

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1824/04-05
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 9 May 2005 at 4:30 pm
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 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 absent** : Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon MA Lik, JP
- Public Officers attending** : Item IV
Mr Chris WARDLAW
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (5)
Mr Billy WOO
Assistant Secretary (Language Education) for Education
and Manpower
- Item V
Mr CHENG Yan-chee, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (4)

Mr SHE Mang
Principal Inspector (Information Technology in
Education), Education and Manpower Bureau

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. Confirmation of minutes

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1324/04-05, CB(2)1431/04-05]

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 March and 6 April 2005 were confirmed.

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

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1304/04-05(01), CB(2)1343/04-05(01) and CB(2)1403/04-05(01)]

2. Members noted the following papers which had been issued since the last meeting –

- (a) the Administration's paper on "School-based after-school learning and support programmes" [LC Paper No. CB(2)1304/04-05(01)];
- (b) a submission from Concern Group for Former Government Evening Schools [LC Paper No. CB(2)1343/04-05(01)]; and
- (c) the Administration's paper on "Start-up loan for post-secondary education providers" [LC Paper No. CB(2)1403/04-05(01)].

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[Appendices I and II to LC Paper No. CB(2)1429/04-05]

3. Members noted the "List of outstanding items for discussion" and "List of follow-up actions" which were tabled at the meeting.

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Regular meeting on 13 June 2005

4. Members agreed to discuss “Review of the progress of the Study on small class teaching in 37 primary schools and the way forward” at the next regular meeting scheduled for Monday, 13 June 2005 from 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong suggested that apart from academics and members of the Steering Committee established to advise on the Study, the Panel should invite the 37 primary schools which wished to present their views on the Study at the meeting. Members agreed.

Scheduling of special meetings

5. At the request of the Administration, members agreed to hold a special meeting from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm on 30 May 2005 to discuss the following items –

- (a) Review of School Building Programme;
- (b) Proposal on the construction of a direct subsidy scheme secondary school;
- (c) Funding flexibility and support measures for schools with incorporated management committees; and
- (d) Proposal on preparation for the new academic structure for senior secondary and higher education which would be submitted to the Finance Committee for consideration in June 2005.

6. Members noted that the Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM) would make a statement at the Council meeting on 18 May 2005 on the way forward after the consultation exercise on “Reforming the academic structure for senior secondary education and higher education – Action plan for investing in the future”. As suggested by the Administration, members also agreed to hold a special meeting after the meeting of the House Committee to be held at 2:30 pm on 3 June 2005 to receive a briefing by SEM on the subject and two related proposals which would be submitted to the Finance Committee for consideration in early July 2005.

[Post-meeting note : At the request of the Administration, the items in paragraph 5(c) and 5(d) would be discussed at the special meeting to be held on 3 June 2005.]

7. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong suggested that the Panel should discuss the review on governance structure of University Grants Committee-funded institutions and their internal grievances and complaint mechanisms before the end of the current session. Members agreed to include the item into the list of

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outstanding items for discussion.

IV. Use of Language Fund – proposals to strengthen support in language education at pre-primary and primary levels

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1429/04-05(01)]

8. At the invitation of the Chairman, Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (5) (DS(EM)5) briefed members on the main proposals as detailed in the Administration's paper.

Professional development for pre-primary teachers

9. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that there were some 6 000 kindergarten (KG) teachers and some 1 000 child care workers, who did not possess the qualification of a certificate in early childhood education and these child care workers would be recognised as KG teachers upon harmonisation of pre-primary services. He considered it unfair that only \$20 million out of the \$500 million injection into the Language Fund (the Fund) would be used in professional development of pre-primary teachers. Mr CHEUNG added that pre-primary teachers had been excluded from the allocation of \$550 million for provision of school-based professional support to school teachers in support of the implementation of the education reforms.

10. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong further said that given the costs of \$42,000 and \$16,000 of the Compulsory Language Immersion Programme for pre-service English Language and Putonghua teacher trainees in teacher education institutes (TEIs), it was unfair to allocate only \$20 million for the professional development of some 7 000 pre-primary teachers who had not completed a certificate programme in early childhood education. Mr CHEUNG asked whether the Administration would review the allocation for professional development of pre-primary teachers, and how many pre-primary teachers would benefit from the allocation in their professional development.

11. DS(EM)5 responded that the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) recognised the importance of early childhood education to children in developing their readiness in acquisition of language at school ages. The Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) would examine the needs of pre-primary teachers in professional development and determine their share of the \$500 million injection into the Fund. The allocation of \$20 million was an initial estimate and could be adjusted with the aim of providing sufficient training opportunities for pre-primary teachers' professional development in language education. He distinguished this initial allocation and purpose from the general professional upgrading of pre-primary teachers supported through other strategies of EMB.

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12. DS(EM)5 pointed out that the needs of pre-primary teachers in professional development were not the same as those of primary school teachers. In this connection, EMB had proposed to develop separate programmes for strengthening the professional development of KG teachers. EMB also considered that based on past experience, short duration courses focused on specific areas of teaching and learning would be more suitable for serving pre-primary teachers to complement their general professional upgrading. Furthermore, EMB considered that pre-primary teachers might also benefit from immersion courses of appropriate durations and contents.

13. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that he was glad to hear that SCOLAR would examine the needs of pre-primary teachers and review the allocation of \$20 million to encourage KG teachers to pursue professional development. He requested EMB to advise the Panel on the final allocation for professional development of pre-primary teachers in due course. He asked whether KG principals and teachers who had completed approved courses on language education and pedagogy could be exempted from similar courses required under the certificate programmes in early childhood education.

14. DS(EM)5 responded that the Administration would carefully consider the needs and views of the stakeholders in the allocation of the \$500 million injection to strengthen support in language education at pre-primary and primary levels. Given the strong views of members on the need to upgrade the pre-primary workforce to enhance quality of language teaching in early childhood education, EMB would examine the development needs of pre-primary teachers in an extensive manner, and make recommendations in support of their professional development.

15. On the provision of exemption in language and pedagogy studies from certificate programmes in early childhood education, DS(EM)5 explained that there were differences in qualification requirements and hence professional development needs between primary school teachers and pre-primary teachers. Nevertheless, he agreed that EMB should explore the room for leverage of support measures between primary school teachers and pre-primary teachers, and work towards the establishment of smooth interfaces between the professional development programmes for these two groups of teachers. He added that EMB recognised the importance of enhancing quality of language learning in early childhood education, and would continue to consider measures to improve language education at the pre-primary level. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong urged the Administration to reconsider the allocation for professional development of pre-primary teachers.

16. Dr Fernando CHEUNG shared the concern of Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong about the small allocation for professional development of pre-primary teachers. He asked about the difference between the professional development programmes for pre-primary teachers and primary school teachers.

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17. DS(EM)5 explained that there were different expectations in primary schools and KGs related to language education. For instance, English language teachers in primary schools were required to teach students in regular classes and students were expected to achieve a set of learning objectives which would be assessed through the Territory-wide System Assessment at primary three and six levels. On the other hand, pre-primary teachers were expected to prepare KG pupils with the abilities and confidence to attend primary schools, and exposure and experience in language education was part of the whole programme to ensure school readiness of young children. They were expected to acquire a different set of skills and pedagogies for exposing KG pupils between the ages of three to six to the languages of English and Chinese in a quality manner. In the light of their different needs in professional development, EMB would collaborate with SCOLAR to provide specific development programmes for pre-primary teachers in language education.

18. Dr Fernando CHEUNG asked about the estimated quota and expenditure for overseas immersion courses for English Language and Putonghua teachers in primary schools.

19. Assistant Secretary (Language Education) for Education and Manpower (AS(LE)EM) responded that under the injection of \$500 million, EMB proposed initially to allocate \$140 million for the provision of overseas immersion courses for primary school teachers. He pointed out that the allocation would be mainly deployed for the provision of immersion courses for English Language teachers because there were already financial support provided under the Fund for some 200 to 300 Chinese Language teachers to attend a four-week Putonghua immersion courses in Beijing during the summer holidays.

20. AS(LE)EM further said that EMB was in the process of planning the provision of overseas immersion courses for language teachers over the next few years, and had yet to work out the detailed arrangements and implementation plan at this stage. All local English teachers should be eligible to apply for subsidies for such purpose, subject to availability of resources. He added that the costs of \$34,000 to \$42,000 for English courses and \$16,000 to \$19,000 for Putonghua courses under the eight to ten week Compulsory Language Immersion programme for pre-service English Language and Putonghua teacher trainees in all TEIs were cited in the paper to provide references on the costs incurred for overseas immersion courses. However, the specific nature of the immersion courses for serving teachers would necessarily be different from pre-service arrangements.

21. Referring to paragraph 16(e) of the Administration's paper, Ms Emily LAU pointed out that researches had concluded that quality language education at early ages was most critical for children in language learning. She asked how the Administration would conduct in-depth researches into language learning at

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an early age, which might possibly related to neuro-scientific studies, so as to shed light on the language policy at primary and pre-primary levels.

22. DS(EM)5 responded that there were already a number of empirical researches into the language education in Hong Kong. EMB would study the results of these researches with a view to promoting a wider adoption of the best practices in language education at primary and pre-primary levels.

23. Ms Emily LAU considered that the provision of quality language education at KG would facilitate language teaching and learning at primary and secondary levels. She asked how pre-primary teachers would be selected to attend the professional development programmes in order that they would benefit from the four to eight weeks development programmes and become competent language teachers. She considered that the Administration should allocate sufficient resources for upgrading the requirements and qualification of pre-primary teachers as well as attracting graduates in education with high language proficiency to join the pre-primary workforce.

24. DS(EM)5 responded that the Administration had introduced a number of measures to upgrade the requirements and qualification of pre-primary teachers over the past decade and had committed to continue to do so in the years ahead. He described the work of SCOLAR in upgrading the quality of the pre-primary education in the past few years. He pointed out that the Administration would provide more resources and support in professional development of pre-primary teachers, and anticipated that every KG teacher could achieve a certificate in early childhood education in the next few years.

25. DS(EM)5 further said that the Administration would consult the pre-primary sector on the way forward and plan the implementation of the support measures having regard to the qualifications and needs of the pre-primary workforce. He highlighted that the proposed allocation would mainly be used in the development of separate programmes for strengthening the professional development of pre-primary teachers in specific aspects of language teaching in a more focused approach. For instance, pre-primary teachers would be provided with five to six three-hour courses on promotion of language activities, such as songs, stories, games and on-line/web-based learning materials, etc., structured around the current guideline issued to KG by the Curriculum Development Institute.

26. Ms Audrey EU asked about the types of programmes which were approved for professional development of serving English primary school teachers and pre-primary teachers. She also asked whether the intensive courses on special aspects of the learning and teaching of English language such as grammar and phonics in context was primarily designed for teachers teaching non-native learners.

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27. DS(EM)5 responded that the courses were in general operated by TEIs and recognised by SCOLAR as appropriate for the purpose of professional development for serving English Language teachers in primary schools and KGs, and were designed for teaching Chinese children at primary and pre-primary levels. He cited the 15-hour Reading programme in which serving primary school teachers were trained on the use of books and stories for teaching English language at Key Stage 1 to illustrate that serving teachers could apply what they learnt from the programme to support teaching and learning in primary schools and KGs.

28. Ms Audrey EU asked about the demand and supply for the Professional Development Incentive Grant Scheme for Language Teachers (the Scheme), and asked whether programmes under the Scheme were subject to vetting for quality control.

29. AS(LE)EM responded that EMB would approve the programmes on the basis of their relevance in upgrading teachers' knowledge and pedagogy in teaching the language concerned. Under the Scheme, the approved programmes were mainly offered by University Grants Committee-funded institutions. AS(LE)EM further explained that the Scheme was launched in 2004 to encourage serving language teachers, particularly those who possessed neither a degree nor any teacher training in the relevant language subject, to upgrade their professional qualifications in order to match that required of their counterparts entering the profession in the 2004-05 school year or afterwards. There was no pre-condition for these serving language teachers to apply for grant to subsidize 50% of tuition fees (up to \$30,000) of any approved programme under the Scheme.

30. Ms Audrey EU asked whether the implementation of specialised teaching in primary schools had an impact on the operation of the Fund.

31. DS(EM)5 explained that the Fund was not intended for providing system support for professional upgrading of language teachers, but for serving language teachers who wished to upgrade their professionalism in language teaching on a voluntary basis. He pointed out that specialised teaching was a policy to ensure schools to deploy teachers to focus their professional effort on teaching English and Chinese in primary schools, and would not affect the requirements or qualifications of serving language teachers.

32. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung expressed support for the provision of overseas immersion courses for language teachers to experience language teaching and learning in different circumstances. He, however, expressed reservations about the effectiveness of overseas immersion programmes which lasted for only four to eight weeks and other intensive training on specific areas of language teaching with durations of 10 – 15 hours each. He asked whether the training duration would be extended in the light of the training contents, and whether there were

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other training courses and support measures to facilitate professional development of language teachers.

33. DS(EM)5 responded that overseas immersion courses would provide serving language teachers with exposure to authentic English language learning environment and building their capacity for continuing improvement. The new skills and experience acquired by participating teachers would be translated into improvement in the learning and teaching of the English language subject in the wider context of the school. In addition, participating teachers would be expected to act as resource teachers to help other English teachers in their schools.

34. AS(LE)EM supplemented that the duration of the intensive training courses on specific aspects of language teaching currently offered by TEIs were normally in the range of 10 to 15 hours. The Administration did not have any predetermined view about the duration of professional development courses.

35. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung expressed concern about the effects of closure of under-utilised primary schools in the light of the declining student population. He considered it a waste of public resources if serving language teachers in these schools were forced to leave the workforce after they had completed the approved upgrading programme, including the overseas immersion courses and other professional development programmes.

36. DS(EM)5 responded that the policy objective was to upgrade the quality of language teachers through the provision of various professional development programmes within budgetary constraints, irrespective of which schools they were serving. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung remarked that EMB should aim to make the best use of serving language teachers who had attended the various development programmes.

37. AS(LE)EM responded that according to the 2003 Teacher Survey conducted by EMB, some 20 000 serving teachers of the Chinese or the English Language subject in primary and secondary schools were not in possession of a degree majoring in the language subject they taught, or had not received any teacher training in the relevant subject, or both. The Scheme therefore aimed to encourage these serving teachers to upgrade their qualifications.

Follow-up

38. In concluding the discussion, the Chairman remarked that the overall quality of pre-primary teachers would be upgraded if the provision of early childhood education was publicly-funded. He requested the Administration to provide a progress report on its implementation of the Scheme and other support measures for the professional development of serving language teachers. The Chairman also requested the Administration to review the allocation for the

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professional development of pre-primary teachers in the light of members' views and suggestions.

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39. The Chairman asked when the Administration could arrange the Chairman of SCOLAR to brief members on the use of the \$500 million injection and the progress of implementation of the professional development programmes to strengthen support in language education at pre-primary and primary levels. DS(EM)5 responded that SCOLAR was currently working on the detailed proposals for implementation from July 2005. He agreed that the Administration would revert to the Panel on the progress of implementation later in the year and suggested this should be in the context of broader progress in language education in line with the SCOLAR Action Plan (2003). Ms Audrey EU also requested the Administration to provide information on enrolment of the professional development programmes for primary and secondary school teachers in its progress report for follow-up discussion at a future meeting.

V. The second information technology in education strategy
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1429/04-05(03)]

40. At the Chairman's invitation, Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (4) (DS(EM)4) briefed members on the main points of the Administration's paper on the subject. He highlighted that to help needy students to acquire computers for use, a large-scale campaign would be launched in the next two school years to encourage donation of old computers for a computer recycling project (the Project). Under the Project, the donated computers would be refurbished, bundled with necessary software and Internet access service before allocating to needy students. EMB would also provide basic IT training to parents of the students who would receive these computers.

Scope of the Project

41. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed support for the Project which would provide needy students with a computer to learn and access Internet at their own pace. He pointed out that according to a survey conducted by the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union (HKPTU), around 5% of the student population (about 40 000 students) in Hong Kong did not have a computer at home. He asked how many students would benefit from the Project and whether EMB would bear the computer maintenance costs and Internet access service fees.

42. DS(EM)4 responded that according to the survey conducted by the Census and Statistics Department, about half of the households with a child of age 10 or above had financial difficulty to procure a computer at home and the number of such children was around 20 000. The non-recurrent expenditure of \$45.5 million to promote community-wide support was budgeted on the basis of recycling some 20 000 donated computers in the 2005-07 school years for these

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children. In collaboration with non-governmental organisations, some IT and Internet service providers had agreed to provide the necessary software and maintenance services for the recycled computers, and their access to Internet at nominal costs.

43. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed doubt as to whether the IT and Internet service providers would continue to support the Project and provide their services at low costs in the long run. He pointed out that the survey conducted by HKPTU had revealed that the majority of low-income families were living in partitioned rooms in private flats which might not have access to Internet. Students of these families who wished to have access to Internet might have to queue up for the use of computers in youth or community centres. They often have to wait for a long time and could use the computers for only an hour.

44. Mr CHEUNG Man-Kwong and Ms Emily LAU requested the Administration to expand the scope of the Project to benefit all the students who did not have a computer at home.

Extending the opening hours of computer rooms and IT facilities in schools

45. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong suggested that EMB should extend the opening hours of computer rooms and IT facilities in public sector schools for needy students to learn through computers after school hours. He considered that schools should employ additional staff to man the computer rooms and IT facilities so that parents would be willing to let their children stay in schools after school hours.

46. DS(EM)4 responded that schools were already provided with an incentive grant to extend the opening hours of their computer rooms and IT facilities to facilitate student self-learning after school hours. He added that schools had the discretion to let their students use the recycled computers at school or at home or both.

47. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered that EMB should proactively encourage schools, particularly those in districts having a large number of low-income families, to extend the opening hours of their IT facilities in the light of the learning needs of their students. He agreed that the demand for such service would vary from school to school and from district to district, but considered that there was no reason for schools to refuse extending the opening hours of their IT facilities for their needy students. He requested EMB to play a more active role in encouraging schools to do so. Ms Emily LAU shared a similar view. Ms Emily LAU considered that EMB should liaise with schools on the detailed arrangements for extending the opening hours of their computer rooms and IT facilities for use by their needy students.

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48. The Chairman suggested that EMB should consider incorporating the extended use of computer rooms and IT facilities in schools as one of the school-based after-school learning and support programmes for students from disadvantaged families. He considered that parents would be more willing to let their children stay in schools to learn after school hours. DS(EM)4 agreed to follow up the matter.

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Follow-up

49. Ms Emily LAU requested the Administration to provide a detailed implementation plan of the Project which would benefit those students without a computer at home in its proposal to be submitted to the Finance Committee for consideration. DS(EM)4 agreed.

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VI. Any other business

50. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:38 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
7 June 2005