

Panel on Education

List of issues suggested to be considered (position as at 11 October 2004)

Proposed timing for discussion

1. University admission system

In discussing curriculum reform on 21 January 2002, the former Panel on Education requested the Administration to ensure that the future senior secondary curriculum and university admission system would align with the new curriculum for basic education.

To be confirmed

The consultation on the new senior secondary and university education academic systems as recommended in the 2004 Policy Address will include recommendations for university admission.

2. Transparency and representation of the new Education Commission (EC)

Some members of the Bills Committee on Education Reorganization (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2002 were of the view that the new EC following the merger should become a statutory body in the longer term in order to enhance its advisory role. At the meeting of the former House Committee on 7 February 2003, Ms Cyd HO suggested that the issue should be followed up by the Panel on Education.

To be confirmed

3. Implementation of four-year first-degree programmes

Ms Emily LAU noted that there were views in the community opposing the proposed four-year structure for first-degree programmes. On 5 July 2003, she suggested that the Panel should discuss with the Administration on the implementation of four-year first-degree programmes.

To be confirmed

As announced in the 2004 Policy Address, the Administration will consult the public on proposed changes to the academic structure at the senior secondary school level,

**Proposed timing
for discussion**

and corresponding changes to the duration of undergraduate programmes.

4. Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) to conduct examinations outside Hong Kong

The Bills Committee on the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (Amendment) Bill 2003 requested the Secretary for Education and Manpower to report to the Panel on how HKEAA would enforce measures to secure confidentiality of public examinations when HKEAA is about to conduct examinations outside Hong Kong.

To be confirmed

5. Native-speaking English Teacher (NET) Scheme in primary schools

At the meeting on 17 November 2003, members of the former Panel on Education expressed support for the implementation of the NET Scheme in primary schools and requested the Administration to review the performance of NETs in primary schools with a view to developing a long-term strategy for the provision of NETs in schools.

To be confirmed

The Administration said that a systematic evaluation on the performance of the primary NET Scheme was underway. The Administration will revert to the Panel when the evaluation report is available.

6. School self-evaluation (SSE)

At its meeting on 3 March 2004, the Bills Committee on Education (Amendment) Bill 2002 decided to refer the item of SSE including its impact on teachers' workload in schools to the former Panel on Education for follow-up discussion.

To be confirmed

7. Future developments in the higher education sector

At the meeting on 15 March 2004, members of the former Panel on Education requested the University Grants Committee (UGC) to report its work progress in respect of

To be confirmed

the proposals as detailed in its document entitled "To make a difference, to move with the times". Secretary General, UGC undertook to revert to the Panel later in 2004.

8. Remuneration systems in UGC-funded institutions after deregulation of university salaries

The former Panel on Education received the views and concerns of the deputations on the matter at the meeting on 5 July 2004. Members of the former Panel on Education in general expressed concern about the disputes between staff and management, and the role of the governing bodies of UGC-funded institutions in the development and implementation of their new remuneration systems. They considered that UGC-funded institutions should establish fair, open and transparent appeal mechanisms to facilitate the establishment and implementation of the new remuneration systems. In addition, some members suggested that a mechanism should be established to monitor the performance of university councils and the attendance of their members at meetings; and the minutes of the meetings of university councils should be made public.

To be confirmed

Members agreed that the Panel should follow up the issue in the new term. In this connection, Dr YEUNG Sum requested representatives of university administration to relay the views and concerns of deputations to university councils; and suggested that the universities, UGC and EMB should follow up the following issues raised by the deputations –

- (a) the offer of contract terms to new recruits which would affect the universities' ability to attract good academic staff;
- (b) larger percentages of salary reductions for staff in the lower echelon than those for staff in the top echelon;
- (c) availability of appeal and grievance mechanisms for staff who felt aggrieved by the implementation of the new remuneration system to lodge complaints;

- (d) adoption of reasonable and uniform salary scales for similar grades in UGC-funded institutions; and
- (e) complaints against universities' compelling serving academic staff on substantiated terms to accept the conversion of their terms of employment to contract terms.

9. Sample constitutions for Incorporated Management Committee (IMC)

Under the Education Amendment Ordinance 2002, aided schools are required to establish an IMC within a transition period of five years starting from 1 January 2005. To establish an IMC, aided schools are required to submit a draft constitution to the Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower for approval.

To be confirmed

At the meeting of the Bills Committee on Education (Amendment) Bill 2002 on 6 July 2004, Ms Cyd HO, Chairman of the Bills Committee, suggested that in view of time constraint, deliberation on the sample constitutions for IMC should be referred to the Panel for follow-up.

10. Improving teacher-student ratios and class sizes in primary and secondary schools

At the meeting on 19 July 2004, members of the former Panel on Education discussed with deputations and the Administration the implementation of the recommendations of the Education Commission Report No.5 on improving teacher-student ratios and class sizes in schools. Some members and deputations suggested that the Administration should take the opportunity of a declining student population to implement small class teaching in order to improve the teacher-student ratios and class sizes in schools on an incremental basis.

To be confirmed

The Administration pointed out that implementation of small class teaching would entail substantial recurrent staff costs.

In view of members' suggestion, the Administration agreed to explore how to tackle the resource problem and provide a proposal on the way forward for follow-up discussion early in the new term.

11. Regulation of private intermediaries providing overseas studies services

Item referred to the Panel on 21 July 2004 under the LegCo Redress System. Duty Roster Member and Invited Members receiving a concern group on 17 July 2004 considered that to protect the interests of students and parents, the Government should regulate the operation of private intermediaries providing overseas studies services by way of appropriate amendments to the Education Ordinance.

To be confirmed

The Administration has explained that services provided by such private intermediaries are mainly related to applications of travel documents, and transport and accommodation arrangements for admission to education programmes offered by overseas institutions. These services are commercial in nature and users of such services are safeguarded by relevant consumer-related legislation. The Administration also pointed out that many overseas countries have mechanisms in place to safeguard the rights and interests of their non-local students. Hong Kong students who are not satisfied with the education services and accommodation provided by an overseas institution may lodge their complaints with the appropriate authority in the overseas country concerned.