

立法會
Legislative Council

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seen by the Administration)

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**Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to the Provision of
Boarding Places, Senior Secondary Education and Employment
Opportunities for Children with Special Educational Needs**

**Minutes of meeting
held on Friday, 17 March 2006 at 10:45 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

- Members present** : Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung (Chairman)
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, GBS, JP
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
- Member attending** : Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
- Public Officers attending** : Mr Christopher WARDLAW
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (5)
- Dr Catherine K K CHAN
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and
Manpower (Curriculum Development)
- Mrs Betty IP TSANG Chui-hing
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and
Manpower (School Administration & Support)

Mrs Mary MA LO To-wan
Commissioner for Rehabilitation, Health, Welfare and
Food Bureau

Mr SIT Tung
Assistant Director (Rehabilitation and Medical Social
Services), Social Welfare Department

**Attendance by
invitation** : Item II

Parents' Alliance on Special Education System

Mrs Pansy LEUNG KONG Wai-ying
Covenor

Mrs Karen AU YEUNG CHAN Cheuk-man
Vice-Convenor

Hong Kong Association for Parents of Persons with
Physical Disabilities

Ms NAM Suk-yee
Vice-Chairman

Ms Sandy LAM Suk-yu
Executive Member

Parents Concerned Group – Integrated Education

Ms Connie LIO Sio-chu
Committee

Hong Kong Association for Specific Learning
Disabilities

Mrs LAU LI Man-ying
Vice-Chairperson

Mrs KWAN TO Sze-wah
Ex-Co member

The Association of Parents of the Severely Mentally Handicapped

Mrs LAU CHENG Yee-man
Deputy Chairman

Mrs Sandra CHENG HO Wai-ngan
Secretary

Special Education Society of Hong Kong

Mr Andrew TSE
Chairman

Ms Maria WONG
Vice-Chairman

Clerk in attendance : Miss Odelia LEUNG
Chief Council Secretary (2)6

Staff in attendance : Mr Stanley MA
Senior Council Secretary (2)6

Ms Sandy HAU
Legislative Assistant (2)6

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I. Confirmation of minutes
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1362/05-06]

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2006 were confirmed.

II. Future development of special education under the new senior secondary academic structure
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1361/05-06(01) and CB(2)1591/05-06(01)]

2. With the aid of power-point computer programme, Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (5) (DS(EM(5))) briefed members on the proposals in the consultation document entitled “Further Consultation on Career-oriented Studies and the New Senior Secondary Academic Structure for Special Schools (the consultation document)”.

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Oral presentation by deputations

*Parents' Alliance on Special Education System
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1446/05-06(01)]*

3. Mrs Pansy LEUNG presented the views of the Parents Alliance on Special Education System as detailed in its submission. She highlighted that the Alliance queried the reliability of the findings of the study entitled "A Study of the Effectiveness of Special Schools" (the Study) that the overall resource allocation to Hong Kong's special schools, human, financial and capital, was good by international standards. The Alliance acknowledged the need to engage parents in school activities but considered that parents should not be regarded as manpower resources for special schools. The voluntary help of parents should not be a means to save manpower resources. The Alliance considered it short-sighted to design the new senior academic structure (NSS) with the main purpose of enhancing the employability and employment opportunities of students with intellectual disability (ID students). The Alliance called for diversification of the curriculum to cater for the different needs of children with special educational needs (SEN).

*Hong Kong Association for Parents of Persons with Physical Disabilities
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1459/05-06(02)]*

4. Ms NAM Suk-ye presented the views of the Hong Kong Association for Parents of Persons with Physical Disabilities as detailed in its submission. She highlighted that the Association objected to the reduction of junior secondary education for ID students from four years to three years under NSS. The Association called on the Administration to provide special transport arrangements to PD students to facilitate them to attend career-oriented studies (COS). The Association requested the Administration to encourage schools for the physically disabled not just to adopt mode 1 in implementing COS, i.e. courses delivered at the venues of the course providers and taught by the staff of the course providers, but other modes so that PD students could have access to a wide variety of COS. The Association opposed the proposed increase of boarding fees in special schools to the range of fees for hostels under the Social Welfare Department (SWD). It considered that the tuition fee for senior secondary education should be set at a level lower than 18% of cost recovery. The Association was also concerned about any age limit for students with SEN for completing senior secondary education.

*Parents Concerned Group – Integrated Education
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1401/05-06(01)]*

5. Ms Connie LIO presented the views of the Parents Concerned Group – Integrated Education as detailed in its submission. She highlighted that the Administration had failed to honour its undertaking to review the trial scheme of

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converting former skills opportunity schools into ordinary secondary schools. The consultation document had not mentioned about the future development of these skills opportunity schools. She said that at least two of the three former skills opportunity schools had indicated wish to operate as special schools in order to obtain the necessary resources and cater for the needs of students with SEN. The Group was disappointed that the consultation document had not made any recommendation in respect of students with SEN but without obvious disabilities. The proposed COS in the consultation document was not suitable for these students. As both parents and students with SEN could benefit from the continued operation of skills opportunity schools, the Group requested the Administration to reclassify these schools as special schools and assist them to provide senior secondary education.

Hong Kong Association for Specific Learning Disabilities

6. Mrs LAU LI Man-ying said that students with specific learning disabilities (SLD students) were intellectually capable of studying in ordinary schools and pursuing post-secondary education. However, at present, the school class design did not take into account their needs and they were not treated fairly. She considered it necessary to provide special accommodation in assessing SLD students for post-secondary education. She requested the Administration to provide support measures to SLD students to enable them to pursue higher education and continuing learning.

*The Association of Parents of the Severely Mentally Handicapped
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1434/05-06(01)]*

7. Mrs Sandra CHENG presented the views of the Association of Parents of the Severely Mentally Handicapped as detailed in its submission. She highlighted that the curriculum design of NSS(ID) should not focus on skills training. ID students should be provided with different COS courses to suit their needs. To pursue the goal of lifelong learning and whole-person development, the Administration should work toward the establishment of community colleges for ID students. The Association suggested that each school should establish a fund to support parent education and parent participation in school activities. The Administration should formulate policies and increase resources for the future development of special education, and organize school programmes and activities for the promotion of an inclusive culture for ID students in the community. The Association also urged the Administration to consider the financial burden of parents of ID students and to consult them and relevant organisations on any proposal to increase senior secondary school fees and boarding fees in special schools.

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*Special Education Society of Hong Kong
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1459/05-06(03) and (04)]*

8. Mr Andrew TSE presented the views of the Special Education Society of Hong Kong as detailed in its submission. He highlighted the effect of NSS academic structure on basic education in special schools. The Society considered that the NSS (ID) curriculum tilted towards the teaching of practical subjects and independent living skills. There should be better interface between basic education and senior secondary education for students with SEN. The Society suggested that the Administration should develop learning outcomes in basic education for ID students, adopt one curriculum framework for all under the NSS academic structure, and provide additional resources for special schools, such as start-up grants for the operation of the pilot courses as stated in the consultation document. The Society also considered that 10 years of basic education for ID students should be maintained.

The Administration's response

9. In response to the deputations' views, DS(EM)5 said that on grounds of equity, the Administration proposed to provide ID students, including those attending schools for the visually impaired, schools for the hearing impaired (HI schools) and schools for the physically disabled (PD schools), three years junior secondary and three years senior secondary education. The Administration was committed to implementing the NSS academic structure and had earmarked resources to cater for the potential demand for additional number of classes in special schools. The appropriate level of resources for special schools for ID students would be determined when details of the NSS(ID) curriculum, the learning outcomes and assessment standards had been worked out and agreed with the stakeholders. The Administration would collaborate with education experts and make reference to overseas experience in the development and validation of the NSS(ID) curriculum and the learning outcomes and assessment framework through a research and development project in the next two years.

10. DS(EM)5 further said that under the NSS academic structure, special schools were expected to assume the responsibility for preparing students with SEN for a smooth transfer to training, employment, post-secondary education or other arrangements. They would need to set clear directions for enhancing student learning and fostering student autonomy consistent with individual capabilities. Working on the principle of one curriculum framework for all, special schools would have to develop a broad and challenging school-based curriculum which was capable of stretching the potential of students to the full. The Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) would continue to collaborate with the special education, welfare, rehabilitation, business and vocational training sectors to maximize the benefits of the NSS education and to facilitate the smooth transition of students with SEN from school to meaningful employment, post-school training and adult life.

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11. Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower (School Administration & Support) (PAS(SAS)) said that under the new academic structure, all students would be provided with three-year junior secondary and three-year senior secondary education. Students with SEN whose learning in schools was seriously disrupted for various reasons such as hospitalisation would be allowed to repeat. EMB would collaborate with the Vocational Training Council (VTC) and stakeholders in the design and development of COS for students with SEN. As regards transition to post-school life, EMB would continue to collaborate with the Commissioner for Rehabilitation, SWD and the key stakeholders to work out feasible and appropriate exit pathways/post-school placement arrangements for students with SEN after leaving school.

12. PAS(SAS) pointed out that students in senior secondary classes of special schools were now paying the same level of school fees as their counterparts in ordinary schools. The Administration had no intention to change the policy. Students with financial difficulties could apply for financial assistance through the Student Financial Assistance Scheme. By comparing the hostel fees under SWD, which ranged from \$1,600 to \$1,800 per boarder per month, the Administration considered that there was room for gradual adjustment for the existing boarding fee of \$440 per boarder per month in special schools. However, the Administration did not have any firm plan yet and would consult the stakeholders when it had worked out a proposal on increase of boarding fees.

13. PAS(SAS) appreciated that many parents were willing to actively engage in school activities and serve as teacher aides in classroom and extra-curricular activities. Their participation helped to strengthen home-school collaboration and parent-child relationship. Furthermore, she clarified that parent participation in school activities would not affect the amount of resources to be allocated to special schools.

14. Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower (Curriculum Development) supplemented that the proposed NSS(ID) curriculum framework would enable teachers to locate the needs of students with SEN on a continuum of core, elective and other learning experiences as tabulated in Appendix 6 to the consultation document. A functional approach had been adopted in the design of the curriculum for Chinese and Mathematics to meet the different learning needs of ID students. EMB would collaborate with the Curriculum Development Council, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, education experts and stakeholders to work out the details of the curriculum and assessment framework in preparation for the implementation of the NSS(ID) curriculum in the 2009-10 school year.

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Discussion

Post-school learning and employment

15. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that owing to the uncertainty about exit pathways for students with SEN, the issue of years of basic education remained unresolved. He considered that the provision of quality and meaningful post-school learning and employment opportunities to students with SEN could address the issues of age limit for special education and duration of basic education for ID students. He pointed out that at present, sheltered workshops provided no learning opportunities with the sole emphasis on undertaking simple work suitable to persons with different disabilities. He asked whether the Administration would consider providing continuing education opportunities for students with SEN through the various skills training centers, integrated vocational training centers, or other forms of training and employment.

16. Commissioner for Rehabilitation (C for R) responded that in anticipation of the implementation of the new academic structure in the 2009-10 school year, the Administration was reviewing the contents of existing skills training courses of the post-school institutions to ensure smooth articulation with the NSS curriculum. She explained that the main purpose of vocational rehabilitation service was to facilitate the smooth transition of students with SEN from school to meaningful employment, post-school training and adult life. At present, special schools would refer prospective school leavers to VTC for assessment of the most suitable type of post-school institutions for the students. A comprehensive range of training courses/programmes was offered at VTC Skills Centres for the purpose of improving trainees' employment prospects and preparing them for open employment. The integrated vocational services centres operated or funded by SWD provided flexible rehabilitation services including sheltered workshops, supported employment and skills training tailored to the needs of people with different disabilities. Through the provision of one-stop service, students with SEN would be arranged to attend vocational training sheltered workshops or take up supported employment according to their ability. Depending on individual capabilities, some students with SEN might find an employment in the open market after two years of training.

17. Assistant Director (Rehabilitation and Medical Social Services) supplemented that SWD would collaborate with EMB to improve the rehabilitation services for students with disabilities in the light of the implementation of the new academic structure and the NSS(ID) curriculum. He added that SWD would continue to work with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to review and improve the training contents of day training and rehabilitation services to tailor for the ability of people with disabilities and to meet the need of the employment market.

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18. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that apart from the existing rehabilitation services, the Government should provide continuing education opportunities for students with SEN, including students with severe disabilities, after leaving school. He pointed out that not all people with disabilities could find an employment and lead an independent life, and students with severe ID would need the care and attention of parents or social workers in daily living. He considered that rehabilitation centres should be planned and run to cater for the long-term learning and living needs of disabled persons who were unable to take up open employment.

19. The Chairman shared the concern of Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong. He considered that the current operation of sheltered workshops could not provide the disabled with a pleasant environment. He pointed out that very few trainees in sheltered workshops and rehabilitation centers were able to lead an independent life. The Administration should provide a wider range of rehabilitation services for people with disabilities so that they could lead a meaningful life.

20. C for R responded that the Administration would consider the views of members on ways to enhance continuing education opportunities in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services for people with disabilities. She added that it had always been the aim of the Administration to enable people with disabilities to pursue lifelong learning and lead a meaningful life.

Improvement measures on special education

21. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that the focus of the consultation document was on the integration of students with SEN in ordinary schools and the interests of students with severe ID and specific learning disabilities were neglected. He was disappointed at the lack of specific proposals on improvement of special education, such as the provision of education to students with SEN up to the age of 21.

22. DS(EM)5 responded that the current consultation dealt with the academic structure and curriculum framework for special schools. Other issues would be dealt with in the comprehensive review of special education. He acknowledged that it was the Government policy for students with SEN to study in ordinary schools insofar as they could benefit from integrated education. However, for students with severe, profound or multiple disabilities who could not be benefited from ordinary school settings, they would be placed in special schools where their disabilities, impairments and learning difficulties would be properly managed. He highlighted that special education was provided for children to overcome their barrier in learning arising from disability or learning difficulties. The overarching objective was to enable students with SEN to maximise their potential and lead an independent life. In this connection, the Administration considered it important that opportunities should be provided for students in

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special schools to interact with ordinary students in other settings to enhance learning and social integration.

23. DS(EM)5 further said that one of the contemporary thinking in special education was that there should be no clear demarcation between special schools and ordinary schools. A continuum of schools should be operated to meet the learning needs of students with different aptitudes and capabilities. The Administration would endeavour to facilitate collaboration between special schools and ordinary schools to enable interaction of their students for the benefits of learning as well as for social integration. In this context, special schools were expected to serve as professional and resources centres to support ordinary schools in the implementation of integrated education.

24. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung remarked that in line with the concept of positive discrimination under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance, the review of special education should aim to come up with special measures and arrangements to support students with SEN in learning. He considered that the Administration should review the provision of special education from the perspective of students with SEN.

Age limit for special education

25. The Chairman was concerned whether the Administration would review the age limit for students with SEN in special schools under the new academic structure. He pointed out that at present, enrolment to the two-year Extension of Years Education (EYE) programme was subject to a maximum age of 18.

26. PAS(SAS) responded that with the implementation of the NSS academic structure, all students would be provided with six years of primary education and six years of secondary education. By then, there was no need to operate the EYE programme which was intended for ID students aged 16 to 17 and 11 months. As regards the age limit of students in special schools, she pointed out that EMB had all along been dealing the issue flexibly and there were individual cases in which students were allowed to continue their education in special schools beyond the age of 20.

Provision of basic education

27. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan noted with concern that under the new academic structure for special schools, PD/HI students would be provided with 10 years basic education, whereas ID students only nine years. He asked for the reason for the disparity in the provision of basic education for students with different types of SEN.

28. In response, DS(EM)5 said that the Administration had adopted the broad principle that students with SEN who were intellectually capable of pursuing the

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ordinary curriculum would follow the ordinary curriculum and be assessed in the same way as other students with appropriate assessment accommodation in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education under the NSS academic structure, while ID students would follow the NSS(ID) curriculum with emphasis on broadening their learning experiences including their vocational awareness and preparation for independent living. He acknowledged that the proposal for PD/HI students to have access to 10-year basic education might appear controversial, but pointed out that the proposal was made on the basis of the current practice for PD/HI students who were capable of following the ordinary curriculum.

29. PAS(SAS) pointed out that students with normal intelligence but severe to profound hearing impairment might have difficulty in language acquisition and development as well as in auditory reception and oral expression, whereas students of normal intelligence in PD schools might have severe or multiple physical disabilities. The learning of these students was regularly and frequently disrupted by therapies and hospitalization. For these students who were capable of following the ordinary curriculum and attending the public examinations, the Administration considered it appropriate to follow the existing practice to provide them with an additional year of study in order to prepare them better for the three-year senior secondary education, leading to the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education. This was only a special arrangement for a limited number of HI and PD students. Extending such an arrangement to all students with SEN was not necessary.

30. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan asked whether the disparity in the provision of basic education to ID students and HI/PD students with normal intellectual ability would constitute discrimination against ID students who studied with HI/PD students in the same special school, or even in the same class.

31. PAS(SAS) responded that at present, some students in PD schools would switch to ordinary schools after completion of primary six, while other students would continue their secondary education in the PD schools. She pointed out that some special schools adopted small group teaching for students with different types of SEN and capabilities. The Administration was aware of the manpower resources required for implementing small group teaching. The Administration would examine the appropriate arrangements for provision of basic education to students with different types of SEN in special schools through a research and development project in the next two years.

32. The Chairman remained of the view that ID students should also be provided with 10 years basic education under the new academic structure. He could not accept that only PD/HI students should be provided with 10 years basic education because of their capability to follow the ordinary curriculum and participate in the open examinations.

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Resources

33. Referring to paragraph 7.2 of the consultation document, Miss CHAN Yuen-han expressed concern about the conclusion of the Study that the overall resource allocation to Hong Kong's special schools in terms of human, financial and capital, was good by world standards, and the real challenge lay in resource management in special schools. She asked whether such a conclusion on the management effectiveness of special schools reflected the Administration's intention to keep the resource allocation for special education at the current level.

34. DS(EM)5 responded that the Administration had committed resources of \$115.6 million for the transition period leading up to 2009 to encourage the growth of diversity of curriculum, assessment and pathways in the senior secondary schools including piloting with special schools approaches for ID students. The Administration was also committed to the implementation of the NSS academic structure and had earmarked resources to cater for the potential demand for additional classes in special schools. The statements in paragraph 7.2 of the consultation document should apply to all public sector schools in terms of cost-effective deployment of scarce public resources. He explained that the Study was conducted to assess the effectiveness of resource utilisation in special schools in support of student learning, and had identified the elements for successful school management as well as the areas for management improvement. In the next couple of years, the Administration would work towards the development of appropriate curriculum and assessment framework as well as improvement on effectiveness of resources management in special schools to enhance student learning.

35. Miss CHAN Yuen-han remarked that the Administration should provide adequate resources for implementation of special education under the new academic structure. The Chairman pointed out that the results of the Study were controversial and had caused heated debate in the special education sector.

Boarding fees

36. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan sought clarification from the Administration concerning the proposed increase in boarding fees in special schools. PAS(SAS) replied that the Administration was open on the issue and would consider the views of the stakeholders collected from the current consultation exercise.

37. Mr Albert CHAN said that some students with SEN residing in New Territories West were provided with boarding places in special schools located in Hong Kong Island. He requested the Administration to provide a breakdown by district of the supply of and demand for boarding services for students with different types of disabilities.

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Admin

38. PAS(SAS) agreed to provide updated statistics as requested. She added that with the support of the Subcommittee, two boarding sections for PD students with 60 places each would be established in the New Territories East and New Territories West respectively. The two projects would be completed in 2010.

Follow-up

Admin

39. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide a written response to the views and concerns of members and deputations expressed at the meeting. DS(EM)5 noted the request and supplemented that the Administration would take account of the views and concerns of members and deputations in the preparation of a report on the outcome of the current consultation exercise.

III. Any other business

40. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:55 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
19 April 2006