

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1431/04-05
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Wednesday, 6 April 2005 at 8:30 am
in 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 Emily LAU Wai-hing, 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 attending** : Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP
- Member absent** : Hon MA Lik, JP
- Public Officers attending** : Item III
Mr CHENG Man-yiu, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (3)

Mrs Betty IP TSANG Chui-hing
Principal Assistant Secretary (School Administration &
Support), Education and Manpower Bureau

Item IV

Mr Michael TIEN
Chairman of Working Group on Review of Secondary
School Places Allocation and Medium of Instruction
for Secondary Schools

Dr Anissa CHAN
Member of Working Group on Review of Secondary
School Places Allocation and Medium of Instruction
for Secondary Schools

Dr CHEUNG Kwok-wah
Member of Working Group on Review of Secondary
School Places Allocation and Medium of Instruction
for Secondary Schools

Sr WONG May-may
Member of Working Group on Review of Secondary
School Places Allocation and Medium of Instruction
for Secondary Schools

Professor LEE Wing-on
Member of Working Group on Review of Secondary
School Places Allocation and Medium of Instruction
for Secondary Schools

Mr FUNG Ka-ching
Member of Working Group on Review of Secondary
School Places Allocation and Medium of Instruction
for Secondary Schools

Mrs Cherry TSE
Member of Working Group on Review of Secondary
School Places Allocation and Medium of Instruction
for Secondary Schools

Mrs Fanny LAM
Member of Working Group on Review of Secondary
School Places Allocation and Medium of Instruction
for Secondary Schools

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

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

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

Members noted that no information paper had been issued since the last meeting.

II. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[Appendices I and II to LC Paper No. CB(2)1173/04-05]

2. Members noted the “list of outstanding items for discussion” and “List of follow-up actions” which were tabled at the meeting.

3. Members agreed to discuss the follow items at the next regular meeting scheduled for 9 May 2005 at 4:30 pm -

- (a) Use of Language Fund – Proposals to strengthen support in language education at pre-primary and primary levels;
- (b) The Second Information Technology in Education Strategies; and
- (c) Funding flexibility and support measures for aided schools with incorporated management committees.

4. Regarding the item in paragraph 3(a), Ms Audrey EU suggested that the Administration should provide an overview of language education in Hong Kong and elaborate on how the Language Fund would be used to enhance language education in Hong Kong.

III. Financial assistance scheme for evening adult education courses

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1173/04-05(01)]

Introduction

5. At the invitation of the Chairman, Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (3) (DS(EM)3) briefed members on the main points of the Administration’s paper on the subject. He highlighted that the proposed financial assistance scheme (the Scheme) for adult learners, if supported by the

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Panel and approved by the Finance Committee (FC), would take effect from the 2005-06 school year for a period of three years. The operation of the Scheme would make reference to that of the existing Project Yi Jin (PYJ) which provided a basic subsidy of 30% of the course fees and a full fee remission to needy adult learners who met the prescribed criteria including the standard means test used for PYJ. Members noted that the Administration intended to submit the proposal to the FC for consideration at its meeting on 6 May 2005.

Impact of outsourcing

6. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that at the meetings of the Panel on 7 and 28 April 2003, members had expressed strong reservations about the Administration's proposal to outsource the provision of government evening school courses operated by the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) to non-profit-making service providers. He pointed out that many members at that time had expressed concern about the increase in tuition fees after outsourcing which would affect student enrolment in these schools. However, the Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower (PSEM) had assured members that the proposed outsourcing would not affect adult learners in pursuit of secondary education in evening schools as the Administration would provide financial assistance to the selected operators.

7. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that according to the response of the Secretary for Education and Manpower to the question raised by Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung on 2 February 2005, student enrolment of the subvented classes in evening adult education courses had decreased from 11 170 in the 2002-03 school year to 3 066 in the 2004-05 school year. He asked whether the Administration would agree that the decision to outsource the government evening school courses from the 2002-03 school year was a mistake. Contrary to the Administration's assurance, the decision had resulted in a substantial increase in tuition fees and subsequently a significant decline in student enrolment. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan also considered that the substantial increase of course fees was the major cause of the decrease in student enrolment after outsourcing.

8. DS(EM)3 responded that the decision to outsource the provision of government evening school courses from the 2002-03 school year was made having regard to the declining student enrolment of Government evening school courses in previous years. He considered that whether the continuing decline in student enrolment in these courses was merely a result of the outsourcing could not be ascertained at this stage, and the merits and demerits of the outsourcing had better be assessed together with other initiatives by the community as a whole.

9. DS(EM)3 said that the Government had introduced various initiatives to provide more diversified courses and training opportunities including PYJ to

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adult learners in recent years. Nevertheless, the Administration acknowledged that some adult learners would prefer to pursue mainstream secondary school courses. In view of their needs, the Administration had discussed with some adult learner representatives and concern groups, and subsequently proposed the Scheme to provide financial assistance to adult learners in pursuit of traditional secondary school education.

Level of subsidy

10. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered that adult learners in subvented evening courses were mostly from low-income families which had difficulty to pay the high annual fees of about \$6,000, \$7,500 and \$9,600 for junior secondary, senior secondary and matriculation courses respectively. He considered it apparent that the high tuition fees had caused the large decrease in student enrolment. Mr CHEUNG asked why fee remission for subvented evening adult education courses under the Scheme should follow that of PYJ but not the low cost-recovery ratio of about 18% for day time primary and secondary education. He considered that given a budget surplus of \$3.8 billion in education in the 2004-05 financial year, the Scheme was not in conformity with the policy to reduce inter-generational poverty and provide more assistance to needy families.

11. DS(EM)3 acknowledged that enrolment of subsidized secondary courses for adult learners had decreased from about 6 800 in the 2002-03 school year to about 3 200 and 1 500 in the 2003-04 and 2004-05 school years respectively. He explained that the Scheme aimed to provide subsidy to adult learners in the light of the present circumstances. The Administration did not consider it appropriate to follow the previous subsidy model adopted for government evening secondary schools with the provision of nine-year free basic education as well as other courses and training opportunities to adult learners of different background in recent years. He pointed out that the Administration had taken the high dropout rate and cost-effectiveness of the former government evening secondary schools into consideration and formulated the Scheme under the broad direction of providing subsidies to adult learners direct and introducing means to bring down the level of school fees.

12. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan suggested that the Administration should consider waiving the rent of school premises for course providers so that they would have room to reduce tuition fees. DS(EM)3 responded that EMB would continue to explore with related bureaux and departments the feasibility of waiving the requirement for the selected operators to pay rents for the use of government school premises.

13. The Chairman pointed out that in the face of a knowledge-based economy, working adults who for various reasons had not attended or completed secondary education during their early ages should be provided with another opportunity to pursue secondary studies to enhance their ability to pursue higher level studies

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and move upward along the social ladder. Citing the language proficiency requirements of Disney Land Corporation in its recruitment of frontline staff as an example, the Chairman pointed out that possession of formal academic qualification was important in seeking employment. He also requested the Administration to review the level of assistance provided under the Scheme.

14. DS(EM)3 responded that apart from evening secondary school courses, the Administration provided a range of other courses and training opportunities including basic education courses under the Adult Education Subvention Scheme, English Language courses under the Continuing Education Fund, various courses under the Employees Retraining Board and the Skills Upgrading Scheme, and PYJ which provided an alternative path for adult learners and some Secondary Five (S5) school leavers who had not attained five passes in HKCEE. He anticipated that members would consider the provision of education opportunities to adult learners from an overall perspective, and added that if members did not support the Scheme, the Administration would not submit the proposal to FC for consideration.

15. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed dissatisfaction that the Administration was making a threat to withdraw the Scheme if members did not give their support. He pointed out that the Administration had stated in paragraph 4 of its paper that there were adults who preferred taking the mainstream secondary courses and sitting for HKCEE instead of taking the alternative path of PYJ. He suggested that the level of assistance under the Scheme should follow the model for the previous Government evening secondary schools. Mr CHEUNG pointed out that given the decline in student enrolment, the additional resources required would only be in the range of a few millions. He saw no reason why the Administration could not provide more assistance to working adults.

16. DS(EM)3 clarified that he had no intention to threaten members but just to state the fact that the Administration would not submit the proposal to FC for consideration without the support of the Panel. He reiterated that there were diversified courses and training opportunities for working adults and in particular PYJ provided an alternative path for them to attain five passes in HKCEE. The Scheme was proposed as another alternative having regard to the needs of some adult learners who preferred to pursue mainstream secondary education.

17. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that at the Panel meeting on 7 April 2003, members and representatives of adult learners had emphasised that the increase of tuition fees after outsourcing would deter adult learners from enrolment. He pointed out that PYJ and courses offered by the Hong Kong Institute of Education were mainly short duration courses which were not accepted by employers as equivalent to five passes in HKCEE. He also pointed out that not every working adult met the requirement for enrolment in PYJ. He suggested

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that the Administration should improve the terms of the Scheme to assist adult learners who had the stamina to pursue secondary studies after work, in the light of its policy to reduce inter-generational poverty.

18. Ms LI Fung-ying said that a number of women organisations had expressed concern about setting the subsidy level of the Scheme at 30% of the course fees for all learners. She pointed out that many women, including those newly arrived from the Mainland, had not received free primary and junior secondary education during their early ages, and had financial difficulty to afford the high tuition fees of secondary courses available in the market. She considered that the Administration should review the subsidy level of the Scheme in the light of affordability of low-income families and its policy to alleviate the problem of poverty in the community.

19. DS(EM)3 responded that there were different subsidy schemes for adult learners of different background to pursue academic studies and vocational training. The Administration did not consider that the provision of the previous Government evening secondary school courses was in line with the current development of adult education in the circumstances. The Administration, however, acknowledged the need to provide the Scheme for adult learners who preferred to enrol in mainstream senior secondary studies, and would review the Scheme, if approved, in the third year of its operation.

20. Ms Emily LAU and Dr Fernando CHEUNG agreed that the Government should review the Scheme to provide more subsidies to needy adults in the light of its policy to reduce inter-generational poverty. Ms LAU considered that given a budget surplus of \$3.8 billion in education, the allocation of \$12 million for implementation of the Scheme each for three years was not in line with the community expectation that the Government should invest more in education. Ms LAU asked the Administration to trace the causes of the decline in enrolment and review the subsidy level under the Scheme.

21. Responding to Ms Emily LAU, DS(EM)3 pointed out that it would be difficult to locate the adult learners who had switched their studies from the former Government evening secondary schools to other continuing education programmes. He, however, agreed to provide the enrolment in other continuing education programmes for members' reference.

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Inclusion of junior secondary courses under the Scheme

22. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan expressed appreciation of the Administration's positive response to the request of a Group of Legislative Council Members and representatives of adult learners for the provision of financial assistance to needy adult learners attending mainstream secondary course. He suggested that the Administration should expand the scope of the Scheme to cover junior secondary courses so that working adults not eligible for enrolment to senior

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secondary courses could attend junior secondary courses first. Mr LEE pointed out that if the Scheme only covered senior secondary education, the demand for it would diminish after three years' time as there would not be many students progressing from junior secondary course to enroll.

23. DS(EM)3 responded that the Administration considered it inappropriate to subsidise evening junior secondary courses. He pointed out that with the provision of nine-year free education in 1978, most adults were now qualified for enrolment in senior secondary courses. Adults without the requisite qualification could pursue the basic education courses under the Adult Education Subvention Scheme first.

24. The Chairman considered that the Government should provide appropriate assistance to adult learners who wished to attend junior and senior secondary education, and sit for HKCEE. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan requested the Administration to elaborate on the basic education courses under the Adult Education Subvention Scheme which would prepare adult learners to sit for HKCEE.

25. Principal Assistant Secretary (School Administration & Support), Education and Manpower (PAS(SAS)EM) explained that the Administration considered it more appropriate for adult learners to attend modular courses on language, generic skills, numeracy and information technology than to attend the traditional secondary courses in pursuing further studies. She pointed out that under the Adult Education Subvention Scheme, the Administration provided subsidies to non-governmental organisations which operated a wide range of formal and non-formal courses at different levels for adults of different background. At present, under the purview of General Education Courses, a total of 39 programmes and 140 classes were in operation to cater for the diverse needs of adult learners, including basic education programmes at junior secondary levels for adults who wish to pursue senior secondary studies. She added that EMB would also collaborate with selected course operators on provision of tailor-made curriculum at S4 to prepare adult learners to attend programmes leading to HKCEE.

26. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan asked about the duration of the General Education Courses for adults under the Adult Education Subvention Scheme. PAS(SAS)EM replied that depending on the level of the modulus/programmes concerned, the duration of the courses under the Adult Education Subvention Scheme ranged from about 20 to 50 hours.

27. Dr Fernando CHEUNG considered that the community should provide a second opportunity for vulnerable groups, in particular working adults and new immigrants aged 16 or above who did not have the opportunity to receive nine-year free basic education, to pursue secondary education. He expressed support for the inclusion of junior secondary courses in the Scheme.

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Dr CHEUNG further pointed out that completion of the short duration continuing education courses under the various subsidy schemes could not be equivalent to attainment of five passes in HKCEE which was commonly recognised by employers as a basic qualification requirement and by various educational institutions for enrolment to higher level studies.

28. Ms LI Fung-ying expressed dissatisfaction that while the Administration had encouraged adult learners to pursue non-mainstream studies, only formal academic qualifications were emphasised in the qualifications framework. Ms LI considered that the Administration should incorporate the academic status of the various adult education courses into the qualifications framework before its implementation for some 20 professions from 2006. She requested the Administration to specify the interfaces between the various education systems including adult education, and provide multiple pathways for acquisition of academic qualifications for adult workers to follow. DS(EM)3 replied that EMB would examine these issues in the course of developing the qualifications framework.

Follow-up

29. The Chairman requested the Administration to consider members' requests of including junior secondary courses and revising the level of subsidy under the Scheme. Ms Emily LAU suggested that the Administration should provide an advanced copy of its proposal to the Panel well in advance for members' prior consideration so that the Panel might convene another meeting to further discuss the matter. The Administration agreed.

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[Post-meeting note : The advanced copy of the Administration's proposal to be submitted to the Finance Committee for consideration at its meeting on 6 May 2005 was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1344/04-05(01) on 21 April 2005.]

IV. Review of the medium of instruction for secondary schools and secondary school places allocation

[File Ref : EMB (EC)101/55/1/C, Annex A to File Ref : EMB (EC)101/55/1/C, LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1186/04-05(01) and (02) and CB(2)1214/04-05(01)]

30. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Michael TIEN, Chairman of the Working Group on Review of Secondary School Places Allocation and Medium of Instruction of Secondary Schools (Chairman of the Working Group), presented the response of the Working Group to the views and concerns of the deputations expressed at the meeting on 14 March 2005 as detailed in his speaking note which was tabled at the meeting and subsequently issued vide [LC Paper No. CB(2)1214/04-05(01)].

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The Medium of Instruction (MOI) policy

31. Ms Audrey EU said that students' potential to learn in English at the age of 12 to 13 would vary from students to students and it would be too early to label their ability to learn through English by their performance at primary five (P5) and six (P6) levels. She asked whether the Working Group would take into consideration the performance and abilities of the graduate students of a secondary school to learn through English in determining whether the school could use English as MOI.

32. Chairman of the Working Group responded that it would be very complicated to establish a measurement of students' English proficiency at the exit point and the provision of exemption from the requirement that a school adopting English as MOI (EMI school) should have 85% S1 students being capable of learning through English. He explained that students' performance in English in HKCEE after completion of S5 would depend on a number of factors including their proficiency level at the S1 intake. He pointed out that the development of a reliable and accurate formula for assessing the progress of students' English proficiency between start of S1 and end of S5 in an EMI or a school adopting Chinese as MOI (CMI school) would be extremely complex and controversial. For instance, there would be heated debate on whether a school's absolute results in HKCEE or value-addedness should be taken as an output indicator and in how many subjects. In addition, it would create pressure on the students in an EMI school if their progress in English proficiency would be taken into account to determine the school's MOI in the future.

33. Chairman of the Working Group also questioned the need to use English as MOI for children at the age of 12 to 15 in S1 – S3 classes during the stage of nine-year free basic education. He considered it more appropriate to let S1 – S3 students continue to learn in mother tongue and switch to learn in English at S4 if appropriate. He clarified that the Working Group did not oppose that students who were capable to learn through English should be provided with the opportunity to do so. He pointed out that students in CMI schools were now happier and more proactive to learn in classes. He added that though there was still a general bias towards EMI, there was also a rising trend for school choices to be decided by the factors other than the MOI. One of the illustrations was that many parents had now chosen to apply to CMI schools at the Discretionary Stage of Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) exercise and included CMI schools in their top three choices of secondary schools at the Central Stage Overall, some 80% students were allocated to a school of their top three choices in the recent SSPA exercise.

34. Chairman of the Working Group stressed that the Working Group had considered a number of measures to improve the English proficiency of students in CMI schools, and had finally recommended that CMI schools should be

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allowed to allocate, on top of English Language lessons, no more than 15% of the lesson time in S1-S3 for extended learning activities through English on condition that the normal teaching and learning of the content subjects would not be adversely affected. The Working Group anticipated that the recommendation could narrow the disparity between CMI and EMI schools in terms of students' exposure to English. Nevertheless, the Working Group would consider further measures to raise CMI students' interest and proficiency in English.

35. Ms Audrey EU said that while she agreed to the view that the English proficiency of a student in an EMI school was not necessarily high and that of a student in a CMI school was not necessarily low, she considered that education should aim to enhance students' language ability, i.e. biliterate in written Chinese and English and trilingual in Cantonese, Putonghua and spoken English so that the competitiveness of Hong Kong as an international commercial and financial centre could be maintained in the long run. From this perspective, Ms EU considered that the top 40% S1 students who were able to learn through English should be provided with sufficient exposure to English. She asked whether the Working Group would examine the impact of implementing its proposals on student enrolment in EMI schools in the long term. She considered that the number of EMI schools might decrease as a result of the prescribed criteria of student ability.

36. Chairman of the Working Group responded that the Working Group had not attempted to project the number of EMI schools after implementation of the MOI proposals in September 2007. Nor did the Working Group had any intention to restrict the number of EMI schools by adopting the requirement in the Medium of Instruction Guidance for Secondary Schools (the Guidance) that at least 85% of the student intake at S1 in an EMI school should be able to learn through English. He stressed that the Working Group was concerned about the overall effectiveness of teaching and learning in secondary schools and not the number of EMI or CMI schools after implementation of the proposed MOI policy.

37. Ms Audrey EU remarked that she considered it important that the Administration should explain how its MOI policy would facilitate enhancement of students' language ability and competitiveness of Hong Kong as an international metropolis in the long term.

38. Chairman of the Working Group responded that the Working Group considered that enhancing students' language ability was vital in maintaining the competitiveness of Hong Kong as an international metropolis. He considered that there were diverse pathways to enhance students' language ability and learning through EMI was only one of them.

39. Referring to the submission of the Pun U Association Wah Yan Primary School Parents Teachers Association [LC Paper No. CB(2)1054/04-05(02)

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(revised)], Ms Emily LAU said that many parents shared the concern of the Association that the Administration should adopt a consistent MOI policy for parents to follow. Ms LAU agreed that the Administration should review the Guidance published in September 1997 in a prudent, comprehensive and fair manner, and defer implementation of any policies aiming to expand the scope of mother-tongue teaching in school education.

40. Chairman of the Working Group responded that the Working Group supported the broad direction of the MOI policy set out in the Guidance, i.e. all secondary schools should adopt mother-tongue teaching at junior secondary levels and schools using English as MOI should fulfill the three prescribed criteria of student ability, teacher capability and support measures. The Working Group, however, considered that the Guidance would be more readily accepted by schools if it had been implemented with an objective mechanism, and therefore had elaborated on the three prescribed criteria in paragraphs 10 - 15 of the consultation document.

41. Dr Anissa CHAN said that members of the Working Group had visited CMI and EMI schools of different types and observed the implementation result of the Guidance on the effectiveness of teaching and learning activities in classes. As a result of these visits and observations, the Working Group recommended that teachers in EMI schools should be able to communicate the subject content to students intelligibly and their use of English should have no adverse impact on students' acquisition of the English language. In addition, students in EMI schools considered that they could learn more effectively in mother tongue and teachers in CMI schools considered the provision of not more than 15% of the total lesson time in S1 – S3 for extended learning activities conducted through English would facilitate some schools' change of MOI from Chinese to English for individual subjects at senior secondary levels. Ms Emily LAU remarked that the Working Group should provide information on its review of the Guidance for members' information, if available.

42. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that he was confused by the considerations of the MOI policy. While the Working Group upheld the rectitude and insisted that students learned best in their mother tongue, it recommended that EMI schools should continue to operate and only students with good academic results would be allowed to learn in non-mother tongue. He considered implementation of the bifurcation approach to maintain the distinction between EMI and CMI schools too early for junior secondary education, and its adverse labelling effect on students in CMI schools unacceptable. Dr CHEUNG also considered that the prescribed criteria for EMI schools had reinforced the conception of the better quality of education and students in EMI schools. He also queried the rationale for specifying the percentage of lesson time for individual subjects, given that EMB advocated the implementation of school-based management.

43. Chairman of the Working Group said that he had asked the same

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questions raised by Dr Fernando CHEUNG at the first few meetings of the Working Group, and was subsequently convinced that mother-tongue teaching should be encouraged since students learnt best in mother tongue and EMI teaching should only be allowed subject to fulfilment of prescribed criteria which were proposed to help assure learning effectiveness. He explained that the Working Group well understood that if all secondary schools adopted Chinese as MOI for their S1 – S3 classes, there would be no labelling effect on CMI schools and their students. If students with good academic performance could learn in mother tongue, they would have plenty of time to improve their English proficiency while avoiding possible dip in the performance in other subjects. The Working Group, however, had to consider the circumstances in Hong Kong and parents' aspirations when formulating its proposals in MOI, and the Working Group sought to strike a right balance among various factors.

44. Chairman of the Working Group further pointed out that mother-tongue teaching had all along be advocated by academics and supported by research findings since the early eighties, but firm implementation of the policy on mother-tongue teaching took place only in the 1998-99 school year. Before the implementation of the Guidance in 1998, most secondary schools claimed to adopt EMI teaching. In reality, teaching in most of these secondary schools was actually conducted mainly in Cantonese though English textbooks were used and assessment was conducted in English. As a result, students experienced great difficulties in learning nor was their English improved. Some even lost their interest in learning. He anticipated that as the merits of mother-tongue teaching became more evident, the community as a whole would accept the adoption of mother-tongue teaching in all secondary schools.

45. Dr Fernando CHEUNG asked whether the proposals of the Working Group would enhance the acceptability of mother-tongue teaching and convince parents to send their children to CMI schools in the long term.

46. Chairman of the Working Group responded that although the labelling effect on CMI schools would still persist, the Working Group anticipated that implementation of the proposals in the consultation document would enhance learning effectiveness and prove the merits of mother-tongue teaching in the long term. Professor LEE Wing-on supplemented that the Working Group had consulted CMI schools on ways to reduce the labelling effect of the bifurcation approach on CMI schools and so far no workable option had been identified.

47. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung asked whether the Working Group had made its proposals on MOI from an educational point of view. He considered that students should be provided with a choice to attend CMI or EMI schools. Mr LEUNG also pointed out that students could also learn well if English textbooks were used but teaching was conducted in mother tongue.

48. Chairman of the Working Group responded that some principals had

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pointed out that even the top students in EMI schools would learn abstract theories and concepts in individual subjects better through mother tongue. They strongly objected to adopting mix-code teaching in junior secondary education as using English textbooks and English for examination would pose great difficulties to most students. Professor LEE Wing-on supplemented that the Working Group recommended mother-tongue teaching based on educational considerations.

49. Mr LEUNG Kwan-yin expressed appreciation that the Working Group had given priority consideration to the learning needs of students in formulating education policies. He anticipated that members of the Working Group would explain their educational beliefs to stakeholders during the consultation period. He considered that the overall English standard in Hong Kong had declined and asked whether the Working Group could provide empirical data to sustain the educational belief that mother-tongue teaching could enhance students' learning effectiveness.

50. Mrs Cherry TSE responded that Annex 2 of the consultation document provided a list of MOI-related research studies which were conducted in the past two decades. In brief, the researches had confirmed the merits of mother-tongue teaching in enhancing learning effectiveness. She added that the first cohort of students to experience the MOI Guidance was now at their S7 studies; and thus, the less-than-desirable English proficiency of graduates and undergraduates that many lamented could not be attributed to the MOI Guidance, but rather to the laissez-faire regime prior to that.

51. Mr Tommy CHEUNG pointed out that people would formulate their views on education based on their preference. He considered that the current MOI policy which allowed the operation of both EMI and CMI schools should continue until there were substantial justifications for any change. He asked how the Working Group could quantify the views of stakeholders for making decision on whether a change of MOI was justified.

52. Chairman of the Working Group responded that the Working Group would carefully consider the views and suggestions of stakeholders, and would adopt feasible suggestions which would balance the conflicting views among stakeholders without affecting the quality of education.

53. Mrs Selina CHOW considered that the core issue was whether secondary schools in Hong Kong should all be CMI schools or whether some EMI schools should continue to operate in Hong Kong. She considered that given the cultural and political background of Hong Kong and the preference of parents, EMI schools should continue to exist. She suggested that the Government should endeavour to promote a positive image of CMI schools in the community and provide more resources to CMI schools to enhance the English proficiency of their students.

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54. Mrs Selina CHOW said that the Liberal Party supported the broad direction of mother-tongue teaching and opposed the within-school approach in adoption of MOI. She suggested that the Working Group should review the language proficiency requirement of EMI teachers and the six-year review mechanism to assess whether there should be any change to MOI adopted by individual schools. She considered that teachers in EMI schools should possess a higher qualification and flexibility should be allowed for change of MOI in CMI schools.

Consultation and implementation

55. Ms Audrey EU asked whether the Working Group would extend the consultation period in response to parents' request for more time to study the proposals in the consultation document and exchange views with others on the pros and cons of mother-tongue teaching.

56. Chairman of the Working Group responded that the Working Group had considered the request of deputations expressed at the last meeting and would recommend to the Education Commission (EC) that the deadline of the consultation period be deferred to 2 July 2005. He pointed out that the Working Group had consulted a number of academics and primary and secondary school councils, and would make use of the extended consultation period to further consult the stakeholders, in particular parents and students, on the proposals in the consultation document. He added that the extension for two months would not affect the implementation of mother-tongue teaching and the new SSPA system in September 2007.

57. Ms Audrey EU suggested that the consultation period should be extended to the end of September 2005 as parents and students would have to concentrate on school and public examinations to be held in April to June 2005. She considered that the Working Group should provide sufficient time for parents to consider and discuss the proposals in the consultation document, and provide more valuable feedback to the Working Group for consideration.

58. Chairman of the Working Group replied that the Working Group had considered the feasibility of extending the consultation period to end of September 2005. However, this would imply a delay in the implementation of the new SSPA system in September 2007. He understood that many schools would not prefer such a delay. He further pointed out that the issues of MOI and SSPA should be dealt with in tandem as they were inextricable from the implementation perspective.

59. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that no one would dispute the argument that students would learn best in their mother tongue which could be supported by the attainment of CMI students in Hong Kong Certificate of Education

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Examination (HKCEE). He pointed out that the majority of parents were not convinced that mother-tongue teaching would not affect students' development of English proficiency in schools. He suggested that the Working Group should focus on publicizing the results of research findings and the successful cases to convince parents that students in CMI schools could learn and develop their proficiency in English as good as their counterparts in EMI schools.

60. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong also considered that MOI policy should be implemented consistently in order to facilitate effective teaching in schools. He pointed out that there were divided views on MOI policy between CMI and EMI schools on the proposals in the consultation document. While many CMI schools were concerned about the prescribed criteria for conversion to EMI schools, many EMI schools had expressed reservations about the proposed six-year review mechanism to assess whether there should be any change to MOI adopted in individual schools. Mr CHEUNG considered it unlikely that extending the consultation period to July or September 2005 would enable the Working Group to reach a consensus with various stakeholders, given the diverse concerns of CMI schools and EMI schools, on the implementation of the MOI policy. Nevertheless, he considered that a longer consultation period might help resolve some of the disputes over the MOI policy. He asked whether the Administration would consider deferring the implementation of the MOI policy in order to provide stakeholders with more time to discuss the issues and narrow their disparity.

61. Chairman of the Working Group responded that the Working Group had all along maintained an open mind on MOI policy and SSPA mechanism. He stressed that the Working Group had carefully examined the views and suggestions of various stakeholders from both theoretical and practical point of views, and made its recommendations in the consultation document after in-depth discussions. He pointed out that the recommendations of the Working Group were in line with basic educational beliefs and ideals, and would balance the interests of the stakeholders. The Working Group, however, would continue to collect views and consider suggestions during the extended consultation period.

62. Chairman of the Working Group further said that he agreed to the view that stakeholders would be convinced of the merits of mother-tongue teaching when there were more data on students' performance in HKCEE. He pointed out that many students from EMI schools had decided to take the 2005 HKALE in Chinese on the grounds that they could express themselves better when using Chinese. He anticipated that the results of the 2005 HKCEE would reinforce the findings from previous HKCEE results that students learned best in their mother tongue.

63. Ms Emily LAU referred to the summary of views of deputations expressed at the meeting on 14 March 2005 [LC Paper No.

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CB(2)1186/04-05(02)] and said that there were clearly dissonant views on implementation of mother-tongue teaching in secondary schools. She, however, considered that Hong Kong people recognised the need to compromise on controversial issues, and the stakeholders in the education sector might ultimately compromise on a course of implementation if their views were respected and their doubts were dispelled. She urged that the Working Group should exchange views with the deputations attending the meeting on 14 March 2005 with a view to minimising dissonant views on the matter.

64. Chairman of the Working Group reiterated that the Working Group in principle agreed to extend the consultation period in order to collect more views from parents and students. He pointed out that many parents were still unclear about the features and mechanisms in the education systems. For instance, many parents were unaware that for admission to most university programmes, universities would only require students to meet the minimum English standard and their admission decision actually hinged on a student's performance in the relevant content subjects. Many parents did not believe that in considering a student's performance in HKALE, universities would not be interested nor able to know whether the student had taken the examination in English or Chinese.

65. Mrs Cherry TSE said that subject to EC's approval on extending the consultation period, Chairman of the Working Group would arrange further meetings with the deputations. The Working Group Secretariat had in fact already touched base with the Pun U Association Wah Yan Primary School Parents Teachers Association with a view to arranging a session for exchange of views. She added that many parents had the mis-conception that students would automatically learn English better in EMI schools. The Working Group therefore would further explain to parents the merits and policy considerations of mother-tongue teaching during the extended consultation period. Ms Emily LAU urged that Chairman of the Working Group should meet as many deputations as possible before the deadline for consultation.

66. Dr CHEUNG Kwok-wah said that parents of different background had different expectations and held diverse views on the MOI policy. While some preferred to implement the recommended MOI proposals as soon as practicable, others preferred to defer implementation until they achieved a better understanding of the merits and demerits of mother-tongue teaching. Dr CHEUNG said that although he was inclined to defer implementing the related proposals until the benefits of mother-tongue teaching were well reflected by students' performance in HKCEE, the Working Group would have to finalise its recommendations on MOI policy and the SSPA mechanism by the end of the 2005 for implementation of the new SSPA mechanism from the 2007 school year. He added that allocation of more resources in education to enhance students' proficiency in English was the primary concern of parents.

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Concluding remark

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67. The Chairman considered that the MOI policy would not be an issue when the English proficiency of CMI school students was comparable to their counterparts in EMI schools. He suggested that the Government should allocate more resources to CMI schools with a view to enhancing the quality and effectiveness of English teaching and learning. The Chairman also requested the Working Group to inform the Panel of its final decision on the member's request of further extending the consultation deadline.

V. Any other business

68. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11:01 am.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
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