

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)546/04-05
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 13 December 2004 at 4:30 pm
in the Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Dr Hon YEUNG Sum (Chairman)
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, GBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, SBS, JP
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP

Members absent : Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon MA Lik, JP

Public Officers attending : Item IV
Mr CHENG Yan-chee, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (4)
Mr CHING Wai-hung
Senior Education Officer (Placement and Support)

Item V
Mr Chris WARDLAW
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (5)

Mr Andrew POON
Principal Assistant Secretary (Quality Assurance),
Education and Manpower Bureau

Item VI

Mr Edward YAU
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (1)

Mrs Carrie WILLIS
Executive Director, Vocational Training Council

Miss Annie HO
Principal Education Officer, Vocational Training Council

Clerk in attendance : Miss Flora TAI
Chief Council Secretary (2)2

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

Miss Sherman WOO
Legislative Assistant (2)2

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I. Confirmation of minutes

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)350/04-05 and CB(2)351/04-05]

The minutes of the meetings held on 29 October and 8 November 2004 were confirmed.

II. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting

[LC Paper No. CB(2)210/04-05(01)]

2. Members noted the Administration's paper on "Review of the subvention arrangement for the English Schools Foundation" issued on 12 November 2004.

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[Appendices I and II to LC Paper No. CB(2)349/04-05]

3. Members noted the "List of outstanding issues for discussion" and the

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“List of follow-up actions” issued vide LC Paper No.CB(2)388/04-05 on 10 December 2004.

4. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the regular meeting scheduled for Monday, 10 January 2005 at 4:30 pm –

- (a) Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme in primary schools; and
- (b) Boarding places, senior secondary education and employment opportunities for students with special educational needs.

5. Members considered that the scope of the agenda item referred to paragraph 4(b) also fell under the policy portfolio of the Panel on Welfare Services. The Chairman instructed the Clerk to liaise with the Panel on Welfare Services whether a joint meeting should be held for the discussion of this item.

[Post-meeting note : A joint meeting of the Panel on Education and the Panel on Welfare Services was subsequently scheduled for 10 January 2005 at 5:30 pm.]

6. Ms Audrey EU and Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong suggested that the Panel should discuss the implementation and evaluation of the pilot study on effective strategies of class and group teaching in 37 primary schools. Mrs Selina CHOW suggested that the discussion should include the effectiveness of professional development programmes for teachers to teach in small classes. Ms EU and Mr CHEUNG pointed out that there were media reports that some members of the Steering Committee, which was formed to advise on the study throughout its duration, had remarked that the benefits of small class teaching on learning was insignificant. They considered that it was inappropriate for these members of the Steering Committee to make these remarks as the Committee was tasked to evaluate the results of the study which had not been completed. They suggested that representatives of the Steering Committee should be invited to participate in the discussion. Members agreed.

Proposals on construction of primary and secondary school premises

7. Members noted the capital works projects on construction of new school premises which would be submitted to the Public Works Subcommittee in the 2004-05 legislative session as tabulated in Appendix B of LC Paper No.CB(2)257/04-05 issued on 22 November 2004. At the suggestion of the Chairman, members agreed that the Administration should provide a paper on each proposal well in advance to the Panel for circulation so that members could have ample time to decide whether it was necessary to discuss the proposal at a Panel meeting before its submission to the Public Works Subcommittee.

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IV. Revision of the early retirement scheme for aided primary school teachers

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)349/04-05(01) and (02) and FCR(2003-2004)62]

8. At the invitation of the Chairman, Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (4) (DS(EM)4) briefed members on the main points of the Administration's paper on the subject [LC Paper No. CB(2)349/04-05(01)]. In brief, the Administration proposed to revise the eligibility criteria of the Early Retirement Scheme for Aided Primary School Teachers (ERS) to include teachers of all aided primary schools and with less than five years of service before the normal retirement age of 60 (i.e. at or above the age of 55), subject to a sliding scale of discount in calculating the ex-gratia payment under the ERS.

Proposed relaxation on eligibility criteria for the ERS

9. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed support for the proposed relaxation in eligibility criteria as it would not result in additional financial implications for the Government and the Administration would continue to implement the ERS up to the 2006-07 school year using the grant of \$700 million approved by the Finance Committee. He agreed that the ERS was welcomed by teachers who wished to retire before their normal retirement age and had helped ease the problem of surplus teachers in aided primary schools. Mr CHEUNG suggested that the teaching posts thus vacated by successful ERS applicants in schools where there were no surplus teachers or reduction of classes should be opened to surplus teachers in other schools, similar to the current practice adopted by large school sponsoring bodies (SSBs) in deployment of surplus teachers among the schools they operated.

10. DS(EM)4 responded that the Administration concurred with Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's suggestion in principle. In implementing the ERS in the 2004-05 school year, the Administration had requested SSBs to give priority consideration to surplus teachers for filling the vacated teaching posts arising from successful ERS applicants in their schools. The Administration would request all aided primary schools with such vacated posts to follow the practice after the Finance Committee had endorsed the proposal to revise the eligibility criteria of the ERS.

11. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong asked whether the Administration had estimated the number of successful ERS applicants under the revised eligibility criteria. DS(EM)4 responded that the Administration initially estimated that about 700 teachers would be approved to join the ERS in the 2005-06 school year. He pointed out that the actual number of successful applicants would depend on the supply and demand of teachers in the next school year, the figures of which would become clearer after the completion of the primary one admission (POA) exercise in February 2005.

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12. Mr Tommy CHEUNG expressed reservations about the Administration's proposal. He pointed out that the proposed relaxation in eligibility criteria for the ERS deviated from the original intention for the establishment of the ERS and the Early Retirement Ex-gratia Payment Fund (the Fund), and the review on the ERS had not yet been conducted.

13. DS(EM)4 responded that a review on the ERS was originally planned for 2006, but the proposal was put forward in response to feedback from teachers and principals in aided primary schools. The Administration envisaged that by extending the ERS to all aided primary schools and to teachers at or above the age of 55, more teaching posts would be vacated to accommodate both surplus teachers and fresh graduates which would help ease the problem of surplus teachers and help maintain a healthy turnover in the teaching force at the same time. He added that the ex-gratia payment for successful ERS applicants aged 55 and above would be discounted according to a sliding scale from 0% to 100%, which was derived to ensure that no additional funding would be incurred.

14. Mr Tommy CHEUNG maintained his view that it was not appropriate to relax the eligibility criteria for the ERS even though it did not result in additional financial implications for the Government. He pointed out that he could not see the need to incur public money for additional payment to teachers who would retire in a few years' time. Mr Tommy CHEUNG considered the proposal not in line with the original intention of the ERS to ease the problem of surplus teachers in aided primary schools. He also wondered whether the relaxed eligibility criteria would also encourage good teachers to leave the teaching force earlier than their normal retirement age.

15. Mr Andrew LEUNG shared the view of Mr Tommy CHEUNG. He considered that the Fund should be used in accordance with its original objectives. He also considered that there was no need to extend the ERS to schools without surplus teachers at this stage of implementation.

16. Mr Jasper TSANG was of the view that the proposed relaxation in eligibility criteria would not only help ease the problem of surplus teachers, but also create more employment opportunities for fresh graduates. He added that successful ESR applicants needed to be supported by the principals/School Management Committees (SMC) concerned and good teachers would be kept in the teaching force.

Application of the ERS for Government schools

17. Dr Fernando CHEUNG asked whether the Administration would consider extending the ERS to Government primary schools with surplus teachers in the future.

18. DS(EM)4 responded that the Administration would explore feasible

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measures to ease the problem of surplus teachers in Government primary schools which might emerge after the completion of the POA exercise for the 2005-06 school year. He pointed out that Government school teachers were civil servants employed in accordance with the terms and conditions under the civil service regulations.

19. Dr Fernando CHEUNG asked whether teachers would be allowed to retire earlier than the normal retirement age on other grounds such as the heavy workload arising from implementation of the education reform initiatives. DS(EM)4 responded that the ERS aimed to provide a financial incentive for some teachers of aided primary schools to retire early so as to ease the problem of surplus teachers. The Administration at present had no intention to provide teachers with an option to retire earlier than the normal retirement age on other grounds. Mr Tommy CHEUNG remarked that providing teachers with an option to retire early on other grounds was not in line with the spirit of the ERS to ease the problem of surplus teachers.

V. School self-evaluation

[LC Paper No. CB(2)349/04-05(03)]

20. At the invitation of the Chairman, Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (5) (DS(EM)5) briefed members on the main points of the Administration's paper entitled "Progress report on the implementation of the School development and accountability (SDA) framework".

Implementation and feedback

21. Referring to the findings of the post-ESR survey on teachers' opinion on external school review (ESR) as summarised in Appendix 2 of the Administration's paper, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that around 24% to 29% of respondents disagreed that ESR did not affect teachers' daily duties, and around 16% to 17% of respondents strongly disagreed that ESR did not exert much pressure on teachers. He pointed out that teachers and principals were already overloaded with the implementation of various education reform initiatives, and would be required to attend professional development programmes for the implementation of the proposed new academic structure for senior secondary education. Mr CHEUNG expressed concern about the additional work required for them under the school self-evaluation (SSE) and ESR. He considered the refinement measures introduced in June 2004 had reflected EMB's inadequate planning for implementing the SDA framework. Mr CHEUNG asked whether the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) had consulted the schools and related personnel about the recommended strategies for implementing SDA in the 2005-06 school year.

22. DS(EM)5 responded that EMB had held consultations with school

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councils and had discussions with school personnel including the school sponsoring bodies on the implementation of SDA in the 2005-06 school year. EMB had provided extensive support to schools about the implementation of the SDA framework from September 2004 as well. He pointed out that it was clear that the school sector considered that SSE and ESR had put pressure on schools and teachers in their daily work. EMB, however, anticipated that the education sector would appreciate the positive impacts of SDA on school development and accountability, the benefit of having access to useful data available under the SDA framework and the support provided by EMB throughout the implementation process. EMB understood that schools were worried about the workload arising from SSE and ESR as the concept of data management and evidence-based self-assessment was relatively new to schools. DS(EM)5 pointed out that additional workload was normal in the implementation of a new development and accountability system for the school sector. To reduce schools' workload, EMB would continue to consult and collaborate with the schools to simplify the documentation process for SSE and ESR. As a result, a number of improved measures had been implemented in June 2004 to help schools meet the requirements under SSE and ESR.

23. Principal Assistant Secretary (Quality Assurance) (PAS(QA)) supplemented that EMB understood the diversity in the capacity and readiness of schools in the implementation of the SSE process. He pointed out that some schools had considered SSE as a one-off event rather than an on-going school development practice. Some tended to over-prepare and over-document in the preparing for ESR. In the light of the experience in Phase I implementation, EMB had conducted more than 30 experience-sharing sessions on good practices in SSE and related issues with a total attendance of more than 5 400 teachers. During these sessions, participating teachers shared the best practices and purposes of SSE and ESR. They were also reminded not to over-document for ESR. He added that according to a systematic Impact Study conducted by a research team from Cambridge Education and the University of Cambridge in 2004, the overall response from teachers and principals of the 99 schools involved in the Phase I implementation of SSE and ESR were very encouraging.

24. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that SSE was new to schools and involved complicate and voluminous administrative work on their part. Some schools were not fully aware of the requirements of ESR and they were concerned that the results of ESR would affect their reputation and student enrolment. He also considered it absurd to say that teachers in general welcomed the introduction of SSE and ESR under SDA. Mr CHEUNG suggested that EMB should consult schools extensively on the recommended strategies to support the implementation of SDA in the 2005-06 school year.

25. DS(EM)5 acknowledged that it was still a common perception among schools that ESR would mean additional workload. He pointed out that researches had revealed that when schools and teachers were familiar with the

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storage and retrieval of the necessary data, the preparation of SSE and ESR would become a normal and on-going activity in school management. He pointed out that there were schools that had made SSE their own and had successfully embedded self-evaluation in the daily round of activities. He envisaged that with a better understanding of the SSE and ESR requirements, the workload for schools to meet these requirements would be reduced.

26. DS(EM)5 further said that the post-ESR survey was conducted to ascertain ESR on schools and so did the Impact Study conducted by two quality assurance and school improvement specialists, Professor John MacBeath and Mr Bill Clarke. The post-ESR survey revealed that 70% of all teacher respondents affirmed the achievement of the SDA. The Study also confirmed that the preparation of the SSE report on the 14 performance indicator-related areas could bring the staff of a school together to reflect on the quality and effectiveness of the school as a whole, and would help improve openness and transparency in school management. Furthermore, the Study also confirmed the importance of the use of data as a basis of SSE and gave credit to SDA in giving impetus for schools to move from impressionistic to evidence-based approach in performance management and school development.

27. Ms Audrey EU noted that according to the post-ESR survey, about 7.2% of the respondents strongly agreed and about 51% agreed that they were on the whole satisfied with the ESR process. She asked about the composition of the 99 schools and the percentage of the respondents who were teachers of the 99 schools. The Chairman also asked whether the Administration would release the names of these 99 schools to the public.

28. DS(EM)5 responded that the 99 schools included in the ESR review exercise were pioneers in the implementation of SDA and represented a fair spectrum of the primary, secondary and special schools in Hong Kong. PAS(QA) added that the respondents were the 3817 teachers coming from the 99 schools which comprised 32 secondary, 60 primary and seven special schools. Their names as well as their ESR reports would be uploaded to the EMB website by the end of December 2004.

Access to and transparency of school data

29. Mr Jasper TSANG noted from paragraph 11 of the Administration's paper that since June 2004, schools were no longer required to include any key performance measures (KPMs) in the uploaded school report for the 2003-04 and 2004-05 school years. They would need to report only about 10 KPM items to SMC and "key stakeholders" up to the 2004-05 school year. Mr TSANG asked whether "key stakeholders" included parents and local community members. He also asked how EMB would prevent unnecessary publication of data on KPMs.

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30. DS(EM)5 responded that the requirement for schools to upload their school plans and reports to their websites were relaxed in view of schools' concern about increased transparency at a time of declining student population. Nevertheless, schools were well advised to let parents and local communities informed of their KPMs. To avoid unnecessary publication of KPM data, EMB would establish protocols for schools to follow. DS(EM)5 said that EMB was confident that schools would follow the protocols on the use of KPM data for publicity purposes. PAS(QA) supplemented that "key stakeholders" included members of SMCs, parents and teachers in the schools concerned. Schools had discretion as to whether KPM data should be released to local communities on request.

31. Mr Jasper TSANG asked whether all schools were aware of the requirement to report only about 10 KPM items to SMCs and key stakeholders including parents and teachers. He pointed out that schools with less impressive improvements in performance might not wish to disclose their KPM data.

32. DS(EM)5 explained that the prime objective of SDA was that parents and other key stakeholders of a school should have access to the KPM data and be aware of the strengths and areas for improvement of the school. EMB had conducted a series of seminars and workshops for school principals on the use of school data to develop appropriate learning and assessment policy, and a pamphlet on the use of KPMs had been produced to promote the use of data for school improvement purposes. EMB would aim to create a positive culture in the use of data and review the selection, collection and reporting of KPM data in the 2005-06 school year.

33. PAS(QA) supplemented that the refinement measures were implemented after consultation with major school sponsoring bodies and school councils. To enforce compliance, EMB had issued a circular to schools on the requirements of the refinement measures on 11 June 2004.

34. The Chairman asked how schools would respond to the requirement that KPM data should be released to parents upon request. Mr Jasper TSANG remarked that while schools with impressive KPM achievements might wish to publicise their achievements, schools with less impressive achievements might wish to maintain confidentiality of the related KPM data. He asked how EMB would prevent unauthorized disclosure of unfavourable KPM data.

35. DS(EM)5 responded that in line with the spirit of SDA and school-based management, schools should share the KPM achievements with parents and teachers to facilitate on-going development and performance improvements. EMB would encourage schools to publicise their KPMs to enhance transparency and accountability in school management. He believed that as honest self-evaluating professional organisations, schools should disclose their KPM and other achievements to key stakeholders and collaborate with them to

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improve performance in various KPM areas.

36. Mr Tommy CHEUNG pointed out that other parents might also wish to have access to the KPM data of a school even though their children were not studied there. DS(EM)5 responded that the appropriate level of transparency to be achieved in school management would have to be determined in the light of the community needs and the changing circumstances. The objective of SDA was to provide rigorous, objective and systematic quality assurance procedures that were needed to maximize the benefits of the education and curriculum reform initiatives and enhance student learning outcome.

37. Ms Audrey EU said that it was still not clear which KPM items would or would not be included in the uploaded school report and which KPM items would need to be reported to SMC and key stakeholders only. She requested the Administration to provide samples of SSE report and ESR report showing these different groups of KPM items for members' easy reference. DS(EM)5 undertook to provide the samples as requested.

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Assessment and support

38. Mr Tommy CHEUNG expressed concern about the objectivity and consistency of assessing performance improvements on the basis of the KPMs under the SDA framework. He pointed out that schools might set performance targets at different levels for self-evaluation purposes. It would be difficult to compare their progress improvements in an objective and consistent manner.

39. DS(EM)5 responded that EMB would initially provide a set of performance indicators for schools to assess their own performances. As the school data size became sufficiently large, the benchmark process should provide a set of more objective and consistent standards for different levels of outcomes and schools' performance achievements. PAS(QA) supplemented that full set of performance indicators for schools had been issued to all schools in 2002 and the reference data on KPM would be issued to schools in 2004.

40. Mr Patrick LAU asked how EMB would assist schools to improve their performances as identified in SSE and ESR, in particular schools with limited space and financial resources.

41. DS(EM)5 responded that SDA policy aimed to establish a mutual commitment to enhance the quality of school education and student learning outcomes by way of evidence-based and data-driven SSE and ESR. Schools were expected to prepare their annual action plans and performance reports and validated by the ESR Team. EMB would provide appropriate support services to schools in need. The ESR was one of the tools to complement schools' self-evaluation. As regards the provision of resources, the Administration had set aside \$550 million for providing a range of school based professional support

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programmes to support schools in implementing various reform initiatives. This included the establishment of school-based professional support teams to collaborate with universities in the provision of quality support programmes to schools. Besides, the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research also organised a wide range of professional development programmes for serving language teachers in schools.

Follow-up

42. The Chairman suggested that the Panel should follow up the discussion by receiving views from deputations at a future meeting. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Mr Tommy CHEUNG expressed support for the suggestion. Mr Tommy CHEUNG added that academics in universities who were experienced in evaluation work of school's performance should be invited to present their views to the Panel.

VI. Increase of course fees by the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education

[LC Paper No. CB(2)349/04-05(04)]

43. At the invitation of the Chairman, Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (1) (DS(EM)1) and Executive Director, Vocational Training Council (ED(VTC)) briefed members on the Administration's paper on the subject.

Increase of fees and cost-recovery rates

44. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that he had received a complaint about the increase of course fees ranging from 5% to 20% for part-time evening (PTE) programmes offered by the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (IVE). He pointed out that an increase of 20% in course fees was well in excess of a 5% increase as suggested by the Chairman of Vocational Training Council (VTC) on various occasions. Mr CHEUNG considered that a 20% increase of course fee was too much a burden for needy students under the current economic conditions. He asked whether EMB had given approval for a 20% increase for individual modules of PTE programmes offered by IVE.

45. DS(EM)1 explained that prior to 2003-04, the VTC's fee policy was that the fees of PTE courses offered by IVE were pegged at rates of not less than 50% cost-recovery. The policy was reviewed and modified under the VTC's 8-year Strategic Plan 2003-04 to 2010 -11 (the Strategic Plan), which proposed, among others, to increase by phases the fees of the PTE courses above craft level in order to attain full cost recovery by the 2006-07 academic year. The direction of the Strategic Plan was subsequently endorsed by EMB.

46. DS(EM)1 further explained that EMB had approved the proposed fee

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increases in respect of PTE courses for the 2004-05 academic year after taking into consideration the general economic conditions, the fee levels of comparable courses offered by other educational institutions and the impact on students and their affordability. The fee increases for different PTE courses varied, ranging from 5% to 20%, depending on their mode of studies, unit costs and cost recovery rates already achieved. He pointed out that the EMB did not approve fee increases for the full-time courses which had remained unchanged and the fees for some PTE courses below craft level were increased only by a small percentage.

47. ED(VTC) supplemented that the strategy to increase by phases the fees of the PTE courses was mapped out having regard to the market demand for the PTE programmes from the working adults, the higher level of fees charged by other institutions offering similar courses, the improvement to the mode of delivery and the teaching and learning environment in IVE, the financial assistance available to those students in need and the VTC's efforts to improve cost efficiency. She pointed out that on average, the annual tuition fees for courses above craft level had increased from about \$6,240 in 2003-04 to about \$7,500 in 2004-05, i.e. a net increase of about \$1,260 in a year. Needy students could seek deferment of fee payment or assistance under the Non-Means Tested Loan Scheme administered by the Student Financial Assistance Agency.

48. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that he would not object to reasonable increase in course fees for programmes offered by IVE, but could not accept an increase as high as 20% for the 2004-05 academic year. He suggested that the VTC should limit the increase of fees for individual PTE programmes by 5% to 7% each year until the target ratios of cost-recovery were achieved. Mr CHEUNG also asked about the forecast increase of fees for the next academic year.

49. ED(VTC) explained that the target was to attain full cost recovery for the PTE courses above craft level by 2006-07, and tuition fees would be increased in the next two academic years, but the VTC would continue to improve internal efficiency to reduce the unit costs, which would minimise the increase of course fees. Current forecasts were that the fees for the Higher Technician courses would increase by about 5% and those for the Technician courses by about 10% in the next academic year. As the current cost recovery rates for the Technician courses were lower, it would be necessary to increase fees at a higher rate to bring them to full cost recovery by 2006-07.

50. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed concern that students who had to pay an additional 20% course fees would face further increase in the next academic year. He considered it unfair to impose a 20% fee increase for current students who would have no alternative but to pay the new fees in order to continue their studies. Mr CHEUNG pointed out that the financial burden would be especially heavy for students who had to complete their study of a programme

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by taking a number of modules.

Student enrolment and funding support

51. Mr TSANG Yok-sing asked about the total enrolment of PTE programmes operated by IVE in the 2004-05 academic year. ED(VTC) replied that the total enrolment for the academic year was about 18 700 students.

52. Mr TSANG Yok-sing pointed out that the total enrolment in the 1999-2000 to 2003-04 academic years were 25 600, 24 600, 23 200, 23 000 and 21 700 respectively. He expressed concern about the decline in enrolment in the current academic year. The Chairman asked whether the decline was largely a result of reduction of funding support by the Government.

53. ED(VTC) explained that the VTC planned the provision of PTE places in each academic year primarily on the basis of the estimated market demand for the PTE programmes from the working adults, taking into consideration past trend of enrolments. As the VTC would have to provide a wide range of services including full time pre-employment courses and part-time in-service education and training courses, the resource factor must also be taken into account and the services prioritised. She added that the income from the increase in course fees would help support some 5000 PTE places.

Follow-up

54. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong requested the VTC to re-consider the appropriate level of tuition fees for PTE programmes which had been increased by 20% in the 2004-05 academic year.

55. DS(EM)1 responded that the VTC would aim to achieve the targeted cost-recovery rates for individual programmes and efficiency savings in accordance with its Strategic Plan. In the long term, the VTC would have to remain competitive in the provision of PTE programmes which were offered by other providers in a free market.

56. The Chairman requested the Administration to review its funding policy for the VTC's PTE programmes with a view to increasing education opportunities for the working adults. Dr Fernando CHEUNG added that the Administration should not reduce funding support for the VTC as it would reduce further education opportunities for the working adults. He pointed out that reduction of funding support did not dovetail with the Government's policy of improving the quality of manpower resources.

57. DS(EM)1 responded that the Government would continue to fund and subsidize the VTC programmes that met the specific manpower development requirements such as the VTC's recent programmes to help train the

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non-engaged youth. For programmes which were offered by other operators in the training market, the VTC should aim at operating on a self financing basis by improving efficiency and to remain competitive in the long run.

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58. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide a paper in response to members' views and suggestions expressed at the meeting. DS(EM)1 agreed.

VII. Any other business

59. Members agreed to re-schedule the regular meeting originally scheduled for 14 February 2004 to Monday, 7 February 2004 at 4:30 pm.

60. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 7:01 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
7 January 2005