

For Finance Committee meeting
on 19 November 2004

Supplementary Paper to FCR(2004-05)30 Merging of student travel subsidy schemes

Introduction

This note summarises the views of parent organisations on the proposal to rationalise the student travel subsidy schemes as set out in FCR(2004-05)30 for discussion at the Finance Committee meeting on 19 November 2004. In paragraph 20 of the paper, we undertook to provide such information for Members' reference before the meeting.

Consultation with parent organisations

2. We consulted the Legislative Council Panel on Education at its meeting on 8 November 2004. Some Members expressed concerns about the financial burden on the 22 000 applicants who would have their travel subsidy reduced under the proposed two-tier subsidy arrangement, and requested the Administration to consult parent organisations on the proposals. They appreciated the urgency of the proposals, and agreed that the Finance Committee paper might be issued first pending completion of the consultation with parent organisations.

3. We have consulted members of the Committee on Home-School Co-operation, the Hong Kong Parents Association, and 15 district-based federations of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs)/Parent Associations on the details of our proposals. Among these organisations, the Committee on Home-School Co-operation was set up by the Education and Manpower Bureau to promote home-school co-operation through various means. Current membership includes parents, school principals, teachers and other experts. The Hong Kong Parents Association was initiated by some parents to consolidate parents' efforts generally in promoting the development of education. The federations are, on the other hand, voluntary alliances of PTAs on a district basis.

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4. Before meeting the representatives of the above parent organisations and to facilitate discussion, we issued a paper outlining our proposals for their perusal. Some parent representatives considered the proposals reasonable and expressed support for them, including the proposed transitional arrangement to minimise the impact on the students to be affected. A few representatives were in favour of existing arrangements and did not see a need for the proposed changes; and a few others were in support of the proposals to benefit more students but did not agree to reducing the subsidy for some existing beneficiaries under the proposed two-tier subsidy arrangement. The parent representatives were requested to complete a questionnaire at the end of the meeting. Of the 29 questionnaires returned from them, 22 were supportive of the proposals.

5. We also consulted some PTAs in one of the districts which does not have a PTA federation and where a relatively large number of students would likely be affected by the proposals. Owing to time constraint, we only managed to reach out to six PTAs individually. We explained our proposals in a paper issued to them through the schools. Of the six PTAs, five supported the proposals while one had no comment.

Education and Manpower Bureau
16 November 2004