to meet the shortfall in EMB. He pointed out that the Environment and Food Bureau and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department should have surplus of directorate posts since the number of their directorate posts had increased since 1997 but related work should have been streamlined after the dissolution of the municipal councils.

11. Dr YEUNG Sum shared Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's view, saying that the Democratic Party would not support the staffing proposal to increase directorate posts in EMB. He observed that downsizing of civil service establishment seemed to be confined to posts in the lower ranks while directorate posts had increased. Dr YEUNG considered that as the Administration expected to fill the proposed

Action

directorates posts by civil servants with rich experience in administration, it should not have difficulties in identifying surplus administrative officers within the Government to take up the jobs.

12. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that the Liberal Party would have strong reservations about any staffing proposal to create additional directorates posts, unless the need for such posts was absolutely necessary and interdepartmental transfer was not possible. The Liberal Party would not support the EMB's proposal to create two supernumerary posts of AOSGC at the present stage. Mr CHEUNG also opined that the Administration should carefully consider the duration of directorates posts in the staffing proposal.

13. Ms Emily LAU shared the view of other members that new directorates posts should only be created with strong justifications. She stressed that work should not be carried out as a matter of routine and cost-effectiveness of the existing staffing arrangements should be reviewed. Ms LAU suggested that EMB should identify any unnecessary work in the light of changing circumstances and re-organise work distribution to meet additional manpower needs.

14. SEM responded that the Administration was well aware of the community's concerns about the creation of directorates posts under the prevailing economic circumstances. She, however, stressed that EMB had not been provided with adequate manpower support to cope with the additional workload arising from the various educational initiatives which had been introduced after 1997, including implementation of the Education Reform. On staff redeployment, SEM explained that interdepartmental transfer of directorates posts would have to be decided by the Chief Secretary for the Administration and would be considered only when the directorates posts to be transferred had been confirmed to be surplus to requirement. In line with existing policies and practices, transfer of QEF Secretariat's work to ED would mean simultaneous transfer to the ED of all the directorates and non-directorates posts in the QEF Secretariat.

15. In response to members' request to review the work portfolio of EMB and its staff structure, SEM said that EMB would review its work and discontinue or suspend some of its policy commitments if there was a consensus in the community. She pointed out that various education initiatives had been implemented during the past few years and the introduction of the Education Reform had further stretched the already limited manpower resources of EMB. Given the existing manpower resources, the Administration might have to re-prioritise policy initiatives such as the provision of whole-day primary schooling in 2007-08 school year. SEM also pointed out that the liaison, negotiation and arrangements involved in locating a suitable site for construction of a new school and subsequent transfer of students from an existing to the new school was an extremely time-consuming process. In fact, EMB had taken the lead to improve service delivery by way of re-engineering the work processes, streamlining the

Action

existing operation and implementing other innovative measures to save manpower time and costs. She added that during a period of economic downturn, the community as a whole had more grievances and complaints. As a result, staff of EMB had to communicate with stakeholders in education more closely and frequently in the course of implementing policy initiatives in education. She urged members to re-consider the current manpower needs of EMB on the basis of the justifications provided in the staffing proposal.

16. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that he had suggested to the Civil Service Bureau that the Administration should review its overall establishment of directorate manpower as well as directorate strength in individual bureaux and departments before submitting any staffing proposal to create directorate posts. He considered that there was over-staffing at directorate level in the civil service establishment. He asked EMB to re-consider the need for the three directorate posts after a re-organisation of its work.

17. SEM responded that the staffing proposal had been vigorously examined by the Finance Bureau and Civil Service Bureau before putting forward to members. The Administration had taken into account the community's concerns about creation of permanent directorate posts and proposed the creation of the three supernumerary posts on a time-limited basis to meet the short-term needs of EMB.

18. SEM highlighted that one AOSGC was created on a time-limited basis and would be reviewed after the setting up of the proposed MDC in 2003. Initially the Administration hoped that the Principal Assistant Secretary (PAS) responsible for the policy work on teachers and teacher education could take up the work of SCOLAR. With the Government's commitment to upgrade the quality of teacher education in response to the community's aspiration, the Administration was formulating a number of new policies and initiatives. Concurrently, SCOLAR was undertaking a review on language education in Hong Kong. A separate AOSGC was therefore required to head the Support Unit of SCOLAR (SSU) to oversee the substantive changes in the work priorities of SCOLAR in the light of the community's expectation to improve students' language ability. The Administration anticipated that the existing PAS temporarily assigned with the duties of the Head of SSU could concentrate on the policy work on teachers and teacher education, as well as work related to the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications. The remaining AOSGC was created for implementing the Education Reform and would be responsible for servicing the Education Commission (EC) Division of EMB. She stressed that the EC Division needed to provide secretariat support to the four Working Groups established under EC to examine the various issues arising from reforms in continuing education, senior secondary education structure and interface between universities and other post-secondary institutions. The Administration would review the need for the post at an appropriate time having regard to the progress of implementing the Education Reform.

Action

19. Ms Emily LAU said that there was a concern in the education community that too many educational initiatives had been introduced during the past few years. She asked whether the Administration would consider adjusting its implementation pace of the Education Reform and the various educational initiatives.

20. SEM explained that the Administration was progressively implementing the various reform and support measures since their adoption in 2000. These measures covered virtually all significant aspects of the education system, i.e., the academic structure, the curricula, the assessment mechanisms and the interface between different stages of education. Since many facets of the education system were inter-related, the reform and support measures should be implemented concurrently if the intended benefits were to be achieved. For example, various complementary measures needed to be implemented after the abolition of the Academic Aptitude Tests. The review of the medium of instruction policy would need to be coordinated with the review on the SSPA mechanism. SEM added that EMB had a number of policy initiatives to be achieved in the next 10 years and many of the preparation and planning work needed to be commenced without delay.

Establishment of non-directorate staff

21. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that it was worrying to note that when putting forward any staffing proposal to create directorate posts, the Administration would always propose to create additional non-directorate staff correspondingly. He enquired about the need and justifications for the creation of four time-limited non-directorate posts at a cost of about \$3.3 million to support the proposed AOSGC posts and the continuity of these posts in the civil service.

22. SEM responded that the four time-limited posts were required to assist the two AOSGC post holders in implementing the Education Reform and the setting up of MDC and CEF. In line with current civil service policies, these posts would be created on a time-limited basis. Their continued need would depend on the work progress of the Education Reform and the requirements of MDC and CEF in due course. SEM also pointed out that ancillary staffing support would be required when new directorate posts were created so that the manpower resources of these directorate staff could be effectively utilised.

23. Ms Emily LAU asked about the growth of directorate and non-directorate posts in EMB over the years. SEM undertook to provide information on the changes in the EMB's establishment for directorate and non-directorate posts in recent years for members' reference.

Adm

Action

Way forward

24. In summing up the discussion, the Chairman said that members acknowledged that EMB had a lot of policy work which needed to be done in the coming decade, but some members considered that EMB should reshuffle the duties of its directorate staff or the Administration should re-deploy its directorate staff in the civil service establishment to meet additional manpower needs of EMB.

25. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong suggested that the staffing proposal should be put on hold until the feasibility to reshuffle the duties or to re-deploy directorate staff from other bureaux or departments had been sorted out. Ms Emily LAU asked about the Administration's plan in respect of the staffing proposal given members' views expressed at the meeting.

26. SEM reiterated that EMB had already carefully reviewed the schedules of all its PASs and concluded that there was no scope for internal redeployment. If members held a strong view that staffing resources must be re-deployed from other bureaux or departments even if there were adequate justifications for additional directorate posts in EMB, she would discuss the matter with the Finance Bureau. She pointed out that under the circumstances EMB had no option except putting the work of some policy commitments on hold especially those which were manpower-intensive, unless additional manpower resources would be provided. EMB would review its policy commitments and set priorities in the light of available manpower resources. Mr SZETO Wah requested that EMB should carefully consider the community's aspiration in the review. SEM assured members that the Administration would revert to the Panel if the review recommended the suspension of any major policy initiatives.

VI. Secondary School Places Allocation in 2001-02

[LC Paper No. CB(2)712/01-02(01)]

27. At the invitation of the Chairman, Director of Education (D of E) briefed members on the main points of the Administration's paper on the SSPA system. D of E also informed members that ED had consulted the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) on the proposed changes to the SSPA system and EOC had raised no query on the proposal.

Removal of the three gender-based features

28. Miss Cyd HO said that the Administration should not emphasise the "adverse impact" of the new allocation algorithm of combined scaling, combined banding and no pre-determined gender quota on co-educational secondary schools. It seemed that the Administration was still holding hard feeling against the High Court ruling. Miss HO considered that a higher percentage of girls or boys in

Action

Band 1 should not be regarded as problematic. The Administration should take appropriate measures to enhance learning for boys and girls such as improving school curriculum, teaching and learning, and internal assessment. She expressed concern that there were reports that some secondary schools might adopt discriminatory measures against girls in the allocation of discretionary places in order to maintain a balanced enrolment of different sexes at secondary one (S1). Similarly, some primary schools might adjust the internal assessment system in favour of boys so as to create a balanced performance of boys and girls in primary five (P5) and six (P6) classes.

29. D of E responded that the Administration was only trying to point out the possible impact of the new allocation algorithm by conducting simulation runs based on available data from the 2000 and 2001 allocation exercises. It definitely had no intention to highlight the possible impact arising from the probability that the percentage of boys in Band 1 would be smaller than that of girls. He stressed that ED would provide timely support to schools with unbalanced ratios of boys and girls. As regards compliance with anti-discriminatory legislation, ED would issue a circular to all the schools requesting them not to use the allocation of discretionary places or any other measures to achieve a balanced enrolment of the two sexes at S1.

30. Ms Audrey EU expressed appreciation of the ED's efforts in removing the three discriminatory elements from SSPA system. However, she considered that there was no need to make any comparison of first-choice percentage by sex before and after the removal of the three gender-based features in the original SSPA system. She suggested that the Administration should present the overall situation regardless of sex difference and stress the principle of equal opportunity in SSPA in the future. D of E explained that in the light of the High Court ruling, ED was obliged to provide the community with a full picture on the SSPA system, including the impact of the new allocation arrangement. The public had the right to know.

31. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that to his knowledge EOC had taken the view that after the removal of the three discriminatory elements in SSPA system, only a few secondary schools would have unbalanced ratios of boys and girls. It considered that the findings of stimulations presented in Appendix 2 to the Administration's paper would mislead parents and had exaggerated the effects of the new arrangements on boys.

32. In response, D of E reiterated that the Administration had no intention to exaggerate the possible effects of the removal of the three gender-based features of SSPA. Referring to a press release entitled "Way forward for SSPA system announced" issued by ED on 15 December 2001, D of E stressed that the Administration had presented the information in a neutral manner. The press

Action

release was tabled at the meeting and subsequently issued vide LC Paper No. CB(2)712/01-02(01).

Clerk

33. Ms Emily LAU considered that the Panel should invite the views of EOC on whether the SSPA system for the 2002 allocation was in full compliance with the Sex Discrimination Ordinance. She also urged the Administration to ensure compliance of schools with the requirements of the Ordinance. D of E assured members that ED would endeavour to advise schools to comply with the statutory requirements of the anti-discriminatory legislation.

Review of the SSPA system and internal assessment mechanism

34. Members noted that ED had scheduled to review the short-term mechanism of the SSPA system in 2003-04 before implementing the long-term mechanism as from the 2005-06 school year. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung asked whether review of SSPA system could be conducted earlier than 2003. He considered that the Administration should have set out the direction for improving the future SSPA system and the current assessment mechanism in schools. Mr LEUNG expressed dissatisfaction with the Administration's slow progress in this respect.

35. D of E responded that the short-term mechanisms of the SSPA system had been implemented as from the 2001 allocation. These included the abolition of the Academic Aptitude Test, the reduction of Bands from five to three, the increase of discretionary places from 10% to 20% and the abandonment of written tests for enrolment of discretionary places. To tie in with the review on the medium of instruction policy, EC had scheduled to review the short-term mechanisms in 2003-04 before implementing the long-term mechanism in 2005-06. D of E further pointed out that the pressing task of ED following the High Court ruling was to adjust the SSPA system so that it would be lawful, fair and conform to educational principle. In view of the recent changes to SSPA system, ED considered it appropriate to keep further changes to the system in the next few years to the minimum.

36. D of E acknowledged that the current content and format of internal assessment in many primary schools stressed too much on rote memorisation and verbal skills. He assured members that ED would encourage schools to adopt a greater variety of assessment methods and formats on broader content areas to assess students' diversified abilities and achievement fairly, validly and meaningfully.

37. Ms Emily LAU noted that the guidebook on internal assessment at P5 and P6 would be revamped to include the new concepts and guidelines with exemplars on assessment for different subjects. Ms LAU asked and D of E explained that the new guidebook would be issued to schools in early 2002. A series of seminars and workshops on the new internal assessment methods and formats would be

Action

organised. He stressed that the cultivation of a new assessment culture was an essential element of the curriculum reform and ED would promote the new culture in tandem with the implementation of curriculum changes. He hoped that teachers and principals would adopt the new and diversified ways of teaching and assessment to teach and develop students' potentials. Efforts would also be made to remove gender-stereotyped beliefs of parents. He added that the "Knowledge Fair on Assessment for Learning" conducted by the Curriculum Development Institute on 12 November 2001 had attracted some 4 000 educators to participate in the discussion of the new culture and good practices in internal assessment. At Ms Emily LAU's request, D of E undertook to provide the Panel and EOC with the new guidebook on internal assessment at P5 and P6 when available.

Adm

38. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Dr YEUNG Sum pointed out that since the internal assessment mechanism would determine the priority order of a student in the central allocation, extensive research and public consultation should be conducted before putting forward any major changes. They considered that the new assessment mechanism should be designed to assess boys' and girls' performance on a fair basis, rather than to cater for the differences in physical and cognitive development between them.

School curriculum and school facilities

39. Mr Tommy CHEUNG expressed concern that as a few secondary schools would possibly be allocated a lop-sided ratio of girls or boys under the new allocation algorithm, there would be inadequate places for individual subjects in these schools. He urged the Administration to ensure that students were provided with choices in subject studies and special arrangements on teaching and learning for subjects such as Physical Education for classes with a great majority of girls would be made.

40. D of E responded that schools had been able to provide students with choices in different subject studies and would make necessary arrangements for teaching on special subjects such as Design and Technology, Home Economics and Physical Education for classes with a majority of girls or boys. Ms Audrey EU remarked that students in different levels of secondary classes should be provided with the opportunities to study the same range of subjects. She stressed that the curriculum reform should strive towards providing students with a broad and balanced curriculum so that all students, regardless of gender, would enjoy a comprehensive learning experience and could develop their potentials to the full.

41. Miss Cyd HO pointed out that the provision of latrine facilities in school should take into account the physical difference between boys and girls. She considered that ED should be aware of the fact that girls on average needed more time than boys as far as the use of latrine facilities was concerned.

Action

42. D of E responded that ED would closely monitor the situation and provide appropriate support to schools when the results of the 2002 allocation were known. In planning for the provision of latrine facilities, ED would take into account the physical difference between boys and girls and provide sufficient number of toilets for schools with a large intake of girls at S1. In case of necessity, schools might consider extending the recess period to facilitate utilization of latrine facilities.

43. Miss Cyd HO remarked that it was also unfair for girls if they needed to use up all the recess time for queuing up to use latrine facilities. Mr Tommy CHEUNG added that ED should reserve sufficient funds and simplify the application procedures for construction of latrine facilities. D of E responded that based on the results of the simulations, ED already had some ideas about the schools which would require additional male or female latrine facilities. ED would monitor the results of the 2002 SSPA allocation closely and plan the necessary construction work for these schools as soon as practicable. He assured members that ED maintained a major repair account for urgent repair and construction works in schools.

VII. Briefing on arrangements for implementing the "Through-train" Mode

[LC Paper No. CB(2)668/01-02(02)]

44. At the Chairman's invitation, Assistant Director of Education (Planning and Research) (ADE(P&R)) briefed members on the salient points of the Administration's paper.

45. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong stressed that the Administration should observe the principle that "through-train" schools must not become a closed system. He urged the Administration to ensure that popular existing secondary schools turning into "through-train" schools should reserve sufficient number of their total number of S1 places for admitting students of other primary schools through discretionary places and central allocation. He pointed out that while many newly-operated through-train secondary schools did provide a satisfactory level of secondary education, most parents would prefer to send their children to "through-train" secondary schools with a reputation for providing quality education. He therefore suggested that the Administration should increase the total number of S1 places in these popular schools through reprovisioning, in-situ redevelopment or School Improvement Programme. Given the current Primary One Admission system and in view of the need to balance the interest between "through-train" and "non-through-train" students, he considered that 50% of the total number of reserved S1 places in through-train schools should be made available for central allocation. Ms Emily LAU expressed support for Mr CHEUNG's views.

Action

46. Dr YEUNG Sum asked whether the requirement that linked primary and secondary schools applying to form "through-train" schools must have the same financing mode was intended to force schools to join the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS). ADE(P&R) responded that the Administration had no intention to force schools to join DSS. He explained that the requirement was to ensure that a fair and consistent mechanism was applied in admitting students. He pointed out that private schools had complete discretion in student enrolment and allowing private primary schools and aided secondary schools to form through-train schools would create privileges to students enrolled to the private primary schools concerned. ED would try to work out a solution with the feeder/nominated schools currently not meeting the requirements of through-train and these schools had to decide whether to adopt the through-train mode on or before 31 May 2012.

VIII. Future model of the Hong Kong Education City

[LC Paper No. CB(2)668/01-02(03)]

47. At the invitation of the Chairman, D of E briefed members on the main points of the Administration's paper which sought members' views on the three possible options for continuing the Hong Kong Education City (EdCity) project upon the expiry of the Quality Education Fund (QEF) grant on 31 August 2002. D of E informed members that he was the Chairman of the Steering Committee of the EdCity project which recommended to set up a government-owned company in running the project.

48. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered that the EdCity Project should preferably be managed by a non-profit-making limited company 100% owned by the Government. He asked about the financial arrangements in case the proposed funding of \$25 million redeployed from the existing resources allocated for Information Technology (IT) in education each year was insufficient to meet the operating costs.

49. D of E responded that the objective of operating the EdCity was not profit-making. In fact, the role of the EdCity had evolved from a web portal to an infrastructure in facilitating, promoting and shaping the education landscape in Hong Kong. It should continue to exist beyond the expiry of the QEF grant on 31 August 2002 to support the current education and curriculum reforms which would last for 10 years or more. The proposed initial funding for continuing the EdCity project after 31 August 2002 was for a period of three years. The future Board of Directors to be chaired by D of E would review the funding arrangement in the light of the outcome of the comprehensive review of the strategy of IT in education and the quality of services provided by the EdCity. The proposed mode of operation would provide flexibility for the EdCity to function as a rich repository of education resources for sharing amongst teachers and students and as an on-line web-based teaching and learning platform for the community. Assistant

Action

Director of Education (Infrastructure) (ADE(I)) supplemented that the total operating cost of the EdCity was less than \$20 million in the past year. An annual funding of \$25 million should suffice for the EdCity to provide a wider variety and better quality of services.

50. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong further asked whether the EdCity would put up advertisements for commercial educational organisations such as tutorial schools on its website; and if yes, how ED could ensure the integrity of these organisations. He was concerned that students would patronise these tutorial schools because of the reputation of the EdCity and students might suffer financial loss if these schools operated improperly. D of E responded that the EdCity would not aim to increase revenue through publishing advertisements commercial organisations. The Steering Committee of the EdCity project would carefully consider relevant policy.

51. Ms Emily LAU enquired about the role of the advisory committees such as the Editorial and Content Development Committee and the Business Development and Marketing Committee, etc. in the operation of the EdCity. D of E responded that the proposed company would be managed by a Board of Directors which would comprise a few government officials and a majority of independent community members and renowned education professionals. The various advisory committees would provide professional advice to the Board of Directors to facilitate efficient and effective management of the EdCity.

52. Mr SIN Chung-kai said that he was a member of the Steering Committee of the EdCity. He supported setting up a non-profit-making limited company 100% owned by the Government to manage the EdCity project because the option would allow ED's steer over the direction and operation of the project while providing flexibility to the operation of the company. Dr YEUNG Sum expressed a similar view. He pointed out that it was important to hold the Administration responsible for maintaining the quality of the IT in education services provided by the EdCity.

IX. Any other business

53. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:55 pm.