

立法會
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seen by the Administration)

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Panel on Education

**Minutes of special meeting
held on Friday, 3 June 2005 at 3:00 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
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
- Member attending** : Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
- Members absent** : Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon MA Lik, JP
Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, SBS, JP
- Public Officers attending** : Professor Arthur LI, GBS, JP
Secretary for Education and Manpower
- Mrs Fanny LAW, GBS, JP
Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower

Mr Chris WARDLAW
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (5)
(Item I to III only)

Dr Catherine K K CHAN
Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum Development)
(Item I only)

Dr Peter W HILL
Secretary General, Hong Kong Examinations and
Assessment Authority
(Item I only)

Mrs Betty IP
Principal Assistant Secretary (School Administration
and Support)
(Item IV only)

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. Briefing on the new academic structure for senior secondary and higher education

[Consultation report on the New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education – Action plan for Investing in the future of Hong Kong and LC Paper No. CB(2)1716/04-05(01)]

At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM) briefed members on the key decisions and recommendations in the Administration's report entitled "The New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education – Action Plan for Investing in the Future of Hong Kong" (the Report).

Tuition fee for senior secondary education

2. Referring to media reports, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong asked the Administration to confirm whether tuition fees for senior secondary classes would be increased in the 2005-06 school year. Referring to Chapter Six of the consultation document entitled "Reforming the Academic Structure for Senior

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Secondary Education and Higher Education – Actions for Investing in the Future”, he pointed out that the Administration had indicated its policy intent to gradually bring the tuition fee for senior secondary education to the target recovery level. In this connection, Mr CHEUNG requested the Administration to provide a schedule for increasing senior secondary tuition fees for members’ reference.

3. SEM explained that the existing policy was to recover 18% of the cost from tuition fees for senior secondary education. Since the tuition fees had been frozen since 1998 at \$5,050 per annum for Secondary 4 (S4) and S5, and \$8,750 for S6 and S7 which were about 15% of the unit costs, the Administration would gradually bring the tuition fees back to the target recovery level. If the increase were to be phased in over four years to minimise the financial impact on parents, tuition fees would increase by 5% each year, which would mean not more than an additional dollar per day. SEM pointed out that the increase in tuition fees was not related to the implementation of the three-year senior secondary and four-year undergraduate academic system (the “3+3+4” academic structure). He added that as at present, the Government would continue to provide financial assistance to needy students.

4. Dr Fernando CHEUNG considered that the Administration should review the various financial assistance schemes for needy families and students on an on-going basis. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung remarked that the Administration should examine and explain how increase of tuition fees could improve quality of senior secondary education. Mr LEUNG also suggested that the Administration should consider the impact of an increase in tuition fees on needy students whose family income was marginally above the eligibility criteria for the existing fee remission schemes.

5. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that the annual tuition fee for senior secondary education would progressively increase from the current \$5,050 to \$7,200 in the 2009-10 school year on a weighted average basis at current prices. He considered the increase of tuition fee mainly a result of the increase of student unit cost arising from the implementation of the “3+3+4” academic structure. He suggested that the Administration should include the matter in the second consultation exercise in order to reach a consensus among the community on a schedule for progressive increase of tuition fees for senior secondary education, having regard to the additional costs incurred for the implementation of the new senior secondary curriculum.

6. SEM responded that under the existing cost-recovery rate of 18%, the increase in student unit cost arising from implementing the “3+3+4” academic structure would justify an increase in tuition fees for senior secondary education. He pointed out that for the 2004-05 school year, the estimated annual recurrent costs for a S4 or S5 place and a S6 or S7 place were \$33,540 and \$58,650 respectively, and the annual tuition fees for S4-S5 and S6-S7 were at \$5,050 and

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\$8,750 respectively, or at about \$6,000 on a weighted average basis. The recommended increase of the weighted average fee from the current \$6,000 to about \$7,200 at current prices would mean that while tuition fees for S4-S5 would increase, tuition fees for S6 might decrease in the 2009-10 school year.

7. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong remarked that he had no objection to reasonable increase of tuition fees for senior secondary education under the new academic structure. He, however, considered that the Administration should explain to the community the justifications for such increase, and allow reasonable time to phase in the increase. In response to members' enquiries, SEM reiterated that the Administration had no concrete timetable for increasing the tuition fees for senior secondary education. If there was a decision to do so, the Administration would definitely inform the Panel.

Tuition fees for tertiary education

8. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered that the Administration should review the student financial assistance schemes in view of the proposed increase in annual tuition fees of undergraduate programmes from the current \$42,000 to \$50,000 under the "3+3+4" academic structure. SEM responded that the Student Financial Assistance Agency was reviewing the methods and periods of repayment under various student financial assistance schemes for needy students.

9. The Chairman pointed out that the proposed increase of tuition fee for undergraduate programmes was significant as it would increase the cost-recovery rate from the current 18% to about 24%.

10. SEM responded that a cost-recovery rate of 24% compared favourably with those in overseas places. He pointed out that the cost-recovery rates for university education in the United Kingdom and the United States ranged from 30% to 60% of costs. He added that the Administration would carefully examine the issue before the implementation of the new academic structure for higher education in the 2009-10 school year. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung remarked that when comparing with the cost-recovery rates for university education in overseas places, the Administration should take into account the overall education systems and subsidisation policies provided in these places in a comprehensive manner.

Future development of Project Yi Jin

11. Dr Fernando CHEUNG asked about the long-term development of Project Yi Jin (PYJ) in the context of the implementation of the "3+3+4" academic structure which would incorporate the provision of Career-oriented Studies (COS) at senior secondary levels. He also asked about the continuing education opportunities for senior secondary graduates under the new academic

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structure.

12. SEM responded that a review of PYJ in 2004 had shown that PYJ had played an effective role of providing an alternative education pathway for low achievers in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examinations. The Administration had obtained funding approval to continue the operation of PYJ from the 2005-6 to the 2007-08 school years. At present, the Administration had no plan to suspend the operation of PYJ after the 2007-08 school years. SEM added that starting from the 2004-05 school year, some secondary schools had started to offer COS similar to those offered under PYJ, and in the long term, PYJ might provide continuing education opportunities for senior secondary graduates under the “3+3+4” academic structure.

Progression from S3 to S4 under the “3+3+4” academic structure

13. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung asked how S3 students would be assessed in progression to S4 studies under the “3+3+4” academic structure.

14. Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower (PSEM) responded that in the light of declining student population, secondary schools would move towards symmetrical class structure. Most students would complete their six-year secondary education in the same school. At this stage, the Administration had no plan to establish a central mechanism for allocation of S4 places. Given the diversity of students’ interests, aptitudes and needs in learning, the Administration considered it more appropriate to allow S3 students the free choice to continue their senior secondary education in the same school or enrol in another school which offered elective subjects that suited them. The Administration would ensure the provision of sufficient S4 places for S3 students who wished to continue their secondary school education. She added that the Education Commission would review the Junior Secondary Education Assessment (JSEA) system in 2006.

Deadlines for consultation and completion of the key actions

15. Referring to the critical milestones for key actions in Table 13.1 of the Report, Ms Audrey EU asked whether the Administration would consider specifying the deadlines for completion of individual key actions in the Table. She considered that parents should be well informed of the start of the second consultation exercise on the key actions and the deadlines for submitting views to the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB).

16. SEM responded that EMB had already started the second consultation exercise on the curriculum details and assessment mode of the proposed subjects after he had made a statement on the Government’s way forward for implementing the reform at the Council meeting on 18 May 2005. So far, EMB had conducted 11 and four briefing sessions on the proposals in the Report for

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teachers and parents respectively. EMB envisaged that another 40 briefing sessions would be held for teachers on the curriculum design of proposed subjects including Liberal Studies in the next few months.

17. Ms Audrey EU requested EMB to provide a detailed timetable which would indicate the target dates for achievement of the critical stages as specified in Table 13.1. She considered that EMB should ensure that principals, teachers and parents were well aware of the schedules of the briefing sessions on specific topics to be conducted by EMB. Otherwise, teachers and parents for various reasons might miss the opportunity to express their views.

18. PSEM responded that EMB had sent a complete set of consultation documents on curriculum and assessment for the 24 new senior secondary subjects to schools for comment. These documents as well as the schedules of briefing sessions and workshops were uploaded onto the EMB website for public access. Schools were requested to consult teachers and parents and return their comments to EMB by the end of August 2005. As regards the critical milestones for key actions, EMB had informed principals that the new senior secondary curriculum and assessment guides and university admission requirements at the faculty/programme level would be finalised by mid-2006.

19. Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum Development) (PAS(CD)) supplemented that EMB would conduct some 40 briefing sessions which would accommodate some 16 000 teachers on the design of the curricula for the 24 proposed subjects. EMB would also conduct another round of questionnaire survey to obtain further feedback from teachers on the design of the new senior secondary curriculum framework.

20. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide an information paper to the Panel setting out clearly the timeframe of the second consultation exercise, including the timetable as well as the scope and target of consultation in due course. The Administration noted his request.

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Curriculum design and support for teaching Liberal Studies

21. Ms Audrey EU considered that the Administration should base on the results of the last consultation exercise on the overall curriculum framework work out the curriculum details and assessment framework of individual subjects in the forthcoming consultation. She pointed out that parents in general were concerned about the curriculum design, teachers' professional development and assessment mode for teaching Liberal Studies as a core subject under the new senior secondary curriculum. In this connection, the Chairman asked how professional development programmes for teachers would be conducted and whether parents would have access to the proposed curricula for different senior secondary subjects, in particular the Liberal Studies.

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22. PSEM responded that the Administration would collaborate with schools, principals' associations and teacher networks in different districts to monitor the progress of the academic reform. Starting from August 2005 onwards, EMB would conduct a series of workshops for school principals and teachers involved in planning and leading the migration to the new academic structure. The aim was to equip schools with the necessary skills and knowledge to plan the new curriculum and deployment of resources for effective implementation of the new academic structure. After the completion of these workshops by the end of the 2005/06 school year, EMB would have a better understanding of the needs of individual schools based on which to plan the support measures, including the provision of sufficient funds to schools for implementing the new senior secondary curriculum.

23. PSEM said that generally speaking, there would be a minimum of 35-hour professional development for subject teachers, to be supplemented by a range of optional courses for teachers teaching a new subject, such as Liberal Studies, or a new module of an existing subject. In addition, Liberal Studies teachers would be provided with not less than 100 hours of training on the basic knowledge and skills required for teaching the subject. Schools were asked to work out staff development plans for their teachers to achieve professional competence in teaching Liberal Studies through self-learning, collaborative learning with peers or attending professional development programmes. Schools were also encouraged to start teaching Integrated Humanities and Science and Technology in senior secondary classes so that their teachers could start teaching topics covered by Liberal Studies at an early opportunity. The duration of professional development would vary according to the needs and experience of individual teachers, and might span over a number of years to facilitate teachers' understanding and applications of the skills and knowledge in different contexts. For such purpose, professional development programmes for teachers would commence in the 2005-06 school year and would be progressively implemented up to the 2009-10 school year.

24. PSEM further said that a web-based resource platform would be launched in mid-2005 to provide the basic knowledge which underpinned the Liberal Studies curriculum, updated learning and teaching materials relevant to each unit of study, exemplary learning and teaching practices, and case studies for teachers' reference. An association of Liberal Studies Teachers, comprising some 300 serving teachers with experience in teaching Liberal Studies, had been established. They would form professional networks in the districts where they taught so as to provide mutual support and assistance to teachers who would be teaching Liberal Studies.

25. PSEM added that the number of core units in the curriculum design of Liberal Studies would be reduced from nine to six in order to allow sufficient time for students to learn the subject matters in sufficient depth and breadth, and schools in general had expressed support for the recommendation. Furthermore,

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EMB would publish the new senior secondary curriculum and assessment guides, and universities would announce their specific entrance requirements at the faculty/programme level in mid-2006. Schools could then plan their school-based curriculum and staff development programmes accordingly.

26. Ms Audrey EU sought clarification about the interpretation of the percentage range, i.e. 82.8%-88.4%, of teacher respondents who strongly agreed or agreed to the compulsory part and elective part on curriculum and assessment design of Liberal Studies as indicated in Part B of the Summary of EMB Survey Findings in Appendix 2 to the Report.

27. PAS(CD) explained that in view of the design of the related questions, EMB had used a range of percentage to indicate the response of teachers in support of the curriculum design for the compulsory part and the elective part of Liberal Studies. She added that EMB would conduct another opinion survey to obtain more feedback from teachers on curriculum design for Liberal Studies.

Provision of first-year-first-degree places

28. Dr Fernando CHEUNG asked whether the provision of subsidised places for direct entry of sub-degree graduates to second and third year studies of undergraduate programmes would affect the provision of 14 500 first-year-first-degree places in University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions.

29. SEM responded that the provision of 800 second-year and 800 third-year direct entry places in the 2005-06 and 2006-07 school years would not affect the provision of 14 500 first-year-first-degree subsidised places in undergraduate programmes of UGC-funded institutions. However, UGC-funded institutions enjoyed high autonomy in the use of allocated resources and had discretion on their student enrolment matters.

Surplus classroom arising from implementing the new academic structure

30. Mr Patrick LAU suggested that the Administration should take the opportunity of implementing the new senior secondary structure to improve the learning environment and facilities in schools. He asked whether the Administration would review the use of surplus classrooms arising from implementation of the new academic structure in secondary schools.

31. PSEM responded that as a result of the increase in S6 classes and the phasing out of S7 classes, secondary schools might, depending on their student enrolment, operate more or fewer classes in the 2011-12 school year. The Administration would encourage schools to make use of the surplus classrooms, if any, to conduct small group teaching according to the needs of students and the nature of the subject, e.g. Liberal Studies.

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II. Measures to support development of the new academic structure for senior secondary and higher education

32. Members noted the Administration's paper on proposed measures to support the development of the "3+3+4" academic structure [LC Paper No. CB(2)1716/04-05(02)].

Professional development of teachers

33. Ms Emily LAU noted that the Administration had provided a breakdown of the non-recurrent commitment of about \$2,450 million in paragraph 26 of its paper for funding the development support measures as detailed in paragraph 7 of the paper. She expressed concern about the core training for school principals and teachers in paragraph 7(d) and requested the Administration to elaborate on the detailed arrangements for the professional development of teachers and principals to facilitate implementation of the "3+3+4" academic structure.

34. PSEM responded that to facilitate the planning and smooth implementation of the new academic structure, EMB had conducted a questionnaire survey among 476 secondary schools in October 2004. Based on the returns from schools, the number of schools, the number of teachers who would teach individual subjects, and the number of teachers who needed to attend professional development programmes were detailed in item 11 of the survey findings in Appendix 2 to the Report. Based on the information, the Administration would plan for sufficient professional development programmes. While some of the programmes would be conducted by EMB without incurring additional costs, others would be commissioned to tertiary institutions by way of tendering. She added that the breakdown of the proposed non-recurrent commitment was based on the best estimates at this stage, and would be subject to review in the light of changing demands.

35. PSEM also explained that a minimum of 30-35 and 100 hours of professional development would be provided for Liberal Studies teachers. Professional training on assessment of student performance under the new senior secondary curriculum would also be provided. The amount of professional development required would vary between teachers. EMB would collaborate with schools and tertiary institutions to work out the appropriate professional development programmes and modes of operation to meet the different circumstances of schools and needs of their teachers.

36. Ms Emily LAU asked whether the estimated commitment of \$906 million for the Teacher Professional Preparation Grant was sufficient for the intended purposes, which include the provision of relief teachers for serving teachers to attend professional development programmes and senior teachers to assist

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principals in coordinating and steering the transition to the new senior secondary curriculum. She also asked whether the amount of \$120 million to assist schools in engaging services that could enhance the professional capacity of teachers and the capacity of schools to implement the new senior secondary curriculum was included in the grant of \$906 million.

37. PSEM responded that under the Teacher Professional Preparation Grant, a standard secondary school would be provided on average one additional Graduate Master per annum for four years starting from the 2005-06 school year. Schools could flexibly use the grant to create space for teachers to prepare for the implementation of the new senior secondary curriculum, and to better equip the schools for migration to the “3+3+4” academic structure. She added that the amount of \$120 million was included under the grant of \$906 million for schools to procure necessary support services according to their needs.

38. Dr Fernando CHEUNG asked whether the non-recurrent commitment of \$2,450 million had included the provision of special education for students with special educational needs (SEN). He also asked how professional development for teachers in the special education sector would be planned and tailored to meet the needs of students with SEN.

39. PSEM responded that the estimates had taken into account the provision of special education to students with SEN. The provision of funds and development programmes for teachers in different categories of special schools would be determined in the light of the curricula for students with different SEN which would be worked out in collaboration with the special education sector by the end of 2005.

Funding flexibility and additional funding

40. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that the non-recurrent commitments set out in paragraph 26 of the Administration’s paper were based on the best estimates at this stage, and might have to be reshuffled in the light of changing circumstances and demands. He suggested that the Administration should explain the calculations for the non-recurrent commitments and recommend the provision of flexibility in virement of funds between constituent grants under the non-recurrent commitments in its proposal to the Finance Committee (FC) for funding approval. Ms Emily LAU echoed his view.

41. The Chairman asked why the Administration considered it necessary to create the non-recurrent commitment of \$2,450 million at this stage, given that the implementation of the “3+3+4” academic structure had been deferred to the 2009-10 school year.

42. SEM explained that given the complexity of the “3+3+4” academic structure, it was necessary to provide sufficient non-recurrent resources at the

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outset to assist secondary schools and UGC-funded institutions to migrate to the new academic structure in the 2009-10 school year. The non-recurrent commitment, if approved by FC, would assure schools and UGC-funded institutions of the Government's commitment and readiness to support the institutions, schools and teachers in the implementation of the new academic structure.

43. Ms Emily LAU and Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong asked whether additional funding would be required before and after the implementation of the "3+3+4" academic structure in the 2009-10 school year.

44. SEM responded that in view of the community feedback during the last consultation exercise, the Government had increased the non-recurrent commitment to about \$4,400 million in order to cope with the increase in demands for curriculum development and teacher training, etc. The non-recurrent commitment of \$2,450 million was mainly for funding the development support measures. PSEM supplemented that the remainder was for operating additional classes, including the need to accommodate additional students in the double cohort year (with both S7 and new S6 students) in the 2011-12 school year, and other commitments which would be implemented nearer the commencement of the new academic structure.

45. The Chairman informed members that the Administration intended to submit the proposal to FC for consideration on 24 June 2005. He invited members to indicate their position on the proposal. Members present in general were supportive of the proposal and raised no objection to its submission to FC.

III. Additional staff support for implementation of the new academic structure for senior secondary and higher education

46. Members noted the Administration's paper on its proposal to create two supernumerary directorate posts to provide dedicated professional support for the implementation of the new senior secondary curriculum and assessment framework under the "3+3+4" academic structure, as well as to provide school-based professional support to individual schools to facilitate their smooth transition to the new academic structure [LC Paper No. CB(2)1716/04-05(03)].

Period of the two proposed supernumerary directorate posts

47. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Ms Emily LAU expressed reservation about the proposed creation of two supernumerary directorate posts for five years up to 30 June 2010. They pointed out that Legislative Council Members belonging to different political parties had reached a consensus that the maximum duration of supernumerary directorate posts normally should not exceed a period of more than two and a half years. They suggested that the

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Administration should consider proposing the creation of the posts for an initial period of two years and extend the duration of the contracts subject to a review of the continued need for these posts.

48. SEM explained that in view of the scale, importance and complexity of the “3+3+4” academic reform and the substantial amount of professional input required to implement the new senior secondary curriculum and assessment framework, the Administration considered it necessary to create the two supernumerary directorate posts for five years up to 30 June 2010. He considered that members should consider the unique need of the posts to support the implementation of the new academic structure, instead of a general consensus on the creation of supernumerary directorate posts in bureaux and departments under normal circumstances. SEM added that the Establishment Subcommittee of FC had endorsed the creation of two supernumerary posts for a period of six years to support the planning and implementation of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) and related highway infrastructure projects.

49. PSEM also pointed out that the proposed directorate posts were required to support the huge amount of preparation and coordination work for implementation of the “3+3+4” academic structure, and would be required in the run-up to and during the first year of the implementation of the “3+3+4” academic structure. She considered that the “3+3+4” academic structure had far-reaching implications on the future development of education, and was comparable to the construction of HZMB in terms of its impact on the future development of Hong Kong.

50. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered it unnecessary to compare the circumstances between the HZMB project and the “3+3+4” academic structure for the creation of the two supernumerary directorate posts. Mr Jasper TSANG added that members would consider the justifications for the creation of the six-year supernumerary directorate posts under the HZMB project before casting their votes on the proposal of creating directorate posts for the new academic structure.

51. The Chairman said that members were only considering the proposed creation of two supernumerary directorate posts from a perspective of prudent management of public resources. He pointed out that in supporting the approval of the non-recurrent commitment of \$2,450 million, members had demonstrated their full support for the implementation of the “3+3+4” academic structure. He requested the Administration to consider members’ suggestion before submitting the proposal to the Establishment Subcommittee for consideration on 9 June 2005.

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IV. Funding flexibility and support measures for schools to set up incorporated management committees

52. At the invitation of the Chairman, SEM briefed members on the main points in the Administration's paper on the subject [LC Paper No. CB(2)1716/04-05(04)].

53. Members noted the submissions from the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong (the Catholic Diocese), the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui and the Methodist Church, Hong Kong which were tabled at the meeting [LC Paper Nos. CB(2) 1788/04-05(01)-(03)].

54. Mr Patrick LAU declared interest as a manager of a school of the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui.

55. The Chairman informed the meeting that the Administration intended to submit its proposal on funding flexibility and support measures for schools to set up Incorporated Management Committees (IMC) to FC for consideration at its meeting on 24 June 2005. He invited questions from members on the proposal.

Time-limited cash grants

56. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the Catholic Diocese, the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui and the Methodist Church considered it discriminatory against non-IMC schools if only IMC schools would be eligible for an initial time-limited cash grant of \$350,000 per school per annum starting from the 2005-06 school year leading up to the end of the 2008-09 school year. In particular, the Catholic Diocese had openly expressed that it would apply for judicial review if only IMC schools were provided with the funding flexibility and support measures as proposed in the Administration's paper.

57. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered that all aided schools which had submitted a draft constitution of their proposed IMCs by 1 July 2009 for the purpose of establishing IMCs before 1 January 2010 should be provided with the time-limited cash grant. He urged the Administration to discuss with the Catholic Diocese, the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui, the Methodist Church and other school sponsoring bodies (SSBs) sharing similar concern for the purpose of working out an option to settle the disputes over the proposals in the Administration's paper. He anticipated that EMB could reach a consensus with these SSBs and revert to the Panel on 13 June 2005 with a revised proposal for submission to FC on 24 June 2005.

58. SEM responded that all aided schools which had submitted a draft constitution for the purpose of establishing an IMC before the statutory deadline of 1 July 2009 would be given the initial cash grant of \$350,000. He pointed out that some SSBs might have misunderstood the Administration's proposal on

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provision of time-limited cash grant. He undertook to meet these SSBs to clarify the policy intent and the implications of the proposals.

59. PSEM supplemented that under the Education (Amendment) Ordinance 2004 (the Amendment Ordinance), all aided schools should have established an IMC before 1 January 2010. The proposed time-limited cash grant of \$350,000 would be given to aided schools which had submitted the draft constitution before 1 July 2009 to cover the costs, including legal and accounting costs, incurred for the establishment of an IMC.

60. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that the time-limited cash grant would be provided to IMC schools up to the 2008-09 school year and not subsequent school years. In other words, aided schools which would establish an IMC in the 2008-09 school year would receive only \$350,000 which was much less than the grants given to aided schools which would establish an IMC in the 2005-06 school year. Referring to paragraph 17 of the Administration's paper, Mr CHEUNG pointed out that to facilitate smooth implementation of the Amendment Ordinance, schools with IMCs established in the early years would be requested to share their experiences and help other schools to set up IMCs. These IMC schools would then receive more cash grants than schools which would establish an IMC at a later stage. He considered that EMB should discuss with SSBs which would established an IMC in their schools at a later stage with the aim of agreeing on fair and consistent arrangements for the provision of the time-limited cash grants beyond the 2008-09 school year.

61. The Chairman said that he had an impression that the time-limited cash grant aimed to provide incentives to encourage schools to submit a draft constitution before 1 July 2009 for the purpose of establishing an IMC. He agreed that EMB should discuss with SSBs alternative arrangements for further provision of grants to schools which would establish an IMC at a later stage.

62. SEM responded that he would be pleased to discuss with SSBs alternative arrangements for the provision of the time-limited cash grant. He, however, pointed out that given the huge budget required, EMB would only be able to set aside sufficient funds for the provision of time-limited cash grant up to the 2008-09 school year.

63. Mr Jasper TSANG sought clarifications about the meaning of the disbursement of initial time-limited cash grants to schools concerned from the 2005-06 school year leading up to the end of the 2008-09 school year in paragraph 17 of the Administration's paper. He asked whether aided schools which had established an IMC in the 2005-06 school year would continue to enjoy an annual cash grant of \$350,000 in subsequent school years up to the 2008-09 school year.

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64. SEM responded that it was reasonable to provide more cash grants to IMC schools which had offered assistance to other schools in the establishment of IMCs. PSEM supplemented that the Administration would provide all aided schools which had submitted a draft constitution for establishing an IMC before 1 July 2009 with an initial cash grant of \$350,000 to cover the costs incurred. Given that some 1 200 aided primary and secondary schools were required to establish an IMC before 1 January 2010, EMB would request schools with IMCs established in the early years to share their experiences and help other schools to set up IMCs. The Administration considered it reasonable to give further grants to these IMC schools to cover the manpower and other costs incurred for providing such help to non-IMC schools.

65. Mr Jasper TSANG cautioned that the Administration should carefully examine the rationale for providing schools which would establish an IMC earlier than other schools with more annual cash grants of \$350,000 each year. He considered that the Administration should estimate the costs required.

66. PSEM responded that according to feedback from schools, around 150 to 200 schools intended to establish an IMC in the 2005-06 school year. SEM added that the Administration would encourage schools to establish their IMCs as early as practicable, and the proposed provision of time-limited cash grants to IMC schools in the initial years was open to all eligible schools.

67. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung asked whether IMC schools would still be provided with the time-limited cash grant beyond the 2005-06 school year, if all aided schools had established an IMC in the 2005-06 school year. He considered that the costs incurred for the establishment of an IMC should be greater than the costs incurred for providing assistance to other schools to establish an IMC. He suggested that the Administration should at least work out a set of fair and consistent criteria for providing cash grants to IMC schools which had offered assistance to other schools in the establishment of IMCs.

68. SEM responded that it would be unrealistic to expect all aided schools to establish an IMC in the 2005-06 school year. He pointed out that schools in preparation for the establishment of an IMC would have to handle a lot of planning, organisational and administrative work, such as the preparation and arrangements for the election of parent and teacher managers, etc. EMB would provide professional advice to schools, but would not have the necessary manpower to actively participate or assist in the establishment of IMCs in individual schools. The provision of assistance by IMC schools to non-IMC schools in the establishment of IMCs was thus essential, and should be encouraged by the provision of additional cash grants.

69. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung and Mr Patrick LAU considered that the Administration should elaborate on the justifications for providing more annual cash grants of \$350,000 to schools which would establish an IMC earlier than

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other schools. Mr LEUNG queried the rationale for providing schools which would establish an IMC in the 2005-06 school year with the cash grant for four consecutive years, while schools which would establish an IMC in the 2008-09 school year would receive the cash grant for one year only.

70. Ms Emily LAU expressed objection to the provision of more cash grants to schools which would establish an IMC earlier than other schools. She considered that schools which intended to establish an IMC at a later stage should at least be disbursed with the costs incurred for the establishment of an IMC. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered that the provision of time-limited cash grant from the 2005-06 leading up to the 2008-09 school year was apparently proposed to encourage schools to establish an IMC as soon as practicable. He considered the proposal unfair to SSBs which had openly expressed reservation about the establishment of IMC in their schools.

Funding flexibility and professional liability insurance

71. Dr Fernando CHEUNG considered that in the interests of students, all aided schools should be provided with more autonomy and flexibility in the use of resources, and all managers of IMCs or School Management Committees should be covered by the professional liability insurance taken out by EMB. He considered it inappropriate to set the requirement that only IMC schools could enjoy more autonomy and flexibility in the use of resources, as such autonomy and flexibility would enhance quality of school education which would in turn benefit student learning.

72. SEM responded that the Administration considered it essential that only IMC schools with elected representatives of teachers, parents, alumni and independent persons participating in the management of the school at the decision-making level should be provided with more autonomy and flexibility in the use of public resources. He pointed out that the provision was proposed having regard to the existence of the necessary pre-conditions in IMC schools which included a system of checks and balances with stakeholders' participation within a transparent and accountable framework of governance. He added that schools which preferred to establish an IMC at a later stage would continue to enjoy the current autonomy and flexibility in the use of resources under the existing regulatory framework.

73. Dr Fernando CHEUNG remarked that all aided schools were now subject to the supervision of EMB in the use of resources. Given the relatively small amount of monies involved, all aided schools should be given more autonomy and flexibility in the use of funds if the existing regulatory framework was effective.

74. SEM responded that the Administration considered that IMC schools had a more democratic and transparent system of management and should be

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provided with more autonomy in the use of funds. To be prudent in the management of public funds, further devolution of funding flexibility should only be given to schools with an open and transparent system of governance.

Follow-up

75. Ms Audrey EU suggested that the Panel should invite concern SSBs to express views on the Administration's proposal at a future meeting. Mr Jasper TSANG added that interested SSBs, regardless of whether they supported or opposed the proposal, should be given an opportunity to express views at the meeting. The Chairman concurred with the suggestion.

76. Members agreed to hold a special meeting on Monday, 20 June 2005 at 5:30 pm to receive views from deputations and continue discussion on the proposal.

V. Any other business

77. Members noted that the Native English-speaking Teachers' Association had provided the following documents to the Panel –

- (a) a letter dated 25 May 2005 [LC Paper No. CB(2)1775/04-05(01)];
- (b) a note dated 31 May 2005 [LC Paper No. CB(2)1775/04-05(02)];
and
- (c) a letter dated 1 June 2005 [LC Paper No. CB(2)1783/04-05(01)].

78. Members agreed to hold a special meeting on Thursday, 30 June 2005 at 4:30 pm to discuss the following items –

- (a) Native-speaking English Teacher (NET) Scheme; and
- (b) Training of kindergarten teachers.

79. Ms Audrey EU suggested that the Administration should be requested to include in the discussion paper for the NET Scheme information on the overall English standard of students in the past decade and the cost-effectiveness of the NET Scheme in improving the English proficiency of students in Hong Kong. Members agreed.

Clerk

[Post-meeting note: The special meeting on 30 June 2005 was subsequently cancelled and discussion of the two items was deferred to the regular meeting scheduled for Monday, 11 July 2005 from 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm.]

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80. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 5:40 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
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