

OFFICIAL RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday, 2 December 2004

**The Council continued to meet at
half-past Two o'clock**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

THE PRESIDENT

THE HONOURABLE MRS RITA FAN HSU LAI-TAI, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE JAMES TIEN PEI-CHUN, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ALBERT HO CHUN-YAN

IR DR THE HONOURABLE RAYMOND HO CHUNG-TAI, S.B.ST.J., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LEE CHEUK-YAN

THE HONOURABLE MARTIN LEE CHU-MING, S.C., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE DAVID LI KWOK-PO, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE FRED LI WAH-MING, J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE LUI MING-WAH, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MARGARET NG

THE HONOURABLE MRS SELINA CHOW LIANG SHUK-YEE, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE JAMES TO KUN-SUN

THE HONOURABLE CHEUNG MAN-KWONG

THE HONOURABLE CHAN YUEN-HAN, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHAN KAM-LAM, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS SOPHIE LEUNG LAU YAU-FUN, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LEUNG YIU-CHUNG

THE HONOURABLE SIN CHUNG-KAI, J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE PHILIP WONG YU-HONG, G.B.S.

THE HONOURABLE WONG YUNG-KAN, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE JASPER TSANG YOK-SING, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE HOWARD YOUNG, S.B.S., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE YEUNG SUM

THE HONOURABLE LAU CHIN-SHEK, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LAU KONG-WAH, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LAU WONG-FAT, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MIRIAM LAU KIN-YEE, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE EMILY LAU WAI-HING, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHOY SO-YUK

THE HONOURABLE ANDREW CHENG KAR-FOO

THE HONOURABLE TIMOTHY FOK TSUN-TING, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE TAM YIU-CHUNG, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ABRAHAM SHEK LAI-HIM, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LI FUNG-YING, B.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE TOMMY CHEUNG YU-YAN, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE FREDERICK FUNG KIN-KEE, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE AUDREY EU YUET-MEE, S.C., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE WONG KWOK-HING, M.H.

THE HONOURABLE LEE WING-TAT

THE HONOURABLE LI KWOK-YING, M.H.

DR THE HONOURABLE JOSEPH LEE KOK-LONG

THE HONOURABLE DANIEL LAM WAI-KEUNG, B.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE JEFFREY LAM KIN-FUNG, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ANDREW LEUNG KWAN-YUEN, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ALAN LEONG KAH-KIT, S.C.

THE HONOURABLE LEUNG KWOK-HUNG

DR THE HONOURABLE KWOK KA-KI

DR THE HONOURABLE FERNANDO CHEUNG CHIU-HUNG

THE HONOURABLE CHEUNG HOK-MING, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE WONG TING-KWONG, B.B.S.

THE HONOURABLE RONNY TONG KA-WAH, S.C.

THE HONOURABLE CHIM PUI-CHUNG

THE HONOURABLE PATRICK LAU SAU-SHING, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ALBERT JINGHAN CHENG

THE HONOURABLE KWONG CHI-KIN

THE HONOURABLE TAM HEUNG-MAN

MEMBERS ABSENT:

THE HONOURABLE BERNARD CHAN, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ALBERT CHAN WAI-YIP

THE HONOURABLE VINCENT FANG KANG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MA LIK, J.P.

PUBLIC OFFICERS ATTENDING:

PROF THE HONOURABLE ARTHUR LI KWOK-CHEUNG, G.B.S., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER

DR THE HONOURABLE YORK CHOW YAT-NGOK, S.B.S., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR HEALTH, WELFARE AND FOOD

CLERKS IN ATTENDANCE:

MR RICKY FUNG CHOI-CHEUNG, J.P., SECRETARY GENERAL

MRS JUSTINA LAM CHENG BO-LING, ASSISTANT SECRETARY
GENERAL

MEMBERS' MOTIONS

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Two motions with no legislative effect. I have accepted the recommendations of the House Committee: the movers of the motions will each have up to 15 minutes for their speeches including their replies, and another five minutes to speak on the amendments; the movers of amendments will each have up to 10 minutes to speak; the mover of an amendment to an amendment and other Members will each have up to seven minutes for their speeches. I am obliged to direct any Member speaking in excess of the specified time to discontinue.

First motion: Implementing small class teaching. Ms Audrey EU.

IMPLEMENTING SMALL CLASS TEACHING

MS AUDREY EU (in Cantonese): Madam President, I move that the motion as printed on the Agenda be passed.

This motion debate today is about small class teaching. First of all, I should explain what "small class" means. There is actually no scientific definition of "small class" that determines the ideal class size. I think a more accurate description is how many people or how much room there should be in order to best suit the method of teaching. The Government is currently using a class size of 25 students to implement small class teaching on a pilot basis for a period of three years. To pre-empt disputes, Madam President, I will adopt this number of students to mean a "small class".

The theme of my motion today is quality education and I wish to put across two messages. First, small class is one of the prerequisites for the realization of the objectives of the education reform; and second, small class is an international trend, and if it is not promptly implemented in Hong Kong, the competitiveness of Hong Kong is set to be undermined.

Madam President, this motion today is not about money and yet, it is impossible not to talk about money. Shortly after the commencement of this term of the Legislative Council, I wrote to the Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower enquiring how much expenditure would be required for the implementation of small class teaching. In her reply she told me that it

would cost \$3.6 billion. When I looked at it, I found that it was the figure in 2002, but it is already 2004 now. So I asked her if more updated figures could be available. Then she replied in writing that they had made a mistake and that it should be \$3.1 billion. That is why Mr Ronny TONG had joked that I should write more to the Permanent Secretary, because for every letter written to her, \$500 million can be saved. In fact, the \$3.1 billion mentioned by her can very easily lead to misunderstanding. Whenever I ask other people how they will interpret the Government's estimate of an additional \$3.1 billion for implementing small class teaching, they will think that an additional \$3.1 billion is required on top of the existing expenditure. In fact, this is not what the authorities mean. With regard to the expenditure, Mr Alan LEONG of the Article 45 Concern Group will further explain it in his speech later on. Besides, Ms Margaret NG and Mr Ronny TONG will share with Members the successful experiences of small class teaching both in Hong Kong and overseas countries.

Madam President, another point that I wish to emphasize is that the objective or theme of the original motion today has nothing to do with "rice bowls". Madam President, I am not saying that the "rice bowls" of teachers are unimportant. They are actually very important, because only when there is high morale and a stable working environment can quality talents be attracted to teach our next generations. But I think we should not let the poor performers, the run-of-the-mill or mediocre teachers set a bad example to students. Those teachers or headmasters who will only do harm to our younger generations should be eliminated. But it does not mean that small class teaching should be ruled out.

Many members of the education profession and many headmasters are here listening to this motion debate today. I think they will agree that when they ask for and support the implementation of small class teaching, their objective is not preservation of their "rice bowls". The objective is to put education onto the right track. In the ensuing debate, I hope I will not hear many Members say that small class teaching should not be implemented because it is meant for the protection of "rice bowls". This is putting the cart before the horse. Our objective is to achieve quality education, hoping that small class teaching can become one of the necessary conditions to better support the implementation of the education reform. Madam President, why do I say that it is one of the conditions? It is because no one is saying that small class is the

only condition, and no one is saying that the situation will become very satisfactory when the class size is reduced and will hence obviate the need to carry out any other work. We do not mean this. Yet, it is one of the conditions.

In the consultation document on reform proposals for the education system published in 2000, the Education Commission pointed out that the education reform should be student-focused, in the hope that all-round development can be achieved through lifelong learning. Moreover, a number of specific goals were proposed: to enable students to enjoy learning, enhance their effectiveness in communication and develop their creativity and sense of commitment.

However, let us look at the existing environment in primary and secondary schools. When each class is crammed with 32 to 40 students, it is indeed very difficult to achieve or realize the goals of the education reform. Let us start with the goal of "enabling students to enjoy learning". In order to make the lessons enjoyable for students, there must first be a happy learning environment. It is difficult for the traditional "one-way" teaching which stresses memorization to arouse an interest in learning among students. The students may obtain high scores, for they are forced to recite or memorize and to do exercises from morning till night every day. Yes, they may score good marks, but they absolutely do not enjoy learning. The proposed teaching methods, such as the diversified approach, activity approach, group discussion, collaborative projects or role-playing, stress that learning should transcend the boundary of classrooms through, for instance, life-wide learning, outings in the countryside, and so on. All this can be done only when the teacher is leading a relatively small class, and it is only under such circumstance that students will find learning enjoyable.

To implement the diversified approach of teaching, a small class is definitely better than a big class. Reduced class size will help develop a better relationship between students and teachers. I have personally observed an English lesson conducted in a small class. The teacher was teaching "Can you skip? Can you catch a ball?". The teacher divided the class into four groups, each of which had a rope to skip and a ball to throw here and there. It is very difficult for a big class to have the environment or space for these activities. Then the teacher explained the meaning of the words to the students. Through these activities, students will be able to learn these words by heart, and this approach is better than just requiring students to memorize the words or to do dictation.

The second goal is to enhance students' effectiveness in communication. Disregarding whether it is about language training, it is still the case that a small class is better than a big class. In a small class, the teacher can give students more opportunities of participation. It is also possible for discussion to be conducted in groups in accordance with students' varied standards. For example, I have seen a teacher teaching percentage in a small class. The teacher did not just tell the students to do arithmetic. Rather, the teacher distributed some discount cards to the students and told them to discuss in groups how they can buy all the things necessary for an outing at the lowest prices. These activities are possible in small classes but are more unlikely to be conducted in big classes.

Third, to develop students' sense of commitment. This is, in fact, very important insofar as affective education is concerned. The objective is to cultivate students' moral values. At present, many families are in a rather difficult position financially. It is very difficult for teachers, particularly the class teachers, to take care of each and every student and also the needs of their families if there are too many students in a class. Many people have asked whether, in terms of academic scores, the implementation of small class teaching can bring about considerable progress. A teacher has once told me this: "While a student may not be smart and clever, I can teach him so that he will not go astray; I can teach him so that he will at least be willing to go to school and will not become a delinquent who will do harm to society when he grows up." How should the efforts of this teacher be quantified? So, this is also a merit of small class teaching.

Finally, to develop creativity in students. This is about students' thinking and analytical power to distinguish right and wrong, something that can hardly be achieved by the traditional "one-way" teaching. The Government has recently implemented integrated education and reduced the number of allocation streams of secondary students from five to three, resulting in greater variations in the quality of students in a class. Certainly, this can help children with special needs integrate into mainstream schools and hence mitigate the labelling effects. But if there are too many students in a class, it will be impossible for these students to be properly taken care of. I have visited some schools where small class teaching is implemented. The students can sit on the floor to have their lessons. Some of the students are mildly mentally retarded or autistic, and they are all within the teacher's arm's reach. This can help these students integrate into ordinary schools. On the other hand, the smart students can also

be better taken care of. Just now it was also mentioned that the top pupils should be allowed to develop their full potential while the weaker ones should be given appropriate assistance to attain the minimum standards. It is very difficult to meet the challenges from smart students. If there is too big a gap in the quality of students in a class, it may dampen the interest of students who often wish to answer questions, because the teacher can hardly give them opportunities to give play to their talents. So, this is also a reason why we hope that small class teaching can be implemented, for it can achieve the objective of enabling the top pupils to develop their full potential while assisting the weaker ones to attain the minimum standards and enable teachers to tailor their teaching to students' varied abilities. As a result, not one single student would be neglected.

Madam President, Secretary Prof Arthur LI has said that the success of education hinges on the quality of teachers. This is about priorities as often mentioned by him. Besides, Mrs Selina CHOW also mentions the quality of teachers in her amendment today. Madam President, I think there is actually no conflict. I am not saying that the quality of teachers is unimportant in the implementation of small class teaching. Rather, they are complementary to each other. Secretary Prof Arthur LI likes to ask: How will a parent choose between a class of 40 students taught by a good teacher and a class of 20 students taught by a mediocre teacher? I am a parent, and if I am to make a choice, I will choose a class of 20 students taught by a good teacher. Why can we not have both? Madam President, why should I be forced to make a choice between two different scenarios?

So, Madam President, the objective of today's motion is not only to reduce the number of students in a class. But in the meantime, I do not think that small class teaching is a brand new, revolutionary idea which requires us to provide more training to teachers before it can be achieved. It is because the Education and Manpower Bureau has already set the objectives of the education reform: To enable students to enjoy learning, enhance their effectiveness in communication and to develop creativity and a sense of commitment. Education is moving in this direction, and at the same time, the teaching methods must be diversified. So, they basically form a two-pronged approach. All in all, Madam President, I do not think that small class teaching and the quality of teachers are mutually exclusive. Nor do I agree that I can only choose one between them.

Moreover, I would like to talk about the Government's frequent allusion to overseas experiences, say, the experience in California of the United States, as examples to show that the cost-effectiveness of small class teaching is far from significant and that little progress has been made in terms of students' academic scores. Firstly, I wish to point out that the experience in California is actually about reducing the normal class size of some 20 students to a smaller one of 10-odd students, and the Government considered the effectiveness of such small class teaching not significant. However, the situation in Hong Kong is different. We are now discussing the reduction of a class size of 30-odd students to 25 students to form a small class. Besides, as also admitted by experts, academic scores are often used as the basis to gauge its effectiveness, but more often than not, the objectives of education are not — Madam President, you should have seen an advertisement promoting "learning is more than scoring". So, we hope that the affective development of students should emphasize not only the transmission of knowledge. Efforts should also be made to develop self-confidence and self-esteem in students and also their ability to integrate into society. These objectives may not necessarily be quantified no matter how many tests are conducted.

Furthermore, Madam President, I also wish to mention that I have set up a working group on small class teaching jointly with some friends who are experts. We have prepared a policy paper which has been distributed to Honourable colleagues and the Secretary. On page six of this policy paper I have also stated the views of other people. In fact, in November 2004, a territory-wide survey was conducted of all subsidized primary schools, but we are still in the process of collecting their replies. So, among the 19 districts, as far as I understand it, we have so far received the replies of about 14 or 15 districts only. Members may note on page six of the policy paper that 100 000 replies have been received, which is by no means a small number. Parents who support small class teaching account for 92.9%; 99.2% of the headmasters and 99% of teachers have also indicated their support. The questionnaire also asked whether they support the implementation of small class teaching in individual districts as a start. On this question, many respondents have expressed support. The results of other surveys are also mentioned at the back of the paper.

Madam President, I would also like to say that Bishop Joseph ZEN has written to all colleagues to express his support for small class teaching. Today, in my office, I received a telephone call from Principal Timothy HA, who is the Chairman of the Hong Kong Association of Sponsoring Bodies of Schools. Mr

HA also expressed support for the original motion on small class teaching. His association has a total of 27 members representing over half of the schools in the territory. So, Madam President, this is an objective that we all wish to achieve. I hope that the Secretary can give us some good news today, so that small class teaching can be implemented as soon as possible. Thank you, Madam President.

Ms Audrey EU moved the following motion: (Translation)

"That this Council urges the Government to progressively implement small class teaching in primary schools, and then in secondary schools, to enable teachers to tailor their teaching to students' varied abilities, so as to realize and achieve the goal of quality education, promote education reform and fulfil the expectations of parents, teachers and students."

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the motion moved by Ms Audrey EU be passed.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mrs Selina CHOW will move an amendment to this motion. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong will move an amendment to Mrs Selina CHOW's amendment. The two amendments have been printed on the Agenda. The motion and the amendments will now be debated together in a joint debate.

I will first call upon Mrs Selina CHOW to speak and move her amendment to the motion. Then, I will call upon Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong to speak and move his amendment to Mrs Selina CHOW's amendment. Members may then debate the motion and the amendments. After Members have spoken, I will first put Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's amendment to Mrs Selina CHOW's amendment to vote. Then, depending on the result of the vote, I will put Mrs Selina CHOW's amendment, either in its original form or in the amended form, to vote.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now call upon Mrs Selina CHOW to speak and move her amendment.

MRS SELINA CHOW (in Cantonese): Madam President, I move that Ms Audrey EU's motion be amended, as printed on the Agenda.

Insofar as today's debate is concerned, I believe there is a consensus among the three of us, namely Ms Audrey EU, the mover of the original motion, myself, and Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, the mover of an amendment to mine, that small class teaching will definitely help improve students' learning. Moreover, teachers can have more time on average to communicate with each and every student to understand their needs so as to enable teachers to tailor their teaching to students' varied abilities and achieve the goal of quality education, as stated in the original motion. Given our consensus that small class teaching is good, why is it still necessary for us to argue this issue today? Why is it still necessary for me to amend the original motion? Although I believe there is a consensus among us and despite our approval of the general spirit of small class teaching, there is still a divergence of opinion among Members on certain specific details such as what conditions should be met before small class teaching can be implemented, how small class teaching can be implemented in concrete terms, and how to ensure the progress of other education reform initiatives will not be affected to avoid losing sight of other aspects of the education front. These several points are missing in the original motion. I find it essential for us to clarify these issues before we can ensure small class teaching, once implemented, can really achieve effectiveness. I have therefore proposed an amendment in this connection.

I would like to draw an analogy here. Small class teaching is like a utopia, or the Peach Blossom Garden, that we yearn for, but how can we reach there? This question warrants discussion in great detail. I originally planned to explain the key points of my amendment one after another. However, today I have just received the findings of a public opinion poll conducted by the Liberal Party. It is found that more than 54% of the parents interviewed shared the view that upgrading the teaching quality of teachers should be the paramount consideration in implementing small class teaching. This percentage is far higher than that of funding, the second consideration. This shows that the greatest concern to parents remains to be whether the quality of teachers can complement small class teaching. As such, I have decided to say a few words on teacher training.

Perhaps some people may say that should the size of each class be reduced, the teachers will then not be required to teach so many students, and their

workload will naturally be reduced. Right, if our goal is limited to reducing the size of each class rather than upgrading the quality of teaching by this means, the teachers will certainly be less busy than they are now. However, if our goal to implement small class teaching is to enhance the interests and abilities of students in learning as well as upgrading the quality of teaching, the existing teaching mode, teaching methods, and even the whole notion of education have to be adjusted and changed accordingly to complement small class teaching with the reduction in class sizes. Otherwise, small class teaching will merely be reduced to an unattainable ideal that cannot help at all to improve the learning abilities and achievements of students.

In other words, small class teaching will raise, rather than lower, our expectations for teachers, thus posing an enormous challenge that will tax their abilities. As such, strengthening teacher training and small class teaching must be complementary, just like we have to walk on two legs. Should the quality of teachers fall behind, it will be like a person moving his right leg forward with his left leg dragging behind. Can he really take strides forward?

I have heard many people from the education sector and school principals indicating in this Chamber their affirmation of small class teaching. Besides, I have been fortunate to come into direct contact, meet and discuss with several primary school principals to discuss their views on the teaching problems in connection with small class teaching. They have shown me a concrete proposal on ways to implement small class teaching in their district. The proposal largely deals with ways to upgrade the quality of teachers through workshops, seminars and systematic training programmes in order to cope with the requirements of small class teaching. They have even emphasized to me that, as the objective of small class teaching is to upgrade the quality of education, the teaching effectiveness of teachers will certainly be constantly upgraded, so as to enable the students to learn in a more enjoyable and effective manner under the environment of small class teaching. These enthusiastic people in the education sector have, as if by tacit agreement, taken great pains to explore new teaching methods to equip themselves in the hope of teaching their students properly. I must extend my heartfelt respects to them for their enthusiasm and efforts.

They have even told me that the reform was launched by their staff on their own initiatives, totally different from some of the previous top-down reforms in which the top and the bottom is detached. Its chances of success will also be higher than that of other reforms. I do understand and agree with this.

Their devotion has made me believe there is every chance that small class teaching, being spontaneously promoted, will succeed. However, from a macroscopic angle, in order to achieve the desired result, the crucial prerequisite must be met. This would mean that our teachers must be capable of rising up to this challenge. In addition, their complementary training must be strengthened as a whole to guarantee that their preparatory work is properly done. However, in order to achieve this goal, we cannot rely merely on the enthusiasm of teachers or principals. Instead, the Government must formulate a set of comprehensive strategies in a holistic manner. Without these complementary measures, small class teaching will get only half the results with double the effort.

According to some people, the constant decline in the number of school-age students in Hong Kong, coupled with the worsening problems with redundant teachers and a contraction in the number of classes as well as a growing number of vacant classrooms, has provided a golden opportunity for small class teaching. I would not deny that an opportunity has thus been provided in terms of hardware. However, all the parents and I share the same hope that, in launching any education reform, including small class teaching, the interest of students should be made the prime goal. Using small class teaching as a means to resolve the abovementioned problems with the contraction in the number of classes and redundant teachers will deviate from our paramount goal.

Having spent so much time on such issues as teacher training, I have to say a few words on another practical issue: Where does the money come from? Doubtless many people in the community consider small class teaching a pressing cause. However, there are some who consider it necessary for the Government to put its resources into reforms in other areas first. Even the implementation of full-time schooling has to be put aside. Upgrading the linguistic abilities of the students and their mastery of information technology, for instance, is considered the most important. Yesterday, I read from the newspaper that Prof K M CHENG, an authority in the education sector, was worried that the Government might compromise due to political pressure by wasting its resources on making it compulsory for small class teaching to be implemented across the territory. In his opinion, reducing the number of teaching sessions for teachers and strengthening teacher training will be more effective than reducing the class size.

Of course, it will be ideal for all reforms to be implemented simultaneously, and everyone will be pleased. After all, there can be infinite ideals. However, we live in a realistic world where resources are finite. It is simply impossible for us to make choices without priorities, unless every citizen approves of tax increases. That will be another matter. I believe Members will understand that resources are required for the implementation of every reform. It is impossible to put into immediate force whatever proposals that come to mind. On the education front, a substantial amount of resources is required in a number of areas. The expenditure on education has been increased from \$37.9 billion in 1996 to nearly \$60 billion this year, and a number of major reforms are still pending. For instance, the "3+3+4" proposal and its complementary curriculum reforms incur enormous expenses. As numerous reforms have to be launched simultaneously, do we have sufficient resources? How should the expenses be borne? I must remind Members that, in launching small class teaching, the authorities concerned must prudently assess the additional resources required for implementing small class teaching, weigh the commitments of both the Government and parents to avoid seeing the minute details but not the major issue, thus neglecting the needs of education reform.

Regarding Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's amendment to mine, I would like to ask Mr Tommy CHEUNG to speak on my behalf.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mrs Selina CHOW, your time is up.

MRS SELINA CHOW (in Cantonese): Thank you, Madam President.

Mrs Selina CHOW moved the following amendment: (Translation)

"To add "prudently assess the additional resources required for implementing small class teaching, weigh the commitments of both the Government and parents and, by ensuring that complementing training for teachers is available," after "urges the Government to"; and to delete ", and then in secondary schools," after "primary schools"."

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the amendment, moved by Mrs Selina CHOW to Mrs Audrey EU's motion, be passed.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now call upon Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong to speak and move his amendment to Mrs Selina CHOW's amendment.

MR CHEUNG MAN-KWONG (in Cantonese): Madam President, regarding the amendment moved by Mrs Selina CHOW, I have no doubt that she is sincerely concerned, however, she has undoubtedly set three hurdles for small class teaching, allowing the Government to seize the opportunity to defer the implementation of small class teaching and kill it in the womb.

Small class teaching has already become the consensus and aspiration of society. If there is any delay, people will be alienated. Although Mrs Selina CHOW is speaking "on behalf of parents", I hope she will understand that making students to continue learning in a class with 30 to 40 students is not what parents at large expect. Two years ago, 100 000 parents expressed their support for small class teaching. Recently, various school head associations have again received views from 100 000 parents expressing support for the implementation of small class teaching by district and by grade. It is thus evident that the amendment moved by the Liberal Party is not what parents really prefer.

The first hurdle set by Mrs Selina CHOW is resources. Earlier on, the Government produced a figure on the so-called additional expenditure, which amounted to \$3.6 billion but was later amended to \$3.1 billion. This amount misleads society, deters parents and distorts the small class teaching proposal put forward by the education sector. No matter it is the original proposal moved by Ms Audrey EU or my amendment, they both share one common principle, that is, to request the Government to make optimal use of the resources saved as a result of a drop in the number of students, make spending commensurate with the revenue and implement small class teaching on the basis of districts, by grade and by year. Nobody has ever demanded that the Government deploy additional resources and implement small class teaching in all schools all at once. In view of this, Mrs Selina CHOW's request urging the Government to assess the

additional resources required by small class teaching and to weigh the commitments of parents is in fact much ado about nothing.

The small class teaching proposal put forward by the education sector is pragmatic, flexible and far-sighted. It is pragmatic in that in districts where there is a drastic decrease in student numbers, the student number of every Primary One class will be frozen, so that the number of students in each class will decrease year by year from 32 to 23. Since the population is decreasing, small class teaching can be implemented throughout Hong Kong gradually, by district and grade and in domino-style, without the need to build additional schools, to recruit more teachers or to allocate additional resources. The flexibility of the proposal lies in the suggestion that schools can decide the number of students to be enrolled and popular schools can enroll more students, thus giving parents a choice. Take Sha Tin as an example. The number of Primary One classes offered this year is 142 and a total of over 4 300 students were enrolled and there are on average 31 students per class. Next year, the number of Primary One students in Sha Tin District will drop to 3 000 and it will only be necessary to offer 135 classes for small class teaching with 23 students per class to immediately become a reality.

Sha Tin is not an isolated case. From Sha Tin to Tai Po, Tuen Mun, the North District and Wan Chai, small class teaching can be extended rapidly to all parts of Hong Kong and become a reality. Furthermore, not only does the implementation of small class teaching by district and grade require no additional expenditure, it can even give rise to a sizeable surplus. Why? This is because the proposal made by the education sector is very restrained. It is only necessary to freeze the number of classes at Primary One but the number of classes from Primary Two to Primary Six can still be reduced, saving hundreds of millions of dollars in expenditure for the Government, which can be used on education reform or training teachers for small class teaching. This is a win-win situation in which one stone can kill two birds. Therefore, it can be seen that as long as small class teaching is implemented in the right way, it is by no means a course of action that will incur large expenses with no possibility of backtracking but rather, it is a thoroughfare towards quality education.

The second hurdle set by Mrs Selina CHOW is to strike out small class teaching for secondary schools. Be it in the implementation of education reform or curriculum reform in secondary schools, it was necessary to pay attention to the differences among students as well as reducing the number of

students. However, the Liberal Party is bucking the trend and stifling the opportunity for implementing small class teaching in secondary schools. This year, there are nearly 16 000 unfilled secondary school places, so the condition definitely exists for secondary schools to adopt an approach similar to that of primary schools, whereby schools with the need, in particular schools enrolling Band 3 students, can begin implementing small class teaching without having to wait six years for its complete implementation in primary schools or to increase the number of schools or teachers.

As we all know, students enrolled into secondary schools are categorized into three Allocation Bands. For schools enrolling Band 3 students, teaching is by no means easy and ethical education is particularly difficult. However, the number of students enrolled in each class in these schools still stands at 40, which is even more than that in primary schools. This is indeed totally unreasonable and things are by no means easy for these schools. At the same time when society keeps complaining that over 10 000 students do not score any marks in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination each year, has it occurred to anyone that the undesirable environment created by large classes is also a factor contributing towards the zero scores of these students?

The third hurdle set by Mrs Selina CHOW is to enable the Government to use teacher training as an excuse to drag its feet on small class teaching. Madam President, as it is, small class interactive teaching has always been included in local teacher training. What teachers find truly regrettable is that in a large class setting, there is no scope for them to put their training into practice. If small class teaching is implemented, small class interactive teaching can then be put into practice. This is the case for small class teaching in Shanghai, where implementation and improvement go hand in hand, and small class teaching has been extended from Primary One up to Secondary Two. Recently, in Macao, Mr Edmond HO announced his decision to further implement small class teaching in his policy address. How can Hong Kong lag behind? Hong Kong should learn from Shanghai, affirm the direction of small class teaching, then continually improve the pedagogy and intensify teacher training, doing both at the same time, rather than using teacher training as the pretext to delay small class teaching.

Madam President, both Mr TUNG Chee-hwa and Prof Arthur LI favour small class teaching but they do not have the courage to put it into practice. This is to profess love of what one really fears. Nowadays, small class teaching

is the greatest consensus in education and the earnest aspiration of parents. How can the SAR Government continue to bury its head in the sand like an ostrich in respect of small class teaching and behave like a snail with regard to quality education?

With these remarks, Madam President, I amend the amendment moved by Mrs Selina CHOW. Thank you.

Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong moved the following amendment to Mrs Selina CHOW's amendment: (Translation)

"To delete "prudently assess" after "the Government to" and substitute with "make optimal use of"; to delete "additional" before "resources"; to delete "required for implementing" after "resources" and substitute with "saved due to the drop in the primary and secondary school student population to provide training for teachers on"; to delete ", weigh the commitments of both the Government and parents and, by ensuring that complementing training for teachers is available" before ", progressively implement small class teaching" and substitute with "and, through a 'by district and by grade' mode of transition"; to delete "in" after "progressively implement small class teaching" and substitute with ", starting with"; and to add "and junior secondary forms," after "primary schools"."

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the amendment, moved by Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong to Mrs Selina CHOW's amendment, be passed.

MR PATRICK LAU (in Cantonese): Madam President, I know that this is not the first time that small class teaching is proposed for discussion in this Council. I very much thank Ms Audrey EU for proposing it again, as it gives me an opportunity to express my support for this motion.

I have been engaged in education for many years. Forty years ago before I studied in the university, I had been a teacher in a private school for one year. At that time, there were 50 students in each class, and I did not know whether I should deal with the order in class or impart knowledge to students. Later, I

had taught in the university for 31 years. While this motion mainly targets secondary and primary schools, I am well aware of the merits of small class teaching. When I taught architecture in the university, I had insisted on small class teaching, because only in this way could I really understand the ability of each of my students, so that I could tailor teaching to their varied standards and talents. This is very important.

Insofar as the education system in Hong Kong is concerned, small class teaching cannot be implemented owing to historical reasons, thus making it impossible for teachers to tailor teaching to students' varied abilities. This is a main reason contributing to the so-called "spoon-fed" teaching in Hong Kong. It is because teachers have to cope with a large number of students and a tight schedule of lessons and so, they cannot understand the individual talents of each and every student. Nor can they assess their students' learning attitude one by one. Such being the case, they can only adopt the spoon-fed approach in teaching their students.

Madam President, when I worked in the university, I had read many reference letters written to us by school principals, because in submitting their applications, students also had to produce some reference letters. I found that very often, the school principals did not really know the students concerned. Some had even written "He is a good boy", showing that the principal did not know the individual endowment of the student at all. To us teachers who were responsible for vetting applications from students, it was impossible for us to tell whether the students are suitable for studying architecture.

It is proven that some students cannot digest too much knowledge in a big class. This will directly affect their absorption of knowledge and hence preclude them from acquiring more knowledge. This has eventually created some graduates who are below standard as mentioned by Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong.

Madam President, the more well-off parents often spend a lot of money on private tuition for their children. I have also worked as a private tutor before. If private tutorials are considered successful, I think their success can be attributed to small class teaching. I hope that after small class teaching is implemented in the future, private tuition would become unnecessary. Other than graduates who are not up to standard, I think students in Hong Kong generally lack independent and critical thinking and also analytical power,

thinking that they can pass their examinations merely by memorization. This is a blunder of the education system, which fails to cater for the talent development of individual students and to give them room to realize their potentials. I remember that I had once attended the parents day and almost engaged in a war of words with the teacher of my daughter, because he said that my daughter liked asking questions most. I said why she could not ask questions. He said that how he could possibly answer all the questions since he had so many students. In university, I found that few students would ask questions. So, this is precisely where the biggest problem lies. Each person is born with different endowment and talents, and each of us grows up in a different environment. I think a good learning environment is one that can bring their talents into full play. Take myself as an example. Had I not known my own talents at the time, I would not have become an architect. So, if the abilities of students can be explored and effectively brought into play, that would foster an all-win situation to schools, students and parents.

Compared with traditional big class teaching, small class teaching can certainly provide a better learning environment. It is because the teachers can have more time to understand the actual needs of students and then truly tailor their teaching to students' varied abilities in accordance with the learning progress and talents of individual students. I agree that teachers must be well-equipped for it. Madam President, I would like to tell the Secretary that I support the "3+ 3+ 4" structure proposed in the education reform. But to this end, I think the matching facilities are very important, including the reform of the curriculum, teacher training and quality of teaching. Small class teaching can precisely upgrade the quality of teaching and so, it will only do good but not harm to the education reform. On the contrary, the lack of a quality teaching environment will nonetheless prevent the objectives of the education reform from being realized.

Regarding the resources involved for the implementation of small class teaching, Ms Audrey EU has earlier on explained in detail the situation relating to the population. So, insofar as the implementation of small class teaching is concerned, the Government should not take advantage of these number games to tell us how enormous the resources will be required. Rather, it should seriously work out the actual funding required based on the correct population projection in a fair manner. Finally, I would like to tell you, Madam President, that I have been engaged in the architectural design of many international schools, and I have gained an in-depth understanding of their philosophy of education. In

fact, small class teaching is the most important factor contributing to the success of these schools. So, I very much agree that in order to develop into an international city, we must start from building up correct values of education in the younger generation, for they are the pillars of society in the future. With these remarks, I support the Government making appropriate arrangements for the expeditious implementation of small class teaching. Thank you, Madam President.

MR JASPER TSANG (in Cantonese): Madam President, the Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong has all along supported small class teaching, although we understand that small class teaching, like many measures of improving the quality of education, will require resources. So, we have to consider the priorities of resource allocation.

In my impression, whether before or after the reunification, the education authorities in Hong Kong consider it undesirable to have too many pupils in each class, and they have been making every effort to gradually reduce the class size. When I was in junior primary, that is, from Primary One to Three, I studied in a private school. At that time, we had to "lie low". Whenever someone shouted "The Secretary for Education is here!", the school janitor would take the good boys like us — fearing that the more naughty ones would screw things up (*laughter*) — to a small room and tell us to hide there. This proves that the education authorities already knew at the time that it is undesirable to have too many pupils in a class. Later, I became a teacher in a private school. Owing to resource constraint, there were 58 pupils in my first class, and again, the pupils had to "lie low". That is, when officers from the Education Department came, some 10 students would have to hide away. But the students seemed very happy when they were lying low. (*Laughter*) So, over the past decade or so, that is, from end-1980s to early 1990s, the Education Commission then had proposed that the quality of teaching be upgraded. The Government has since made a great effort to reduce the class size in secondary and primary schools. But later, due to resource constraint, the number of students in each class did not come down any further and on the contrary, there was even a slight increase.

We think that it is indeed unnecessary to argue about this any longer. As Ms Audrey EU said earlier, the small class teaching that we are talking about now is not as extreme as reducing the class size to a dozen students. Two decades ago when I visited the international schools in Hong Kong, I did envy them for they could have nine students in a class. The teacher could hold a

coffee in his hand and the whole class of students would gather around him on the floor. The teacher could talk to the students and tell them stories. That was how their lessons were conducted. Now, we are not even suggesting that. What we are talking about now is only a class size of 23 students, which is already the most extreme case as suggested by Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong. That is, we are talking about reducing the class size from 30-odd students to 20-odd students. Is it necessary for us to expound and prove its pros and cons in such great detail? People who have reservations about the early implementation of small class teaching, perhaps including the Education and Manpower Bureau, have raised questions mainly in three aspects. First, they opined that the results of small class teaching are not proven by any experiment, and they have cited many overseas experiences to show that its effectiveness is actually not clear; second, the question of teachers' quality as mentioned earlier; and third, resources.

On the argument about the results not being verified by experiments, in my impression, experiments relating to education often do not have definite results. How can their effects be quantified and gauged? Some people said, since the Government is currently conducting a pilot scheme, consideration can then be given as to how small class teaching can be implemented when the results of this scheme are available. I am sure that this pilot scheme will not give us a definite answer of what is good or otherwise. We are now comparing the effectiveness of teaching a class of 32 students and that of teaching a class of 25 students. Can their effectiveness be gauged in a couple of years' time? Furthermore, owing to moral considerations, in conducting education experiments, everyone will be trying to avoid bad results and work for the best outcome as far as possible. So, a comparison would not be possible, for this is not an experiment that can be conducted in laboratories. I think it is unnecessary to do so. Ms Audrey EU said earlier that some teaching methodologies are feasible only through small class teaching. I am worried that this may cause us to fall into a trap, for this may not necessarily be the case. For example, with regard to teaching in groups, even a class of 40 students can be taught in groups, and in some cases, a bigger class can offer more fun. In Physical Education lessons, for instance, more students mean that more activities can be conducted. So, the simplest point is that — Mr Patrick LAU has just revealed the truth — education is a person-to-person activity. A teacher teaching 20 students can certainly do better than he teaching 32 or 40 students in terms of the attention given to each student. This has been explained very clearly. So, how can the merits of small class teaching be gauged? If it can be implemented only when it is measured and confirmed to be effective, I think this can hardly be acceptable.

With regard to the quality of teachers, an example is the introduction of education television (ETV) in the past. Did anyone say that it was necessary to provide training to the teachers before the merits of ETV can be fully exploited and so, teachers must first be trained before the introduction of ETV? For computer-aided education, the teachers know even less about it. Does it mean that schools are not allowed to install computers before teachers are trained and that schools are allowed to install computers only after the teachers have learnt how to operate computers? For the "3+ 3+ 4" structure that has been proposed now, although consultation is being conducted and training is required, there is at least a timetable proposing its implementation in 2008. That is to say, if everyone agrees with it, a timetable is at least made available, so that everyone knows that there is such a target. So, I always hold that the environment should be improved and conditions be created for teachers to implement small class teaching first, and teachers should be required to receive training only afterwards, because only in this way will there be greater initiative on the part of teachers. If teachers are told to take up training for small class teaching when in reality they are still teaching big classes every day, how can they possibly adapt to it?

What remains is the question of resources. I think this is a practical issue. I think it is far from convincing to simply argue that no additional resources would be required with a reduction in the number of students. Despite a reduction in the number of students, will the resources hence saved be used for small class teaching? Or is it that as Prof CHENG Kai-ming has said, the resources can be used to improve the quality of teachers or to ease the burden of teachers or even to provide other support to Band 3 schools? I think only the Education and Manpower Bureau has such information. They should list out all the information to tell us what improvement measures are necessary, which measures are more pressing and essential, and the resources required for various such measures. The Government should seriously work out the funding required for the implementation of small class teaching, so that the education sector and the community can reach a consensus on how the quality can be upgraded most effectively. Thank you, Madam President.

DR YEUNG SUM (in Cantonese): Madam President, I very much thank Ms Audrey EU for proposing this very important topic for debate. I hope that

colleagues will express the views of their various political parties and factions on this important issue for the Government's consideration.

The position of the Democratic Party is very clear. We fully support the original motion of Ms Audrey EU. But since Mrs Selina CHOW's amendment seeks to cross out the part about implementation in secondary schools and calls for its implementation only in primary schools, and then it mentions a lot about the quality of teachers, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, therefore, proposed an amendment in response to her amendment.

Madam President, regarding the implementation of small class teaching, there are basically several arguments. First, as Mrs Selina CHOW said earlier, various education bodies, such as the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union of Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, which is a trade union of teachers, are said to be basically leveraging on small class teaching to find a way out for the surplus teachers. They are said to be looking at the issue purely from the trade union's angle to the neglect of whether the quality of teachers can meet the requirements of this teaching method.

Second, the Government has argued that a conclusion has not yet been reached academically, or there is no conclusion in the world that small class teaching will definitely be successful. The Permanent Secretary has also said that this is a road of no return, cautioning that we cannot go back once we have taken this path and so, it is better to use four years to implement it in 40 primary schools for four years, and if the result is good, extend it to all schools; otherwise, the proposal will be ruled out. This argument is about the absence of a conclusion academically. It is argued that since there is no conclusion, we should therefore conduct experimental studies and then make a decision depending on the result. But I think four years later, another Chief Executive will have taken office.

Third, the argument on resources. My colleagues in the university are very concerned about the "3+3+4" structure. Mr Patrick LAU, who no longer teaches in the university, also very much supports the "3+3+4" structure. I also strongly support the "3+3+4" structure. But the "3+3+4" structure will require funding. So will the implementation of small class teaching. Then, to which area should funds be first allocated? Some colleagues in the university are concerned about the allocation of resources.

Fourth, the theory of condition. Mrs Selina CHOW has spoken at length on this point. She said that small class teaching requires interaction and an activity-based approach of teaching. Can the teachers cope? She said that teachers are accustomed to one-way teaching and so, it is better to provide training to teachers first. This is the theory of condition.

In fact, Madam President, these four arguments have only one objective and that is, to support the Government stalling the implementation of small class teaching on various pretexts. It is a misfortune for society, and a misfortune for the education sector. Certainly, it basically boils down to a question of resources. But the use of resources basically depends on what objectives society wishes to achieve. If we consider quality teaching very important, then these resources should naturally be used to dovetail quality teaching. The "3+ 3+ 4" structure is only an academic system reform. Without a solid foundation in quality teaching, without quality teaching to shore up the academic reform, that is, without the software to support hardware, how can the academic reforms be viable? So, having studied all the arguments on small class teaching, from a social science viewpoint, it is true that small class teaching is not an absolute factor, it is only one of the many factors. But when the other factors, such as the quality of teachers, the tradition of school, parents' care, and so on, remain equal, small class teaching is definitely important. Some may ask: What evidence is there to prove that the implementation of small class teaching can improve everything? No one has said so. No one has said that small class teaching is a panacea. But when the other factors, such as school tradition, parents' care, family background and even the quality of teachers are equal, small class teaching is definitely important. Direct person-to-person contact is definitely important. Of course, the Secretary has said that there should not be any problem for a good teacher to teach more students. But if there are two good teachers, whose teaching will be more effective? The one who teaches a small class or the one who teaches a big class? This is proof of my point. That is, when the other factors are equal, small class teaching is no doubt a crucial factor. But is it that this very factor can replace all the other factors? This still cannot hold water from the angle of social science.

So, speaking of resources, Madam President, there are actually many precedents in the education sector. Take Tai Po District as an example. In the

2004-05 school year, there are about 4 000 Secondary One students in Tai Po. Based on a class size of 40 students, there will be 100 classes. It is estimated that in 2005-06, the number of Secondary One students in the district will drop to 3 500. If the school fees for the year 2004 are not reduced, it means that with the same amount of funding allocated for operating Secondary One classes, 100 classes can be provided in 2005 with 35 students in each class. This can gradually achieve the target of 30 students in a class. As regards this "by district and by grade" mode, if the Government says that it has to be tested and proven, the education sector has actually adopted this practice already. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong cited Sha Tin as an example earlier and now, I have cited Tai Po as another. Can the Government look into the situation in these districts? Take a look also at our neighbours. In Japan, for instance, following a drop in the population of school-age children, their class size has already been reduced to 20 students. In Taiwan, a document was published in 1996 stipulating that the class size in primary and secondary schools must be reduced to 30 students by 2006. In South Korea, the number of classes with a class size of over 35 students accounted for 77.5% in all primary and secondary classes in 2001, and the percentage has now dropped to 21%. In Macao, the class size in primary and secondary schools was gradually reduced from 45 students to 35 students in 2001.

Madam President, Hong Kong is an international metropolis, a knowledge-based society. Just take a brief look at the neighbouring places and the Secretary will know that we are lagging behind and that our neighbours are progressing at a speed much faster than we are. Hong Kong does have the economic conditions to support its implementation. Take a look also at Shanghai. Small class teaching has been gradually realized there. Our friend, IP Kin-yuen, has visited schools in Shanghai and drawn so many conclusions that I cannot possibly explain them all here. He has pointed out that with the implementation of small class teaching, students will dare to speak and ask many questions in class. Teachers have closer contact with students, and this will facilitate their discussion of more issues and topics. All these are strong proof of the paramount importance of small class teaching. The decline in population actually provides a good opportunity for reform. What are we still waiting for?

If the Secretary supports this policy, then let us join hands to fight for the necessary resources from the Financial Secretary. Thank you, Madam President.

MR TOMMY CHEUNG (in Cantonese): Madam President, small class teaching is the ideal mode of teaching that numerous parents, students and teachers have always been dreaming of. Because they all believe that, with fewer students in each class, the teachers will have more opportunities to take care of their students, who will thus achieve better results. I would like to point out that this kind of thinking may be over-simplistic. The effectiveness of small class teaching cannot be achieved by simply reducing the number of students in each classroom to eight or 10.

Actually, the Liberal Party has always attached great importance to education, particularly to ways of upgrading the quality of teaching in Hong Kong to benefit our next generation. However, as pointed out by three educationists at the University of Chicago, Mrs Rob GREENWALD, Mr Larry V HEDGES and Mr Richard D LAINE, in the conclusions of a research study on the returns on investment in education, lowering the ratio between teachers and students cannot effectively upgrade the quality of teaching. On the contrary, the quality of teachers is the key to upgrading the quality of teaching.

Unfortunately, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong still clings to a simplistic notion he has been holding for the past two years, that a combination of fewer students and surplus teachers offers a golden opportunity for small class teaching, ignoring the fact that the prerequisite for small class teaching requires other complementary elements. Like Shanghai and Taiwan, our neighbours in Asia, their experience in small class teaching shows that small classes must go with changes in teacher qualifications, curricula and teaching methods by such means as improving curriculum, introducing diversified teaching methods and emphasizing the upgrading of teaching competence of teachers.

Second, in terms of resources, the data provided by the Education and Manpower Bureau show that it costs a primary school \$800,000 to operate a class each year. Should small class teaching be fully implemented in primary schools across the territory, 3 860 additional classes will be required. This would translate into an additional \$3.1 billion in public money annually, or one third of the current expenditure on education annually. Yet, what else can we do with \$3.1 billion? I can tell Members that it can be used to launch 19 Expatriate English Language Teachers Schemes, or implement a basket of education reform programmes currently launched in primary and secondary schools, such as whole-day primary schooling, "teaching by subject specialists", Capacity Enhancement Grant, and so on, for a second round.

Therefore, we are of the opinion that the problem with the additional resources incurred as a result of implementing small class teaching cannot be brushed aside with Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's casual remark of "making optimal use of resources saved due to the drop in the primary and secondary school student population". Furthermore, should the resources saved as a result of the drop in the number of enrolled students because of the lowering birth rate be used to implement small class teaching or redeployed to launch other education reform initiatives?

Madam President, we disapprove of Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's amendment to Mrs Selina CHOW's amendment by deleting the sentence "prudently assess the additional resources required for implementing small class teaching, weigh the commitments of both the Government and parents". Actually, the Liberal Party conducted a telephone survey on implementing small class teaching last Saturday — Mrs CHOW also mentioned it earlier — and successfully interviewed 270 people. Although only 60% of the interviewees answered the question concerning who should bear the \$3.1 billion incurred, the number of people agreeing that the Government and parents should be jointly responsible was larger than the number of those who thought that the Government should bear the full responsibility. The former represent nearly 50% of the respondents, while the latter merely 44%. It is evident that members of the public are even more reasonable than Members who are now present in this Chamber.

Next, I would like to say a few words on the possible implication of small class teaching on Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools. I believe Members must have noticed that DSS schools have become hugely popular with parents in recent years. During the period when most Primary One admission forms are distributed, we will often hear that these schools, charging a monthly tuition fee of at least \$3,000 to \$4,000, are packed with parents attracted by their reputation or holding high hopes for their children waiting outside to scramble to hand in applications for their children. Will these popular schools be forced to accept fewer students should they be required to implement small class teaching?

A couple of years ago, I took up the post of school manager of a school to take charge of the work of converting it into a DSS school. We actually hoped at that time to reduce the number of students in each class to 30. However, our recommendation was met with opposition from a number of teachers and the management. The reason was very simple. Originally, there were

approximately 1 200 students in our school, with many classes carrying more than 40 students. Should the number of students in each class be reduced to 30, the total number of students in the school will be cut by one third, and only 800 to 900 students would remain. According to the opponents, small class teaching would lead to a shortage of students, thus affecting the full implementation of universal education in our school. The reason for their objection was that activities in various fields, such as track and field, music, swimming, tennis, and so on, would meet a shortage of participants. Under such circumstances, the implementation of small class teaching through a "by district and by grade" mode proposed by Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong will be extremely unfair to some schools. Although it is the wish of all parents to implement small class teaching, frankly speaking, they would like the small classes of the prestigious school they wish to enrol to accept 26 students if their child would otherwise not be admitted because he or she was the 26th applicant. By the same token, they would like the small classes of the school to accept 38 students if their child were the 38th applicant. For parents whose children having been admitted, they certainly hope that there are fewer students in each class. However, I do not know whether the Government will provide more classrooms in existing schools in the course of implementing small class teaching, so that the number of students in the school can remain unchanged.

Furthermore, Madam President, I would like to say a few words on why the Liberal Party has to amend Ms Audrey EU's original motion, because Mrs Selina CHOW did not mention it in her speech earlier. Regarding Ms EU's proposal of implementing small class teaching in primary and secondary schools, the Liberal Party notes that, despite the consensus reached among various countries on small class teaching, it has been pointed out in overseas studies that the effectiveness of small class teaching is most prominent in the beginner's years, that is, Primary One or Two, when good learning habits can be shaped and interactive learning pattern be promoted most effectively. As the implementation of small class teaching is no small deal, the Liberal Party holds the view that, once it is implemented, resources should be pooled to implement small class teaching progressively in primary schools before reviewing whether it should be extended to secondary schools.

Lastly, I think Members, whether or not they are parents, are greatly concerned about the quality of our education. Without good education, we can hardly have a beautiful tomorrow. Given that a pilot scheme on small class teaching has been introduced into Primary One and Two, we should be able to

implement it progressively and further promote small class teaching after ascertaining its effectiveness and strengthening teacher training.

Thank you, Madam President.

DR JOSEPH LEE (in Cantonese): Madam President, a number of colleagues have discussed the merits and demerits of small class teaching. Now I would like to share with Members my personal experience. Unlike Mr Patrick LAU, who has been a teacher for more than three decades, I have only 10-odd years of teaching experience. I have personally experienced that small class teaching can greatly enhance interaction between teachers and students. Consequently, the students will become more involved, and communication between the teachers and students will be enhanced. Generally speaking, all this can play a major role in helping the students to grasp knowledge, get involved in classes and think. We believe that small class teaching, if implemented in primary and secondary schools, would greatly help growing children and maturing adolescents in terms of their learning and absorption abilities, thinking, and so on.

On the question of how small class teaching can promote education reform, the latter is actually heading in the direction of creating room for schools, teachers and students, promoting the diversified development of students, enabling teachers to tailor their teaching to students' varied abilities and life-wide learning so as to enable students to enjoy comprehensive and balanced learning opportunities, thereby laying a foundation for lifelong learning and achieving whole-man development. Small class teaching can precisely provide teachers and students with more room to achieve the goal of promoting education reform and fulfilling the expectations of parents, teachers and students.

Madam President, some people might probably ask this question: Is small class teaching the only way to achieve the goal of enabling teachers to tailor their teaching to students' varied abilities and realizing and achieving the goal of quality education? Of course, in addition to small class teaching, there are other ways, such as reducing the teaching sessions of teachers, to achieve this goal. However, I believe no one can say which one is the best or the most effective. Of course, it will be ideal for a combination of methods to be adopted simultaneously, though this is practically impossible. In dealing with many

issues, we can only choose a more desirable option in the light of the actual situation.

Numerous surveys have found that most parents, teachers and students consider small class teaching the best option, because counselling to students can thus be strengthened and interaction between teachers and students be upgraded. All this is definitely conducive to raising the quality of teaching and learning.

Some people will also ask this question: Is it the best opportunity to implement small class teaching now? Not only is the birth rate in Hong Kong constantly declining, the number of school-age children is constantly dropping as well. According to the Report No. 39 published by the Audit Commission in October 2002, nine districts, including Central and Western District, Wan Chai, Eastern District, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon City, Kwun Tong, Yau Tsim Mong, Tuen Mun and Tai Po, will experience an oversupply and a serious mismatch of school places in government and aided primary schools in 2010. Some of these schools might encounter problems with vacant classrooms or under-enrolment, and they might have to cease operation or merge as a result. Under such circumstances, why do we not seize the opportunity to implement small class teaching by making optimal use of these resources and such seemingly "excessive" capacity? Do Members still remember the "nine-year compulsory education" implemented years ago? As remarked by Mr LAU, such a spoon-fed education emphasizes "quantity" only. As it is now evident to all, the effectiveness of stressing "quantity" is not bad. As the target of stressing "quantity" has been reached, is it now not opportune to consider stressing "quality"? Small class teaching is precisely a teaching method that emphasizes "quality".

Some people will probably keep asking these questions: Should small class teaching be implemented now? Are the teachers capable of doing so? Are corresponding resources available?

Let me start with teachers. Just now, some colleagues have raised the point that teachers need training. My personal experience as a teacher is that small class teaching is entirely different from the conventional teaching methods currently being adopted because large class teaching focuses merely on one-way teaching methods. Undeniably, teachers have to adjust their teaching methods and strategies in conducting small class teaching. However, Members need not worry, because small class teaching emphasizes learning through discovery,

verification and different situations. The teachers already learned and specifically mastered these teaching methods during their training. Of course, they might not have had suitable opportunities to apply these teaching methods. This is just because, under the existing system, students are being taught in large classes. It is therefore impossible for the teachers to put what they have learned into full play. Consequently, there is nothing they can do but to follow the one-way, large-class teaching method. As such, the teachers do not necessarily have to receive continued training or to be trained before they are fit for small class teaching.

As for resources, no one ever dares to say that there are sufficient resources. Everyone will definitely say that there is a shortage of resources. However, as commented earlier, with the drop in the number of school-age primary students, there will be an over-supply of school places. Thus, the Government does not necessarily have to provide substantial hardware to complement the implementation of small class teaching. Therefore, it is now opportune to capitalize on the resources thus saved to implement small class teaching.

Secondly, according to the information provided by Ms Audrey EU, the Government is likely to have overestimated the financial burden imposed by small class teaching. Actually, the Government does not necessarily have to provide a substantial amount of additional resources so long as small class teaching is implemented through a "by district and by grade" mode in a flexible and progressive manner, as suggested by Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong.

For the above reasons, Madam President, we consider it now opportune to implement small class teaching in primary schools, and then in secondary schools. This will, on the one hand, enable teachers to progressively put into play the teaching methods they have learned to complement the development of small class teaching and, on the other, give the Government ample time to launch its plan and suitably deploy its resources.

Madam President, I so submit. Thank you.

DR FERNANDO CHEUNG (in Cantonese): Madam President, I can still recall that Secretary Prof Arthur LI, immediately after assuming office in 2002, presented to us his "dream of small class teaching" with great ambition. However, he soon awoke from his dream several months after by stating that the

huge fiscal deficit had made "indiscriminately dreaming" impossible. After dragging his feet for two years, Secretary Prof LI is still using the fiscal deficit as his shield. It is indeed regrettable that his lofty words have now turned into momentary somniloquy. To me, it is a great pity that Secretary Prof LI, a man with lofty ideals, lost his dream as soon as he took up the post of Bureau Director.

Ms Audrey EU has made it very clear that, if the Government can seize the golden opportunity arisen as a result of the drop in the school-age student population to implement small class teaching in primary schools progressively, expenditure in the 2010-11 school year, or six years after, will definitely not reach \$3.1 billion, as estimated by the Government. Therefore, small class teaching is certainly not an unattainable "dream". As such, why should the Government present such a frightening figure to mislead the public into believing that small class teaching is costly to implement?

Actually, is it necessary for the Government to be so stingy? Education is a social investment. Today, we are spending to nurture integrity and talent. Furthermore, globalization would bring extremely fierce competition for talent among various places, so there is an even greater need to strengthen education. Small class teaching can help teachers to tailor their teaching to students' varied abilities, enhance interaction in classrooms, and encourage students to ask questions on their own initiatives. Our neighbours, such as Shanghai, Macao, Taiwan and South Korea, have started implementing small class teaching in recent years. Being a university lecturer, I personally have a profound understanding of the harm done by large class teaching to our students in Hong Kong. Being accustomed to the large-class mode of teaching in primary and secondary schools, our students remain passive and shy even after progressing to universities. I very much agree with Mr Patrick LAU — it is a great pity that Mr LAU, previously my alumni, has already left. He was my alumni because we studied in the same secondary school — he mentioned the point that the university students nowadays were really terribly afraid of asking questions. During lessons, the seats in the front row are usually empty. Students arriving the earliest will take the last row. Why is it that our students are so passive? It is because they have virtually grown accustomed to this mode. Teaching and learning are an interactive process between people. The attention and care received by each student will probably affect him for the rest of his life. Why can we not understand such a basic principle?

On the other hand, the population in Hong Kong is ageing rapidly. At present, the number of people aged over 65 represents approximately 11.9% of the total population of Hong Kong. In a decade's time, the percentage will rise to 13.8%. It can be predicted that Hong Kong's future economic development, the pillar of society as a whole, will fall on this group of young people. What will become of our society in the future if we are so stingy about spending on education today! The investment made by Hong Kong in education is already lower than that in many advanced countries. Members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development are expected to spend 6.2% of their GDP on average on education in 2010. The ratios for individual countries are as follows: 7.3% in the United States, 6% in Australia, and 8.2% in Korea. In 2003, the education expenditure in Hong Kong accounted for merely 4.7% of its GDP.

Lastly, I would like to point out that small class teaching is especially important to poverty-stricken children. Although they do not compare less favourably with ordinary children in terms of natural endowments, they do get fewer opportunities than children of the middle class under the existing education system. As middle-class parents can provide their children with more resources to learn, the latter can take tuition classes, music lessons and dance lessons, and take part in other interest classes, so these children are endowed with more cultural capital than grass-roots children. With suitable nurturing, grass-roots children can actually become useful persons and our future leaders. This is why I consider quality education can best help them.

Numerous studies in the United States have proved that small class teaching is beneficial to small children, especially those from ethnic minority groups or socially disadvantaged groups. The reason is that these children have comparatively few resources, and they can merely count on their schools. They will very easily be neglected if their schools practise large class teaching. In small classes, however, they can receive better care and more guidance, hence, they will naturally get better results.

Therefore, I hope the Government can understand that with the worsening disparity between the rich and the poor in Hong Kong, there is an even greater need for poor children to be given adequate education resources to compensate for the inadequacy of their family education resources. At present, all Direct Subsidy Scheme schools and international schools in Hong Kong are practising small class teaching — though not as exaggerated as having only nine students in each class, as Mr Jasper TSANG described earlier. Notwithstanding this, the

number of students in each class is often limited to 20 or so in those schools. For instance, there are only 16 to 20 students in each class in the Pegasus Philip Wong Kin Hang Christian Primary School, whereas the number of students in each class in the primary section of the Hong Kong International School is between 16 and 25. For parents capable of affording an annual tuition fee of tens of thousands of dollars, their children will be able to enjoy the benefits of small class teaching. Impoverished children have simply no such opportunity. If the Government really cares about children, particularly the problems confronting poverty-stricken children, I hope it can expeditiously implement small class teaching with a view to narrowing the gap between the poor children and the rich ones.

While I support Ms Audrey EU's original motion, I also support Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's amendment. Madam President, I so submit.

MR ALAN LEONG (in Cantonese): Madam President, one of the points raised in arguing whether small class teaching should be implemented in primary and secondary schools is whether the Government will be required to inject a substantial amount of additional resources.

According to an estimate made by the Education and Manpower Bureau, an additional \$3.1 billion will be required to meet the expenses require to finance more classes in order to implement small class teaching. The Government's words have given people an impression that an additional \$3.1 billion will have to be spent on top of its current expenditure. It has been pointed out that, given its present financial constraints, the Special Administrative Region Government's implementation of small class teaching is tantamount to feasting on bird's nest. However, we will understand immediately that the spending should not be calculated in this way should we take into account the fact that the unused resources saved due to the drop in the birth rate in Hong Kong can be redeployed.

How did the Government come up with the extra spending of \$3.1 billion? Using \$800,000 for operating one class as the basis, the Education and Manpower Bureau estimated that an additional 3 860 classes would have to be operated should the number of students in each class be reduced to 25, compared with the present average of 34.5, in all primary schools in the 2010-11 school year. Multiplying 3 860 by \$800,000 equals to \$3.08 billion. However, this

formula is entirely flawed in at least two aspects. First, is it really necessary to spend \$800,000 on each new class? This figure is obtained by dividing the amount incurred by all primary schools throughout the territory by the number of classes. However, this figure of \$800,000 does cover all kinds of expenses, recurrent and non-recurrent. A number of these expenses, such as rates and government rent, furniture and equipment, teaching facilities, maintenance fees, and so on, are relatively constant. Given the drop in the number of school-age students, using the classrooms vacated to implement small class teaching will simply not increase the abovementioned expenses. It is because these facilities have already existed before the number of classes is cut. The Education and Manpower Bureau is suspected of exaggerating by calculating the expenses incurred by small class teaching on the assumption that an additional \$800,000 will be required to operate a new class.

Secondly, Madam President, the Government has completely failed to take into account the funds saved as a result of the rapid drop in the student population when it stated that an additional \$3.1 billion would be required. Even if a projection is made on the basis of the figures provided by the Education and Manpower Bureau, the number of classes in government, aided and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools will rapidly drop to approximately 9 600 in the 2010-11 school year, from 13 433 in the 2001-02 school year, should the number of students in existing large classes remain unchanged. As substantial spending can be saved in the next decade, small class teaching can be implemented simply by redeploying some of the resources thus saved to primary education and cutting fewer classes. It will not be the case that an additional \$3.1 billion will be required, as stated by the authorities. Actually, with the rapid drop in the population, it is simply not necessary for the authorities to increase expenditure should some of the resources saved by reducing the number of classes be redeployed for the flexible implementation of small class education. Savings may even be possible.

Actually, the Government has always overestimated the size of our population. Dr Paul YIP of the Department of Statistics of the University of Hong Kong recently pointed out in a press conference that the number of primary students had been overestimated. The reasons cited by him were as follows: First, the quotas for allowing the entry of 60-odd children holding one-way permits into Hong Kong over the past two-odd years have simply not been exhausted. Second, the birth rate in Hong Kong in recent years has continued to slow down. Third, with the ongoing economic and trade development

between China and Hong Kong, more and more Hong Kong people are going northward to seek employment. Some of them have even brought along their children to pursue studies northward. There is indeed a rising trend of the outward movement of school-age students.

Lastly, I have to ask: What is the deal even if additional expenses are really required for implementing small class teaching? Are the expenses on education seen as an investment or expenditure? The authorities should not, if they sincerely regard education as an investment, merely calculate with the help of a calculator whether money should be dug out of their pocket. I believe expenditure on education is an investment, not simply an item of expense. Even if additional resources are required to implement small class teaching, I will still support Ms Audrey EU's motion, not to mention that it is simply unnecessary to inject a substantial amount of additional resources according to my earlier explanation and calculation.

With these remarks, Madam President, I support Ms Audrey EU's motion.

MR LI KWOK-YING (in Cantonese): Madam President, the Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB) has been making a constant appeal to the Government to reduce the size of classes in primary and secondary schools. The benefits of small class teaching to both teachers and students are beyond doubt. I believe Members do understand them very clearly, so I am not going to repeat them here. On the contrary, resources should be a matter of concern to us.

The resources required for implementing small class teaching are a cause of great concern to us. According to an estimate done by the Special Administrative Region Government, if calculated on the basis of spending \$800,000 on each class, an additional \$500 million will be required, should small class teaching be launched starting from the next school year. In other words, an additional \$3.1 billion will have to be expended up to the 2010 school year. However, these results have been doubted by various sectors. To start with, should the sweeping figure of 25 be used to determine the class size? Members of the DAB already pointed out in the previous debate on small class teaching that even overseas studies had not drawn any final conclusion on the desirable number of students in small classes. According to Ms Audrey EU, expenditure

on each class should be \$480,000 only, not \$800,000. Actually, the Government is in the best position to acquire the actual data. The DAB therefore hopes that the authorities can calculate the resources required again in practical terms without exaggerating the figures.

Inadequate resources have been cited as one of the reasons by the Government for opposing the implementation of small class teaching. However, I have to point out that, with the constant drop in the number of students in recent years, coupled with the Government's reduction of classes in primary and secondary schools over the past three years and scrapping a number of village schools, the Government has managed to save at least \$280 million. Where has all the money gone? I think the Government can plough these resources and money back into the education sector. In addition, a large number of vacant classrooms are available in certain districts. Given that there is no acute shortage of both hardware and software, the Government's repeated emphasis that there is a complete lack of resources for implementing small class teaching is utterly untenable.

The number of students has been declining in recent years at an alarming rate. In the 2000 school year, there were 490 000 primary students all over the territory. In this school year, however, the number has dropped to 458 000. In other words, the number of primary students has shrunk by more than 30 000 over a period of five years. For instance, the number of Primary One students in Sha Tin has been declining year after year over the past seven years. Next year, the student population in Sha Tin will be reduced even by half. Actually, 30% of the primary schools in Hong Kong maintain a class size of 30 students or less. It must be borne in mind that it was precisely due to the declining student population that the Education and Manpower Bureau proposed years ago to slash the number of students in each class. Today, this is happening right before our eyes, but why does the Government still intend to reject the recommendation of reducing the number of students in each class?

The fact that there is general support within the education sector for small class teaching offers a great opportunity for implementation of small class teaching. It is known to Members that not every education reform proposed by the Government in recent years has been fully supported by the education sector. On the subject of small class teaching, however, there is general approval in the education sector. In a meeting held by the Panel on Education early last month, representatives of the education sector expressed their respective views on

supporting small class teaching. Some school principals even put forward concrete proposals for implementation. Therefore, by giving a green light to small class teaching, the Government can not only act in compliance with the aspiration of the people, but also bring its partnership with the education sector even closer and facilitate its future reform of the senior secondary academic structure.

As early as 1992, the Education Commission published the Education Commission Report No. 5 and proposed to, in the light of the decline in the student intake, reduce the standard school places in each class by five. Accepting this proposal, the Government has since progressively reduced the number of students in each class. In 1997, however, for the purpose of implementing whole-day schooling in primary schools, the arrangement for reducing the size of classes was put on hold. Furthermore, the schools were required to lend a helping hand by accommodating two more students in each class. At present, more than 70% of public primary schools are practising whole-day schooling. With the successive completion of new schools in the coming years, the target of implementing whole-day schooling in all primary schools in 2007 should be achieved on schedule. The DAB is therefore of the view that, resources permitting, coupled with various favourable conditions, the authorities should stop using various excuses to delay putting the decision of reducing the size of classes into practice and implement small class teaching expeditiously.

In this motion debate, Mrs Selina CHOW has proposed an amendment calling on the Government to "prudently assess the additional resources required for implementing small class teaching, weigh the commitments of both the Government and parents and ensure training for teachers are available". The DAB is of the view that these views are reasonable. However, Mrs CHOW's proposed amendment to delete "secondary schools" has given people an impression that there is no need for secondary schools to implement small class teaching. For this reason, the DAB has some reservations. As regards Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's proposal of implementing small class teaching in Primary One and Secondary One starting from next year, the DAB is of the view that the deployment of resources will become even more complicated as a result. Coupled with the fact that there will be disputes over resources between the Government and members of the community, it is worthwhile to consider whether small class teaching should be launched in primary and secondary schools simultaneously.

Madam President, we were given an opportunity to invite the school principals in three districts, namely Sha Tin, North District and Tai Po, to join us in a meeting held this Tuesday. During the meeting, a lot of questions were raised. One of the questions was very interesting and induced a lot of thinking by us. Members should remember that there have been frequent reports in the community in recent years about school children committing suicide, demonstrating the pressure exerted by education on students. However, it is most shocking to find that some very young students, even studying at Primary Five or Six, have chosen to kill themselves by jumping from a height. This is precisely a live example, an accusation against the failure of our education system. Actually, education does not merely confine to the teaching of textbook knowledge and the teaching of how to prepare for examinations by teachers. Apart from emphasizing personal, social, intellectual, physical and aesthetic development, the teachers in schools should also educate their students how to deal with emotional problems. Teachers are now playing multiple roles. In addition to being teachers, they are playing the role of parents and social workers as well. With large classes and a large number of students, how can a teacher have time to realize his notion? Actually, small class teaching is the prerequisite of quality education. It can also bring the notion of whole-man education into full development.

With these remarks, Madam President, I support Ms Audrey EU's original motion.

MS EMILY LAU (in Cantonese): Madam President, I rise to speak in support of Ms Audrey EU's motion. I would like to express my great appreciation of the tremendous work she has done in relation to this question and the preparation of such a terrific report for our reference. Coupled with the effort put in by a number of professionals and people from various sectors, I hope this motion will not end in naught. According to my understanding, however, this motion is supported by the Secretary too. The Secretary is positively encouraged not to merely say "having no objection". Instead, he should express his "support" for this motion. We will "listen attentively" to his speech later.

Madam President, both Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Mr Patrick LAU motioned international schools earlier in their speeches. I started visiting international schools in the '90s. During the meetings held by the Panel on

Education of the Legislative Council at that time and the subgroups set up under the Finance Committee, I would definitely make reference to these schools whenever the topic of schools was mentioned. Under the "one place, two systems" in Hong Kong, why can some people enjoy education of such quality, while most of the children in the territory are denied the same benefit? The English Schools Foundation (ESF) report and other related information will soon be scrutinized by the Public Accounts Committee. I believe many Hong Kong citizens share the hope that they can receive education funded by public money in the territory. Furthermore, they definitely do not hope to see such a terrible gap with certain prestigious schools in Hong Kong.

Mr Patrick LAU told us that, his daughter, who simply enjoys talking, was discouraged by her teachers from talking. Years ago, I met a teacher whose medium of instruction was English. I was told that when he first arrived in Hong Kong as a teacher, he was extremely shocked and curious to find that all the students in his classes were completely silent. He then asked one of his colleagues why his students acted in that way and had to be asked to speak. He was advised by his colleague that he should never tell the students to speak up. Why? The teacher said: How can you manage a class, given that there is such a large number of students in it? Our teaching method is intended to put the students under control and discourage them from speaking up.

Madam President, I do not believe every teacher will typically act in this manner. However, I believe some teachers do wish their students to behave in this way. From a certain angle, I suppose this is understandable. With such a large number of students in a class, if every student is as energetic as Mr Patrick LAU's daughter, the teachers will be extremely busy. However, during my visits to international schools, I found that every student was extremely energetic. Scores of students would put up their hands waiting to raise their questions before I had even finished talking. Madam President, I was most delighted to find a similar situation when I visited a primary school in Sha Tin lately. As such, I feel that it is indeed unnecessary to debate the issue of small class teaching anymore, only that Ms EU is willing to go to all the trouble to raise the issue for discussion again. I believe she mainly wishes to see a consensus being reached in this Council, which is respected by the Secretary and the Administration, unlike other consensuses which have been swept under the carpet.

I was disappointed to find the hesitation shown by two colleagues from the Liberal Party when they spoke earlier. According to Mrs Selina CHOW, they supported small class teaching. Moreover, a consensus had been reached, and a target set. But the question is: How to proceed? The answer given by her was that the matter had to be evaluated and examined slowly, implying no action for the time being. I find this unacceptable because it has been unanimously agreed that small class teaching should be implemented during the discussions attended by many people from the education sector on education issues in this Council. I understand what the Liberal Party meant when it said that the implementation of small class teaching had to depend on the feasibility of such matters as the curricula, teacher qualifications, and so on. I believe even those people from the education sector who have raised their notion of small class teaching to us or the Secretary do understand that these complementary measures are essential.

Madam President, I would like to say a few words on a letter addressed by the Shatin District Primary School Heads Association to all Members — I believe the Secretary has received the letter too — regarding what the principals intend to do. They hope that, starting from the 2005-06 school year, all primary schools in Sha Tin will, beginning from Primary One, implement small classes in each grade up to Primary Six year-on-year. Apart from expressing their wish to achieve the ultimate target of limiting the number of students in each class to 23, they told us that they did not find it necessary for the Education and Manpower Bureau to provide them with additional funds, as long as the funding for operating primary classes in the 2004-05 year remained unchanged, because they did not wish to aggravate the burden on the Bureau. However, some Members opined that the schools could return some of their funding to the Secretary should fewer students be enrolled.

Over the years, The Frontier has been advising the Chief Executive and the Financial Secretary that we approve of providing 12 years of free education, for we consider this a commitment of Hong Kong. Compared with our so-called trading partners — the most favourable topic for Members who care about doing business — we compare far less favourably on this term. Therefore, even if more money is required, we will still give our consent. The spending of money is always a matter of the utmost concern to me. Taxpayers' money does not fall from the sky. However, money is required in this area. Therefore, I will still give my approval, no matter whether the amount of

\$3.1 billion has been calculated wrongly, as pointed out by Ms Audrey EU, or additional money is really required.

As for the question of complementary measures, Madam President, the Shatin District Primary School Heads Association has indicated that a panel of academic consultants has been organized and lecturers from tertiary institutions have been engaged as consultants to provide professional advice on small class teaching and training for teachers. The Association will also recruit teachers from within the district to form a study group on small class teaching and then invite the participation of a support team from the Education and Manpower Bureau in jointly developing lesson plans and teaching material, establishing resources and engaging in sharing. Furthermore, support networks will be established in the district to share experiences of success. Teacher training seminars will also be organized in the district to help fully prepare the teachers to conduct small class teaching. All these recommendations have been outlined in the letter. They hoped that the plan could commence in the 2005-06 school year.

I believe many people from the education sector are waiting here today to listen to the response of the Secretary later. The message is, while not all people request the Government to immediately implement small class teaching in a broad-brush manner, many people have no objection to the idea of commencing small class teaching in Sha Tin District. I hope the Secretary can give us a piece of good news.

With these remarks, I support Ms Audrey EU's motion.

MR ALBERT CHENG (in Cantonese): Madam President, I have to tell Ms Audrey EU that I went outside a moment ago not because I was not concerned about this matter. Actually, I found the endless criticism of large classes¹ and the praise for small classes² extremely unpleasant to the ear (*laughter*), as if Members were squaring accounts with me. I therefore went outside for a walk; I have no idea where "Siu Pan"³ has gone though. Actually, I could say a few words on small class and large class teaching.

¹ "large class" in Cantonese sounds like "Tai Pan", the nickname of Mr Albert CHENG.

² "small class" in Cantonese sounds like "Siu Pan".

³ "Siu Pan" is the nickname of Mr Andrew CHENG.

While I was a host of a radio programme, I would invariably be criticized by many for cutting their lines. This is indeed most inspirational. During a three-hour programme, I would probably receive 100 to 200 telephone calls from the audience. In other words, I had to entertain 100 to 200 people. I would cut the lines of those whom I found talking rubbish or in a naive or defiant manner, because a lot of people might still be waiting. However, some opinions were remarkably succinct. For instance, Ms Audrey EU or Mr Ronny TONG would probably give me a call. Of course, I had to give their calls priority because they were good students. Yet, I would quickly hang up the calls from nonsense people, because I was unable to teach them anything, even if I wanted to teach them.

Therefore, if only 10 people called during the three-hour programme, I would definitely not cut their lines. I would also not become a target of frequent complaints, because I could talk to them slowly and teach them what is meant by democracy, universal suffrage and transfer of benefits. However, I hardly had time to do so. Therefore, from my personal experience, small class teaching is certainly better than large class teaching — I am talking about small class teaching, not Mr Andrew CHEUNG.

Actually, Madam President, I would also like to remind Ms Audrey EU and Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong that, as Mr Jasper TSANG pointed out earlier, we must not allow ourselves to get trapped or entangled with the Government. We must identify our target clearly: Who are the beneficiaries of small class teaching? Is it really so urgent? These are the subjects we must avoid discussing with the Government: money, teacher qualification and hardware. I do not know why Mrs Selina CHOW described teachers as hardware. When I asked Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong whether he represented hardware, he replied that he had no idea how a man could be turned into hardware.

Most importantly, discussions about money will not only hurt relationships, but also spark anger. We had a debate on money here yesterday, so why has the Secretary come here today instead? The Government has underestimated more than \$10 billion in listing The Link REIT, is that not money? Yet, the Government still has the support of the Liberal Party. The transfer of benefits in the Hunghom Peninsula incident also involved another billions of dollars. As for the West Kowloon project, some said that nearly hundreds of billions of dollars was involved — I did not make that comment; I just read it from the newspaper. All these involve money. Yet, we should stop talking about

money, for this is not a problem. The most important question is how resources can be utilized effectively.

Wealthy families will not send their children to local schools, so what does large class or small class teaching has to do with them? So long as taxpayers' money is not involved, it does not really matter whether large class or small class teaching is chosen. We have to ask ourselves this question honestly: What sort of schools are our own children or relatives attending? Even though Mr Tommy CHEUNG did not tell us the name of the school he had served as school manager, Members would know the answer by reading the newspapers of late. Moreover, he has been showing some of his old pictures around. Therefore, I know that it was the Diocesan Boys' School. According to Mr CHEUNG, the teachers of the school opposed small class teaching because the school would then be unable to send as many students as other schools to participate in swimming and track and field events. It is fortunate that the Diocesan Boys' School is not renowned for dragon dance, or else the situation will be even worse, as it will take more than 100 people to man a dragon. Yet, he resorted to the authority by quoting three professors at the University of Chicago, or three foreign Buddha, who pointed out that reducing the size of classes might not necessarily lead to better quality of education. I would like to remind him that his analogy is inappropriate. While we can turn a small class even smaller, we are not going to turn a large class into a small one, like looking for another "Siu Pan", in addition to Mr Andrew CHENG. Reducing a small class from only 10-odd students to just a few is not going to work. Neither is it necessary. What we are talking about at the moment is to reduce the class size from somewhere between 30 and 40 to 25.

Actually, Ms Audrey EU's request is very moderate. As everything is difficult at the beginning, can she raise her expectation a bit higher? Mrs Selina CHOW commented that it would render us not seeing the wood for the trees. I am not very smart, so I had to ponder for a while before I understood what she meant. As there was nothing I could do when I went outside, I started to draw aimlessly. I thought to myself: How does a wood come into being? I found that I could paint a wood by drawing lots of trees. In other words, without trees, there could be no wood. Mrs Selina CHOW also commented that the problem with teacher qualification has to be resolved first by citing the example that we have to walk on both legs. Honourable Members, how can one learn to run before learning how to walk? How can we come to the problem with teachers before the issue with small class teaching is properly addressed? This

is something they cannot understand. Let me change to a topic that wealthy people will definitely understand. Is it better to have one servant or two servants to serve a family? The answer is definitely the latter. If there are two servants for two masters, this means one servant will be serving one master. If one servant is assigned to a 10-member family, he or she will have to serve 10 people. Should there be two servants, each servant will serve five people. They will definitely not object. If the question of our debate today is whether it is better to have one servant or two, the "Well-off Party" will naturally prefer two. In other words, it will prefer small class teaching. However, what is most important to us is our next generation. I really do not understand the logic. Why should we discuss teacher qualifications? If a teacher can teach 45, 40 or 37 students, why not 25 students? This is absolutely incomprehensible and illogical.

Today, we will therefore not examine such issues as resources, teacher qualifications, hardware, and employment of teachers. What we are talking about is our next generation, a matter of great urgency. Education continues from one generation to another. Students studying Primary One at the moment will become secondary students in six years' time; those currently in secondary schools will go to universities six years later. Let us show some conscience. If we could allow transfer of benefits by putting billions and billions of dollars into the purse of the rich, why can we not save a fraction of it for grass-roots parents to give their children an opportunity to receive reasonable education? If we merely come forward to say we support small class teaching in principle while attaching this and that condition, we had better admit that we neglect our obligation to provide the people with quality education and the interest of the grassroots.

I so submit. Thank you.

MR ABRAHAM SHEK: Madam President, Audrey, as a parent, speaks on behalf of many thousands of parents who share her belief as reflected in today's motion. Whether her motion today will be passed or otherwise is not important; what is important is that we have the ears of Prof LI for the second time. I still remember that two years ago in this Council Chamber here, the Honourable CHEUNG Man-kwong moved a motion to implement small class teaching. In his response to Members' speeches, Prof Arthur LI then stressed that the conditions for implementing small class teaching were not ripe because of two

main factors. I did not agree but I accepted because he is an honourable man. The two factors were: First, there was no definite conclusion on the efficacy of teaching in smaller classes. So, a three-year experimental study should be conducted to decide whether the idea would be appropriate for Hong Kong. Second, given the huge fiscal deficit, the Administration should exercise great prudence, as implementing small class teaching would involve substantial resources.

Two years have passed. The relevant government departments should have a better idea by now as to whether small class teaching would upgrade the quality of education, and Audrey's motion is very timely. Although the fiscal deficit which we are now facing still exists, the gap has narrowed this year. In general, I believe that the aforementioned factors no longer dominate the decision as to whether small class teaching should be implemented. The key now is whether the Administration has the determination to implement small class teaching in Hong Kong. If the answer is yes, difficulties can be overcome. If not, our debate today is totally superfluous and is a waste of time.

Small class teaching has been implemented in many advanced countries and has been adopted in many major cities in China for seven to eight years. I do not think that they are equipped with better resources and conditions.

The time has come for us to implement small class teaching in Hong Kong. Two main reasons propel us to move forward. First, as birth rates decline, the number of students has dropped. Schools and teaching staff can now be redeployed for small class teaching. Second, with the advent of a knowledge-based economy, Hong Kong needs to substantially invest in and nurture our future generations. Small class teaching pinpoints such future needs. Hesitation is not in the best interests of Hong Kong, Mr Secretary.

Changes should be made progressively, as Audrey has suggested in her motion today — a very mild motion, so we cannot really reject it. There is bound to be a first step, without which you cannot take a second step. So, do take the first step now. Some schools may not be able to implement such a measure immediately. There should be a directive in this respect. Some schools can be pioneers, while others which are less endowed can implement it a little bit later.

Madam President, why am I so concerned about this subject? Being a parent and being a Hong Kong citizen, I do need to care about our future. Hong Kong is still undergoing economic restructuring, and we have yet to see light from the other end of the tunnel. Why is restructuring so difficult this time? One of the main causes is that we have the problem of a manpower mismatch. About half of our working population is having problems coping with it. The limited number of low-skilled jobs available in the market cannot accommodate an enormous number of low-skilled workers. We cannot rely on retail and tourism alone. Moreover, we are facing intensified competition from the 1.3 billion people across the border — our own people. A high value-added economy is the answer. Without a pool of high quality human resources, we can never achieve it. Quality education is the answer, and small class teaching is a tool to achieve this objective.

To many, quality education for the young is an investment, but to me, and I am sure to many others, we see it a necessity. That is what makes Hong Kong as it is today.

Small class teaching may not be the panacea. However, it will allow teachers to pay more attention to every kid, and thus improve his interest in learning and motivate him to strive for excellence. Moreover, teachers can put more time and efforts into better assisting the less gifted whose rights to acquire knowledge are no less than the others who are bright. Attention is very important for a student's personal growth. It may play a major role in deciding the destiny of a young child.

According to the Education and Manpower Bureau, 40 primary schools started experimenting small class teaching in September 2004. There will be a review by the end of the 2006-07 school year. Personally, I do not understand why we must wait three more years. Why could the Administration not implement it gradually next year? In fact, many schools are capable of implementing it right now. I sincerely hope that the Administration will seriously consider it from the angle of upgrading our quality of education and overall long-term benefit. Extra funding can be regarded as our investment and a necessity.

I support the implementation of small class teaching and the changes it can bring about. The quality of teachers and their teaching attitude are most crucial. Unlike large classes, the objective of teaching in small classes is to enhance each

individual student's ability to learn. Teachers should devote care and patience on top of counselling skill. There are many who oppose small class teaching on the grounds of inability of our teaching profession in administering it. That is a very weak argument. Not being a professor, but being a simple man, I tell you, if they can teach 40 students, they can teach 20 students much much better. Thank you.

MR RONNY TONG (in Cantonese): Madam President, Secretary and Honourable colleagues, I believe not many Members seated here have experienced both small class teaching and large class teaching like I did. I experienced small class teaching not because my family was well off, as Mr Albert CHENG put it, on the contrary, just like Mr Jasper TSANG, I went to an illicit kindergarten and an illicit primary school when I was small. However, the illicit primary school that I went to was the exact opposite of the one that Mr Jasper TSANG attended in that to him, there were too many students but for me, there were too few. At that time, our classroom was only a small room and there were only 10 pupils in the whole class. Sometimes, quite a number of them did not show up, so there were just a few of us. Later on, a new government primary school came into being in Causeway Bay and I was lucky enough to be enrolled, so I had the opportunity to study in a government primary school.

After admission, I was interviewed by a teacher, who said that my academic results should actually make me qualified to be enrolled at a higher grade. I believe it was already proven then that a small class is superior to a "Tai Pan" (a large class) (*laughter*), but I was not aware of this at that time. After being admitted into a large class, I felt something was amiss because I was often assigned to the last row and I felt a bit lonely. Ms Margaret NG reminded me just now that there is one more merit with a small class, namely, the student who fares the worst in examination will only rank the 25th (*laughter*), not the 30th something or 40th like I did. I have been thinking that it would have been great had the classes been small then. I think there is no need for me to dwell further on the merits and demerits of small class and large class teaching. I believe everyone seated here, including the Secretary, all understand them fully.

There is one thing which I feel most sorry about and that is, many matters raised in the motions in this legislature are actually considered desirable by all Members, or perhaps by an overwhelming majority of Members. However, these matters would often end up being caught in some snags, as a result, one

Member would amend another Member's motion and still another Member would amend that Member's amendment. In the end, all motions and amendments are negated and nothing can be achieved. However, the proposals are in fact very good and everyone supports them. I think that sometimes, if we want to achieve something, it may be necessary to discard some minor obstacles and in fact, these obstacles are of our own making. Take today's motion as an example. I have read the two amendments and their differences are in fact really insignificant. It was necessary for me to take a close look and ask Ms Audrey EU several times before I knew where their differences lay.

In sum, there are three differences. The first difference has to do with progressive implementation. This should not be more difficult than gradual and orderly progress, should it? *(Laughter)* It will take 50 years to achieve gradual and orderly progress, but progressive implementation should be attainable in a few years, should it not? The request made by Ms Audrey EU in the original motion is very simple. It only asks that small class teaching be progressively extended from primary schools to secondary schools. So we are talking about six years' time, is that right? That means we have to wait six years, so is this not already progressive implementation? Why is it still necessary to strike out the words "secondary schools"? Moreover, these days, the Secretary has said that the "3+3+4" academic structure reform is in the pipeline and Liberal Studies will be implemented. I think that small class teaching and Liberal Studies are related and the former can facilitate the latter. The Secretary said that he hoped the "3+3+4" academic structure would be implemented as soon as possible, so why are we still squabbling incessantly over small class teaching in Primary One and Secondary One? Why should the allusion to "secondary schools" be struck out from Ms Audrey EU's motion, or the motion be prevented from being passed? I think this is regrettable.

The second difference lies in the additional resources. Frankly speaking, if we want to implement small class teaching in Hong Kong, no additional resources will be involved if assessed in terms of present-day circumstances and the rationales. The Government said that implementing small class teaching would incur \$3.1 billion — Ms Audrey EU did not heed my advice and if she had written a few more letters, then perhaps the amount of \$3.1 billion would not have been mentioned — but the \$3.1 billion is in fact not an additional amount but only a difference. This is something that I understood only on Sunday. That is to say, the Government will be able to save that amount of money. At a time when our population is decreasing, it is only a matter of course to introduce

small class teaching and it is certain that no extra money will be required. Even if extra money is required, it will be spent on nurturing the future pillar of Hong Kong and this is worth the money. Therefore, additional resources should not be an issue.

The third difference has to do with teacher training. Ms Emily LAU has already said that the Shatin District Primary School Heads Association has prepared a report and many of its members are sitting on the public gallery right now, listening to our speeches. They have made a great deal of effort in preparing a specific proposal to submit to us and the Secretary. The contents of the report are very specific and a very detailed and well-contrived matching programme is proposed. They maintain that it is necessary to provide teacher training, to establish a so-called quality circle and to provide mutual support in administration. This does not mean that small class teaching is intended as a life buoy for teachers of poor quality, but rather, that it takes time for everyone to adapt. However, if all of us have the determination, I believe the teachers will not experience any difficulty. Since they can teach our next generation, they can certainly teach themselves too. I think it is most worthwhile for the Secretary to consider this proposal made by the Shatin District Primary School Heads Association carefully.

I have absolute confidence in Hong Kong teachers and I hope that the Liberal Party also has. In respect of teacher training, there should not be any problem. Therefore, the three obstacles we have mentioned are in fact not obstacles at all. I hope all Honourable colleagues can support the original motion moved by Ms Audrey EU. Thank you.

MR ANDREW LEUNG (in Cantonese): Madam President, on the face of it, small class teaching is certainly desirable. I believe no one will oppose a reduction in the number of students per class so that teachers can have greater scope in engaging in interactive teaching with students, and the business sector and I both support this.

However, how effective is small class teaching? Although there is a lack of established studies on this subject in Hong Kong, we can still make reference to overseas experience. In the United States, studies were conducted on small class teaching in a number of states and the findings showed that the outcomes varied greatly. According to a study programme in Tennessee, students in

small classes showed marked improvement and ethnic minorities also benefited from them. However, the same study found that the academic performance of students in California had not seen any marked improvement and ethnic minorities had not benefited from it in any particular way.

No matter what the results are, the above studies identified a problem worthy of concern, that is, most of the teachers did not modify the contents of lessons and pedagogy in any significant way in response to a small class setting.

The situation in Hong Kong is also similar. At present, there are only 25 students or less in some of the classes in some schools in Hong Kong, however, the teaching strategy adopted is no different from that of large class teaching. Early this year, the Education and Manpower Bureau conducted a series of lesson observations and found that:

- (1) teacher-centred and unidirectional teaching remained to be the major mode of delivery in the majority (about 65%) of the small class lessons observed;
- (2) in about 60% of the small class lessons observed, there was no group work that took advantage of a small class setting; and
- (3) the emphasis of teachers was still characterized by "close-ended" questions with "model answers", with little interactive discussion.

The renowned educational expert, Prof Maurice GALTON, also came to Hong Kong to observe small class teaching. He also found that teachers still adopted unidirectional teaching as their mode of delivery, as in the large class setting, and required students to give standard answers, rather than engaging in open and interactive discussions with students to guide them in learning and training students to think independently and critically.

I believe this is the crux of the matter. Prof CHENG Kai-ming, Chair of Education of the Faculty of Education of the University of Hong Kong, said the other day that to reduce the number of teaching sessions and strengthen teacher training may be more effective than reducing the number of students in each class. The Chairman of the Education Psychology Department of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Prof HAU Kit-tai, also pointed out that the experience in the United States was that small classes might have little effect on students'

academic performance but the cost was very high. Therefore, the public should compare small class teaching and other measures aimed at raising the quality of education carefully and consider which kind of investment will yield the greatest return.

Before putting small class teaching into practice, we must show the public clearly that we are prepared in every aspect. Coupled with the fact that resources are stretched, if small class teaching is to be implemented full scale in all 700 primary schools throughout Hong Kong, enormous expenditure will be required. Therefore, we have to consider the priorities of different policies.

Obviously, if the education sector hastily implements this policy involving a large amount of resources without being adequately prepared and putting in place a package of complementary measures, in view of the present-day circumstances, it would be wasteful and not worthwhile to commit the resources if students cannot enjoy the benefits. Be it the experience of the United States or that of Shanghai, it has been shown that it is necessary to make special efforts in respect of teacher training, curriculum and pedagogy if small class teaching is to be implemented and the number of students is not the focus. Small class teaching is in fact only a kind of facilitation in terms of setting to give teachers greater scope in employing a flexible mode of delivery.

Take the "small-class education" in Shanghai as an example. It requires teachers to understand the learning potential of each student and adopt diverse teaching methods, design different types of homework for students according to individual cases and reform the curriculum, so as to cater to the needs of different students. If we merely request a reduction in the number of students and overlook the spirit behind small class teaching, we would be putting the cart before the horse. Therefore, I have often stressed that teachers should first be allowed to pursue further studies and training, so as to raise their professional skills before implementing small class teaching step by step.

The most important consideration of the authorities now is to ensure that teachers receive adequate training, so that their professional skills and even psychological condition can be enhanced, as well as mastering the skills and pedagogy of small class teaching. This will involve a large number of complementary measures in education that cannot be put in place within a short period of time.

In the long run, small class teaching is worth supporting. I also hope that it can be implemented as soon as possible to raise the quality of education in Hong Kong. However, at present, it should be implemented in a gradual and orderly manner, starting with lower grades or areas where underprivileged families or ethnic minorities with worse-off financial capabilities are found. I believe that in this way, the results will be more remarkable.

The business sector and I opine that in the interest of the next generation and the future development of Hong Kong, education is a very worthwhile investment. However, since the "3+ 3+ 4" academic structure reform will also be launched in the future, there will be competition for resources given the present stretched finances. Therefore, I hope that the Government can consider the views expressed by Members today, give them consideration and make decisions prudently on the priorities in committing resources, so that money can be spent on worthwhile investments and public funds can be spent appropriately.

As Mr CHENG has said, we support small class teaching but we are subjected to many constraints. He said that in that case, it would be better not to implement it and simply oppose it. On the other hand, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that he is very much in favour of the "3+ 3+ 4" academic structure, however, he also made a series of demands concerning teacher training, saying that this was very important to the teaching of Liberal Studies and that a three-year or four-year period was insufficient. In that case, why is it possible to implement small class teaching immediately? I fully support small class teaching but insist that there must be adequate complementary measures. I believe Ms Audrey EU does not wish to hear us merely express our support without making any suggestion. As Members, it is our responsibility to tell the Secretary and the Policy Bureaux concerned all our worries, so as to enable them to consider which approach is the best.

I so submit, Madam President.

MR FREDERICK FUNG (in Cantonese): Madam President, the authorities have always held reservations about small class teaching should be implemented in Hong Kong. The Government has made it known a number of times that, no matter if we conduct an analysis from the angle of policy results or from the

angle of resources, the implementation of small class teaching in primary or secondary schools is not suitable for Hong Kong.

First, in terms of results, the authorities queried the effectiveness of reducing class size, believing that the number of students in a class is not the only indicator in the assessment of teaching effectiveness. Other factors, such as the leadership of school principals, the professional standard of teachers and the pedagogy, the software and hardware of the schools and support from parents are similarly important. Moreover, the authorities have already allocated additional resources to launch other measures that are also conducive to raising teaching quality, for example, those relating to teachers' professional development, teaching assistants and the Native-speaking English Teachers Scheme. In addition, studies in Europe and in the United States showed that given the same amount of resources, the cost-effectiveness of implementing small class teaching is far lower than that of improving teacher quality. These factors all show that not only are the resources required for implementing small class teaching substantial, the results may not even be comparable to that of the existing measures. There is more to lose than to be gained if we implement it blindly.

In addition, after making reference to overseas experience, the authorities considered that no definite causal relationship can as yet be established between two variables, namely, class size and enhancing learning effectiveness. Furthermore, they published the results of lesson observations conducted by overseas experts on schools in Hong Kong that had introduced pilot schemes in small class teaching on their own. These experts were of the view that teachers in Hong Kong did not adjust their pedagogy accordingly, as a result, there was a lack of interaction between teachers and students. Citing this as evidence, the authorities lend weight to the argument that it is not appropriate to implement small class teaching.

Furthermore, another reason cited by the Hong Kong Government for not actively promoting small class teaching is the tight resources. The authorities said that on the basis of 25 students per class, if small class teaching was to be implemented in all primary schools in Hong Kong, the additional expenditure required each year would be more than \$3 billion, thus imposing tremendous pressure on public finance which has recorded deficits for several years in a row. Therefore, it is necessary for the Government to use resources prudently and determine the priorities of measures that are more effective.

The Hong Kong Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood (ADPL) and I do not agree with these arguments. We believe that small class teaching is essential for the future of education in Hong Kong and should be implemented as soon as possible. Moreover, this is an investment, not an expenditure.

In fact, since the '90s, the trend of reform in the international education circle is to reduce the size of classes. Take Hong Kong's neighbours in the East Asian region as an example. In South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, China and even Macao which has far less resources than Hong Kong, reducing the number of classes and class size has been laid down as the important goals in education reform, and specific measures have been devised for this purpose and indicators have been established to evaluate their effectiveness.

If we turn to the progress in this area in Hong Kong, the irony is that the Education Commission in fact affirmed that reducing class size and number was an idea that would contribute towards improving the quality of education in its Report No. 5 published in 1992 and proposed that the class size be further reduced by five persons. However, subsequently, in order to speed up the implementation of whole-day schooling in primary schools, the authorities went against the recommendation by adding two more students to each class, so that the goal of implementing small class teaching was killed in the womb. The ADPL and I are of the view that, to an international city like Hong Kong that lacks any natural resources, it is fairly important to step up the nurturing of its human resources to maintain its competitiveness. For this reason, to introduce small class teaching to reduce the teacher to student ratio and allow greater scope in teaching and learning will raise the quality of students in Hong Kong and it is the best starting point for realizing quality education.

In addition, although the authorities cited the failure of California in the United States to show that the effectiveness of small class teaching may not be as great as generally imagined and Mr Andrew LEUNG has also cited this example as proof just now, in fact, in overseas countries, particularly in the United States, various large- or small-scale but stringent verifications have been conducted and they prove that small class teaching facilitates teaching and learning. For example, the Prime Time Program in Indiana, the STAR Program in Tennessee and the SAGE Program in Wisconsin all showed that small class teaching can indeed yield expected positive outcomes in the academic performance of students, interaction between teacher and student, self-image, and so on. I believe these

examples can serve not merely as powerful theoretical support but also evidence in support of implementing small class teaching in Hong Kong.

With regard to expenses, although the authorities have stressed that, given the present tight public financial resources, it is impossible to deploy additional resources to implement small class teaching, the ADPL and I are of the view that public expenditure does not constitute a sufficient ground to rule out small class teaching and should not become a stumbling block for small class teaching. Firstly, the implementation of small class teaching can proceed by stages and by subjects, for example, it can begin with Primary One and be extended year by year to Primary Two, Three, Four and secondary school, or we can select some important subjects, such as Chinese, English and Mathematics as the major subjects in a pilot scheme. Meanwhile, since Hong Kong is now experiencing a decline in the number of school-age children and in some districts, such as Sha Tin and Tai Po, the situation of under-enrolment has occurred, we consider that it is now high time that small class teaching was implemented given the aforementioned conditions or approaches. Concerning the so-called "additional" expenditure, in fact, "additional" expenditure may not be required indeed. The only thing is the Government has to retain the resources or money for education purposes that it originally thought could be cut.

Concerning the amendment proposed by the Liberal Party, since the reference to the gradual implementation of small class teaching in secondary schools has been deleted, the amendment fails to meet our request to gradually extend small class teaching from primary schools to secondary schools. Furthermore, the wording "prudently assess the additional resources required for implementing small class teaching" has been added to the amendment, implying that the Government does not have adequate resources to implement small class teaching now. Therefore, the ADPL and I oppose this amendment. On the amendment to amendment proposed by the Democratic Party, the mode of transition of "by district and by grade" is similar to our notion. In view of this, we will support this amendment.

With these remarks, Madam President, I support the original motion.

MRS SOPHIE LEUNG (in Cantonese): Madam President, good medicine is always bitter to the taste, and what is more, the attitude of politicians is to always

follow public opinions and the trend. In spite of this, let us look at what Mrs Selina CHOW has sought to amend. She only proposes that the commitments of both the Government and parents should be weighed and demands that the Government prudently assess the actual amount of additional resources required for implementing small class teaching. In fact, a number of Honourable colleagues seated here have also raised the same issue, that is, they want the Government to do some calculations. In addition, we also propose that small class teaching can be implemented only after ensuring that complementary training for teachers is available. We are only talking about something very realistic and speaking our true minds. Madam President, in this age, it is necessary to hold very strong convictions for one to speak one's true mind, otherwise, everyone will say that you are making insinuations.

Madam President, I wish to cite an example. Sometime before 2002, a partnership programme involving the business sector and secondary schools was introduced for voluntary participation by both sides. Its main goal was for company ambassadors recruited by the business sector and teachers of the schools concerned to lead a group of students to participate in a series of activities or to hold a series of workshops in schools, for example, to observe the actual operation of various companies and conduct exchanges with people employed in various sectors. This will enable secondary school students to gain an understanding of the actual world of work and accumulate real life experience, so that their thinking can be stimulated, their horizons broadened and their bookish mentality changed.

Concerning the workshops, only some 20 students in each class can take part in them, so the mode is similar to small class teaching. The emphasis is on interaction and flexibility. In every term of an academic year, there are always close to a hundred schools that will express a wish to participate, but only a few dozen companies in the business sector can participate in this programme each year because it will impose a heavy workload on them. The latest programme was held in more than 20 secondary schools and a study was then conducted. Students were asked to prepare appraisal reports of their teachers afterwards. The comments were all made by the students and I have no intention of challenging the authority of teachers, however, I have a copy of all the comments with me. Some of the comments say that while there was no doubt that some teachers were very responsible, attended all activities and were very involved in them, as well as being devoted to assisting the conduct of the activities, the students think that many teachers were merely doing perfunctory work. The

workshops and activities were all held outside school hours but the impression that the students had of these teachers was that they had adopted the mentality of merely "doing a job" and a conservative mindset in their participation. The students generally felt that the teachers were unwilling to share their views with them and their behaviour was rather passive. Some teachers even displayed a nonchalant attitude during the workshops, others brought along examination papers to do the marking and some of them were even absent.

All these are the true opinions expressed by the students and these opinions are directed at the matter rather than individuals, since the appraisals were anonymous. I wish to point out that if small class teaching is implemented mandatorily — and I stress mandatorily, Madam President — and participation in it is no longer voluntary, will teachers have even less drive to accept new ways of thinking and employ new pedagogy when implementing small class teaching? This is the question we wish to ask and sincerely remind everyone of. We do not mean that all teachers are like this. At this stage, when we are exploring whether small class teaching should be implemented, we very much want to act as the "bad guy" and expose this issue, so as to make Members consider if a new mindset should be adopted in teaching primary school students before we can really exploit the benefits of small class teaching.

Madam President, the essence of small class teaching is not about a quantitative change but more importantly, a qualitative change. I believe excellent teacher quality is indispensable to small class teaching. If the mentality of teachers does not change, even if small class teaching is really implemented in the future, I will still feel very concerned. Just as with the many reforms in the past, I only want to act as the "bad guy" and speak the truth. No matter if Members like to listen to these words or not, what matters most is for us to share a common goal, that is, to consider how best to educate our future generation and bring up a group of young people who are even better in terms of quantity and quality. Thank you, Madam President.

MR LEE CHEUK-YAN (in Cantonese): Madam President, Mrs Sophie LEUNG said just now that she wanted to speak her true mind and be the "bad guy", but let us not be the bad guy and I hope Members will not act as the bad guy either. Why must there be a bad guy? You raised those questions and in fact, there is nothing wrong in doing that. We also wish to address those questions squarely. However, does it follow that, given those questions, we

should refrain from doing anything? It does not, is that right? However, I think that even though you keep shaking your head in denial, but as I listened, I really did not understand what you wanted to do. Frankly speaking, as Mr Ronny TONG said, I think all of us seemed to have reached a very strong consensus, and everyone is in favour of it.

As I heard Mr Andrew LEUNG say just now, "I believe no one will oppose it and we in the Liberal Party also support it", however, it has to depend on the result, so do they support or not? Are they questioning the result? If they have doubts about the result, that is tantamount to saying they do not support it. In that case, I simply do not know whether they are in favour or not. This is because as he went on, he questioned the result, and then said that such and such is the case in Tennessee and that there had been no similar study in Hong Kong. However, it is not true that there has been no such study in Hong Kong. I have read some information on a pilot scheme conducted in 37 primary schools for three years in Hong Kong, including schools A, B, C and D located in Tuen Mun, Island East, Tseung Kwan O and Sha Tin respectively, and everyone agreed that small classes in these schools had brought about tremendous progress in learning.

If we talk about studies, there is also such a study here in Hong Kong. What actually is the position of the Liberal Party? They said that they were in favour but they questioned the result. After that, he remarked that Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong had also said it was necessary to put in place a lot of complementary measures before the "3+3+4" academic structure could be implemented, so he too said that it was necessary to put in place a lot of complementary measures, but what are those measures? Maybe he would say that they are those on teacher training. Just now, I heard a most interesting point, that is, one area of teacher training is to enhance the psychological condition for small class teaching, as Mr Andrew LEUNG put it. I was thinking, oh, that is terrible! Does that mean there is no need to care about the psychological condition in teaching large classes? I wonder if he meant that facing 40 students, with those at the back being mostly naughty ones like Mr Ronny TONG (*laughter*), the demand on a person's psychological condition is less than in facing some 20 students? I really cannot make head or tail of it. Madam President, I do not understand why insofar as psychological condition is concerned, it is necessary to have the right psychological condition when facing a

small class but it is not necessary with a large class. I think this is a very ridiculous remark.

Therefore, I consider that since everyone thinks that this is a good thing, then why do we not do it? Arguments such as that on teacher qualifications have been put forward. For example, Mrs Sophie LEUNG said that she hoped that there would be a qualitative change, that is, a change in teacher quality. However, sometimes it is necessary to have a quantitative change before there will be any qualitative change. That is to say, if the quantity is reduced, it is possible to improve the quality. However, Madam President, she is shaking her head, maybe Mrs Sophie LEUNG disagrees with me, then I had better say for her that she disagrees, so as to save you the trouble of making clarifications.

However, the question is, if you say that you disagree, then when will it be possible to implement small class teaching? When will teacher training be considered adequate and so advanced that the stage for implementing small class teaching has been reached? Who will be responsible for drawing the line? In fact, this is a level that can never be determined. Just now, Mr Andrew LEUNG — Madam President, I am noting other people's body language at the same time and he is pointing at Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, indicating that it is up to Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong to decide — if it were indeed up to Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong to decide, that is, to be decided by the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union, then I would feel more at ease, since the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union can step forward immediately and say, everything is ready and small class teaching can be implemented now. If we could reach a consensus now and if it were up to Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong to decide when to implement small class teaching, if such were the consensus of Members today, then everything would be OK, however, this is not the actual situation.

Moreover, I am aware of the concerns of the Liberal Party because they mentioned additional resources frequently. I understand that their concern is on whether small class teaching should depend on our financial ability and whether there are additional resources. Of course, many of the arguments advanced earlier revolve around the question of whether additional resources are required. I simply would not bother about this. Let us assume that additional resources are required. In that case, what is wrong with requiring additional resources?

I think that if all of us consider education to be an investment and very important — I often criticize the Liberal Party for their ignorance of economics and knowing only about doing business, precisely because the Liberal Party is short-sighted and knows nothing about economics — they often talk about knowledge-based economy, but how does a knowledge-based economy come into being? One may ask, "Whence the additional resources come, and as Dr YEOH Eng-kiong put it, do they grow on trees or drop from the sky?" Then I have to ask conversely, "Whence come the pillar, the talents and quality people for future economic development? Do they drop from the sky? Do they grow on trees? Do they pop up from rocks? Or will they be imported from the Mainland?" At present, there are many talents on the Mainland and over 4 000 of them are coming to Hong Kong. Is this the situation that we wish to see? We all know that the economic development in Hong Kong and its future competitiveness depend on using our brains and we all have to rely on knowledge. However, I always have the impression that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government always talks about knowledge-based economy but it does not promote knowledge, nor is it willing to invest in knowledge. Although the Liberal Party often says that the future economy is knowledge-based, it does not support making any investment in the domains of knowledge.

If all of us are not willing to make any investment, then how will we see any return in the future? If we do not do it now and still maintain that we have to proceed in a gradual and orderly way, then in which year, in which month and on which day will we be able to make small class teaching a reality? I do not mean to say that as long as we implement small class teaching, all problems relating to knowledge-based economy can be solved, but this is a starting point. If we do not even take the first step, if we never take the first step, then when will the education sector in Hong Kong really be able to nurture talents required by a modern civilized society and an international city? How many years do we have to wait?

Therefore, I believe if anyone thinks that education requires additional resources and it has to depend on the money available and we have to spend within our means, then this is an approach for doing business, not an approach that sets sights on the long-term development of the economy. This is a short-sighted view, not a far-sighted and visionary one bearing in mind the interests of Hong Kong.

Therefore, I hope very much that Members can realize one thing, that is, in fact, public opinions in Hong Kong society are highly in favour of small class teaching. If a referendum is held on this matter, it will definitely get a thumbs-up and there is a 99% chance that it will be given the thumbs-up since, as we can all see, the surveys conducted by parent-teacher associations indicate that over 90% of the people are in favour. In that case, let us hold a referendum on this matter and see what the outcome is. If the outcome of the referendum indicates that all people agree with the implementation of small class teaching, then let us invest in this area. Should we not do it this way?

In fact, it is by now very clear what the public opinion is. I hope the Government will not drag its feet on an urgent need of the public and get in the way of the people's aspiration. Thank you, Madam President.

MS MARGARET NG (in Cantonese): Madam President, I strongly support the motion moved by Ms Audrey EU on the implementation of small class teaching.

In fact, sometimes, it is often said that due to the major differences in views on certain issues in society, some goals cannot be attained. Moreover, people are sometimes very indifferent and unwilling to make any contribution or commitment, waiting only for the Government or other people to do something and they will just wait and reap the benefits, or they are being very selfish, so all these factors prevent us from attaining our goals even though they are within sight. However, on this issue of small class teaching, we have reached a broad consensus and not only do we have a consensus, we can also see the most positive side of Hong Kong people, that is, in a very difficult situation in which no additional resources are available, many teachers, school principals or parents are all willing to take up some of the work, devise the methods and conduct an experiment by taking the first step on their own. Ms Audrey EU and I have visited some schools. Some teachers chose to implement small class teaching even though each of them have to teach one or two sessions more. They have devoted a great deal of effort as far as they can. Not only have they made such commitment and contribution, they also pointed out that their support for small class teaching was entirely founded on knowledge. We can see that people who attach importance to and care about education and the next generation in Hong Kong have all conducted studies on their own, written essays and done experiments. Why is it that such a cause, which they proposed implementing

after giving it a great deal of rational consideration and rallying so many people, could not be put into practice merely for some very minor reasons? What a great shame! Therefore, today I will definitely give it all my support. I think that it will be a great shame if this cause cannot be achieved despite the efforts made by so many people and all the effort will go to waste, merely because the Government is not willing to implement it.

Madam President, in fact, small class teaching is a general international trend. Originally, Ms Audrey EU said that she would leave it to Ms Margaret NG to talk about the general international trend. I was reluctant to do so because I think such a simple matter should be evident to all. However, Ms Audrey EU insisted that I speak on this, so I could only oblige and talk about things that everyone is all too familiar with. Leaving countries in Europe and in America aside, in Shanghai on mainland China, whose economy is catching up fast with that of Hong Kong, small class teaching was implemented in as early as 1996, and in most countries in Europe and America, the average number of persons is 15 to 26 per class in primary schools. In East Asia, with a dropping birth rate, there is also a clear trend of moving towards small class teaching in the context of education reform. Measures are also being taken in Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Shanghai, Beijing, Macao, and so on, to reduce the number of people in each class in secondary and primary schools.

Madam President, everyone will notice that the circumstances in Shanghai are the same as those in Hong Kong. Shanghai is also experiencing the problem of a decreasing number of births. Since 1996, Shanghai has conducted a trial in small class teaching in 12 primary schools by reducing the average number of students per class from 50 to between 20 and 24. Nowadays, nearly half of the 800 publicly-funded primary schools in Shanghai have implemented small class teaching and over 80% of the students are enjoying the benefits. The standard number of people per class is 20 to 26 persons. In the meantime, a trial to implement small class education has also begun in 10 secondary schools in Shanghai. In a work entitled *Education Reform and Innovation in Shanghai* written by academics there and published this year, there is a passage summarizing the experience of implementing small class education: "small class education has fully demonstrated its superiority in pilot studies. It can increase the frequency and intensity of exchange and interaction between teachers and students. The role of students as the focus can come into full play and in teaching, greater emphasis is placed on students' comprehensive development. Teachers can adopt various pedagogies and methods and there are more

opportunities to counsel individuals and teach students according to their potential. Therefore, parents welcome small class teaching very much."

Madam President, looking around the world, it is universally agreed that small class teaching is a necessary policy and measure in improving the quality of education. It is inconceivable that we are still dithering nowadays and have not implemented the relevant policy, lagging behind Shanghai by as many as 10 years. There is little wonder that we have to import talents from the Mainland, as Mr LEE Cheuk-yan has pointed out just now.

Madam President, as a matter of fact, I believe everyone supports small class teaching and the benefits are there for all to see. The survey cited just now has shown this very clearly. We all know that "Tai Pan" (a large class) is no good — sorry about that, Mr Albert CHENG — a large class is no good, however, we have no choice but to live with it. Why did I have to come the 36th in academic performance in my class? That was because there were 42 students in the class. The focus should instead be the reasons that prevent us from implementing small class teaching. The first is that there is no money, but this reason has been debunked. Because of a decreasing population, if the calculation is accurate, it is in fact unnecessary to spend any more money than we do now. The second reason is teacher qualification. Training is very important. We all fully understand the importance of teacher training. However, we also know that even though there are excellent teachers, if the teaching environment is bad and there are a large number of students in a class, it will be difficult for teachers to perform their function well. This is a chicken-and-egg issue. However, we can see that teachers and school principals have now put aside the issue of chicken and egg and taken the first step in spite of the undesirable setting that they are in. In view of this, to borrow a remark made by a Member on another occasion, I think that it is not the ability but the will that is lacking.

Madam President, where there is a will, there is a way. We hope that the first step can be taken towards small class teaching and that it will be a success. Thank you.

MR LEUNG YIU-CHUNG (in Cantonese): Madam President, I wonder if the Secretary, when summing up later, will be able to conclude that everyone considers small class teaching desirable, since having heard many Honourable

colleagues speak, I found that nobody opposed small class teaching and said that it was a bad thing. But the caveat is that many Honourable colleagues opined that although small class teaching is good, there are certain prerequisites, that is, teacher training and adequate resources are required. It is under these conditions that small class teaching can be properly implemented. Of course, the more the complementary measures, the more desirable it definitely will be.

However, the question is, "Given the existing resources, can small class teaching be implemented?" This is a question that needs to be explored. As a lot of information collected in surveys indicates — and I do not wish to repeat it today, since many Honourable colleagues have already mentioned it — because of a decrease in population and given our present stage of social development, resource-wise, it is not the case that we cannot do it but whether we are willing to provide the resources. In fact, many workers in education, particularly those in the school networks of certain districts, have already made a lot of suggestions on how to solve the financial problems. Had there been the resolve to solve them, these problems would have been solved by now.

Concerning the so-called training to improve teacher quality, we must not think that the existing teachers are lousy and totally incompetent. We should not describe them in such an unfavourably light. If the quality of teachers is described so unfavourably, then why do we want to put in place the "3+ 3+ 4" academic structure these days? The "3+ 3+ 4" academic structure will require even more funds. If this group of teachers is incompetent, then in the future, when students have to undertake six years of study, after which they have to undertake four years of university study, the waste of money will be even greater for people will level the criticism that it is pointless to push students lacking in quality any further up the system. In view of this, I believe we should not discount the teachers so greatly. Of course, being a teacher, I think that if more training, resources and teaching methods are offered to us, the result will of course be even better after we have learnt the ropes. No one would disagree with this. However, for the time being, the problem that we teachers encounter is that they cannot raise the quality of teaching. What are the reasons? One of them is the excessive number of students in a class. Not only do we have difficulty in dealing with classroom discipline, we also have to spend a lot of time coping with our work, such as marking homework and preparing and grading examination papers. Therefore, it is not easy to expend energy and time to raise the quality of teaching.

In fact, on classroom discipline, I also have some personal experience that I wish to share with Members. I have taught the lower grades such as Secondary One and Secondary Two. It was a big headache for me because there were many students in a class, that is, about 40 of them. After I had told the kids in one corner not to pop around, the kids in another corner would dart out. All the students were popping around and I was really at a loss as to how to cope. They were like little bugs, buzzing all the time and it was practically impossible for me to teach and I was very upset. When I was teaching Secondary One and Secondary Two classes, my family members said that my temper had become much worse. This is very true, Madam President. You can ask my colleagues about it. If they happen to teach some unruly — perhaps let us not say unruly — some more active classes, the emotions that the teachers concerned experience are pretty unbearable. Because of the large number of students, it is difficult to control the order in a class and one can even say that there is little possibility of teaching. For example, during a lesson, most of the time is in fact spent on managing discipline in the classroom. In view of this, I believe it is really necessary to implement small class teaching if teaching quality is to be improved.

Of course, many Honourable colleagues have also cited many surveys conducted in other countries to point out that after implementing small class teaching, there was no sign that academic performance had improved in leaps and bounds. I think this is not surprising at all. This is because when we talk about education, I hope that we will not merely focus on or set our sights simply on academic results. This is because when talking about education, we should talk about all-round development in the moral, intellectual, physical, social and aesthetic aspects. One hallmark of all-round development is that a student can be nurtured to show good behaviour, to get along well with other people, and to achieve personal growth, including his way of thinking. This is far more important than getting a score of 100 in a subject every time he sits for an examination. Otherwise, the burden and resources exacted by his bad behaviour on society will be far greater. I believe we should look at this matter from this angle. Of course, it would be most desirable if a person is well-behaved and also has good academic performance. However, it will already be invaluable if we can teach a student to behave well. Moreover, for society, a lot of resources will also be saved.

Just now, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan pointed out that we should not be short-sighted and I too hope that we will not look at education with such tunnel

vision. If we look at education in such a narrow perspective, we will lose sight of the meaning and essence of education. This is because education is intended to teach a person how to adapt to society, not simply to impart knowledge. It is of course important to impart knowledge, but it is even more important to learn how to adapt to society and integrate into society. To achieve this end, it will depend on more opportunities for we teachers to get in touch with students, otherwise, it will be impossible for us to do so. As teachers, we often want to meet students and talk with them more, since doing so will be most helpful. If a student gains an insight into the attitude towards learning or the ways of learning, or get some ideas on how to conduct oneself in society, it is this type of personal growth that is invaluable and it will not do just to look at the academic results. In fact, I know that a lot of school principals and colleagues in the sector have devoted a great deal of energy, care and thoughts to improving student conduct. However, these schools are regarded by the Education and Manpower Bureau as rubbish. Why? Because when judged according to academic performance, they are the Band 5 schools among Band 5 schools and are not up to scratch. Therefore, I believe that it is most partial and unfair to adopt such an attitude in judging a school, nor is it appropriate to do so.

I hope that when we look at education, we must not look at it in such a narrow perspective. I hope that we can assist students in their development in all areas through small class teaching, not merely in their academic performance. Otherwise, such short-sightedness will impose an even heavier burden on society and impede its development as a whole. I hope other Honourable colleagues will not be so short-sighted or look at the education system, educational concepts and the quality of education so narrowly.

I so submit, Madam President.

DR KWOK KA-KI (in Cantonese): Madam President, today, we are discussing small class teaching. As a parent of three children and someone who grew up under the local education system, I very much wish to say a few things.

On whether small class teaching should be implemented in Hong Kong, there is hardly any need to point out that even a Member as conservative as Mrs Selina CHOW of the Liberal Party is basically in favour of small class teaching, however, she has set multiple hurdles that must be overcome before she will agree to implementing small class teaching. In discussing small class teaching,

I cannot but lament the backwardness of education in Hong Kong. The class setting of 40 students per class has not changed for many years and the unidirectional mode of teaching in the classroom has not changed either. Just now, someone said that according to a study, teachers know only how to teach in a unidirectional mode, therefore, small class teaching should not be implemented. This is to reverse the cause and effect relationship. Facing a class with 40 students, how else can these teachers teach? I wish to ask all Honourable colleagues sitting here if it is possible to teach students individually under these circumstances. It is not possible. All that any teacher can do with a class of 40 students is to teach in a unidirectional mode, however, we are saying that we hope the unidirectional mode of teaching can be ditched before we discuss small class teaching.

I have only recently assumed office as a Member of the Legislative Council to engage in discussions of public affairs. I have read the consultation paper entitled "Reforming the Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education — Actions for Investing in the Future" issued by the Secretary for Education and Manpower. The Secretary was confident that the "3+ 3+ 4" academic structure could be implemented in a few years' time. However, this proposal involves reform that begins at the senior secondary level, offering the subject of Liberal Studies and making changes to the higher education system. The risks, effectiveness and feasibility of this proposal are still unknown, the consultation has not yet been completed, consent has not yet been obtained from the relevant sector, it is not certain if the lower secondary and primary levels will be able to converge and schools and teachers have not been asked if they are prepared, however, the senior officials responsible for education, including the Secretary, are already actively hard selling the proposal and are intent on implementing it, pledging that this huge investment of \$6.7 billion would be worth the money.

Madam President, I do not understand the rationale behind this, nor do I understand why such a rationale cannot be adopted for small class teaching, since small class teaching is an equally important education policy.

People always aspire to greater achievements. When I was a student, I had to study some subjects, including medicine, painstakingly, in order to beat other competitors, survive and take the stride to higher education, jostling with others for a place in Secondary Six and university. Nowadays, parents will only advise and encourage their children to study hard, in the hope that their

children can complete their fundamental education in a pleasant and relaxed learning process. The time has changed and it is appropriate to propose reforms, and it is also appropriate to propose offering Liberal Studies.

Madam President, I remember the Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower, Mrs Fanny LAW, once said that after reforming the academic structure, Liberal Studies in senior secondary schools could be taught in the form of small classes and the provision of additional teaching posts would be considered. Quite unusually, she admitted frankly that small class teaching is the only topic in education that has never been opposed from the past to the present and from the East to the West. She also said that if she were not a civil servant, she would formulate a policy on small class teaching as she wanted and according to commonsense. She also said with some reluctance that small class teaching was a course of action that was costly and with no possibility of reversal. At present, there is no study to indicate that making a huge investment will yield remarkable results.

That public funds must not be wasted has become the excuse for delaying and resisting the implementation of small class teaching. The academic on education, Prof HAU Kit-Tai, was also invited to explain how the results were lacklustre and how implementing small class teaching was just like having bird's nests under the shadow of a budget deficit. In determining the priorities of policies, small class teaching in primary and lower secondary schools has constantly been put on hold, whereas on the introduction of Liberal Studies in senior secondary forms, discussion can be entertained and small class teaching is possible. It is possible for us to judge with our commonsense whether we are really having bird's nests or having fakes made from konnyaku. Whereas pricey tonics may not have high nutritional value or great therapeutic effect, fake brands and counterfeit goods may be poor in quality or carry toxic ingredients that will cause cancer and even take lives.

The Education and Manpower Bureau has put up the excuse that small class teaching is costly and will incur an additional \$3.6 billion, that it is necessary to manage our finance prudently and to take into account the cost-effectiveness. Mr IP Kin-yuen, an academic that has conducted research into small class teaching for a long time, also pointed out that the population in Hong Kong is decreasing year by year and so is the number of students. The number of additional classes that have to be additionally offered is in fact limited and the additional expenses incurred were estimated to stand at \$1.2 billion.

However, there are also some academics and actuaries who said that only \$600 million would be required. Various places in the world, including such regions as Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Beijing and Shanghai in Asia, have all seized the opportunity proffered by a drop in student population to implement small class teaching, and Hong Kong alone is bucking the trend.

Water flows downward and everything is difficult at the beginning. If we do not start from the fundamental level, the foundation will not be secure. If we have our heads in the clouds and want to develop from the middle and even high up in the air, that is, if we discuss the development of the academic structure in senior secondary schools and universities, this will easily bring to mind the two towers in the September 11 incident, which collapsed after being hit because of their poor foundations.

It is not the case that small class teaching has never been introduced in Hong Kong. In fact, most of the international schools and many Direct Subsidy Scheme schools have already implemented it and it is also the privilege of these schools. However, the parents have to shoulder high school fees in order for the students to enjoy this type of quality and aristocratic education, whereas mainstream schools have to forgo teaching quality and their aspiration because of the Government's deficit and teachers and students can only settle for cheap and common education. This is an injustice created by man and a class division along the lines of inequality. The Government is willing to make a little concession only in respect of Liberal Studies at the senior secondary level, but the issue of small class teaching at the primary level, which is the most important in fundamental education, is not raised. What kind of policy is this? Why do we have to accept this? How many more students and how many more generations will have to be sacrificed and how long are people going to oppose small class teaching, even though Hong Kong is becoming a castle in the air that cannot withstand the slightest blow?

Future investments in education should be made in small class teaching, which bears the lowest risk but greatest results. It is of paramount importance to give students a sound and good fundamental education from Primary One.

According to the estimates made by academics in education, given the demographic changes, only an additional \$800 million in expenditure may be required, not \$3.1 billion as the Government claimed. The Government is in fact deceiving the public.

I believe any prejudice and bias against the abilities of teachers will not serve to improve the education system.

With these remarks, I support Ms Audrey EU's original motion and Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's amendment. Thank you, Madam President.

MR LEUNG KWOK-HUNG (in Cantonese): On this issue of small class education, I believe no one will say that he opposes it in principle. In this legislature, a lot of people will make a show of supporting it in words but they are actually against it. For example, in the discussion on The Link REIT yesterday, all Members berated it most vehemently, but when I went home and read the newspaper, I found that these Members had actually said that it would be better to allow it to be listed. I really find it strange because there is hardly any place like this legislature. I suggest that psychologists come more often to have a look here and study why there is such a strange thing in political psychology.

Members' reactions to the subject today are all the same. When it comes to small class teaching, everybody would say that they are in favour of it, but the crux of the problem is that the Government thinks it should not be implemented full-scale now. Furthermore, it is also very slow in arranging test points. I remember taking part in a forum organized by secondary school students, in which a principal said to me, "Secretary Prof Arthur LI said that we were in favour of small class teaching because we wanted to keep our rice bowls. Should you meet him in future, please remember to give him a dressing down for me." So, today, I must give him a dressing down on behalf of that principal. That principal told me that the question of his rice bowl had never occurred to him and he was just commenting on the issue itself. His views are very simple, namely, all schools in Sha Tin District should become test points rather than merely using one or two schools as the test points. He felt very angry that people had distorted the picture like this and turned it into an issue about their rice bowls.

I do not know if the principal concerned is watching the live broadcast on television or not, if he is, then he knows that I have done what he asked me to do. In fact, his feeling is representative of the feelings of the majority of members in the education sector. They have done this thing but some people painted it as a selfish act done for the sake of their rice bowls. However, I think that even if they are doing things for the sake of their rice bowls, there is still nothing wrong

about it. Do people not need jobs? In fact, among the officials in the Bureaux, how many of them have come here to "brazen it out" not for the sake of their jobs? I think, compared with that principal, they are inferior to him in terms of moral endowment because I believe that particular principal would not renege on his words. If there is any change in government policy, the officials in the Bureaux will automatically give themselves a slap on the face and even if someone spit on their face, they will submit tamely, like their behaviour on the issue of constitutional development. If there is the slightest move from the Central Authorities, they will again spit on their own face — I am not going to demonstrate this action, otherwise people will say I am insulting the legislature again. Taking such an action is easy, that is, one spits out some saliva, rub it on one's own face and let it dry.

What is this issue of small class teaching about? It is about, firstly, the Government's exaggeration of the resources required for small class teaching. In fact, all countries that have implemented small class teaching have all seized the opportunities proffered by a decreasing population and birth rate and followed the natural turn of events by using the original resources to implement small class teaching. The situation in Hong Kong should be no different. This is the first point. Therefore, unless Hong Kong people is seized by a desire to have children all of a sudden, otherwise, as long as we put this matter into practice, there is basically a chance that it will be successful and there is no need for the Government to allocate additional funds.

Secondly, is education being regarded as an investment, consumption, or is it a favour returned to the next generation or society? This has to be sorted out clearly. I remember that after the reunification, Mr TUNG said that there were three things that had to be done: the first had to do with the elderly and we all know that the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance payments have been slashed. On education, he also believed that something had to be done, so he tasked Antony LEUNG with it. Mr LEUNG was originally a speculator and he would of course consider education to be an investment, that is, there has to be input and output. Right? That is to say, it is necessary to calculate how many plastic ducks can be produced if a certain amount of plastic is used. Is education something like this? Of course not. Education is a cause that can make society more and more energetic and civilized. Therefore, there is no reason to treat it as an investment.

The Government often says that its amount of investment on education is increasing and accounts for a large proportion of the total expenditure. However, has the Government ever made another comparison. What is the proportion of the expenditure on education to the per capita income and the Gross Domestic Product? Our education accounts for only a small proportion and the reason is simple, because our tax revenue is too little. That is to say, Hong Kong people have to make their own investment, or else they will not be able to make a living. When capitalists recruit manpower, they do pick and choose, however, what matters most is that people make their own investments.

A friend told me that he had spent \$1,000 on the education of his daughter. When I asked further if it was really \$1,000, I found that in fact he meant \$10 million. He spent \$10 million on the education of his daughter, from the time she was small until she grew up. He sent her to the best high school in the United States and she began her study from grade one. What does this example illustrate? That all parents will do their utmost for their children. Parents all want their children to become a success. If the Government is really kind like parents, there is no reason it does not invest in giving all people a good education. On this issue, I think that the present practice adopted by the Government is not appropriate.

I have heard many officials responsible for education say that it is necessary to save money. However, I have also received a complaint from another person who is a lecturer in education in The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. He asked me to lodge a complaint on his behalf because the Vice-Chancellor of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University was in favour of a pay reduction, but he himself had his pay cut by only a hundred-odd dollars, the reason being this Vice-Chancellor is not paid according to the salary scale of the teaching staff but according to the salary scale for Administrative Officers in the Government. This Vice-Chancellor has set a bad example because he was hypocritical and it even turned out that he did not support the government proposal to levy a more progressive profits tax, so as to benefit Hong Kong people. I once said to Mr TUNG that the progressive profits tax ceiling should be raised to 25%. In this way, there will be a great deal of revenue. The same applies in the issue of education. Therefore, I hope all of us will see the facts clearly, that is, small class teaching should be implemented immediately and test points should be arranged on a full scale.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Does any other Member wish to speak?

MR ANDREW CHENG (in Cantonese): Madam President, I often do not know how I should start my discussions on many policy areas. But when it comes to education, the case is different because I was once a student and am now a parent. When I met the Secretary in the lavatory just now, he said to me, "I hope Members will not speak too much because I have an appointment with several hundred parents in Tsuen Wan at 5.30 pm." My immediate response was looking at my watch, only to find that he was not going to make it anyway. Am I right? *(Laughter)* Since he is not going to make it in any case, I suppose the five hundred or so parents waiting for him may as well also want to know how Members debate with the Secretary on this topic. Consequently, although the Secretary may be very anxious to go, I am afraid I cannot comply with his wish.

Madam President, I am not feeling well these days due to nasal sinusitis, and the resultant headache. It has just been diagnosed that my nasal sinusitis is caused by problems with the root of one of my teeth, and this led me to see the dentist just now. The dentist was very nice, for he switched on the radio to let me listen to the debate in the Legislative Council. "Tai Pan"⁴ happened to be speaking then. He often teases me by calling me "Siu Pan"⁵. Frankly, I do not like this nickname, but it anyhow reminds me of the debate today. Many Members assert that small class teaching is beneficial. This is of course true because we can all see how "Tai Pan" dominates every discussion, allowing nobody else to speak. This is just like what is happening with teaching in large classes — only the teacher speaks, with all students remaining absolutely silent. This also explains why a teacher lecturing a large class often has to speak at the top his voice, has to "rely on his voice", so to speak. I did not have too many opportunities to be the co-host of "Tai Pan" in radio talk shows, but I did receive some fax messages, saying that with the presence of "Siu Pan", more people could have a chance to speak and check the dominance of "Tai Pan".

Madam President, I can remember that when I was in Primary Two, there were 53 students in my class. I was quite happy because there was a certain

⁴ "Tai Pan" is the transliteration of "大班" in Cantonese, which can be interpreted as a tycoon or a large class of students.

⁵ "Siu Pan" is the transliteration of "小班" in Cantonese, which can be interpreted as a small tycoon or a small class of students.

teacher who liked to take the roll call in the morning, and every time, it would take him as long as eight to 10 minutes. Many naughty student like me who did not enjoy classes would naturally be very happy whenever that teacher was to take our first lesson of the day. But, honestly, we did lose plenty of learning time. Having listened to the arguments presented by the Liberal Party, I must say I find four words very irritating — gradual and orderly progress. In the case of universal suffrage, they talk about gradual and orderly progress, and now, when it comes to small class teaching, they also say so. What exactly do they mean by gradual and orderly progress? For one thing, they mean that we must first improve the quality of teachers and then the curriculum before examining whether any resources should be committed to implementing small class teaching. Frankly speaking, whenever I talk with the teachers of my daughters, I can sense that they are both physically and mentally exhausted. Several of their teachers are hard-pressed by their work, and I have the impression that they all wish to receive retraining, to enhance their English and study computing but are prevented from doing so because of the lack of time. They must attend to lots of administrative duties; they are no longer able to cope, both emotionally and psychologically, because the pressure is just too heavy. That being the case, why do we not aim at the simultaneous and gradual progress of small class teaching and other related aspects? Why do we still talk about the gradual and orderly progress of small class teaching instead? If we can allow the simultaneous and gradual progress of small class teaching and other related aspects, teachers will be able to relieve their emotional stress and work pressure and in turn seek to cater for their own needs for retraining. Both the Secretary and the Permanent Secretary, Mrs Fanny LAW, often make it a point to criticize the quality of our teachers. I am no longer a student, but if I were ever asked now, I would most certainly answer that while the significance of quality must be recognized, the emotional states of teachers and their principles and ideals of teaching should be considered even more important. Can we imagine what will become of our children, if teachers are rendered reluctant to teach by various frustrations, stress and pressures? I therefore very much hope that the Liberal Party can stop referring to "gradual and orderly progress".

Another point I wish to raise is about something that makes me feel rather ashamed. Every day, I have to drive my daughters to school, and if we come across anybody we know on our way to get the car, say, an Ah Sham⁶, I will

⁶ A Cantonese address for middle-aged women in general.

always say, " Good morning, Ah Sham". But my two daughters will never show any response, and even when I ask them to say "good morning", they will comply only very reluctantly, without even looking at her. I must say this is very impolite. I am unable to make my two daughters behave appropriately. I am of course responsible, but I at the same time think that the computer must also be blamed. The computer is very useful, but it has also led to one problem — the communication among people has turned very impersonal, evident in the children and youngsters these days. I hope that small class teaching can at least increase the communication between teachers and students, or among students themselves. I also hope that students' social commitment can thus be enhanced. Many people criticize children and youngsters for having no sense of responsibility, for contemplating plunging from a building when facing even the smallest pressure — in brief, for their very low Emotional Quotient (EQ). As a matter of fact, EQ training is something that teaching in large classes can never provide. And, of course, we also need to consider how to make it tide in with the curriculum. I therefore hope that efforts can be made in all the three aspects of curriculum, small class teaching and teacher quality.

Madam President, lastly, I wish to talk about the "3+ 4+ 4" education reform mentioned by Members just now — oh, I am sorry, it should be "3+ 3+ 4", and "4+ 3+ 3" is a line-up for soccer teams. I get all this mixed up very often. A "3+ 3+ 4" structure will cost us lots of resources, but if teaching in large classes continues in primary schools, then because of the resultant failure to upgrade the quality of primary education, students may still fail to cope even when they can enter university however excellent education at this tertiary level may be. Therefore, the Secretary should think about the matter thoroughly. If he wants us to support the "3+ 3+ 4" reform, I hope he can realize that he must first implement small class teaching in secondary and primary schools. Thank you, Madam President.

MR MARTIN LEE (in Cantonese): Madam President, in many recent motion debates, the Secretaries concerned invariably rose to speak right after the Member moving a motion had spoken, thus enabling us to know the Government's position right from the outset. This can truly facilitate our debates. Secretary Prof Arthur LI did not do so this time around, so for a while, I suspected that he might be trying to make things difficult for us. But then I told myself that he was not a person up to something like this. Later on, I managed to think out the reason. His position is simply the position of the Liberal Party, which can be seen clearly from Mrs Selina CHOW's amendment.

I believe this is exactly the position of the Government. I hope that if I am wrong, the Secretary can rise to correct me here and now, and I will certainly bow to him in apology.

Mrs Selina CHOW's amendment introduces several more proposals, urging the Government to prudently assess the additional resources required for implementing small class teaching, weigh the commitments of both the Government and parents and make sure that complementing training for teachers is available. In French, I would say these proposals give me a sense of *déjà vu*, and in Chinese, I would think they are "似曾相識" (all too familiar). Actually, the same line of reasoning has been employed in the case of direct elections. Is there really a need for training? Has the Chief Executive been trained for his office anyway? And, how about the Secretaries? Even after they have created such a mess, we can do nothing except hoping them to slowly improve on the job.

Mr Tim FOK, a Legislative Council Member, often talks about the need for a large stadium in Hong Kong, and I always share his view. But if the logic of the amendment applies, then nothing should be done at this very stage. The Hong Kong team was recently slaughtered in Guangzhou, suffering a nil-7 defeat. They may say, "Since these players are so poor, why should a large stadium be constructed for them? We must first give them more training to upgrade the level of local soccer before constructing a large stadium." Madam President, if things really happen that way, I can only ask, "What is going on?"

I was once a teacher for three years because I did not have the means to pursue a law degree and must first work as a teacher in order to save enough money. The classes I taught were understandably large. My experience is that the students a teacher gets to know first will always be the naughtiest of all, and he will then notice those students whose results are the most brilliant. When correcting their homework, he will often be delighted by their good work. As for those students with just average results, he may not even know their names by the end of the term. There are just too many students, so how can a teacher know them all?

When I was at university, I had to attend tutorials — I did not realize that the Chinese term for a tutorial is "導修" until I consulted an interpreter. And, perhaps because I was too preoccupied with ball games and courtship, I sometimes did not have any time to do my assignments. This could have been a

big headache for me in a small tutorial class because the lecturer would definitely know. However, I managed to come up with a little trick. Whenever others' essays were discussed, I would always take part in the discussion very keenly, talking on and on until the end of class. That way, even the lecturer would not know that I had not handed in my assignment. But this tactic will not work in a large class of, say, 42 students because all the exercise books must be handed in and counted at the same time, meaning that if there is any shortfall, the teacher will definitely know who has not handed in his homework. We can thus see that there is a difference between a large class and a small one. This is my experience.

Madam President, what the Democratic Party proposes is just the implementation of small class teaching on a district-by-district basis. We have put forward this proposal for the precise reason that we do not want to burden the Government with the need for any immediate allocation of funds — although the Government is on the other hand prepared to give away huge amounts of money to large consortia, the case of West Kowloon being a fine example. We in the Democratic Party also agree that nothing can possibly be done if the Government does not want to spend any money. But we also think that small class teaching should at least be implemented first in such districts as Wan Chai, Tai Po and Tuen Mun, where schools are already facing insufficient intake. There should not be any difficulties in launching small class teaching in these districts first, nor is there any need for additional expenditure, right? In contrast, it is not possible to do so in places such as Tin Shui Wai, where there are just too many new immigrant students. As a result, large class teaching must continue in these places. We have actually accepted a compromise, agreeing that small class teaching should be not be implemented in these places for the time being. Frankly speaking, this is not an ideal situation, for we should treat all districts equally. But since the Government does not have the money, or since it is reluctant to spend any money, we really cannot do anything.

A similar "by district" mode for implementing small class teaching is also adopted in Shanghai. Ms Margaret NG has already given a huge array of relevant figures connected with Shanghai. But Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong has told me that even in Shanghai, small class teaching is also first implemented in areas with declining birth rates. I know that the Secretary is very patriotic. Since he is so patriotic, why does he refuse to follow the example of Shanghai? Why does he still refuse to implement small class teaching first in districts facing insufficient intake?

I think practically all Members will agree that small class teaching is desirable. But as rightly pointed out by the "long-haired" Member, many Members will always say "yes" and then qualify their approval by saying "but". This is what I often hear. When asked whether something is desirable, they will always say, "Yes, but" And, they never say anything more after uttering "but". The Liberal Party is best at doing this. This time around, after saying "but", they have introduced such a long amendment.

I hope that even though the Secretary may strongly agree to the amendment of the Liberal Party, he can still change his mind after listening to the speeches of so many Members. I hope that when he speaks later on, he can let the students in Hong Kong see that they do have very bright prospects.

Thank you, Madam President.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Does any other Member wish to speak?

MR JAMES TIEN (in Cantonese): Madam President, I wish to start by responding to the remarks of Mr Martin LEE. According to him, we will often say nothing more after uttering "but". However, I must tell Martin that this time around, after saying "but", we will do something more. Since the Liberal Party supports the original motion of Ms Audrey EU, we will still vote for it even if Mrs Selina CHOW's amendment is negated. We do not see any need for us to say "but" today.

Madam President, all Hong Kong people, including the industrial and business sector, are concerned about education, because we are well aware that with globalization and the advent of knowledge-based economy, the only asset we can leave to our children is knowledge. We also understand that the only thing that can give our children greater development prospects is knowledge. We may give them properties, but their prices may drop. We may give them stocks, but unless these are the kind of stocks we talked about yesterday, there may always be a day when no dividends can be awarded. Knowledge is the only asset we can pass on to our children with the sure belief that they will never lose it. For this reason, everybody is in fact very concerned about education, the motion topic today.

When it comes to gradual and orderly progress, Mr Andrew CHENG claims that the Liberal Party always wants everything to progress gradually and orderly. But is it not true that the Democratic Party has also been equally obstinate, demanding the instant achievement of everything, notably the direct elections in 2007 and 2008? Why do they insist so much on the instant achievement of everything? During the last debate on aiding the poor, I jokingly described the pan-democratic camp as the "Money-giving Club", that is precisely the point, because even if there is to be the instant achievement of everything, they will not be the ones to pay anyway. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung has even expressed the view that an increase in the tax rate to 25% will solve all problems. They argue that small class teaching will not bring forth any adverse effects. I must say it can even be further asserted that small class teaching is definitely desirable. But the important point is that they have never considered where the money will come from. As a matter of fact, we have never claimed that there is no money for the implementation of this policy. We have only requested the Government to assess the additional resources required for implementing small class teaching. And according to the Government, additional resources are not required, only that the authorities would like to save some money for launching the "3+ 3+ 4" academic structure.

The education issues under the portfolio of the Secretary are not confined to those of secondary and primary education; he is in charge of the entire cause of education. The problem before him is: How is he going to allocate the funding he gets from taxpayers for the entire education sector? The population is shrinking due to a decline in the birth rate. Therefore, at the very beginning, kindergarten enrolment will drop. And, several years later, that is, four or five years later, Primary One intake will also decrease. Then, perhaps 10 years later, Secondary One intake may in turn drop. And, eventually, some 20 years later, the number of freshmen may also shrink. Therefore, it can be seen that the high birth rate a decade or two ago may have generated the great demand for university places today. In that case, should we now allocate more resources to university education and allocate less to primary education in view of the declining birth rate? I do, however, note a new argument that since the birth rate is low and the number of primary students will necessarily decrease in the coming few years, we should really grasp the opportunity and implement this straightforward policy, so that all teachers can stay behind and retain their jobs. This is an alternative way of looking at the situation.

I am of the view that the main objective of education provision in Hong Kong should be the enlightenment and nurturing of our children; the retention of jobs for teachers should be of secondary importance only. The main objective of education is naturally not the retention of jobs for teachers but the proper education of our children.

Mr Martin LEE, when referring to the need for training mentioned by Mrs Selina CHOW, argued that there was in fact no need for any training. He expressed the view that since the Secretary was able to assume duty without any prior training, teachers should not be required to receive any training. Mr Martin LEE must note that the need for "teacher training" is also mentioned in Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's amendment to Mrs Selina CHOW's amendment to the original motion of Ms Audrey EU. He also refers to "training for teachers" on small class teaching. The need for teacher training is also mentioned in Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's amendment. He has not dismissed training for teachers on small class teaching. Since Mr Martin LEE has responded in this way to Mrs Selina CHOW's proposal, I must point out to him that even Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong also talks about teacher training, although it is certainly not my intention to dwell on this point at any great lengths.

I must admit that I am no expert on education, so I am in no position to comment whether teachers handling large classes now must receive any training before switching to teaching small classes. I do not know too much about this occupation. The only thing I can say is that if there is a need, then training should be provided, but if there is no need, then no training should be conducted. I am not quite sure whether a teacher who has been teaching large classes of 35 students each should need to receive any training before switching to teaching a small class of just 25 students as proposed by Ms Audrey EU. But since many people hold that teacher training is important, it should be considered as long as it does not involve any extra expenditure, or if it can be ascertained that it can even reduce some spending. Anyway, the two amendments and the original motion are not really so different.

Mrs Selina CHOW thinks that small class teaching should first start in primary schools and then in secondary schools. Mr Andrew CHENG, however, criticized her for advocating gradual and orderly progress for everything. Should we first examine whether it is really possible to implement small class teaching at the same time for all 12 levels in the education system, that is, six levels in primary education and six others in secondary schools? Or,

should we disregard all factors and considerations and seek to achieve all in one single stride, implementing small class teaching for all the 12 levels in primary and secondary education? Or, should we do the opposite, starting from primary schools first? I note that Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's proposal on "starting with primary schools and junior secondary forms" is already a step closer to the principle of gradual and orderly progress, in contrast to the initial attempt to achieve everything in one single stride.

As a matter of fact, the differences among all of us are not so great. Therefore, it really does not matter so much whether it is one of the amendments or the original motion itself that is going to be passed. But which of them can be passed? I think all of them may well be passed. Even if the amendments are negated, the original motion will still be passed. The most important message is that all of us are concerned about the education of our children. One may also question whether spending more money will always bring good results. Many Members think that spending more money will necessarily yield better results. But we do have some reservations about this. Looking back at what the Hong Kong SAR Government has done over the past years in such policy areas as education and health care, we will see that money does not necessarily guarantee good results.

Since the business sector and the Liberal Party are so concerned about education, then why do they still support the Secretary, arguing that we should not spend the \$3 billion — or \$800 million (for Ms Audrey EU claims that it is just \$800 million, not \$3 billion)? Actually, we do not have any strong views as to how we should proceed. The most important thing is that the money should be spent appropriately. We do not agree with pro-democracy Members that once money is spent on implementing small class teaching, "the whole sky will brighten up", all problems will be solved, and students will then be able to become successful businessmen or competent lawyers when they grow up, making a mark in society.

Lastly, I must repeat the point that the differences among us are not great indeed. Thank you, Madam President.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Does any other Member wish to speak?

MR FRED LI (in Cantonese): Madam President, I have likewise listened attentively to Members' speeches. I did not intend to speak at the beginning, but having listened to some Members' remarks, I have to do so, because I can remember that Members belonging to the democratic camp have never said that small class teaching can solve all problems and "brighten up the whole sky". I do not know why Mr James TIEN has reached such a conclusion. I have even gone through the speech of Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong again, and I notice that he has never said anything like that. As for the question of resources, the democratic camp (at least the Democratic Party) has never said that it wants to get all things done in one single stride either. What we advocate is just a "by district" mode, or the gradual implementation of small class teaching in some districts where extra resources will not be required. I hope that Members can check clearly before giving any responses. I hope that Members can all base their discussions on facts. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung indeed said that tax could be increased for the purpose, but as revealed by the findings of our analysis, there will be no need for any tax increase or extra resources. Please do not try to scare people by saying something like this.

Nor have we advocated that small class teaching must be implemented immediately — tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. How long will it take to fully implement whole-day primary schooling? It cannot be implemented fully until 2007 or 2008, or even 2009. But what is the point of implementing whole-day primary schooling? The rationale is to do away with the rush and haste of half-day schooling, so that primary students can spend more time in school. The rationale behind small class teaching is exactly the same. It is hoped that students can thus spend more time with their teachers and receive more attention.

I am also a beneficiary of small class teaching. My daughter studies in Good Hope School, which practises small class teaching. There, a class is divided into two groups, so my daughter has a very close relationship with her teachers and classmates. Since there is just a small number of students in one group, the girls can do their projects and class work together. But when they have to give presentations, the two groups will merge into one class again. As a father, I would say that it is good to students to implement small class teaching in Secondary One and Secondary Two, dividing a class of 40 students into two groups. And, we must note that we have just been talking about one secondary school, not any primary school. If small class teaching can already work so

well in a secondary school, we can easily imagine its desirability in primary schools. Primary students need even more attention from teachers.

I believe that all Members in this Chamber, including those from the Liberal Party, will not oppose the idea of small class teaching. I have actually heard them said so. A moment ago, Mr Martin LEE talked about some Members' habit of saying "but". However, Mr James TIEN has already said that although they still say "but" this time around, they will nonetheless support Ms Audrey EU's original motion. I am thus very delighted, as we can at least be sure that all the discussions today will not end up in nothing at all. I think Ms Audrey EU's original motion will be passed. As for the amendments, I really cannot tell. Good luck to Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong anyway.

I wish to emphasize once again that the thrust of Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's amendment is the adoption of a "by district" mode for the implementation of small class teaching. In the case of Sha Tin, for example, why have so many education workers there provided so much information to us? Their purpose is to point out clearly that small class teaching can in fact be implemented expeditiously in some individual districts without incurring any extra resources. Why should the implementation of small class teaching in these districts still be turned down? I must advise the Secretary, half-jokingly, that if the Government still insists on disregarding the opinions of Members, we will have to reconsider our support for his "3+3+4" academic structure. *(Laughter)* I so submit.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Does any other Member wish to speak?

(No Member indicated a wish to speak)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Ms Audrey EU, you may now speak on the two amendments. You have up to five minutes to speak.

MS AUDREY EU (in Cantonese): Madam President, I have mentioned repeatedly that we, Members of the Article 45 Concern Group, will support these motions as far as possible, even if there are slight differences, and additions or deletions are required. So long as the cause can be achieved, we will give

our support. Given this position, we have originally planned to support the two amendments. However, I had a growing feeling that something had gone wrong after listening to the speeches delivered by colleagues from the Liberal Party, particularly the ones delivered by Mr Tommy CHEUNG and Mr Andrew LEUNG.

Madam President, I certainly appreciated it very much when I heard Mr James TIEN indicate in his speech that he would support my original motion. However, he added: "the Government is now saying that no additional resources will be required for implementing small class teaching." After listening to the speech delivered by Mr Tommy CHEUNG, I was given to know that he must be reading from some "outdated stuff", which was prepared by someone else.

I often criticized the Education and Manpower Bureau for misleading the people in terms of figures. As far as I know, at least Mr Tommy CHEUNG has been misled. It was obviously pointed out in his prepared speech that the \$3.1 billion represented the total of multiplying \$800,000 by 3 860 classes. And then he added, "We have conducted certain questionnaire surveys to examine if members of the public support the idea, because the additional \$3.1 billion amounts to the current expenditure on education plus one third of the amount." Then he asked, "Do you think the responsibility should be borne wholly by the Government or split equally between parents and the Government?"

Obviously, he has been misled by the figure of \$3.1 billion. Actually, it is not the case that an additional \$3.1 billion is added on top of our existing resources for education. Let me give a simple explanation so that Members will understand.

Let me assume that we have 2 000 classes at present (government funding is calculated on the basis of the number of classes). Should small class teaching be implemented progressively starting from Primary One next year, it will be fully implemented in all primary grades, from Primary One to Six, in six years' time. In view of the declining population, even if small class teaching is implemented, we will be talking about 1 500 classes only, still fewer than the 2 000 classes we have at present. In the case of large class teaching, considering that there will be more students in each class, the number of classes can even be reduced to 1 200. How did the Government do its calculations? By subtracting 1 200 classes from 1 500 classes, it came up with the result of

having 300 additional classes. By multiplying the number of these extra classes by \$800,000, it came up with \$3.1 billion.

The Government has thus impressed us that there are presently 2 000 primary classes and, with the addition of 300 extra classes, there will be 2 300 classes. This is actually not the case. It is because even if small class teaching is fully implemented in six years' time, there will still be 1 500 classes, fewer than the 2 000 classes we have at present. The resources required will actually be reduced, only that the number of classes is reduced to 1 500 instead of 1 200.

It is precisely for this reason that we have proposed that additional resources will not be required, only that less saving can be made. Owing to the falling population and the reduced number of classes, teacher training, in addition to small class teaching, can be conducted by merely adding a small sum of money to the spending thus saved.

After listening to the speech delivered by Mr Tommy CHEUNG, I was convinced that he had obtained the information from the Education and Manpower Bureau. Hence, he has been misled into believing that the amount of resources required at the moment is already enormous. Should the authorities be required to provide an additional \$3.1 billion, the current expenditure on education will need to be increased by one third. As such, he has found it even necessary to consult the parents to see if they support the idea.

I am pleased to learn from Mr CHEUNG that parents remain supportive. It has even been pointed out by Mrs Selina CHOW in her speech that 54% of the parents supported upgrading the quality of education, and their support has far outweighed their concern about increases in education expenditure. This explains why I have always had great faith in the people of Hong Kong.

However, I find it particularly hard to understand why Mrs Sophie LEUNG made such comments as "good medicine tastes bitter to the mouth", "playing the bad guy", and the remark that politicians should not be led by public opinions. Given that she has heard so many people expressing their approval, why would she still insist on being led by public opinions? Why can I not support the Liberal Party? It is because she further commented that small class teaching could only be implemented progressively upon the completion of a three-year experiment. The answer is actually crystal clear. Even Mr Jasper

TSANG has told us about it. According to Mr TSANG, as the environment has yet to be created, how can the experiment be conducted? We might as well give up the experiment and save the \$80 million originally required.

Secretary, I can tell Mr Jasper TSANG that the same applies to universal suffrage. It will naturally succeed provided that the desirable environment is in place, and no experiments will be required. As commented by Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, the present situation has provided the teachers with no scope to bring their abilities into play. However good they are, they can never achieve it without a small classes setting.

As the Liberal Party maintains that small class teaching can only be implemented progressively and slowly, which is a long-term ideal, I cannot support its amendment.

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER (in Cantonese): Madam President, I am not quite sure as to whether or not we are debating on the "3+ 3+ 4" academic structure or small class teaching today. In fact, my papers are all about small class teaching, but I heard two big shots from the Democratic Party say that if the Government does not undertake to implement small class teaching, they will not pass the proposal on the "3+ 3+ 4" academic structure. I regret very much to see this treating education as a political deal.

It is unfortunate that Dr Fernando CHEUNG is not here now. What he has said is wrong. It is because ever since I have assumed office, I have made it clear on many public occasions that implementing small class teaching is my dream and I have never changed this position. Today Ms Audrey EU and many other Members have all expressed agreement with the philosophy behind small class teaching. They agree with my view and that makes me feel very happy. The crux of the matter does not, however, lie in whether or not small class teaching should be implemented but in how small class teaching is put into practice in a strategic and effective manner. This will allow the advantages of small class teaching to be given full play and avoid any wastage of precious resources.

The Education Commission (EC) released the Education Blueprint for the 21st Century in 2000. We have acted according to the recommendations made by the EC and put various education reform initiatives into practice after

consulting the public and gaining their approval. In so doing we will put in enormous resources and manpower. I am glad to find Ms Audrey EU agree to the idea that the Government should promote education reform and realize the goal of quality education. It is because education reform should be made with the students as the primary target and with their needs and interests in mind. To date there are still many education initiatives in the reform blueprint which have not yet been fully implemented, for example, to further enhance the academic qualifications of kindergarten teachers and take forward the reform in senior secondary and higher education about which the public is currently being consulted. All these initiatives would mean substantial input of resources. Should we not act according to the agreed priorities and complete each one of the reforms pledged and avoid making hasty and wasteful efforts or adopting a piecemeal approach?

I understand that as the student population falls, front-line education workers are worried about their job prospects. So there is a suggestion to implement small class teaching in districts with under-enrolment in schools so that the schools can continue with their operation. I have said many times that I do not oppose small class teaching, not at all, nor do I doubt that given everything being equal, small class teaching is better than teaching a large class of students. As a matter of fact, any improvement measure in education would have its advantages, but the key problem at stake is when resources, finance and manpower-wise, are limited, how we should accord the priorities and put resources in those places where the quality of education can be most effectively raised.

Small class teaching is the most popular political issue as teachers, parents and students would naturally think that it would bring immediate benefits. That is why small class teaching is often boasted as the panacea leading to education excellence. But in practice the desired effects may not be obtained so easily. Despite the many studies made abroad in class size and the various kinds of experience gathered, there is no unanimous conclusion reached on the effectiveness of small class teaching. What matters most is teaching methodology.

Currently there are many grades in the primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong with a class size of 25 pupils or less. The number of pupils in an intensive remedial class may be 10 or less, but it does not follow that teaching efficacy is satisfactory. Many Members have pointed out earlier that teaching methodology employed by teachers and their professional skills will have a direct

bearing on the quality of education. Therefore, they suggested that the Government should provide this kind of training. If we really care about education, why should we not first train up teachers who are already teaching small classes, instead of creating more small classes so that we may be unable to cope with this great surge in training needs.

If Members are concerned primarily about the question of job security of teachers, I believe Members will know that the Education and Manpower Bureau has taken many measures to retain dedicated teachers who are committed to serving in the education sector and who are capable of meeting the challenges posed by education reform. Such measures included the voluntary retirement schemes and special supply teachers scheme launched last year. In addition, in response to views put forward by many teachers and school principals, we will propose to the Finance Committee shortly a voluntary retirement scheme for teachers aged 55 or above to help solve the problem of surplus teachers. Starting from the next school year, we will raise the teacher-class ratio in whole-day primary schools from 1.4 teachers for each class to 1.5 teachers. This will enable schools to practise the concept of "teaching by subject specialists". This will not only reduce the workload of the teachers and foster their professional capabilities, but also raise teaching effectiveness, thus killing three birds with one stone. We would reckon that there will be an increase of not less than 570 teaching positions for the 2005-06 school year and an increase of not less than 140 teaching positions in the following year.

A full-scale implementation of small class teaching would incur a huge recurrent expenditure. We must act with prudence to ensure that the merits of small class teaching are fully exploited while other effective education measures will not be adversely affected. This will mean the provision of a truly quality education to the pupils. With this in mind, we must ponder over the following questions:

- (a) What is in fact small class teaching?
- (b) What kind of teaching methodology will give full play to the merits of small class teaching?
- (c) What are the social resource implications for a wholesale implementation of small class teaching?

- (d) In view of the priorities in the utilization of resources, should the implementation of small class teaching be accorded priority? Are other more effective measures available? In other words, is there a need to sacrifice or delay the implementation of other measures to put small class teaching into practice as soon as possible?

First of all, what is a small class? Ms Audrey EU has said that there is no unanimous view on that in the education sector. In the United States, the size of a small class is usually less than 20 pupils. In Shanghai, it would mean 30 pupils. In Taiwan and Macao, a small class is 35 pupils. If we take the size of a small class in Taiwan and Macao as the standard, then we would already have implemented small class teaching in Hong Kong. As for Britain, researches have shown that the effect would be most marked when class size is reduced to 25 pupils. In Hong Kong, schools taking part in the small class teaching study conducted by the Education and Manpower Bureau have a class size between 20 to 25 pupils.

Scholars conversant with studies on the issue of classroom learning think that owing to the difference in the nature of various kinds of learning activities, class size can be adjusted accordingly. For example, a small class or a small group may be more suitable for the "learning through practice" kind of teaching, such as problem-solving in mathematics, and speaking skills and extensive writing in Chinese language and English language. But a normal class size will suit some subjects such as physical education, music, choirs, and so on. Owing to these considerations, the design of the study on small class teaching organized by the Education and Manpower Bureau is to carry out small class teaching in the core subjects of Chinese, English and Mathematics in the first and second years of primary school and the session hours taken up by these subjects are 60% of the total.

Can small class teaching achieve the desirable effect of teaching excellence? Theoretically, small class teaching would be more beneficial to student-oriented teaching and achieve diversity in teaching, attend to students' individual needs and ultimately make learning more effective. This is hopefully also the expectations of parents, teachers and students alike. But in practice, is there a direct relationship between class size and academic performance? What are the prerequisites for the implementation of small class teaching? What should be done to give full play to the advantages of small class teaching so that a desirable result can be achieved?

Many international studies show that in terms of effects on academic performance, the increase brought about by small class teaching is insignificant. This is far less than the achievements brought about by other education reform measures. The same amount of resources, if put in teacher training, would be 10 times more effective than the achievements brought about by small class teaching.

Conversely, a proficient teacher may teach as well in a large class. The Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Programme for International Student Assessment organized by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) show that in countries and places which perform well, such as Japan, South Korea and Hong Kong, most of the classes have a size of 35 pupils or more. In Hong Kong, our information shows that there is no obvious correlation between class size and student's academic performance. In schools with similar student background and class size, there could be vast differences in terms of academic performance.

Overseas studies show that the effects of small class teaching are most marked during the early stages of learning. When pupils return to normal classes at the senior grades of primary schools, the effects of small class teaching can still be maintained. That is why in overseas countries, plans to reduce the number of classes are usually undertaken in junior primary schools. As for secondary schools, their contents and activities in teaching are more complicated and so they should be given greater room in teaching and they should not be confined by the concept of class size. This is why the Government has been providing resources to secondary schools to undertake teaching in split classes and small groups as appropriate. Now the teacher-to-pupil ratio in secondary schools is 1:18. I think that secondary schools should be able to deploy resources with flexibility to arrange learning in split classes and small groups for the pupils learning various subjects.

The size of a kitchen does not necessarily affect the dishes made and the most important thing, as we all know, is the skills of the cook. Likewise, a small class is only a kind of teaching environment and a reduction in class size does not mean that the performance of the students will necessarily improve. Teachers must make adjustments to the contents and strategies of teaching before they can make full use of the environment offered by small class teaching, attend to the learning needs of their students and thereby raise teaching effectiveness. The "small class education" of Shanghai and the "spirit of small class teaching"

of Taiwan all lay emphasis on improving the curricula and teaching methodology. In Shanghai, teachers teaching small classes are required to design individualized learning objectives and assessment for their students. When devising lesson plans, consideration should be given to the capabilities and needs of each student. When assignments are marked, students should be given immediate feedback. Instructional strategies like collaborative learning, small group learning and peer discussions should be adopted. Suppose the same requirements are imposed on teachers in Hong Kong when small class teaching is implemented here, what will Members think be the reaction of teachers?

Suppose class size is reduced but the teachers do not change their teaching methodology, this will greatly affect the efficacy of small class teaching. In the 2003-04 school year, we visited some schools which implemented small class teaching by redeploying their own resources and conducted systematic classroom observations. We found that most of the so-called small classes were not different from the large classes in terms of the mode of teaching. There was a lack of interaction between teachers and pupils and there was a deficiency in teaching in groups, in terms of both quality and quantity. Therefore, I agree very much with Mrs Selina CHOW's point, that teachers should be equipped before small class teaching is implemented and it is in this way that the advantages of small class teaching can be given full play.

To prepare teachers for small class teaching, appropriate training should be provided. This would mean suitable planning and matching facilities, as well as time and resources. In the "3+ 3+ 4" reform we have recommended that Liberal Studies should be made a core subject for all students. Some principals and teachers say that even if there is training for four years, it would be difficult for them to adapt to the new teaching methodology. If four years are not sufficient for training up Liberal Studies teachers, why is it that Members think that small class teaching can be implemented right away when it may mean all subjects and all teachers? I do not know if this is good teaching material for Liberal Studies on what is meant by double standards.

Now 37 primary schools are made points of our study on small class teaching. A focus of the study is to provide professional support, promote thinking and collaboration among teachers, and encourage appropriate teaching methodology so that students can learn effectively. The study will be undertaken for a period of three years, the purpose of which is not to deny the

merits of small class teaching but to identify the essential matching conditions for small class teaching and to give full play to the merits of small class teaching. All these will hopefully achieve the aims of identifying talented students and providing a solid foundation for the less able, as well as teaching students according to their respective capabilities. Many people have often cited Shanghai's experience in small class teaching. Do Members know that Shanghai has passed a trial stage where at first only 12 schools took part — I repeat — only 12 primary schools took part in the trial scheme for small class teaching? But in Hong Kong, we have 37 primary schools taking part in the first year of our study on small class teaching.

I hope Members can have greater patience so that we can conduct a trial in small class teaching first with a scientific frame of mind and a pragmatic attitude. This will ensure its eventual success.

The question of whether or not small class teaching is cost-effective is an extremely controversial one, for that involves prioritization of public policies and opportunity costs. In California, a place which Members have mentioned, small class teaching has been implemented since 1996 in all kindergartens and up to grade three. The maximum class size was reduced from the original 32 drastically to under 20. The total expenditure was as much as US\$5 billion or about HK\$39 billion. Findings of studies show that there has not been any marked improvement in the academic performance of the students. But a lot of education expenses have been used to such an extent that other education improvement measures have been forced to be delayed or postponed.

Based on the population projections released in 2004, we reckon that for the 2010-11 school year, if small classes of 25 pupils are implemented in all primary schools territory-wide, it would mean 3 800 more classes will have to be offered as compared to classes at present with an average size of 34.5 pupils. When the average cost for one class is \$800,000, the additional expenditure would be about \$3.1 billion, or about one third of the recurrent expenditure on primary education at present. When compared to expenditure incurred by the current education measures, the difference is 10 times or even more than 20 times greater.

Some Members have queried the sum of \$800,000 per year for each class, but actually this sum is worked out according to the funding formula for primary

schools in the public sector. I do not know if Members would want us to reduce the funding for each class to \$480,000 or not.

Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong suggested using the resources saved from the continual decline of school-age population on small class teaching. He also said that the Government would not have to make any additional funding for that purpose. But Mr CHEUNG seemed to have forgotten that there is a steady growth of expenditure on education every year in such items as the salary increments of staff, the expenses of hiring supply teachers to relieve other teachers of their duties so that they can receive professional training, and so on. In addition, other education reform measures being implemented will need additional resources and the deployment of education resources should be seen as a whole and from a holistic perspective. Do we still not want to achieve the goal of having at least one native-speaking English teacher in each primary school? Do we still think that school development subsidies be paid out to the schools?

I am glad to note that when most Members talked about small class teaching, they were exploring the issue from the interests of the students and from the perspective of education. Over the past decade we have launched many improvement measures in our primary and secondary schools. These include providing additional staff to the schools such as teachers under the Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme, Curriculum Development Officers in primary schools, school librarians, and so on. We have provided school development subsidies to schools to create room for improvements in teaching and learning. Most of these measures are well-received in the education sector and they are regarded as effective. In addition, we have also begun to implement whole-day primary schooling on a full scale, promote continuing professional developments for school heads and teachers, provide school-based professional support and increase teacher-to-pupil ratio in primary schools to achieve the goal of "teaching by subject specialists", and so on. Under the existing system, primary and secondary schools have a great degree of flexibility and reasonable amounts of resources with which they may deploy according to the needs of students and the curricula to realize their goals of quality education through various strategies and measures. Therefore, a reduction of class size is not necessarily the best means or the only means to realize quality education or promote education reforms.

As for the proposal made by Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong to progressively implement small class teaching by district and by grade, I have met representatives from the Shatin District School Heads Association to hear their views. Put it simply, their idea is to use the number of primary one classes in Sha Tin for the 2004-05 school year as a basis and they demand that starting from the 2005-06 school year, small class teaching with 23 pupils in each class should be implemented for the Primary One classes in the district. My view is that their initial suggestion does not work, for suppose class size is arbitrarily set at 23 pupils, that is against the will of the parents and it will be difficult for us to explain the reasons for our doing so to parents and schools in other districts.

If small class teaching is to be progressively implemented by district, then which districts and schools should start first? Why should these districts and schools start first? I have been given to understand that many parents wish to increase the number of teachers in those popular schools so that these schools can teach in small classes or groups. So parents support small class teaching, but it should only be implemented in those popular schools. It seems that Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's proposal is to start small class teaching in schools and districts with under-enrolment, which is not the preference indicated by parents. On top of that, there is a continual over-supply of primary school places in all the districts in Hong Kong, then will it mean that small class teaching will be implemented in many districts by grade or even throughout Hong Kong by grade? Another point is that the idea to implement small class teaching by district seems to put the supply and demand of school places and the survival of the schools as the first and foremost consideration, which is against the student-oriented philosophy in education.

As a matter of principle, I do not think many people will oppose to the idea of small class teaching, but in terms of cost-effectiveness, even experts in education have yet to come up with a consensus. Many international studies have shown that the efficacy of small class teaching is far lower than other education measures. It is not the only or the best means to achieve quality education. As for reducing the pressure on teachers, this can be done through such other means as increasing the teacher-to-pupil ratio and reducing the number of lessons which teachers are required to take, and so on. Small class teaching would require teachers to change the instruction contents and strategies and that a more interactive approach be adopted. This may not reduce the pressure on the teachers but will in turn add to it.

I wish to reiterate that the Government does not oppose small class teaching and now 37 primary schools in Hong Kong have begun small class teaching. But we think this must be implemented progressively according to a strategy and in a student-based approach to ensure that the quality of teaching will reach the efficacy which is expected of small class teaching. Therefore, we must conduct pilot studies first, prepare teachers for instruction strategies pertinent to small class teaching, assess the matching facilities required and make the best use of our limited resources to help those students who are in most need of small class teaching. We should also compare the effectiveness of various education initiatives carefully and set the priorities. Given the fiscal deficits, we also have a responsibility all the more in gauging the affordability of the parents and taxpayers.

In view of the above considerations, I oppose the amendment proposed by Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong. Although I do not oppose the original motion proposed by Ms Audrey EU, as the amendment proposed by Mrs Selina CHOW can better state the requirements necessary for the implementation of small class teaching, I support the amendment proposed by Mrs Selina CHOW.

Madam President, I so submit.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now put the question to you and that is: That the amendment, moved by Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong to Mrs Selina CHOW's amendment, be passed. Will those in favour please raise their hands?

(Members raised their hands)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Those against please raise their hands.

(Members raised their hands)

Mrs Selina CHOW rose to claim a division.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mrs Selina CHOW has claimed a division. The division bell will ring for three minutes, after which the division will start.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Will Members please proceed to vote.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Will Members please check their votes. If there are no queries, voting shall now stop and the result will be displayed.

Functional Constituencies:

Dr Raymond HO, Dr LUI Ming-wah, Ms Margaret NG, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, Mr SIN Chung-kai, Mr Abraham SHEK, Ms LI Fung-ying, Dr Joseph LEE, Dr KWOK Ka-ki, Dr Fernando CHEUNG, Mr Patrick LAU and Miss TAM Heung-man voted for the amendment.

Mrs Sophie LEUNG, Dr Philip WONG, Mr Howard YOUNG, Ms Miriam LAU, Mr Jeffrey LAM, Mr Andrew LEUNG and Mr KWONG Chi-kin voted against the amendment.

Mr Timothy FOK and Mr CHIM Pui-chung abstained.

Geographical Constituencies:

Mr Albert HO, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan, Mr Martin LEE, Mr Fred LI, Mr James TO, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, Dr YEUNG Sum, Mr LAU Chin-shek, Ms Emily LAU, Mr Andrew CHENG, Mr Frederick FUNG, Ms Audrey EU, Mr LEE Wing-tat, Mr Alan LEONG, Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung, Mr Ronny TONG and Mr Albert CHENG voted for the amendment.

Mr James TIEN and Mrs Selina CHOW voted against the amendment.

Mr CHAN Kam-lam, Mr Jasper TSANG, Mr LAU Kong-wah, Mr TAM Yiu-chung and Mr LI Kwok-ying abstained.

THE PRESIDENT, Mrs Rita FAN, did not cast any vote.

THE PRESIDENT announced that among the Members returned by functional constituencies, 21 were present, 12 were in favour of the amendment, seven against it and two abstained; while among the Members returned by geographical constituencies through direct elections, 25 were present, 17 were in favour of the amendment, two against it and five abstained. Since the question was agreed by a majority of each of the two groups of Members present, she therefore declared that the amendment was carried.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now put the question to you and that is: That Mrs Selina CHOW's amendment, as amended by Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, to Ms Audrey EU's motion, be passed. Will those in favour please raise their hands?

(Members raised their hands)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Those against please raise their hands.

(Members raised their hands)

Mr James TIEN rose to claim a division.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr James TIEN has claimed a division. The division bell will ring for three minutes.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Will Members please proceed to vote.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Will Members please check their votes. If there are no queries, voting shall now stop and the result will be displayed.

Functional Constituencies:

Dr Raymond HO, Dr LUI Ming-wah, Ms Margaret NG, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, Mr SIN Chung-kai, Mr Timothy FOK, Mr Abraham SHEK, Ms LI

Fung-ying, Dr Joseph LEE, Dr KWOK Ka-ki, Dr Fernando CHEUNG, Mr Patrick LAU and Miss TAM Heung-man voted for the amendment.

Mr KWONG Chi-kin voted against the amendment.

Mrs Sophie LEUNG, Dr Philip WONG, Mr Howard YOUNG, Ms Miriam LAU, Mr Jeffrey LAM, Mr Andrew LEUNG and Mr CHIM Pui-chung abstained.

Geographical Constituencies:

Mr Albert HO, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan, Mr Martin LEE, Mr Fred LI, Mr James TO, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, Dr YEUNG Sum, Mr LAU Chin-shek, Ms Emily LAU, Mr Andrew CHENG, Mr Frederick FUNG, Ms Audrey EU, Mr LEE Wing-tat, Mr Alan LEONG, Mr Ronny TONG and Mr Albert CHENG voted for the amendment.

Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung voted against the amendment.

Mr James TIEN, Mrs Selina CHOW, Mr CHAN Kam-lam, Mr Jasper TSANG, Mr LAU Kong-wah, Mr TAM Yiu-chung and Mr LI Kwok-ying abstained.

THE PRESIDENT, Mrs Rita FAN, did not cast any vote.

THE PRESIDENT announced that among the Members returned by functional constituencies, 21 were present, 13 were in favour of the amendment, one against it and seven abstained; while among the Members returned by geographical constituencies through direct elections, 25 were present, 16 were in favour of the amendment, one against it and seven abstained. Since the question was agreed by a majority of each of the two groups of Members present, she therefore declared that the amendment was carried.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Ms Audrey EU, you may now reply and you have one minute 17 seconds.

MS AUDREY EU (in Cantonese): Madam President, according to the Secretary, the size of a kitchen does not necessarily have a bearing on the tastes of the dishes prepared therein. Ms Margaret NG, who is sitting beside me, is a master cook. She told me that the Secretary has obviously never cooked.

I do not understand why the Secretary repeatedly said that small class teaching was not the only and the best solution. Today, actually no one has ever said that small class teaching is the only and the best way to realize quality education. The Secretary has also mentioned double standards. Actually, it is the Secretary who is most fond of double standards. He has often told us that pilot studies must be conducted before implementing small class teaching and cost-effectiveness has to be measured too. I want to ask these questions: Has whole-day schooling been tested and its effectiveness quantified? Has the "3+ 3+ 4" academic structure been tested and quantified? Has Liberal Studies been tested and has its benefit gained by the students been quantified before it was implemented? Why must it take three years to measure the effectiveness of small class teaching?

Both Mr Jasper TSANG and Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung used to be teachers. They have raised the same point in their speeches, that it is simply impossible to conduct tests and measure the academic results of the students after three years. Madam President, given that such a large number of colleagues support small class teaching today, I hope the Secretary can really implement a policy supported by both the public and Members and expeditiously implement small class teaching starting next year. Thank you, Madam President.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now put the question to you and that is: That the motion moved by Ms Audrey EU, as amended by Mrs Selina CHOW and Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, be passed. Will those in favour please raise their hands?

(Members raised their hands)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Those against please raise their hands.

(No hands raised)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I think the question is agreed by a majority respectively of each of the two groups of Members, that is, those returned by functional constituencies and those returned by geographical constituencies through direct elections, who are present. I declare the motion as amended passed.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Second motion: Overall development of Chinese medicine practitioners.

OVERALL DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE MEDICINE PRACTITIONERS

MR LI KWOK-YING (in Cantonese): Madam President, I move that the motion as printed on the Agenda be passed. The motion topic today is on urging the Government to formulate a policy on developing Chinese medicine. With a long history in our country and having undergone an evolutionary process of several thousand years, Chinese medicine is now widely recognized in society for its curative effects. The international community also attaches huge importance to the development of Chinese medicine. On the basis of Chinese medicine, Japan and Korea, our close neighbours, have developed their own Kampo medicine and Korean Oriental Medicine. Kampo medicine of Japan has even been turned into a high value-added industry, the products of which are sold worldwide. Western countries also attach great importance to Chinese medicine. Germany took the lead in setting up a Chinese medicine hospital, and the insurance industries of the United States and Australia have one after the other included Chinese medicine in health insurance plans. At the end of 2003, the Australian Government hosted the first World Congress on Chinese Medicine, in a bid to highlight the importance of developing Chinese medicine in Australia. It was also announced that the provincial government of Victoria would invest AU\$ 500,000 in setting up a Centre for Complementary and Alternative Medicine to promote the development of Chinese medicine.

(THE PRESIDENT'S DEPUTY, MS MIRIAM LAU, took the Chair)

In contrast, our SAR Government has failed to keep abreast of the times in the long-term development of Chinese medicine. The Chief Executive once remarked in a policy address that Hong Kong had the conditions of becoming a "centre of traditional Chinese medicine". This subsequently led to a tide of Chinese medicine fervour, with all sorts of proposals on establishing a Chinese medicine port and a Chinese medicine research centre. And, the SAR Government also established a regulatory system for Chinese medicine as the first step. However, after several years of development, the three-point Chinese medicine policy mentioned earlier by the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food in the Legislative Council is still restricted to regulation and a market-led approach, marked by a diminishing role of the Government. As pointed out by the Secretary, the existing policy on developing Chinese medicine consists of the following three points:

- (i) drawing up and regulating the standard of Chinese medicine practice and Chinese medicines by the Chinese Medicine Council;
- (ii) the mainstay of Chinese medicine service remaining in the private sector rather than the public sector; and
- (iii) development of evidence-based Chinese medicine practice through clinical research conducted in Chinese medicine clinics set up at hospitals under the Hospital Authority (HA).

Madam Deputy, the Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB) thinks that it is definitely much too optimistic of the Government to ever think that this three-point policy alone is already sufficient for the development of Chinese medicine. First, the Chinese Medicine Council is merely a regulatory body, meaning that it is not the right organization to recommend strategies for the development of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong. Besides, the existing approach of relying on the private sector as the provider of Chinese medicine services will limit such services to out-patient consultation. Since the private sector is obviously not yet prepared to provide in-patient Chinese medicine services, the further development of Chinese medicine services will be hindered. Third, the policy of positioning public Chinese medicine clinics as the bases of developing evidence-based Chinese medicine practice through clinical research obviously ignores the public demand for public Chinese medicine services and the objective of providing training bases to local Chinese medicine practitioners (CMPs).

What is more, society at large is probably unaware that many existing government policies have actually been impeding the development of Chinese medicine. I have recently received a letter from a university, in which it is pointed out that a certain organization set up by the Government, the Research Grants Council, does not accept funding applications related to Chinese medicine research. This kind of unequal treatment is further evidence of how the Government has ignored the development of Chinese medicine. Even research is subject to so many restrictions, so we cannot possibly expect the formulation of any policy to foster the development of Chinese medicine.

In addition, I wish to discuss the recognition of sick leave certificates issued by CMPs, a problem that has dragged on for many years. I received a complaint some time ago. A certain hospital employee sought consultation from the Nethersole Community Health Service Centre affiliated to the Alice Ho Miu Ling Nethersole Hospital. A CMP there issued a sick leave certificate to him, but the hospital he worked for refused to recognize the sick leave certificate. Even public organizations refuse to recognize the sick leave certificates issued by CMPs, so how can we expect private organizations and insurance companies to do so? How can people be induced to consult CMPs when there is such a hindrance?

Madam Deputy, we may think that Chinese medicine treatment is just limited to herbs and acupuncture. But little do we realize that there are now a wide range of Chinese medicine therapeutic techniques, and they are already widely adopted in the Mainland. Some examples are aquapuncture, thread-embedding, the use of anaesthetic in the Chinese bone-setting technique of manual reduction and the adoption of laser-puncture in place of "filiform needles" as a means of acupoint stimulation. However, owing to the restrictions imposed on local CMPs in the use of therapeutic equipment and drugs, they are forbidden to employ such techniques, thus impeding the further development of Chinese medicine therapeutic techniques.

The abovementioned techniques aside, CMPs are currently forbidden to refer patients for any diagnostic tests under the existing ordinance, and they are also barred from using certain diagnostic equipment, such as Scanning Laser Ophthalmoscope. As a result, patients are forced to seek other tests and diagnoses, thus causing delay in treatment. In fact, our existing university programmes on Chinese medicine already cover familiarization with modern diagnostic techniques. For this reason, as long as the Government can establish

an appropriate mechanism to assess CMPs relevant knowledge, it will be unnecessary to prohibit all CMPs to make use of modern diagnostic techniques and equipment.

Madam Deputy, the DAB hopes that the Government can establish a committee on developing Chinese medicine to formulate strategies for future development and review all existing systems, so as to remove all obstacles and upgrade the professional status of CMPs. The most important point is that it must explore various ways to enhance the role of Chinese medicine in the overall health care planning. Currently, Chinese medicine services in Hong Kong are available only in out-patient clinics. No efforts have ever been made to develop in-patient services, thus greatly restricting the curative effects of Chinese medicine. I can cite a very simple example to illustrate my point. During the SARS outbreak last year, Western medical practitioners were faced with many difficulties, and many people in fact recommended the joint consultations of Western medical practitioners and CMPs. Although it was not until the late stage of the outbreak that the HA finally invited two mainland Chinese medicine experts to Hong Kong, such joint consultations did manage to save quite a number of patients. Besides, Chinese medicine therapeutic treatment also yielded very satisfactory results in dealing with the problem of Avascular Necrosis suffered by ex-SARS patients. From another perspective, from the perspective of the death rate, in the Mainland, where the health care system combines Western medical treatment and Chinese medicine treatment, the death rate of SARS patients was maintained at just 7% to 8%, which was significantly lower than the 17% in Hong Kong. All these facts show that besides being able to achieve the desired curative effects in the treatment of acute diseases, Chinese medicine is also highly effective in enhancing immunity and treating some specific diseases. Therefore, while the incorporation of joint consultations and Chinese medicine in-patient services into our health care system aside, the inclusion of Chinese medicine in our strategies for epidemic prevention should be regarded as essential to the long-term development of Chinese medicine.

The Secretary said sometime ago that a pilot scheme would be launched in public hospitals, whereby CMPs could take part in joint consultations on cancer and pains. The DAB supports giving the "green light" to the participation of CMPs in joint consultations. But we hope that such consultations will not be reduced to a mere embellishment, with CMPs being asked to take part only when Western medical practitioners think that their treatment cannot yield satisfactory

results. Instead, the interests of patients should come first, and they should be permitted to decide on their own whether they should request participation of CMPs in joint consultations. We even hope that Chinese medicine in-patient departments can be established in public hospitals to serve as bases of treatment services, clinical research and manpower training.

Madam Deputy, manpower training is a topic that cannot be excluded from any discussions on the development of Chinese medicine. Currently, the constraints faced by the development of Chinese medicine have severely affected the young CMPs trained up by academic institutions. Some years ago, due to the Chinese medicine craze, a number of universities organized full-time Chinese medicine programmes to train up a new generation of CMPs. Many brilliant students were attracted, and only very few of them were selected. I believe that all students wishing to become CMPs will want to serve the public. But after studying hard for five years, they have to face the harsh reality of being unable to apply what they have learnt or even unemployment. The "rose garden" that they dreamt of years ago has turned out to be something like the ruins of Yuen Ming Yuan.

According to government statistics, the number of Chinese medicine graduates from local universities stands at 76. About 70% of these graduates are engaged in Chinese medicine-related occupations. It appears that their employment situation is not bad at all. But some of those who are said to be engaged in Chinese medicine-related occupations are just working as salespersons of proprietary Chinese medicine or consultants in "slimming" companies. Only about 40 of them have managed to find clinical posts, and 13 are even engaged in occupations totally unrelated to Chinese medicine. We must not forget that we are just talking about the first and second batches of Chinese medicine graduates. Even these graduates are faced with employment difficulties, so we can imagine that the situation will be worse when there are more graduates in the future.

Madam Deputy, the difficulties faced by the new generation of CMPs are entirely attributable to the policy blunder of the Government. The Secretary has told this Council that the mainstay of Chinese medicine services will remain in the private sector rather than the public sector. But fresh Chinese medicine graduates are all CMPs with no experience, no capitals and no social networks. Chinese medicine clinics and herb shops in the community will not bother to take on any inexperienced CMPs for pure commercial reasons. Therefore, despite

all their hard training, these CMPs are forced to take up non-clinical occupations or even leave the field of Chinese medicine entirely. This has not only broken the hearts of enthusiastic Chinese medicine students but has also wasted the million of dollars spent on training each of them.

Some say that under the existing health care system, Western medicine is the mainstream and Chinese medicine is only secondary, so there is a great difference between the developments of these two schools of medicine. Professional training alone can already illustrate the differences. Students of Western medicine can receive clinical training in teaching hospitals; after graduation, they may be employed to work as interns in public hospitals, and thereafter, they may also be employed by the HA and continue to receive specialist training. The situation is markedly different in the case of Chinese medicine. There are no in-patient Chinese medicine departments, and students are forced to take up internship in mainland hospitals. After graduation, they will not have any opportunities of continuing studies, and neither can they find any jobs that can enable them to accumulate experience. As a result, CMPs are often regarded as "second-rate" doctors.

Madam Deputy, I hope the Government can realize that the approach of relying on the private sector as the mainstay of Chinese medicine service will not be workable as a means of manpower training. For this reason, government involvement is essential. It was announced in the 2001 policy address that 18 Chinese medicine out-patient clinics would be set up before the end of 2005. Chinese medicine students all hope that the establishment of these clinics can give them opportunities to gain clinical experience. But the plan has come to a halt after the establishment of just three clinics. The establishment of the rest of the 15 clinics is nowhere in sight. What is more, the three public Chinese medicine clinics emphasize only the development of evidence-based medicine practice, in total contrast to Western medical out-patient clinics, which also play the role of training medical professionals. This shows that the Government's efforts of promoting the professional training of CMPs are really extremely weak. The DAB hopes that the Government can review the positioning of public Chinese medicine out-patient clinics and introduce more elements of training for CMPs. We also hope that following the establishment of Chinese medicine in-patient services, the Government can introduce a training mechanism similar to that of the Western medical practice, so that fresh Chinese medicine graduates can acquire more experience and further professional knowledge.

Moreover, of the 5 000 registered CMPs in Hong Kong now, nearly 1 800 are already aged 60 or above. However, there is no mechanism in Hong Kong which can enable these experienced CMPs to pass on their clinical experience to the new generation of CMPs. Ten years later, when these old CMPs stop practising, and if the new generation of CMPs cannot catch up in experience and knowledge, the quality of CMPs in Hong Kong will certainly decline drastically, and society as whole will surely suffer.

In marked contrast, there is an established system for the development of Chinese medicine. Currently, apart from receiving training in traditional Chinese medicine, students of Chinese medicine in the Mainland also have to acquire knowledge of modern medical sciences. In other words, they have to take subjects that combine both Western medicine and Chinese medicine, and after graduation, they may work as junior CMPs in hospitals and receive on-the-job training. CMPs with in-patient experience may even continue to read for a degree in clinical specialty. To make sure that the knowledge and experience of old CMPs can be passed on to their young counterparts, a system is also put in place to regulate the relevant efforts. And, training programmes tailor-made for "top" CMPs are also available to upgrade their clinical skills more expeditiously.

In respect of hardware, the mainland authorities have been incorporating Chinese medicine into the health care planning of different places over the past 10 years, requiring local authorities to allocate reasonable resources to Chinese medicine services. At the local level, county governments are required to set up a Chinese medicine hospital for every 400 000 people. In the Mainland, there are now Chinese medicine general hospitals, Chinese medicine specialist hospitals and even hospitals offering combined Western and Chinese medical services, with a view to providing people with a wider range of treatment services and better health care and medical planning. The SAR Government must learn from the experience of the Mainland, so as to promote the development of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong.

Madam Deputy, Chinese medicine is not only part of the finest heritage of our country but also a key development area of medical knowledge in the international community. Hong Kong is already lagging behind the Mainland and even the whole world in this respect. If the SAR Government still clings to the anachronism of "emphasizing Western medicine and neglecting Chinese medicine", and if it still relies on the private sector as the mainstay of

development, thinking that this can already foster the development of Chinese medicine, then our advantages in developing into an international centre of Chinese medicine will only be wasted by the policy-making government officials.

With these remarks, Madam Deputy, I move the motion.

Mr LI Kwok-ying moved the following motion: (Translation)

"That, whereas the professional status of Chinese medicine practitioners (CMPs) has been established for quite a long time, the development of CMPs has been handicapped because the Government does not have a long-term development strategy for Chinese medicine, is not adequately involved in this regard, and fails to establish avenues for CMPs to receive professional training, this Council urges the Government to formulate a long-term policy on the development of CMPs, which should include:

- (a) expediting the expansion of the scope of services provided by CMPs in the public medical system, implementing the outstanding plan to set up 15 public Chinese medicine out-patient clinics, establishing a mechanism for public hospitals whereby their in-patients can seek joint consultation and treatment by CMPs, setting up a Chinese medicine in-patient department in public hospitals, and studying the establishment of a Chinese medicine hospital;
- (b) establishing a committee on the development of Chinese medicine, and formulating strategies and policies to facilitate the development of Chinese medicine, such as giving statutory status to the sick leave certificates issued by CMPs, and reviewing the medical equipment that CMPs are allowed to use; and
- (c) formulating a mechanism and avenues for CMPs to receive professional training."

DEPUTY PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the motion moved by Mr LI Kwok-ying be passed.

DEPUTY PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, Mr Andrew CHENG and Dr KWOK Ka-ki will move amendments to this motion respectively. Their amendments have been printed on the Agenda. The motion and the three amendments will now be debated together in a joint debate.

I now call upon Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung to speak first, to be followed by Mr Andrew CHENG and Dr KWOK Ka-ki; but no amendments are to be moved at this stage.

MR LEUNG YIU-CHUNG (in Cantonese): Madam Deputy, I can still remember that on 14 July 1999, the Chinese Medicine Ordinance was passed in the Legislative Council. At that time, we held a positive attitude and accepted the regulatory framework for Chinese medicine proposed by the Government. We also recognized the Government's development of Chinese medicine, hoping that the status of Chinese medicine could be elevated; that when the Government and the related committees enforced the Ordinance, they could, in the spirit of promoting the development of Chinese medicine, assist practising Chinese medicine practitioners (CMPs) to have a smooth transition. However, unfortunately, during the past few years, we can see that the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong (CMC) has performed really in a most disappointing and regrettable manner in exercising the authority conferred on it by the Ordinance as well as formulating and enforcing the policies.

According to the Ordinance, before 3 January 2000, CMPs practising in Hong Kong may apply for the status of listed CMPs. They can become registered CMPs if they have been practising for a continuous period of at least 15 years or have been practising for a continuous period of at least 10 years in Hong Kong; or they have acquired an academic qualification that is acceptable to the Chinese Medicine Practitioners Board (Practitioners Board) under the Council. Besides, CMPs who have practised Chinese medicine in Hong Kong for at least 10 years continuously or who have practised for less than 10 years but have acquired an academic qualification approved by the Practitioners Board can become listed CMPs after assessment. CMPs with less than 10 years of practising experience must pass a licensing examination. In fact, all of these provisions have already been stipulated in the Ordinance, so no one has any objection because these are governed by the law. However, the critical issue is: How these provisions are enforced, how the 10 or 15 years of experience are

defined, or even what constitute qualifications acceptable to the Practitioners Board. These are the critical issues.

In fact, we can see that, by August 2002, the legislative process was completed. And at that time, of the 9 000 practising CMPs in Hong Kong, only 2 384 were able to become registered CMPs, and another 5 500 persons as listed CMPs. Naturally, this gave rise to many problems. After this categorization exercise among those 5 500 listed CMPs, eventually 3 019 are still unable to become registered CMPs and retain the status as listed CMPs. Where do the problems lie? In fact, I have mentioned them already. Is it because they cannot reach the adequate medical standard, so they are not allowed to practise? The answer is in the negative. The main reason lies in how their qualifications and years of experience are defined.

In fact, I think Madam Deputy would also understand one fact, that is, in the past, we had never explained to this group of CMPs that there would be the chance of registration in future, and that, no matter they were practising under the employment of someone or otherwise, they must keep all the documentary evidence, or they would not be able to be registered. Never ever had anyone said this to them in the past. As the Government has set the required periods as long as 10 years and 15 years, how can these people retrieve old records which could prove that they had worked for someone 15 years ago, or who the employer was or who the mentor was? How can they retrieve all these documents? This is a most difficult task. Moreover, there is this question about acceptable qualifications. We all know that, among the CMPs, most of them have acquired their practice skills through apprenticeship or family succession. How can their training become recognized qualifications? Therefore, obviously, if the CMC does not enforce this provision with the same lenient attitude as the one adopted in the legislative process of the law, it will naturally lead to the failure of many people to become registered CMPs. However, really unfortunately and regrettably, the CMC has not adopted a lenient attitude in handling this issue. Instead, it has strictly enforced the provisions of the so-called 10-year or 15-year requirement, and even the so-called acceptable qualification requirement, resulting in the exclusion of so many people from becoming registered CMPs. Such being the case, it has created a major laughing stock in our discussion on the development of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong. On the one hand, the authorities say that they would promote their development, but on the other, they have acted in a way that restricts them, not allowing them to join the profession. How can this be

described as development? While certain members of the CMC are also members of the Chinese medicine sector, why do they not understand the traditional development of the Chinese medicine sector, and impose such difficult conditions on others by requiring them to produce evidence so difficult to retrieve? This is virtually putting others into an extremely difficult position.

Fine. At that time, this group of CMPs said that they had no alternative but to comply with the legislation as the Government had already formulated the policies. So they try to cope with the policies of the Government. In that case, they have to take the examination. If they wish to upgrade their status from listed CMPs to registered CMPs, they have to take the examination. However, the rules of the examination stipulated by the CMC to our amazement, are also utterly unacceptable indeed. It is stipulated that the oral examination should cover 10 subjects, the written one 20. However, there are no uniform standards. So be there 10 subjects or 20, one must take them all. Besides, as many CMPs have acquired their practice skills through apprenticeship or family succession, the scope of knowledge which they have acquired is usually rather narrow. But in the examination, candidates are required to have acquired comprehensive knowledge in all the medical subjects. If you are a CMP, you must also know Western medicine. If you are a bone-setter, you must also have relevant knowledge about pregnant women. Are these requirements much too stringent and difficult for them? Fine, these CMPs say, fine, let us comply with the requirements and pursue the relevant studies as promulgated by the Government. But is there an authorized institute which can offer courses for them? In fact, there is no such an authorized institute. Are there any prescribed lists of readings or reference books which they can study? We all understand that one of the difficulties that exist among CMPs is that, there are different schools or branches of theories of Chinese medicine. So when they analyse the history of a patient or make a diagnosis of the conditions of a patient, they could have very different viewpoints. However, if there is no uniform books to which they can refer, how can they take the examination? In the face of the problem arising from the existence of different schools or branches of theories of Chinese medicine, how should it be solved? The CMC simply could not care less. Anyway, they must take the Chinese medicine examination. Consequently, over 3 000 persons failed the examination during the past two years. Therefore, in this aspect, I think the CMC has actually ignored the tradition of their own sector, and it has also overlooked problems that exist in the sector, failing to take care of the needs of the CMPs. Therefore, we made repeated requests to both the Department of

Health and the CMC for the implementation of a measure, namely, to arrange for the listed CMPs to receive training before taking the examination. This is an approach of mutual accommodation. However, they ignored this request completely. They just required them to take the examination before any training was provided. As a result, many of them failed the examination.

Therefore, from this point, we can see that actually the CMC should be held responsible to a very great extent. At that time, no appeal mechanism was provided in the legislation at all. If the CMC said that a certain CMP had failed to qualify, then he was not qualified. If the CMP concerned felt aggrieved, he might take the case to Court. However, are there many people rich enough to take their cases to Court? It is really not easy at all. Of course, some of them might be financially well off, and might have the means to take their cases to Court. But really not too many people can do that. As a result, many people are excluded.

The Complaints Division of the Secretariat of the Legislative Council has received many such complaints. Many colleagues have jointly handled such cases. I have also repeatedly invited members of the CMC to come here for a meeting with us in a bid to identify a solution. Very unfortunately, members of the CMC have been completely unwilling to come here for a discussion with us in order to solve the problem. Many Honourable colleagues have made every effort to persuade them, but to no avail. With regard to their closed attitude, as evidenced by their unwillingness to listen to the opinions of other people as well as those in the sector, we feel extremely dissatisfied.

Therefore, in the amendment proposed by me today, one of the points is to make the CMC more open, more transparent and more impartial, thereby enabling it to reflect the opinions in the sector. Therefore, what I am proposing is that we hope people of this sector can elect their own representatives to serve in the CMC. As a matter of fact, we can see that such arrangements are already made in the regulatory framework of Western medical practitioners. The corresponding Council of Western medicine practitioners consists of representatives elected by themselves. As such, I hope that, among the 18 members of the CMC, five can be elected by the CMPs themselves. In future, if the development in this aspect proceeds well, the several CMP representatives serving on other boards and committees such as the Practitioners Board, the

Registration Committee and the Examination Committee can also be elected by the sector.

In fact, when the Ordinance was enacted in 1999, Dr LEONG Che-hung already suggested that, despite the initial arrangements of appointing members to the CMC as dictated by the circumstances, measures must be taken to enable CMPs to elect their representatives to the CMC after the system has developed for a certain period of time, so as to strengthen its governance of the sector. As such, I hope the Secretary can listen to this opinion of mine: That upon the expiry of the current term of the CMC, he can really explore in a realistic manner whether it is possible to allow the sector to elect their own representatives to serve on the CMC as well as the various boards and committees by way of election, thereby enabling the adequate reflection and implementation of suggestions in the sector.

Finally, what I want to say is, since we have been discussing the development of the sector today, I hope Members will not worry about my suggestion of making the examination more relaxed in order to enable more listed CMPs to become registered CMPs. We all understand that they have a certain requirement, that is, after becoming registered CMPs, they have to pursue continuing studies during the following three years. Therefore, even if we really allow listed CMPs to become registered CMPs in a relaxed manner, they still have to upgrade their professional conduct and knowledge continuously through pursuing continued studies. Therefore, we need not worry, for even if we really have acted in a relaxed manner to allow listed CMPs to become registered CMPs, the quality of our medical care will remain unaffected. I believe that we do not need to worry too much about this because, as a matter of fact, this further education mechanism has already ensured their quality. I hope the development in this aspect can proceed smoothly, and that the authorities can assist the Chinese medicine industry.

DEPUTY PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, your time is up.

MR ANDREW CHENG (in Cantonese): Madam Deputy, the motion topic today, the overall development of Chinese medicine, is certainly a vast topic. On behalf of the Democratic Party, I shall focus on two areas today. The first

is the development of public Chinese medicine out-patient services. The second is the statutory status of CMPs.

In contrast to the Mainland and Taiwan, the development of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong is still in its infancy. If the Government can incorporate Chinese medicine into the public health care system more expeditiously and on a greater scale, the development of Chinese medicine will be greatly facilitated.

Most people think that the elderly, especially those suffering from chronic diseases, generally prefer Chinese medicine. However, as revealed by the findings of a survey conducted by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service in 1997, the opposite is the case: the percentage of elderly persons and low-income earners who consult CMPs is lower than those of other groups of people. Financial considerations may probably be one of the main reasons. Under the public health care system of Hong Kong, out-patient services are offered at very low fees, with further remission available to the poor. As a result, even if elderly persons and low-income earners prefer Chinese medicine, they will have no choice and they are bound to consult Western medical practitioners at out-patient clinics. In this way, the development of Chinese medicine services is hindered and the rights of patients are not given due care.

Consequently, we have been asking the Government to provide Chinese medicine out-patient services over the years. However, much to our disappointment, the progress has been extremely slow so far. In 2001, the Government pledged that as many as 18 Chinese medicine out-patient clinics would be set up in various places in Hong Kong before the end of 2005. Unfortunately, this undertaking has not been honoured. As at today, the Government is still unable to release any timetable for establishing these 18 out-patient clinics.

Since there are only three such clinics in Hong Kong, it is impossible to provide public Chinese medicine out-patient services in every district. Patients thus find it hard to travel long distances to consult CMPs, and the difficulties encountered by poor elderly persons with mobility problems are especially great. The Government should consider the possibility of making use of the private-sector Chinese medicine out-patient network and offer subsidy to elderly Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) recipients for seeking consultation outside the public health care system.

Actually, even if the Government now starts to establish public Chinese medicine out-patient services, they cannot possibly compare with Western medical out-patient clinics in terms of consultation fees, because government involvement and subsidy will still be very low. Currently, in the three public Chinese medicine out-patient clinics, a patient has to pay \$120 for a visit, and that covers the consultation fee and two doses of Chinese medicine. If a patient wants more doses, he will have to pay \$30 per extra dose. The curative effects of Chinese medicine usually take a longer time to be felt, and many people seeking consultation from CMPs are chronic patients, so the fee charged is really beyond the means of those from the lower strata of society.

The fee level of public Chinese medicine out-patient clinics is far higher than that of general out-patient clinics, or even specialist out-patient clinics. General out-patient clinics charge a fee of \$45 per consultation, and in specialist out-patient clinics, a per-visit fee of \$60 is charged along with a fee of \$10 for each prescribed drug. In all cases, the fees are lower than those charged by Chinese medicine out-patient clinics. In terms of subsidy levels, the cost per consultation in general out-patient clinics is \$215, and the rate of subsidy is thus 79%. For specialist out-patient clinics, the cost per consultation is \$650, and the rate of subsidy is thus as high as 90%. In the case of Chinese medicine out-patient clinics, however, the cost per consultation is just \$240, so the rate of subsidy is in fact lower than 50%. Actually, the cost of \$240 already covers research and information technology systems. If the cost of research is not factored into it, the rate of subsidy will even be lower.

The Government claims that the high consultation fee charged by Chinese medicine out-patient clinics is intended to avoid competition with private CMPs. But this is indeed a lame excuse. The number of patients seeking consultation at public Chinese medicine out-patient clinics will not increase indefinitely, and whatever the levels of fee may be, the number of patients will just remain largely constant. It is estimated that under the Government's plan, even when all the 18 clinics are opened, they will just take up a mere 5% of the total number of patients seeking consultation from CMPs in Hong Kong. A fee reduction will not increase the market share of public health care services.

Besides, Madam Deputy, the fee remission system of Chinese medicine out-patient clinics is also different from that of general out-patient clinics. In Chinese medicine out-patient clinics, fee exemption is available to CSSA recipients only. But in general out-patient clinics and specialist out-patient

clinics, while fee exemption is available to CSSA recipients, there is a separate fee remission system for low-income earners and elderly persons who are poor and suffering from chronic diseases.

It can thus be seen that there are differences between public Chinese medicine out-patient clinics and Western medical out-patient clinics in terms of fee levels, rates of subsidy and fee remission systems. The Government should really conduct a fresh review. Should such differences continue? Are the current arrangements an indication that the Government is just reluctant to invest resources in Chinese medicine services and to incorporate these services into the public health care system? The new Secretary must offer the public and the legislature detailed answers to these two questions indeed.

Lastly, I wish to discuss the professional status of CMPs. Although the registration system for CMPs has been in force for several years, the professional status of CMPs has not yet been established as it should be. And, CMPs are still unable to enjoy the rights they deserve. This is one of the reasons for people's refusal to seek consultation from CMPs.

Under the Code of Practice for Registered Chinese Medicine Practitioner in Hong Kong, a registered CMP may make referrals if necessary, and the registered medical professionals to whom a patient is referred should be able to provide the required diagnosis or treatment. However, public specialist out-patient clinics and hospitals will not accept any referrals by CMPs. On the other hand, under the professional code of practice for registered medical practitioners, a medical practitioner may refer a patient to another medical practitioner for diagnostic or therapeutic services, but in so doing, he must be confident that the services provided on referral will meet accepted scientific standards. Practically, this means that it will be very difficult for a medical practitioner to refer a patient to a CMP. In this way, CMPs are excluded from the Western medical system, thus greatly hindering the development of Chinese medicine. We do however appreciate that mutual referrals will necessarily involve different professional bodies, so discussions must be conducted on many detailed arrangements necessary for practical operation. It is therefore hoped that at this stage, the Government can liaise with all the relevant organizations and departments and bring them together for prompt negotiations on CMPs' power of making referrals.

Madam Deputy, another reason for people's reluctance to seek consultation from CMPs is that CMPs do not have the authority to issue such important documents as sick leave certificates, insurance claim forms and receipts. We understand that the Government is going to put a legislative amendment before the Legislative Council next year, giving recognition to the sick leave certificates issued by CMPs. We support this legislative amendment. But we also think that the insurance claim forms and receipts issued by CMPs should be given similar recognition. Besides, all the relevant documentary proof issued by CMPs should also be recognized for the purpose of establishing employees' entitlement to the sick leave allowance and medical plans under our labour legislation. Some employers may understandably be worried about the indiscriminate issue of documents. But since a registration system for CMPs is already in force and there is a statutory body to regulate various acts of professional misconduct like the indiscriminate issue of documents, such a worry should no longer be a reason for refusal to recognize the documents issued by CMPs. This reason is simply not valid. A reasonable approach should be to request the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong to issue a set of clear guidelines and take concrete precautions to prevent any indiscriminate issue of documents.

Madam Deputy, in brief, the Democratic Party thinks that in the interest of promoting the overall development of Chinese medicine, we must recognize the importance of reviewing the fees and remission system of Chinese medicine out-patient services, so that patients with low income can be granted subsidy to choose Chinese medicine services. We must also recognize the importance of reviewing the power of CMPs to refer patients and of reducing the factors preventing patients from consulting CMPs. I therefore put forward the amendment on behalf of the Democratic Party.

Thank you, Madam Deputy.

DR KWOK KA-KI (in Cantonese): Madam Deputy, first of all, I would like to welcome Mr LI Kwok-ying's motion. As pointed out in his motion, the professional status of CMPs has been established for quite a long time. I believe the Government, the relevant Bureau and even the public will all like to see the rapid development of Chinese medicine, which plays a very important role in the health care system of Hong Kong.

Personally, I think that the sound development of Chinese medicine hinges on two conditions. First, there must be a long-term development policy; second, the training of talents must be improved. A moment ago, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung expressed the hope that, in view of the unique circumstances of CMPs and bone-setters who acquire their practice skills through apprenticeship or family succession, a more suitable examination system and syllabus should be devised for them, and that the listed CMPs concerned should be arranged to receive training before taking the examination, in order to enable them to become registered CMPs smoothly. I am afraid I cannot support this amendment.

The reason is that, as we can see, huge efforts have been made over a very long period of time in the Mainland to bring CMPs and their qualifications under proper regulation. In June 1998, the National People's Congress adopted the Law on Medical Practitioners, which then took effect on 1 May 1999. Under this law, there are various requirements on the regulation of CMPs in respect of disease treatment and prevention and health care. Following the adoption of this law, a person shall not practise Chinese medicine unless he or she is properly registered under the Law on Medical Practitioners. CMPs are also subject to a disciplinary system and must fulfil the requirements of continuing medical education, so as to ensure their professional standard. In August 1998, another law was adopted, whereby the State Drug Administration was established directly under the State Council.

The experience of the Mainland shows us that to upgrade the services and standards of CMPs, appropriate qualifications requirements and training are absolutely essential. For this reason, I do not agree to any drastic changes to the existing system of qualifications assessment. Basically, the establishment of a committee on the development of Chinese medicine, or a committee on the registration of CMPs as proposed in the original motion, already provides a mechanism whereby all matters relating to qualifications assessment, including the formulation of qualifications benchmarks, examinations and training, can be decided by members of the same profession. This is already a form of professional self-regulation. Consequently, I do support such a direction.

A long-term strategy for Chinese medicine is essential. I naturally understand that the Government is facing a huge fiscal deficit. As the saying goes, "even the cleverest housewife cannot cook a meal without any rice". Large numbers of public services, such as those delivered by the Hospital

Authority (HA) and the Department of Health, are all facing an acute shortage of resources. It will hence be very difficult for the Government to shoulder the additional burden of seeing to the overall development of Chinese medicine. But I do think that there is still a way out, as long as the Government can give up its preconception that it must take the lead in everything. What I mean is that it is not always necessary for the Government to finance the development of Chinese medicine with public money. Quite the contrary, I think that there is now an opportunity which puts the Government in a very good position to foster the accelerated development of Chinese medicine by just drawing up a regime for upgrading the qualifications and training of CMPs.

When it comes to the employment of young Chinese medicine graduates, I think the Government must really do something. Madam Deputy, as revealed by the analysis we have just looked at, of all the 80 Chinese medicine graduates this year, only four have managed to secure training posts in the Chinese medicine clinics recognized by the HA. This is a very low ratio. I have talked with many young Chinese medicine graduates and CMPs, and they have all pointed out that there are immense difficulties. They all hope that the Government can think out some solutions and play a leading role in this respect.

I cannot possibly ask the Government to provide training to all young Chinese medicine graduates, and even if I did ask, it would be very difficult for the Government to do so. But we must still bear in mind that all these graduates are precisely the very important people who are supposed to assist us in developing Chinese medicine and upgrading its professional standards in the future. Many of them were filled with enthusiasm before entering university, and they also did very well at university, both in examinations and their learning. It is a pity that only four out of the 80 graduates can receive some kind of satisfactory training. This is really rather disappointing.

Madam Deputy, I do not think that the Government should become the sole provider of Chinese medicine services, but I also think that it is worth the while for it to invest more resources in the training of young Chinese medicine graduates. First, it may draw up some job matching schemes in conjunction with well-established Chinese medicine clinics or experienced CMPs. It may, for example, identify some Chinese medicine clinics with a sound tradition of training and make arrangements for young Chinese medicine graduates to work there under job matching schemes. The second thing that the Government may do again involves the provision of assistance; it may, for example, offer them

financial assistance. For other individual trades and industries, the Government has also put in place some schemes that offer such assistance. Under the policy on youth employment, for example, assistance is available to young people in the first or second year of their employment. This kind of assistance will definitely be very timely help to young CMPs.

Madam Deputy, if we still do not start planning for the long-term development of Chinese medicine today, I really cannot see how there can be any substantial progress of the profession in the future. What worries me more is that many other countries — Europe and also Japan — are catching up fast in the development of Chinese medicine. It simply does not stand to reason that with the Motherland right at its back and also the strong support for development of health care, Hong Kong should still lag so far behind other countries, should still fail to do well in the development of Chinese medicine.

I hope that the Government can draw up a more concrete scheme which can be implemented quickly to provide training to young CMPs. We can ill-afford any further delay because there are several dozen Chinese medicine graduates every year and they all need to receive solid and recognized training. I hope that the Government can establish a mechanism to assist them in their practical training.

Madam Deputy, another vector of development is to adopt joint consultation of both CMPs and Western medical practitioners in some particular wards and for some specific diseases. I understand that circumstances permitting, as when this is deemed to be suitable for a particular disease, the HA already allows the adoption of this type of consultation. But I still hope that this practice can be entrenched, and that the scope can be extended to include every hospital. That way, CMPs and Western medical practitioners can come together in consultations and conduct joint research.

As the saying goes, "it takes 10 years to grow a tree but a hundred years to nurture a person". I am convinced that in order to enable the Chinese medicine profession in Hong Kong to achieve substantial and genuine progress, the Government must make some efforts. It is never too late to start. Madam Deputy, I hope that the Government can make some serious efforts. I further hope that it can support my amendment. Thank you, Madam Deputy.

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH, WELFARE AND FOOD (in Cantonese): Madam Deputy, I would like to thank you and Honourable Members for allowing me to speak at this stage of the meeting. I intended to speak, but now I find that many Honourable Members have left the Chamber to have their meals. The Government does have its position and I wanted to talk about the position of the Government, so that Members can be more specific and constructive in making comments and giving opinions. However, as I note the present situation, I hope

MR JAMES TIEN (in Cantonese): Madam Deputy, I ask that the Council be counted.

DEPUTY PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): We should first count the Council, but even with a cursory glance, we can see that a quorum is lacking. Therefore, I now direct the Clerk to ring the bell to summon Members.

(During the ringing of the bell, Members were seen entering and exiting the Chamber)

DEPUTY PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Will Members please stop exiting the Chamber. It will be impossible to do the head count while Members are entering and exiting the Chamber. Will Members please return to their seats in the Chamber, so that we can do a head count? I shall also direct Secretariat staff to request Members to return to the Chamber, or else it will be impossible to count the Council and ascertain if a quorum is present.

(During the ringing of the bell, the President resumed the Chair)

(After the ringing of the bell, a number of Members returned to the Chamber)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): A quorum is now present. Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food, you may continue.

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH, WELFARE AND FOOD (in Cantonese): Madam President, Honourable Members, first of all, I would like to say a few words on why I have to speak at this stage. I can recall that there was an oral question on Chinese medicine practitioners (CMPs) in the Legislative Council three weeks ago. I reflected after the meeting on the opinions put forward by Members, and also discussed them with my colleagues. Therefore, I would like to inform Members here explicitly of the present stand of the Government and the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau, together with what we think about the way forward. I also hope that, when Members deliver your speeches later, they can specifically tell me their views and comments, thereby making our work easier.

Chinese medicine has a long history insofar as its application and development are concerned. Although many Hong Kong people have the habit of consulting CMPs and taking Chinese medicine, no systematic mechanism has ever been devised to regulate CMPs and Chinese medicine in Hong Kong. So a clear direction of development has been lacking. With the formulation of a long-term development strategy for Chinese medicine in 1999, together with the establishment of a legal framework for the development of Chinese medicine, the Chinese medicine industry in Hong Kong has started to develop since. So far, it has developed for a short span of five years only.

As regards the development strategy, we aim mainly at enabling the people and patients to enjoy a high-quality professional Chinese medicine service, continuously improving the standard of CMPs, and promoting the development of clinical research and practice for Chinese medicine.

In order to promote the professional development of any sector, several factors are indispensable, including the setting of a certain professional standard, the availability of quality and continuous education and training, the provision of opportunity for professional development, and enhanced public acceptance of and confidence in the profession.

With regard to the professional development of Chinese medicine, our strategy is to recognize the status of CMPs through a statutory regulatory regime that includes registration, examination and continuing education. During the past few years, the key work that the Government has done includes the enactment of the Chinese Medicine Ordinance, the establishment of the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong, the implementation of the licensing system of

Chinese medicine traders and the registration system of proprietary Chinese medicine, the operation of Chinese medicine out-patient clinics on a trial basis, granting financial subsidies to universities for organizing full-day bachelor degree programmes in Chinese medicine and elevating the level of technology and facilities for research and development on Chinese medicine. We also plan to introduce legislative amendments to recognize the status of CMPs and Chinese medicine under the relevant labour legislation.

In the long run, we hope to enhance the status of Hong Kong's Chinese medicine profession in the region on this firm foundation, so as to provide the sector with a platform conducive to its sustainable and prosperous development. All these serve to illustrate the efforts and commitment of the Government in promoting the development of Chinese medicine.

In view of the suggestions made by Members, I would like to make the following responses.

The first issue is about Chinese medicine out-patient clinics. We think that, insofar as the current development of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong is concerned, it is the most appropriate approach for us to combine Chinese medicine service, in the form of out-patient clinic, with the public medical care system.

In his policy objectives in 2001, the Chief Executive stated that the Government aimed at setting up 18 Chinese medicine clinics. We shall strive to achieve this objective fully. During the past year, we have set up three Chinese medicine clinics in Tung Wah Hospital, Yan Chai Hospital and Alice Ho Miu Ling Nethersole Hospital, all of which stress both evidence-based practice and out-patient service. Together with the Hospital Authority (HA), we shall jointly review the operational experience and efficiency of these three clinics and complete the review as soon as possible.

I think it is necessary to expedite the development of Chinese medicine out-patient clinics. We shall consider following the conventional mode of collaborating with non-governmental organizations or charitable organizations. In formulating the development details, we shall consider the experience of such organizations in providing Chinese medicine services and adopt a mode of operation whereby experienced CMPs will lead local Chinese medicine graduates. This will provide training opportunities to the latter. These clinics

will continue to help establish the practice benchmarks. They will also work with the benefit of the HA's information and technology network, thereby systematizing Chinese medicine clinical knowledge.

Tentatively, we plan to set up two to three additional Chinese medicine clinics in 2005. At present, we are in the negotiation and planning stages. Meanwhile, we shall make arrangements for the planning of other clinics.

With regard to the fees, subsidy and fee remission system of the Chinese medicine clinics, we have the following viewpoints. Currently, elderly persons drawing CSSA can apply for fee waiver or remissions of varied rates when they use services provided by the three Chinese medicine clinics under the HA. In opening additional Chinese medicine out-patient clinics, we would make the best use of the existing free consultation services or waiver system, with a view to suitably looking after the needs of financially straitened elderly persons on the premise of effectively utilizing public funds.

As regards the mechanism for in-patient joint consultation by CMP and setting up a Chinese medicine in-patient department, we hold the following views. Mr LI Kwok-ying proposes in his original motion the establishment of a mechanism for in-patients to seek joint consultation with CMP, the setting up of a Chinese medicine in-patient department and a Chinese medicine hospital. CMPs are capable of achieving excellent therapeutic results which have been widely recognized by the people, especially in treating certain diseases and physical conditions such as chronic illnesses, the conditions of patients who have undergone chemotherapy and certain pains. Very often, patients would seek treatment from CMPs even when Western medical practitioners advise them against doing so or tell them it is not necessary. And it has been proved that their treatments do produce some substantial results. Therefore, there is some scope of development for joint consultation, and to a certain extent, the integration of the two streams of medicine.

Currently our ideas are to designate specific hospitals as pilot hospitals where treatments are primarily provided by Western medical practitioners, to be supplemented by consultation of CMPs for cases where best treatment results can be obtained by fully utilizing the potential benefits from both Western medicine and Chinese medicine. We call this a counselling mode. This mode of co-operation can also bring about significant enhancement to the standard of clinical research of Chinese medicine.

With regard to setting up a Chinese medicine hospital, our view is that CMPs mainly provide consultation in out-patient clinics, and this is where their greatest strength lies. For patients who are seriously ill, or in-patients of a hospital, it is by and large the responsibility of Western medical practitioners, while the CMPs can play a supplementary role. Our long-term goal is to establish a treatment mode in which CMPs and Western medical practitioners can work together in a complementary manner. Setting up a purely Chinese medicine hospital does not work well with the current development of Chinese medicine and Western medicine, nor could it provide the most comprehensive treatment to patients. Chinese medicine hospitals in mainland China are operated in a way totally different from that of Hong Kong, as most of them are self-financing; therefore, we shall not take setting up a Chinese medicine hospital into our consideration at the current stage.

As for setting up a committee on the development of Chinese medicine, as proposed by Mr LI Kwok-ying in his motion, I would also like to talk about our views on this. At present, the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong (CMC), which is established under the Chinese Medicine Ordinance, is responsible for ensuring the standard of professional practice and professional conduct in the profession of CMPs. When necessary, the CMC will also advise the Government on matters relating to the strategic and policy development of Chinese medicine. Since its establishment in 1999, the CMC has been actively promoting the development of Chinese medicine, and its achievement has been evident to all. For this reason, I think it is unnecessary to form another committee for the development of Chinese medicine, lest it would give rise to superfluity. However, in the strategic blueprint drawn up by my Bureau for the overall development of medical and health care as well as health care financing, the development of Chinese medicine will certainly be included. There will also be a motion debate on this subject in the Legislative Council next week, at which time I shall give a more detailed account of the related issues.

Members have expressed concern over the composition of the CMC and its boards and committees, as well as their transparency and the representativeness of their members. The Chinese Medicine Ordinance has already stipulated the compositions of the CMC, the Chinese Medicine Practitioners Board (the Practitioners Board), the Chinese Medicines Board and other committees. According to the Ordinance, members of the CMC include CMPs, persons from the trade of Chinese medicine, persons from educational or scientific research institutions in Hong Kong and lay persons. Insofar as CMPs are concerned, current members include CMPs who have acquired their practice

skills through family succession or apprenticeship, persons with a degree or above qualification in Chinese medicine, local Chinese medicine groups, members of trade unions, CMPs in private practice or under employment, and CMPs who specialize in general practice, acupuncture or bone setting. They come from different backgrounds so that they could reflect views representing industry workers of different training backgrounds and different practice models. Many of these members are themselves chairmen or executive committee members of various Chinese medicine bodies. There are rules that prohibit members of the CMC from engaging in publicity activities related to their scope of business in their capacity as members of the CMC. I undertake that in next September, when the term of office of the current CMC members expires, we shall conduct a review of its composition, and by then, due consideration will be given as to whether it is necessary to incorporate some CMP members into the CMC through election.

Another fact is also worth mentioning, that is, there are currently nearly 80 organizations established by CMPs or traders in Chinese medicine. Since this large number of organizations may represent interests of different nature, we cannot use such organizations as the basis for appointing representatives to the CMC. However, I understand the concerns expressed by Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, and I undertake to review the composition and membership of the CMC.

As regards the level of transparency of the CMC, in formulating and implementing regulatory measures on Chinese medicine, it has consulted the industry through many different channels and methods. Specific arrangements for related measures are introduced to the industry through channels like consultation meetings, briefing sessions, and the newsletters of the Chinese Medicines Board, and so on, which aim at helping the industry to understand and adapt to such arrangements.

Mr LI Kwok-ying raised the subject of sick leave certificates issued by CMPs and the medical equipment they can use. Let me talk about the work of the CMC in this area.

The Practitioners Board under the CMC has formulated a set of guidelines to govern matters relating to sick leave certificates issued by CMPs. The guidelines include common illnesses often treated by local CMPs, so that CMPs may make reference to them when they have to recommend the suitable number

of days of sick leave. The guidelines was already distributed to all local registered CMPs in the beginning of the year.

Mr Andrew CHENG talked about recognizing the statutory status of documents issued by CMPs such as insurance claim forms and receipts, and so on. I know that the Economic Development and Labour Bureau is about to submit a bill to the Legislative Council, in which it will propose to recognize the status of Chinese medicine in the context of related labour legislation. The proposed legislative amendments include admission of receipts issued by registered CMPs as supporting documents for the purpose of applying for medical fee reimbursement under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance and the Pneumoconiosis (Compensation) Ordinance. As regards insurance claim forms, currently members of the public can take out medical policies available in the market which provides for reimbursement of medical fees for consulting CMPs. Since medical policies are taken out on a voluntary basis, under the free market principle, the Government is of the view that the coverage of medical insurance of this nature is best determined by the insured and the insurance company in accordance with their specific needs. The Insurance Companies Ordinance does not allow the Government to intervene in any terms of an insurance policy, nor does it specify which supporting documents the claimant needs to submit when he files a claim.

Insofar as the use of medical equipment is concerned, the CMPs, being an important part of the medical and health care sector, should be professionally responsible to patients. The Code of Practice for Registered Chinese Medicine Practitioners in Hong Kong promulgated by the Practitioners Board stipulates that CMPs should adopt treatment methods on the basis of traditional Chinese medicine and they should master relevant knowledge and skills in order to perform their professional duties. Insofar as the use of diagnostic techniques and medical equipment is concerned, CMPs have to act in compliance with the provisions of relevant legislation on medical treatment.

Every now and then, the Practitioners Board holds discussions on the scope of professional practice of CMPs, including such issues as the use of medical equipment and arrangements for medical referral. Recently, the Practitioners Board has been conducting discussion on whether CMPs should be allowed to refer patients to radiographer for taking of X-ray photos in order to follow up a patient's case, and the Practitioners Board is about to consult the opinions of relevant health care bodies. If necessary, the Practitioners Board

will also consult the Chinese medicine profession with a view to promoting the development of Chinese medicine while ensuring that the health of the public can be adequately protected.

With regard to the mechanism and avenues of professional training of listed CMPs or CMPs, I would like to explain the situation as follows. We think that the continuing education of CMPs is very important. CMPs should also keep abreast of the times, so as to ensure that their professional standard can catch up with the development of Chinese medicine and the needs of patients.

As for bachelor degree programmes in Chinese medicine offered by local tertiary institutions, the Practitioners Board requires that the relevant tertiary institutions must provide under graduates with at least 30 weeks of clinical practice. At present, the three universities that offer full-time bachelor degree programmes in Chinese medicine have already made arrangements for the undergraduates to undertake clinical practice in renowned Chinese medicine universities as well as Chinese medicine hospitals attached to the universities.

As of today, altogether 76 persons have graduated in three batches from full-time bachelor degree programmes in Chinese medicine. As indicated by certain information, most of them are now working in posts related to Chinese medicine. Among these people, 50 of them are now working in Chinese medicine clinics or are engaged in research projects of Chinese medicine.

The three Chinese medicine clinics operated by the HA have also employed four graduates as CMPs. As for other Chinese medicine clinics that will be set up in the future, they will also provide further training opportunities. Dr KWOK raised the subject of in-service training. I think this is even more direct and more effective than continuing professional education (that is linked with the qualification to practise) in upgrading the professional standard of CMPs. The Practitioners Board has already formulated a framework of continuing professional education for CMPs, so as to ensure that CMPs can acquire the latest professional knowledge and skills in Chinese medicine through training courses, seminars and self-learning programmes. A CMP has to score at least 60 points in three years in order to renew his practising certificate. The mechanism of continuing professional education will be officially implemented in early 2005.

With regard to the opinions put forward by Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung on the issue of examining listed CMPs, I think the key lies in ensuring proper protection

of people using the service of CMPs. It is just a transitional measure to introduce the category of listed CMPs which include CMPs who had already started practice before the Chinese Medicine Ordinance came into effect. The measure aims at enabling these CMPs to continue with their practice. But in the long run, in order to cope with the professional development of the profession, we hope all listed CMPs can eventually become registered CMPs by way of passing the examination. We also think that it is necessary to have an examination which is of the right standard.

In setting the syllabus, the Practitioners Board has conducted detailed studies and discussions, in order to ensure that registered CMPs should have acquired the fundamental knowledge and clinical skills of the profession of Chinese medicine. The registration examination shall test the all-rounded professional knowledge of a CMP, and the scope should cover all the fundamental knowledge of all the different subjects of Chinese medicine, as well as the clinical subjects. Besides, in order to cope with the requirements of modern Chinese medicine, registered CMPs should also possess some basic knowledge in modern medical science, an understanding of the health care system and the regulatory regime of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong as well as the authority and responsibility of a CMP. So the syllabus of the examination should also cover the above scope as well. The Practitioners Board has also made reference to the requirements and contents of similar professional examinations in both Hong Kong and the Mainland, so as to ensure that the standards of the Licensing Examination for CMPs are consistent with those of other medical professions.

In order to assist listed CMPs to better understand the essential points that should be noted when they take the Licensing Examination for CMPs, the Department of Health has held numerous briefing sessions on the Licensing Examination for CMPs.

In conclusion, we would like to stress that the Government attaches great significance to the long-term and healthy development of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong. I would like to reiterate several main points.

First, we shall expeditiously proceed to implement the programme of establishing regional Chinese medicine clinics, and to provide assistance to people with financial difficulties, so as to ensure that even these people can make use of the services provided by such out-patient clinics.

Second, such out-patient clinics will provide some of the local graduates with additional professional training opportunities.

Third, we shall conduct joint consultation sessions between CMPs and Western medical practitioners in the form of a pilot scheme in selected hospitals.

Finally, I shall review the composition and the membership of the CMC should the need arise, so that all kinds of opinions from the industry can be adequately reflected.

Earlier I have elaborated to Members the viewpoints of this Bureau on the development of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong. Thank you in advance for providing me with possibly many additional suggestions in future.

Thank you, Madam President.

MS LI FUNG-YING (in Cantonese): Madam President, the history of Chinese medicine goes back to the very ancient times. Establishing the statutory status of CMPs marks only the first step in enabling Chinese medicine to meet the requirements of modern-day society, and there is still a very long way to go before genuine modernization can be achieved. In the debate today, we may focus our discussions on several aspects, namely, the impact sustained by Chinese medicine in the course of modernization, the adjustments that must be made to the health care and legal systems after establishing the statutory status of CMPs and the future development of the Chinese medicine profession on the path to modernization.

I agree with the Secretary that the development of the profession is determined by several significant factors. But the Secretary seems to have omitted one important factor. And, what I am going to talk about is precisely this factor — the registration of CMPs and the impact they sustain. The Government has failed to honour the undertaking it made when the last Legislative Council passed the Chinese Medicine Ordinance, the undertaking that maximum latitude instead of stringency will be applied in drawing up transitional arrangements on assisting serving listed CMPs in registering as licensed CMPs. As a result, some 5 000 listed CMPs have been barred from applying for direct registration, thus leading to huge outcries from the sector and causing hundreds of people to complain to the Legislative Council.

I agree that it is necessary to ensure and consider public health and safety. But I also think that we must at the same time fully consider how we can assist serving listed CMPs in registration. But this is precisely the problem that has been frustrating many listed CMPs. A fine example is the syllabus of the licensing examination, which is divided into 20 units, comprising the health care system of Hong Kong, fundamentals of modern medical science, ancient Chinese medicine literature and even surgery, internal medicine, gynaecology, paediatrics, orthopedics and acupuncture. We can easily imagine the difficulties faced by CMPs who have acquired their professional knowledge through practical experience when they are required to express what they know in writing. This is not to speak of requiring bone-setters to tackle the many examination topics I have just mentioned. Is this a fair arrangement to them?

Therefore, regarding the failure of listed CMPs to register, although the Government claims that it has no intention of setting a deadline for the practice of listed CMPs at this stage, I must nonetheless point out that the problem is still very much like a knife hanging over listed CMPs. They just do not know when the Government will make a decision. They also fear that once a decision is made, they will have to close down their business.

I do not agree that the Government should try to let time tackle the problem relating to the registration of CMPs. During the time of the last Legislative Council, when the Government replied to Members' questions on the training of CMPs, it pointed out, "The terms of reference of the Chinese Medicine Council under the Chinese Medicine Ordinance does not cover the provision of training to Listed Chinese Medicine Practitioners. In regard to professional medical training, the Government does not offer any direct subsidy under its current policy. But it has always encouraged the profession to upgrade its own value, assistance has been provided as far as practicable." There may not be anything so wrong with this attitude of the Government if we are just talking about a well-established profession with a long history of operation. However, when it comes to a profession that has yet to be brought onto the proper track of development, such a *laissez-faire* and passive attitude of the Government will only cause hindrance and even run counter to the very objective of bringing Chinese medicine under regulation.

The professional training of CMPs is not the only problem. Various impediments to the development of the Chinese medicine profession are also found in our laws. The Secretary has told us that many Secretaries are considering legislative amendments, but I simply do not know for how much

longer the matter will drag on. Up to this very moment, the sick leave certificates issued by CMPs are still not recognized under our labour legislation. Consequently, employees are forced to consult Western medical practitioners when they fall sick, because the sick leave certificates issued by CMPs are not recognized. The Government claims on the one hand that it wants to promote the development of Chinese medicine, but on the other, it continues to tolerate the existence of labour laws that discriminate against CMPs. Is it not running counter to its avowed objective?

Madam President, the modernization of traditional Chinese medicine is a highly complex social engineering project. Its smooth completion will involve an extensive range of matters, and the role of the Government is always crucial. In the modernization of Chinese medicine, the Government must assume a number of responsibilities, including the establishment of a committee on developing Chinese medicine, the formulation of an integrated strategy and policy on the development of Chinese medicine, the setting up of out-patient Chinese medicine clinics at public health care institutions, the establishment of Chinese medicine in-patient and health care services and the provision of internship training for Chinese medicine students. Besides, recognition must be given to the sick leave certificates issued by CMPs, and measures must be formulated to require the insurance industry to accept the sick leave certificates and claim forms issued by CMPs. All these adjustment measures are essential to the regulation of the Chinese medicine profession. Empty talks about giving statutory status to CMPs will never work.

I so submit. Thank you, Madam President.

DR RAYMOND HO (in Cantonese): Madam President, first of all, I wish to declare that I am the Honorary Consultant of the Hong Kong Acupuncture and Moxibustion Association, and that several members of my family are Western medical practitioners.

Chinese medicine has a history of several thousand years. Its curative effects were evidenced during the SARS outbreak and should thus be given recognition. Recently, the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Hong Kong has successfully extracted two substances from Chinese herbal medicine that can control diabetes. In response to all this, one cannot help asking, "Why is Chinese medicine unable to gain wide acceptance in Hong Kong despite its evident curative effects?" I am of the view that from both medical and

economic perspectives, there is in fact huge room for the development of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong.

From the medical perspective, since Chinese medicine relies mainly on natural herbs and therapeutic treatment, it in general causes fewer side-effects than Western medicine. Besides, the allergy of some people to certain Western drugs also reminds us of Chinese medicine. The development of Chinese medicine by the Government will provide the people of Hong Kong with an alternative form of treatment.

Since Chinese medicine is of medical value, its development will naturally bring about considerable economic benefits. Given the tight finances of the Government, the funding for public hospitals is all the time decreasing. The establishment of Chinese medicine departments in public hospitals and clinics, I believe, will be able to generate considerable revenue for hospitals. Besides, the commercialization of successful Chinese medicine products will also foster the development of the local pharmaceutical industry.

Despite all the advantages, the development of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong is still lagging far behind that in the Mainland and even other countries. The reason for this is probably the failure of Chinese medicine to gain any wide popularity in Hong Kong so far. Many people in Hong Kong prefer Western medicine because they think that Chinese medicine is not supported by adequate scientific research and clinical experience. People in Hong Kong generally have greater confidence in Western medicine because of its long-established training mechanism, professional examinations and systems of registration and supervision. In recent years the Government has invested resources in establishing a registration system for CMPs and some CMPs have by now been properly registered. However, the sick leave certificates issued by CMPs are still not given any statutory status, and a satisfactory monitoring system has yet to be established. As a result, Chinese medicine treatment is often regarded as the second choice by people. I am of the view that the development of Chinese medicine must start with training and supervision.

Currently, largely owing to small demand, not many academic institutions in Hong Kong offer training in Chinese medicine, and the number of places is by no means large. Generally speaking, students wishing to pursue studies in medicine will choose Western medicine because they think that while Western

medicine qualifications are recognized worldwide, those of Chinese medicine are not. In view of this, while the Government seeks to establish systematic training programmes in the process of developing Chinese medicine, it must also promote Chinese medicine internationally, so as to upgrade its status in the world. As for the supervisory system, it should also cover the academic and professional qualifications of CMPs and their professional conduct.

Hong Kong is a city that sees the blending of the East and the West. In terms of medicine development, we therefore have an advantage over Western countries. I mean, while we have knowledge in Western medicine, we also have the support of Chinese medicine. I think we should let these two types of medicine complement each other in our medicine development. The Government has already expended resources on establishing a registration system for CMPs, but it is a pity that subsequent progress has been very slow, failing to achieve the desired result. For this reason, I hope that the Government can set up a committee on developing Chinese medicine and formulate strategies and policies to facilitate the development of Chinese medicine. That way, this fine heritage of our country can be promoted.

Madam President, I so submit.

MR JEFFREY LAM (in Cantonese): Madam President, Chinese medicine has a long history and it is a manifestation of the traditional wisdom of the Chinese people. The application and efficacy of Chinese medicines are also gaining recognition and popularity in the international arena. Hong Kong experienced the attack of SARS last year. In the Mainland, a therapy that combined the application of both Chinese and Western medicines was adopted in the treatment of SARS cases, curing a considerable number of SARS patients. The Mainland has seen a lower death rate and a lower incident rate of SARS than those of Hong Kong. A team of CMPs had been invited to visit the Hong Kong hospitals where they attended some joint consultation sessions for the treatment of SARS patients. These CMPs also prescribed medications for patients suffering from the sequelae of avascular necrosis associated with SARS, which also shaved considerable efficacy. This illustrates the advantage of the approach of combining the applications of both Chinese and Western medicines in administration of treatment.

Yet, the development of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong has been less than satisfactory. The Chief Executive proclaimed in his first policy address that he placed great emphasis on the application of Chinese medicine, but since then the progress in promoting Chinese medicine has remained unsatisfactory. Take the out-patient service of public hospitals as an example. In 2001, the authorities undertook to set up 18 Chinese medicine clinics by the end of 2005, but so far only three such clinics have become operational, which is a far cry from meeting the people's demand for public Chinese medicine out-patient clinics. Several days ago, Secretary Dr York CHOW undertook to set up Chinese medicine clinics in all the 18 districts. We certainly hope that this time he would not let us down again.

Regarding the second point raised by Mr Andrew CHENG, that is, subsidizing elderly recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) in using the services of non-public Chinese medicine out-patient clinics, the authorities should consider it very carefully, as it will incur huge expenditure. As a matter of fact, elderly CSSA recipients are now already able to enjoy waiver of fees for both consultation and medicine when they visit any of the three Chinese medicine clinics operated by the Hospital Authority. In fact, if the plan of providing Chinese medicine out-patient clinics in public hospitals can be fully implemented expeditiously, more patients in need of such a service will naturally be benefited as a result.

To expedite the process of integrating Chinese medicine and Western medicine, the Liberal Party agrees that the authorities should gradually introduce a mechanism in public hospitals whereby in-patients can seek joint consultation and treatment by CMPs, and introduce Chinese medicine in-patient service. With such measures in place, not only will patients be provided with more appropriate treatment which will enable them to stand a high chance of full rehabilitation, but the clinical training experience of locally trained CMPs will also be substantially enhanced. Subsequently, they would not have to go all the way back to the Mainland frequently in order to receive clinical training.

As a matter of fact, the development of Chinese medicine has been sluggish, so much so that we have not been able to fully tap the talents we have and we may be blamed for wasting our resources. It has become imperative for the authorities to speed up the pace of development. To date, of the first two batches of 76 graduates of Chinese medicine, only about 50 of them are engaged

in jobs related to Chinese medicine. If the lack of job opportunities has made the remaining 20-odd graduates unable to secure jobs in the Chinese medicine sector, we are not just wasting the talents of these people, who have spent five years on the training, but we have also wasted some \$20 million of training subsidies provided by the Government. We believe that, if we can do a good job in the training of CMPs and provide matching facilities for the development of Chinese medicine, then a Chinese medicine hospital will soon be established as a natural course of development.

Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung mentioned in his amendment that some 3 000 listed CMPs still could not qualify as registered CMPs. The Liberal Party agrees that this is a problem to which a solution must be identified. However, the Liberal Party believes that no new standards should be formulated apart from the existing registration examination. If we fail to identify the reasons why these listed CMPs could not get the registration under the existing mechanism and say arbitrarily that the development of the Chinese medicine industry has been hindered, then we must be making an overstatement.

Besides, the Government will soon recognize the statutory status of sick leave certificates issued by CMPs and their medical assessment of injuries in labour matters. To further enhance the acceptance of CMPs, and in response to the people's trust in CMPs, the Liberal Party believes that the authorities should introduce long-term measures to cope with the circumstances, so that patients could get reimbursement for the expenditure incurred in seeking Chinese medicine consultations and to facilitate them in filing claims as the need arises.

Madam President, Chinese medicine is in itself a valuable industry with high economic returns. In our opinion, Hong Kong enjoys advantages in such areas as management, intellectual property and medical technology. Coupled with the resourceful Chinese medicine materials and an abundant supply of research and development personnel right next to us in the Mainland, Hong Kong should capitalize on the advantages of integration between the Mainland and Hong Kong to expedite the development of the local Chinese medicine industry. For this reason, we support the establishment of a committee on the development of Chinese medicine to facilitate the strategic development of the industry both locally and internationally.

Recently, the European countries, the United States, Australia and Japan, and so on, have been stepping up efforts in researching the efficacy of Chinese medicine. Take the Chinese expert in combating AIDs Dr David HO as an example. He has been engaged in research and development initiatives in examining the effect of Chinese herbal medicine in fighting AIDs. Meanwhile, the University of California has joined hands with the China Academy of Traditional Chinese Medicine on a research project on the prevention of cardiovascular diseases. A famous Chinese medicine store with a history of a century and 17 shops and sub-offices in 12 countries has recently set up a research and development base right here in Hong Kong. Judging from all these, we should not overlook the potentials of the Chinese medicine industry in the international arena.

Lastly, insofar as the amendment proposed by Dr KWOK Ka-ki is concerned, we find that his amendment is mostly similar to the original motion with only minimal differences. Both of them mainly aim at promoting the development of Chinese medicine. The Liberal Party supports such spirit.

Madam President, I so submit.

MR WONG YUNG-KAN (in Cantonese): Madam President, Chinese medicine has a very long history. However, due to the oversight of the former British Hong Kong Government and the misunderstanding of the medical sector, the development of Chinese medicine had remained stagnant. At present, though three tertiary institutions are offering degree programmes in Chinese medicine, and the registration of CMPs has been completed (with the exception of some who have not registered yet), CMPs remain "second-rated doctors" in Hong Kong. So it is still a situation of "consulting a Western medical practitioner if you want to cure your illness, and consulting a CMP if you want to regulate your physical conditions." It looks as though Chinese medicine can never gain first-rated status.

Madam President, both Chinese medicine and Western medicine have very different curative effects, featuring special strengths respectively. The Chinese medicine mainly caters for the nurturing of the internal harmony of the patients, helping them to regulate the functions and conditions of their body, thereby strengthening their immunity. In addition, the effects of Chinese medicine are mild, with relatively little side-effects, and it is most suitable for curing chronic

illnesses, geriatric diseases and gynecological diseases, and so on, with remarkable results. It has exactly filled up the gap of inadequacies left by Western medicine. In fact, the people have a strong demand for the service of Chinese medicine. According to a survey, 40% of the people have frequently taken Chinese medicine. However, the former British Hong Kong Government had all along adopted a policy that favoured Western medicine at the expense of Chinese medicine which enjoyed no legal status at all. So, Chinese medicine had always been placed in an excluded and despised position. Most public hospitals did not provide Chinese medicine service, nor were in-patients in hospitals allowed to consult CMPs and take Chinese medicine at the same time. So, the people could only seek treatment from CMPs in private practice. In addition, the medical insurance provided by most employers do not cover consultation and medicines provided by CMPs; sick leave certificates issued by CMPs were mostly not recognized; and CMPs do not have the authority to refer cases to other medical services.

In order to change this discriminatory phenomenon, it is not practical for us to chant a few slogans to "demand mutual compatibility between Chinese and Western medicines" because to some people with deep-rooted concepts, they almost see CMPs as the equivalent of witch doctors. Before gaining some fundamental understanding of Chinese medicine and CMPs, they have already ruled out the existence of CMPs. I believe education is the only way that may change their thinking. At present, an integrated system of Chinese and Western medicines is adopted in the Mainland. People studying medicine in the Mainland have to concurrently pursue studies in both Chinese and Western medicines. Upon graduation, students may freely choose to practise as either CMPs or Western medical practitioners. So they have adequate knowledge in both Chinese and Western medicines. However, in Hong Kong, the academic programmes offered in Western medicine have absolutely no coverage on Chinese medicine. On the contrary, courses in Chinese medicine do include some basic theories of Western medicine. So for CMPs with formal training, they have already known the operating practices of Western medical practitioners.

Madam President, in order to promote a better understanding of CMPs among Western medical practitioners, the DAB proposes that the two universities should incorporate some basic theories of Chinese medicine into their respective Western medicine programmes, so as to enable Western medical practitioners to gain a thorough understanding of Chinese medicine and remove their prejudice against Chinese medicine, thus the CMPs and Western medical

practitioners would not resist each other. In this way, we hope to make way for future co-operation between practitioners in the two different streams of medicine. For Western medical practitioners, they should also adopt an open mind and recognize the existence of CMPs, so that they can work together to strive for the well-being of patients.

In order to make CMPs more professional, the Government may consider establishing specialist Chinese medicine clinics in hospitals, which should be modelled on the present operating practices adopted by specialty schools in Western medicine, so as to provide in-service training courses to CMPs, thereby facilitating their professional development. At the same time, the Government should review the medical equipment that CMPs are allowed to use. Such equipment should come under the supervision of the present Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong and an examination system for this should be established, so as to facilitate the use of such highly safe and curative medical equipment for the provision of better treatment to patients.

Madam President, the Secretary has mentioned just now that both CMPs and Western medical practitioners need to pursue continuous training and education. The DAB agrees to this. However, in my opinion, it is more essential for Policy Bureaux, the Hospital Authority and all the Western medical practitioners now to acquire a more in-depth understanding of Chinese medicine, thereby enabling the CMPs and Western medical practitioners to complement each other in serving the people of Hong Kong.

Besides, the Government should allocate more resources to educating the public. Consideration should be given to incorporating knowledge of Chinese medicine into the curriculum of primary and secondary schools and hold exhibitions on Chinese medicine in the communities, so as to enhance the people's understanding of Chinese medicine.

Madam President, I so submit.

MR WONG KWOK-HING (in Cantonese): Madam President, with state of the art technological progress and advanced development in medical science nowadays, many fatal diseases of the past have become curable now in modern medicine. Having said that, Chinese medicine is by no means heading towards its demise. Quite the contrary, it is gradually gaining popularity. The Chief Executive proposed to develop Hong Kong into an international centre for Chinese medicine as early as 1997 in his policy address. It was thought that the

Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) had a transcendent view with a grand and far-sighted vision for the future. As it turns out, it is all smoke, no fire. They just pay lip service to it. Seven years have passed, and all these talks of a so-called international centre for Chinese medicine have failed to bear fruit, and the SAR Government may as well have already forgotten all about these grand talks. Neither have there been sufficient measures in promoting the development of Chinese medicine. All these serve to illustrate that, under our current health care system, which is predominantly pro-Western medicine, obvious limitations are still present in the development of Chinese medicine.

Three universities in Hong Kong now offer bachelor degree programmes in Chinese medicine; among them, the one offered by the Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) was even started as early as 1998. Yet, students of Chinese medicine find it hard to get a job upon graduation, and they have no career prospects, facing an uncertain future. As pointed out by Secretary Dr York CHOW in his reply to a question raised some time earlier by a Member, among 45 students who had completed a bachelor degree programme in Chinese medicine in 2004, including graduates from the HKBU and The Chinese University of Hong Kong, only about 25 were employed in Chinese medicine clinics. The market is simply not there to absorb these graduates. The Government has allocated considerable resources to the training of CMPs. However, with no matching facilities in place to facilitate their employment, graduates simply cannot apply their knowledge to actual jobs and are therefore unable to render their service to society. In this case, such resources are simply wasted for nothing, are they not?

Arrangements are made for students of Western medicine, upon graduation to work in public hospitals as housemen. However, such opportunities are not available to graduates of Chinese medicine. Due to their lack of clinical experience, many Chinese medicine clinics are reluctant to employ these fresh graduates, not to mention the possibility of setting up a clinic of their own in private practice after graduation. Therefore, due consideration should be given to the proposals put forward by the industry, that is, to establish Chinese medicine specialist departments and Chinese medicine in-patient service in public hospitals, or even to set up a Chinese medicine hospital to provide graduates of Chinese medicine with jobs opportunities and the chance to serve as housemen. In fact, the people do need such services.

As a matter of fact, the Government did propose in the policy address of 2001 to set up 18 Chinese medicine out-patient clinics by the end of year 2005. Unfortunately, Secretary Dr York CHOW said earlier that whether more Chinese medicine clinics would be set up would depend on the outcome of a review of the effectiveness of the three existing Chinese medicine out-patient clinics. This is a complete departure from the undertaking made by the Government and it is simply turning a blind eye to the people's demand for treatment in Chinese medicine. The authorities said that the three existing Chinese medicine clinics had not reached a 100% utilization rate, thereby questioning whether the public demand for Chinese medicine clinics. However, have the authorities ever considered this: Since many users of the Chinese medicine clinics are elderly people, so whether the clinics are conveniently located has a direct impact on their utilization rates? As such, the utilization rate simply cannot reflect the actual demand for Chinese medicine services. So, the full-scale implementation of the Chinese medicine clinic plan will also help to solve the unemployment problem faced by graduates of Chinese medicine.

In fact, many elderly people have a habit of consulting CMPs and receiving treatment from them because they believe Chinese medicine can strengthen their bodily functions and enable them to restore wholesomeness. After all, there are certain medical conditions that Western medical practitioners have no cures for. Meanwhile, Chinese medicine has strengths in the treatment of certain illnesses, such as rheumatism, anaemia and general body weakness, and so on. Therefore, the Government should expedite the full-scale implementation of the plan of setting up 18 Chinese medicine clinics so as to cater for the people's demand for Chinese medicine services. Moreover, the Government should consider subsidizing the medical expenses incurred by the elderly in using Chinese medicine services. Soon after his assumption of office, Secretary Dr York CHOW turned down the possibility of implementing any related measures, which was most unsympathetic. Although the Chinese medicine industry is regulated through the implementation of relevant legislation, the process has not been plain sailing without arguments. As some CMPs have failed to attain the status of "registered CMP" under the existing mechanism, the authorities should conduct a review to examine whether the existing mechanism is much too rigid. Furthermore, the profession of CMPs has been operating in a traditional mode. Before any regulation was in place, people in the profession simply did not bother too much about any system, and as a result, many

practising CMPs have failed to qualify as registered CMPs because of many restrictions. The authorities should come up with a more flexible system in order to address the qualification problem of such CMPs.

Generally speaking, the Government is not giving adequate attention to the development of Chinese medicine. Simply put, when there are only a handful of Chinese medicine clinics in the public sector, can we take this as a sign of support for the development of the Chinese medicine industry? Moreover, the Government should identify ways of implementing measures to recognize the statutory status of sick leave certificates issued by CMPs as soon as possible. This is because if sick leave certificates issued by CMPs cannot be admitted as supporting documents, patients will turn away from CMPs, which will hinder the development of the Chinese medicine industry. With regard to the training of professional personnel in Chinese medicine, it is simply not adequately comprehensive. With insufficient matching measures, graduates of Chinese medicine face poor prospects, which is an indirect wastage of resources. Besides, the Government has also been placing too much emphasis on the training of CMPs, to the neglect of the training of other paramedical and nursing personnel in Chinese medicine, such as dispensers.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr WONG Kwok-hing, your time is up. Please sit down.

MISS CHOY SO-YUK (in Cantonese): Madam President, I would like to put forward the viewpoint of the Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB) on Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung's amendment.

Chinese medicine has a long history of several thousand years, and is a major source of the great cultural heritage of the Chinese people. Although Hong Kong is already highly westernized, Chinese medicine is still very popular among the people in the local community — a situation very much similar to those in other Chinese communities. Be it for strengthening the physical conditions, for the prevention of diseases, or even for treating long-term medical problems, Chinese medicine has always played a very significant role. In particular, many Chinese will seek treatment from Chinese bone-setters when they have suffered from some bone fractures or sprang ankles or joints because

the curative effect is obvious in such cases and words of mouth have helped to promote its popularity.

In fact, the Chief Executive mentioned as early as 1997 his intention of developing Hong Kong into an international centre of Chinese medicine. However, seven years since, even though many initiatives have been introduced to gradually institutionalize Chinese medicine, most measures have been adopted with primary significance attached to the mainstream Western medicine. So, plugging Chinese medicine arbitrarily into the established framework has in fact imposed too much restraints on its development instead.

One of the examples that have caused the greatest public concern is the subject of sick leave certificates issued by CMPs. All along, such sick leave certificates have not enjoyed the same "statutory status" as those issued by Western medical practitioners. Yet, another more fundamental issue is, under the present registration system, no consideration has been given to the traditional mode of training of CMPs. Instead, the present system just strictly follows the relevant experience of Western medical practitioners by requiring CMPs to possess all-round knowledge in different medical subjects before they can pass the registration examination. However, we must know that many CMPs have acquired their practice skills through apprenticeship or family succession, so their training usually focuses on the passing of knowledge and skills only in certain specialized fields and they do not stress the acquisition of knowledge and skills in other fields. For example, a master bone-setter may be an expert in treating all sorts of complicated external injuries, but he may not have too much knowledge in curing internal disorders because his expertise really lies in bone-setting. If we do not allow him to continue practising as a professional treating patients in his specialized field just because he does not possess all-round knowledge of different medical subjects, can we call this reasonable?

Furthermore, not only does the present registration examination baffle many CMPs who have acquired their practice skills through apprenticeship or family succession, but it also presents an impossible mission to them even if they aspire to become qualified by pursuing further studies and passing the examination because such an examination neither has a prescribed scope nor a prescribed reading list. So how can they make proper preparations for it?

Besides, though the present system provides for the exemption of applicants who have practised Chinese medicine continuously for 15 years to qualify as registered CMPs, the authorities usually only accept business registration as proof of the practice period. Therefore, for those who have not been practising continuously in the past may not be able to get the qualification through exemption. The critical issue is: Many such CMPs are elderly persons who may be highly competent in treating patients, but they would find it difficult to study and revise the books again for the purpose of passing the examination. With a sense of helplessness, they may be forced to leave their practice.

Madam President, the establishment of a system should aim at facilitating people in the sector to give full play to their existing strengths, so as to upgrade their level and status. It should not impose difficulties on or even force veteran CMPs to abandon their practice. Such a situation will not just undermine the present foundation of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong, but will also lead to serious wastage of human resources directly. Worst still, it deprives the people of their right to choose and it will stall the pace of development of the CMP sector.

The DAB thinks that the working experience and qualifications of traditional CMPs are most valuable. The Government should respect and treasure them. Instead of trying to find out how they can be knocked out of the present system, the Government should strive to devise a good mechanism to enable the existing CMPs to continue making contribution to society. Taking the present specific conditions into consideration, the Government should accept the acquisition of practice skills through apprenticeship or family succession as one of the training methods of CMPs. As such, it should devise a specific syllabus for them. They should be allowed to continue practising while adopting the mode of "training first, examination later", so as to enable them to gradually complete the registration procedure and continue serving the people.

By taking a retrospective view of the situation, we can see that all along CMPs have not been accorded due recognition, and the development of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong has been very slow and difficult. Certain historical factors may be responsible for bringing about such a situation. However, apart from that, it is believed that such a situation is also attributable to the fact that the posts of officials in charge of medical and health affairs have long been held by those with a professional background in Western medicine. At present, even

though the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong (CMC) has officially been established, all of its members are still appointed by the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food. Under such arrangements, we really suspect whether the CMC can put forward the best opinions on the development of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong, and how much opinions not favoured by the Government as well as the practical difficulties faced by practitioners of the sector can actually reach the core of the decision-making hierarchy. In this connection, the DAB thinks that the Government must first consider introducing changes to the composition of the CMC, in order to allow organizations in the sector to recommend candidates for appointment to the CMC. This should enhance the participation of practitioners in the sector as well as the transparency of the CMC.

Madam President, on the issue of whether the status and level of Chinese medicine can be raised, it relies heavily on the hard work and self-strengthening efforts of people in the sector. However, ultimately, it still depends on whether the Government can provide corresponding policies to complement the development of the sector. In this connection, the Government has an unshirkable responsibility to make improvement in this regard.

Madam President, I so submit.

MR JASPER TSANG (in Cantonese): Madam President, as the DAB is called a "pro-China political party", naturally we are concerned about the development of Chinese medicine. Although this meeting has already been extended to a length beyond the expectations of many Honourable colleagues, they have still participated in the discussion seriously. I feel very happy about this.

I would like to thank the Secretary for having spoken earlier than originally scheduled, so as to explain to us in detail the Government's policies on the development of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong. I would like to respond to the information provided by the Secretary just now, particularly to explore the problems from the perspective of training professional talents in Chinese medicine.

I would like to first discuss the Chinese medicine out-patient clinic service. The Secretary said earlier that the Government had decided to speed up the pace

of development of Chinese medicine out-patient clinics. This news is most encouraging. Unfortunately, when the Secretary went on to explain how the process could be expedited, he pointed out that two to three additional Chinese medicine out-patient clinics would be opened in 2005, and he also mentioned that the Chief Executive had undertaken in his policy address in 2001 to establish 18 Chinese medicine out-patient clinics. However, the Secretary had failed to mention that the policy address did include a timetable, that is, those 18 clinics should be established before the end of 2005. Although the Secretary said that he would speed up the process, to our amazement, all he could do was just trying to establish two to three additional clinics in 2005. I am afraid such a speed will not be satisfactory to anyone. Besides, as pointed out by the Secretary accurately, such public Chinese medicine clinics can actually provide a very good opportunity for graduates in Chinese medicine to undertake clinical work. However, as also pointed out by the Secretary, during the past two years, out of the 70-plus university graduates in Chinese medicine, only four have been employed to work in the three public Chinese medicine out-patient clinics. At such a rate, the addition of two to three out-patient clinics can hardly solve the problem. How many opportunities of training and clinical practice can be provided to local university graduates in Chinese medicine?

In particular, the Secretary mentioned Chinese medicine hospitals, highlighting the fact that, insofar as the present policies are concerned, the Government does not have any preparation for, nor does it have any plan to establish any Chinese medicine hospital. I cannot understand one of the reasons mentioned by him. The Secretary said that operating a Chinese medicine hospital does not serve the actual needs of promoting the combined application of Chinese and Western medicines as in-patients are treated mainly by Western medicine. However, the Secretary went on to say that Chinese medicine hospitals can be operated in the Mainland because most of such hospitals are operated on a self-financing basis. Such being the case, does he mean that a self-financing mode of operation is suitable for adoption in establishing a Chinese medicine hospital, but once it involves the use of public fund or is operated as a public hospital, then it will become not viable? This is the point that baffles me. The absence of a Chinese medicine hospital as a base of clinical practice for Chinese medicine graduates will definitely create a huge obstacle to the professional development of talents in Chinese medicine. Can you imagine that students currently pursuing studies in Western medicine in universities are not provided with opportunities of clinical practice by their respective teaching

hospitals? Is this possible? Is there a reason why students pursuing studies in Chinese medicine do not have to engage in clinical practice? The universities do not think so. As such, they have arranged for students pursuing studies in Chinese medicine in Hong Kong to do clinical practice in mainland hospitals, albeit with a lot of special efforts. Such arrangements are made simply because there is no Chinese medicine hospital in Hong Kong, so students are not provided with opportunities of clinical practice locally. The hospitals do not even have a Chinese medicine department attached to it. However, after completing their clinical practice in the Mainland, these students told us that, though they had learned a lot during clinical practice in the Mainland, they did not have opportunities to apply what they had learnt to practical use in Hong Kong. Mr LI Kwok-ying told us the reason earlier, that is, CMPs face enormous restrictions in the medical equipment they can use in Hong Kong. A lot of the medical equipment and treatment they are allowed to use in mainland hospitals cannot be used in Hong Kong. Therefore, with regard to the experience these students have acquired from their clinical practice in mainland hospitals, its effectiveness is greatly reduced. When these students of Chinese medicine are studying in the universities, they can be arranged by the universities to go to mainland hospitals for clinical practice. But what they can do after graduating from the universities? Where can they go to get such opportunities of clinical practice?

The Secretary also said that actually there is a mechanism for CMPs to pursue continued education and they do have such demands. Yes, the Secretary listed earlier some information and methods of pursuing continued education, including training courses (that is, attending lectures), seminars, as well as self-learning and self-training. Already with the intrinsic shortcoming of having too little clinical experience, our graduates are now only left with the options of attending lectures, and attending more lectures, going to seminars and pursuing self-learning at home. In this way, how can they be provided with the opportunity of making professional advancement, not to mention the possibility of seeking any specialty development? Students of Western medicine can do so, why can their counterparts in Chinese medicine not do the same? Several years ago, with the encouragement of the Chief Executive and the SAR Government, we all held high hopes for the development prospects of the Chinese medicine industry in Hong Kong. So when the universities offered such programmes, many elite students were attracted to enroll in them. And such universities told us proudly that their respective schools of Chinese medicine had accepted the students with the best results in the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination.

We now that this worry. If students of Chinese medicine see that their seniors, having studied hard for five years, face difficulties in pursuing continued education, not to mention their inability to find opportunities of clinical practice, will they still be willing to enroll in and take the courses of Chinese medicine? If we have really lost our confidence in the development of Chinese medicine, then we must have some major problems in the kind of training we provide to our talents.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Does any other Member wish to speak?

MR ALBERT CHENG (in Cantonese): Madam President, I would like to discuss this issue with the Secretary. In the past, the colonial government never attached any significance to CMPs. But since the reunification, the authorities have regulated the CMPs and several schools of Chinese medicine have been established in some universities. If the Government intends to regulate Chinese medicine and provides courses in universities, I think it has the responsibility, as Mr Jasper TSANG said, to provide students of Chinese medicine with opportunities of practice and pursue further studies. Failing this, the Government is acting in a self-contradictory manner. This is illogical.

Mr Jasper TSANG said that the policy of the Government had attracted some elite students to pursue studies in Chinese medicine. However, on completion of their studies, they find that there are no prospects. If all they can do is to feel the pulses of some customers at certain Chinese herbal shops by the side of the streets, it would be a waste of talents. However, in the meantime, I would like to say a few words to the Secretary because I was shocked by the remarks made by Dr KWOK Ka-ki when he and I were at a meeting with the Financial Secretary, Mr Henry TANG. And later on, after I had talked to people in the sector, I found that such remarks were true.

Mr Jasper TSANG said that people pursuing studies in Chinese medicine are elites. In my opinion, those who pursue studies in Western medicine are definitely brilliant students. Dr KWOK said that, on completion of their academic programmes in Western medicine, these students may work in the Hospital Authority. They have the opportunity of undertaking clinical practice, but they can only earn a mediocre income of less than \$20,000 a month. I am aware of this. I think such a salary is acceptable as they can consider

themselves undergoing the training process while they are working. However, Dr KWOK Ka-ki went on to say that they could only make some \$30,000 a month after having worked for eight years. At that juncture, I told the young Administrative Officer by the side of Financial Secretary Henry TANG, just like the young and promising colleague by the side of the Secretary now, "Fortunately, you did not opt for the medicine in university."

Such being the case, our health care policies have wasted talents in both Chinese and Western medicines. Should the situation continue, there will be less and less people willing to enroll in programmes offered by schools of medicine. Be it the programme offered by schools of Western medicine or Chinese medicine, no students will opt for them anymore. And at the end of the day, the people will become the ultimate victims. As the Secretary is a doctor himself, I certainly do not hope to see the occurrence of "doctors protecting the interests of doctors". But on taking care of the students and the younger ones, he may do so; that is, he may take care of the interests of CMPs, and he may also take care of Western medical practitioners. Aspiring to serve the public, these talented young people do not just set their eyes on making money. However, if they could only make some \$30,000 a month after having succeeded in scrambling for a place in the schools of medicine and after having worked for eight years, which is a rather long period of time, I find such a remuneration humiliating.

Having listened to the speech of Mr Jasper TSANG, I feel enlightened: The situation of CMPs is even more miserable. All along, we have been opposing the situation of "doctors protecting the interests of doctors". But now the situation is "doctors persecuting doctors". Therefore, on the contrary, I am requesting the Secretary (especially he is a doctor himself) to consider this: In nurturing doctors of our next generation, we allow you, being a doctor, to protect the interests of doctors.

With these remarks, I support the original motion and the amendments. I support everything, in the hope that I can leave as soon as possible. Thank you.
(Laughter)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Does any other Member wish to speak?

MR TAM YIU-CHUNG (in Cantonese): It is exactly my intention not to let Mr Albert CHENG leave for the time being. *(Laughter)*

Chinese medicine has been practised and developed for several thousand years. With theories and practical testimonies, it has built up an effective and systematic regime which is capable of taking care of the health needs of the people. In Hong Kong, Chinese medicine has all along played an equally important role in our health care system, particularly in terms of providing the people with primary health care and disease prevention. According to figures provided by the Chinese Medical Council of Hong Kong, out-patient service currently provided by practising CMPs accounts for 22% of the overall out-patient service in Hong Kong. Given an ageing population in Hong Kong, our health care system has made it a priority task to prevent and treat chronic diseases among the people. Since Chinese medicine has proved to be more effective than Western medicine in this aspect, it has become imperative to speed up the development of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong.

Earlier in the debate, colleagues from the DAB have pointed out many problems currently faced by CMPs, particularly in terms of their career prospects. Moreover, the development of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong also faces numerous difficulties. Therefore, I would like to put forward several points of opinion with an emphasis on the development of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong.

First, the professional standards and specifications in the manufacture of Chinese medicines in Hong Kong have not been able to converge with international standards, therefore newly developed proprietary Chinese medicines cannot tap new markets. The Department of Health has devised a Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) to govern the production of Chinese medicines, but the extent of recognition and acceptance accorded to the GMP in the international arena remains unknown. To date, not a single GMP certification has been issued for the manufacture of any Chinese medicine product. On the other hand, Hong Kong does not endorse the GMP certification system of China, which has been widely accepted by many countries. As a result, a mainland pharmaceutical company with its GMP properly validated in China has to start from the scratch and apply for a local certification if it wants to set up a pharmaceutical factory in Hong Kong. Worse still, no certification of this kind has ever been issued to date, so there is no way for their products to be certificated at all. Such backwardness in our

professional standards and specifications has cost us many opportunities of getting new pharmaceutical factories set up and new Chinese medicines developed in Hong Kong. In fact, such information is provided to us by people working in the industry.

Second, the Government has failed to provide matching facilities for research and development projects, such as the facilities for conducting clinical experiments. It is mandatory to conduct clinical experiments before a new medicine can be introduced to the market. However, as pointed out by many Members and even the Secretary, at present, there is no Chinese medicine in-patient service in Hong Kong where clinical research can be carried out, while clinical experiments performed in mainland China is not given recognition on the other. As a result, pharmaceutical companies interested in developing new proprietary Chinese medicines in Hong Kong have been forced to abandon their plans due to its inability to conduct clinical experiments for the purpose of validating the effectiveness of their products. Let us look at another example. We know that effective sterilization is an essential prerequisite for the manufacture of Chinese medicines, whereas Cobalt-60 sterilization is the most effective sterilization method. However, the cost involved in carrying out Cobalt-60 sterilization is so huge that it is beyond the affordability of any single pharmaceutical company. Therefore, a centralized sterilization service provided by the Government is essential; otherwise the development and quality enhancement of new Chinese medicines will be affected if pharmaceutical companies are left to employ other sterilization methods.

Third, there is an acute shortage of talents in undertaking research and development projects as well as in the manufacture and management of proprietary Chinese medicines. Institutions like the Vocational Training Council (VTC), the Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) and The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) are now involved in the training of talents in Chinese medicine, but the VTC only offers a Higher Diploma course in Chinese medicines, which falls short of the required level for undertaking research and development projects. The first batch of students of Chinese medicines from the HKBU and CUHK will not graduate until 2006, and there are, after all, no manufacturing facilities of Chinese medicines in the universities, nor do the programmes provide any opportunities for students to put what they have learned into practice. Therefore, it is very difficult for Hong Kong to build up a Chinese medicine research team of its own. Even if we rely on the importation of talents from the Mainland, no effective support measures are in place under

the current system. As there is not a category of pharmaceutical manufacture under the current Admission of Mainland Professionals Scheme, the industry can only import the required professionals through the Supplementary Labour Scheme, which, again, is not intended for endorsing the admission of CMPs, because there is simply no such category under the Scheme. For this reason, the pharmaceutical manufacturing techniques of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong just cannot meet the needs of the industry. All these limitations have led to a shortage of talents in Chinese medicine, which accounts for the lack of progress in the product development of Chinese medicine. There used to be talks of developing a Chinese Medicine Port in Hong Kong, but upon hearing my analysis of these three limitations, Members may realize that no one can be sure when such an objective can be successfully attained. In fact these may turn out to be nothing but "empty talks", which just let the people continue "talking" about it.

Therefore, the overall development of Chinese medicine should cover both CMPs and Chinese medicines. The Government should formulate professional standards and specifications for Chinese medicines, provide training for professionals and help speed up the industrialization of the Chinese medicine industry, otherwise the Chinese medicine industry of Hong Kong will remain at the level of the '50s, which will become a laughing stock. Even in the '50s, we had several famous proprietary Chinese medicines, which are still available in the market. However, I think we can hardly see the emergence of new brand names of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong simply because of factors in the three aspects that I have mentioned just now.

Thank you, Madam President.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Does any other Member wish to speak?

MR ABRAHAM SHEK: Madam President, since Albert called me back, I might as well speak.

The popularity of Chinese medicinal herbs has made inroads into the global market. Today, instead of doubts about its scientific worth, people are eagerly tapping into the huge medical and market potential of herbal treatments, acupuncture and Chinese chiropractic techniques. Is there an opportunity for

Hong Kong to take the lead in this exciting area of development? The answer depends largely on how pro-active our Government will be in fostering a thriving Chinese medicine sector at home.

Just what exactly are our aspirations, as well as our strengths in this field? A few years ago, Mr TUNG pitched to the public the idea of making this city a Chinese medicine hub. However, this ambitious goal was quickly reduced to the present uninspiring policy of "elevating Hong Kong's status" in terms of regional standing. The U-turn in the policy means that we are back to ground zero in the race of researching and developing treatments and drugs which combine Chinese tradition and Western medical expertise.

Having a clearly identified position on developing our Chinese medicine sector would not only give us a specific goal to work towards, but would also greatly affect our trust and perception of the Government and its role. Currently, the Government is both a facilitator and a regulator, while the majority of the Chinese medicine services are left to the private sector. True, this approach requires the least input, both financially and administratively, from the Government. But arguably, this approach is still inadequate as it neglects some core problems encountered by the Chinese medicine sector. Even though we may have put our Chinese medicine ambitions on the back burner, the Government should at least ensure that the sector can grow healthily and will be in a strong enough position in the future when we decide to aim higher.

The primary concern of the sector is that its progress has been handicapped by a lack of avenues for professional development, as well as inadequate research funding and supportive environment. The Government's efforts in introducing a registration scheme and setting up a regulatory body may help boost the sector's professional status, but these measures do little to promote its sustainable development. Indeed, even the registration scheme has drawn criticisms that its assessment criteria fail to take into consideration the unique, and often informal, training tradition of Chinese medicine. There should be a grandfather clause for those practitioners. If nothing is done, a gap in both talent and expertise may result, particularly if we take into account the fact that as many as 35% of the registered Chinese medicine practitioners are already over 60 years old.

Alternatively, a more desirable option is for the Government to allow Chinese medicine practitioners to enjoy greater participation in the public health

sector. To this end, I believe that the proposals in today's motion all deserve support and implementation as soon as possible.

The benefit of expanding out-patient Chinese medicine clinic services is obvious. In the long term, setting up in-patient hospital services and even a Chinese medicine hospital would provide Chinese herbalists with a necessary avenue for professional development as well as a platform for more vigorous research activities. The Government should also consider expanding the scope of the Chinese Medicine Council. Instead of merely acting as a statutory regulator, the Council should be empowered to advise on the long-term development of Chinese medicine.

Perhaps, the strongest opposition to today's motion comes from within the public health sector. Launching new services will inevitably involve additional financial commitment from the Government. Understandably, this may affect the interests of doctors already working in public hospitals under the umbrella of the Hospital Authority (HA), given that the HA is already under great pressure to tighten its belt and trim down its size. However, changes to the existing system are long overdue. Calls for restructuring the public health sector and facilitating a more robust private health industry have been growing. Perhaps a comprehensive review of the existing system will also provide the Government with an opportunity to reconsider the role of Chinese medicine.

Thank you, Madam President.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Does any other Member wish to speak?

(No Member indicated a wish to speak)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr LI Kwok-ying, you may now speak on the three amendments. You have up to five minutes to speak.

MR LI KWOK YING (in Cantonese): Madam President, many thanks to the three Honourable colleagues who have proposed amendments to my motion. First, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung's amendment mentioned the lack of avenues for Chinese medical practitioners (CMPs) who have acquired their skills through

family succession to become registered. Earlier on, Miss CHOY So-yuk mentioned the view of the Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB). I would only like to add one point now. The DAB understands that some CMPs who have acquired their skills through family succession have failed to meet the requirements of the registration examination because they have not received full and formal Chinese medicine training. Since this is a problem left behind by the British Hong Kong Government as it had failed to formulate any Chinese medicine policy over a long period of time, we should not instantly take away the means of living of these CMPs who have served their neighbourhoods for a long time. The DAB thinks that the Government really has the responsibility to provide avenues for them to further their studies in order to increase their knowledge of the full contents of Chinese medicine and to ensure that they can carry on with their work. I also agree with Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung's proposal that there should be representatives from the CMPs in the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong so that their views could be reflected. Unfortunately, the Secretary said that there is no plan of setting up a committee at the moment.

We support Mr Andrew CHENG's amendment, in particular, the proposal to subsidize elderly recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) who use non-public medical services. The DAB understands that seekers of Chinese medicine services accounted for about 22% of the total number of seekers of out-patient services and a large proportion of them are elderly people. At present, an ordinary CMP will charge about \$100 for consultation and medicine which is definitely unaffordable to the elderly recipients of CSSA. Mr CHENG also mentioned the very unfair situation of the different rates of subsidy available for Western and Chinese medical services. Therefore, the Government should review the scheme of subsidy as soon as possible in order to foster the development of Chinese medicine and to ensure that elderly recipients of CSSA can seek the medical services which are more suitable to them.

Insofar as Dr KWOK Ka Ki's amendment is concerned, we support its clear proposals including the provision of continuing Chinese medicine education and appropriate on-the-job training for graduates from the Chinese medicine schools. However, we have reservations about setting benchmarks for quality Chinese medicine services. At present, the professional standard of CMPs is assured after they have obtained registration and their ethical conduct is also regulated by a code of practice. Therefore, it is questionable whether there is a

need to formulate another set of benchmarks. Furthermore, if benchmarks are to be set, they should be set for both Chinese and Western medicine practitioners. It is not right to seek benchmarks for Chinese medicine practitioners and ignore the same demand from the public for Western medical practitioners to provide assured quality services.

Madam President, I so submit.

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH, WELFARE AND FOOD (in Cantonese): First of all, I would like to thank Members for giving me a lot of opinions and for conducting such a heated discussion on our policy. However, I have to emphasize that, given the existing conditions and resources, this approach will still be adopted in the near future. In the long run, however, I agree with carrying out development in other areas, as suggested by numerous Members earlier. With respect to Mr LI Kwok-ying's motion, I have something to add.

First, we agree with most of the recommendations raised in Mr LI's first proposal. However, proper arrangements have to be made in terms of timing. Regarding our current plan to set up Chinese medicine out-patient clinics in 18 districts, we have to study the site identification issue and take complementary measures to foster partnership.

Second, I did not mean to say that I have no intention to establish a development organ or pattern. The Medical Services Development Committee is actually planning to include CMPs in the relevant development. However, I am of the view that CMPs should develop within the health care system as a whole. With respect to sick leave certificates, I can tell Members that the proposal has been forwarded to the Economic Development and Labour Bureau for consideration and will, after examination and verification, be submitted to the Legislative Council for endorsement. I believe CMPs will be able to issue legitimate sick leave certificates starting next year.

Third, I certainly agree with formulating a mechanism and avenues for CMPs to receive professional training.

As regards Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung's amendment, I have reservations only about his suggestion of establishing another model to examine some listed CMPs, because this is against our practice of maintaining fair competition. Moreover, our existing practice of allowing listed CMPs to continue their practice is already

a very liberal approach. Of course, we can consider whether a more active effort can be made to provide training to help them to pass the examination. I also agree with reviewing the compositions of the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong and its various committees.

I already responded to the views expressed by Dr Kwok Ka-ki and Mr Andrew CHENG earlier. In conclusion, I am very grateful to Members for their views. I will incorporate many of these views into the future development. Thank you, Madam President.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now call upon Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung to move his amendment to the motion.

MR LEUNG YIU-CHUNG (in Cantonese): Madam President, I move that Mr LI Kwok-ying's motion be amended, as set out on the Agenda.

Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung moved the following amendment: (Translation)

"To add "or provide proper registration avenues that cater for the CMPs' tradition of acquiring practice skills through apprenticeship or family succession, resulting in some 3 000 listed CMPs still not being able to become registered CMPs" after "to establish avenues for CMPs to receive professional training"; to delete "and" after "CMPs are allowed to use;"; and to add "; (d) having regard to the unique circumstances of CMPs and bone-setters who acquire their practice skills through apprenticeship or family succession, devising a more suitable examination system and syllabus for them, and arranging for the listed CMPs concerned to receive training before taking the examination, in order to enable them to become registered CMPs smoothly; and (e) reforming the compositions of the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong and its various boards and committees, and enhancing their transparency and the representativeness of their members, so as to enable them to reflect a wide spectrum of opinions in the sector" after "(c) formulating a mechanism and avenues for CMPs to receive professional training"."

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the amendment, moved by Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung to Mr LI Kwok-ying's motion, be passed.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now put the question to you as stated. Will those in favour please raise their hands?

(Members raised their hands)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Those against please raise their hands.

(Members raised their hands)

Ms Miriam LAU rose to claim a division.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Ms Miriam LAU has claimed a division. The division bell will ring for three minutes.

(After the division bell had been rung for three minutes)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Since we lack a quorum now, I will ask the Clerk to ring the bell to summon Members to the meeting before we proceed to vote. The summoning bell will now be rung for 15 minutes.

(After the summoning bell had been rung, a number of Members returned to the Chamber)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): A quorum for the meeting has just formed and we can proceed to vote. I now propose the question to you and that is: That the amendment, moved by Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung to Mr LI Kwok-ying's motion, be passed.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Will Members please proceed to vote.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Will Members please check their votes. If there are no queries, voting shall now stop and the result will be displayed.

Functional Constituencies:

Dr Raymond HO, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, Mr SIN Chung-kai, Mr WONG Yung-kan, Mr Abraham SHEK, Ms LI Fung-ying, Mr WONG Kwok-hing, Mr WONG Ting-kwong and Mr KWONG Chi-kin voted for the amendment.

Mr Howard YOUNG, Ms Miriam LAU, Mr Jeffrey LAM, Mr Andrew LEUNG and Dr KWOK Ka-ki voted against the amendment.

Geographical Constituencies:

Mr Martin LEE, Miss CHAN Yuen-han, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, Mr Jasper TSANG, Dr YEUNG Sum, Mr LAU Kong-wah, Miss CHOY So-yuk, Mr Andrew CHENG, Mr TAM Yiu-chung, Ms Audrey EU, Mr LEE Wing-tat, Mr LI Kwok-ying, Mr Alan LEONG and Mr Albert CHENG voted for the amendment.

Mrs Selina CHOW voted against the amendment.

THE PRESIDENT, Mrs Rita FAN, did not cast any vote.

THE PRESIDENT announced that among the Members returned by functional constituencies, 14 were present, nine were in favour of the amendment and five against it; while among the Members returned by geographical constituencies through direct elections, 16 were present, 14 were in favour of the amendment and one against it. Since the question was agreed by a majority of each of the

two groups of Members present, she therefore declared that the amendment was carried.

MS MIRIAM LAU (in Cantonese): Madam President, I move that in the event of further divisions being claimed in respect of the motion on "Overall development of Chinese medicine practitioners" or any amendments thereto, this Council do proceed to each of such divisions immediately after the division bell has been rung for one minute.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the motion moved by Ms Miriam LAU be passed.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Does any Member wish to speak?

(No Member indicated a wish to speak)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now put the question to you as stated. Will those in favour please raise their hands?

(Members raised their hands)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Those against please raise their hands.

(Members raised their hands)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I think the question is agreed by a majority respectively of each of the two groups of Members, that is, those returned by functional constituencies and those returned by geographical constituencies through direct elections, who are present. I declare the motion passed.

I order that in the event of further divisions being claimed in respect of the motion on "Overall development of Chinese medicine practitioners" or any

amendments thereto, this Council do proceed to each of such divisions immediately after the division bell has been rung for one minute.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Members have been informed by circular on 30 November that Dr KWOK Ka-ki would withdraw his amendment if Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung's amendment was passed. Since Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung's amendment has been passed, Dr KWOK Ka-ki has therefore withdrawn his amendment.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr Andrew CHENG, I have given leave for you to revise the terms of your amendment, as set out in the paper which has been circularized to Members on 30 November. You have up to three minutes to explain the revised terms in your amendment, but you may not repeat what you have already covered in your earlier speech.

MR ANDREW CHENG (in Cantonese): Madam President, Members have generally expressed their views in their submissions earlier. There was also some anxiety for a while because Members worried that the meeting might be aborted. Therefore, I do not wish to spend too much of Members' time.

Since the Secretary assumed his office and from his submission made in the debate, I have had the feeling that he is committed to resolving the problem of the overall development of Chinese medicine practitioners. We have heard his words, so let us watch his acts.

Madam President, I so submit.

Mr Andrew CHENG moved the following further amendment to the motion as amended by Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung: (Translation)

"To delete "and" after "become registered CMPs smoothly;"; and to add "; (f) reviewing the levels of fees as well as the fee subsidy and waiver systems in respect of public Chinese medicine out-patient clinics, and considering subsidizing elderly recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance payments who use the services of non-public Chinese medicine out-patient clinics; and (g) giving statutory status to the

insurance claim forms, receipts and other documents issued by CMPs, and reviewing CMPs' rights and responsibilities in the referral of patients" after "opinions in the sector".

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That Mr Andrew CHENG's amendment to Mr LI Kwok-ying's motion as amended by Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, be passed.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now put the question to you as stated. Will those in favour please raise their hands?

(Members raised their hands)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Those against please raise their hands.

(Members raised their hands)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I think the question is agreed by a majority respectively of each of the two groups of Members, that is, those returned by functional constituencies and those returned by geographical constituencies through direct elections, who are present. I declare the amendment passed.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr LI Kwok-ying, you may now reply and you have 47 seconds.

MR LI KWOK-YING (in Cantonese): Madam President, I understand that not much time is left for me to speak. I only wish to respond to the Secretary's remarks. The Secretary said that he attached great importance to the development of Chinese medicine, and would set up Chinese medicine out-patient clinics as soon as possible and provide training. He also said that there would be joint consultation and treatment by Chinese medicine practitioners (CMPs), but not any Chinese medicine in-patient department. If Chinese medicine in-patient departments would not be established, how could

clinical training be provided to the local CMPs? If Chinese medicine departments would not be set up, how could more comprehensive Chinese medicine services be provided to the public and how could CMPs conduct long-term study and provide follow-up treatment to those serious cases which require observation on a long-term basis? If Chinese medicine in-patient departments would not be established, how could the more complicated cases be taken up so that CMPs could assist in the development of the relevant work? Therefore, I hope that the Government can really.....(*the buzzer sounded*)

(Mr WONG Yung-kan indicated to Mr LI Kwok-ying that time was up)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr LI Kwok-ying, please heed Mr WONG Yung-kan's advice. (*Laughter*)

MR LI KWOK-YING (in Cantonese): promote the overall development.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now put the question to you and that is: That the motion moved by Mr LI Kwok-ying, as amended by Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung and Mr Andrew CHENG be passed. I now put the question to you as stated. Will those in favour please raise their hands?

(Members raised their hands)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Those against please raise their hands.

(Members raised their hands)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I think the question is agreed by a majority respectively of each of the two groups of Members, that is, those returned by functional constituencies and those returned by geographical constituencies through direct elections, who are present. I declare the motion as amended passed.

NEXT MEETING

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now adjourn the Council until 2.30 pm on Wednesday, 8 December 2004.

Adjourned accordingly at eleven minutes past Nine o'clock.