

立法會

Legislative Council

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Report of the Panel on Education for submission to the Legislative Council

Purpose

The report gives an account of the work of the Panel on Education during the 2004-2005 Legislative Council (LegCo) session. It will be tabled at the Council meeting on 6 July 2005 in accordance with Rule 77(14) of the Rules of Procedure of the Council.

The Panel

2. The Panel was formed by a resolution passed by the Council on 8 July 1998 and as amended on 20 December 2000 and 9 October 2002 for the purpose of monitoring and examining Government policies and issues of public concern relating to education matters. The terms of reference of the Panel are in **Appendix I**.

3. The Panel comprises 12 members, with Dr Hon YEUNG Sum and Hon Audrey EU elected as Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Panel respectively. The membership list of the Panel is in **Appendix II**.

Major work

New academic structure for senior secondary education and higher education

4. In his 2004 Policy Address, the Chief Executive set out the direction to develop a new senior secondary and higher education academic structure (the “3+3+4” academic structure). In October 2004, the Administration issued a consultation paper entitled “Reforming the Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education” for public consultation on the design blueprint, timing of the implementation and financial arrangements of the proposed “3+3+4” academic structure. The Panel held three special meetings to discuss the proposed “3+3+4” academic structure with the Administration. The Panel also receive views from 48 deputations at one of the meetings.

5. Members in general expressed support for the implementation of the “3+3+4” academic structure with a three-year junior secondary and three-year senior secondary education linking to four-year undergraduate university programmes. They, however, were of the view that the Administration should incorporate the provision of special education and integrated education in the new senior secondary academic structure. The Administration responded that the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) would solicit the views of the special education sector on provision of special education under the new academic structure in the next round of consultation.

6. According to the Consultation Paper, a senior secondary curriculum would be re-designed. All students would be expected to take four core subjects, including Liberal Studies, two to three elective subjects and other learning experiences.

7. Some members expressed concern about the curriculum design, assessment, pedagogies, and class size for teaching Liberal Studies as a core subject at senior secondary levels. They suggested that Liberal Studies should first be taught as an elective subject. These members considered that Liberal Studies should only be included as a core subject when sufficient experienced teachers were available, and appropriate pedagogies and assessment mechanisms, and support measures were put in place.

8. The Administration explained to the Panel that on the basis of the views received during the public consultation exercise, it would decide the appropriate timing for implementing the “3+3+4” academic structure and incorporating Liberal Studies as a core subject in the senior secondary curriculum.

9. Some members considered that universities should set out their admission criteria as early as practicable, in particular whether Liberal Studies should be a mandatory subject, for university admission under the “3+3+4” academic structure. They pointed out that the information was necessary for teachers and principals to plan their school curriculum in preparation for the implementation of the “3+3+4” academic structure in the 2008-09 school year. Parents would also need to know the future admission requirements for individual undergraduate programmes for selecting secondary schools for their children.

10. The Administration informed the Panel that a working group comprising staff of EMB and the universities had been set up to work out the detailed arrangements for university admission. The Administration envisaged that universities would be able to publish their general admission criteria and specific admission requirements for individual faculties in 2005.

11. Members in general considered that the Administration should provide appropriate professional development programmes and sufficient support for teachers to prepare for the implementation of the new senior secondary curriculum. Some of them considered that even a 100-hour development programme was not sufficient for a teacher to become competent in teaching a new subject such as Liberal Studies.

12. The Administration explained to the Panel that the 35-hour professional development programme for teaching a new subject under the new senior secondary curriculum was proposed after consulting the teaching profession. Depending on individual needs, the duration of professional development programmes for a teacher could range from 35 to 100 hours. The Administration would consult teachers thoroughly for the design of appropriate development programmes for different subjects,

13. The Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM) made a statement at the Council meeting on 18 May 2005 on the Government's way forward for implementing the reform. SEM announced that –

- (a) the Government decided to introduce the new academic structure in the 2009-10 school year in order to allow one more year for professional preparation of schools and teachers;
- (b) the Government decided to reduce the number of core units in the curriculum design of Liberal Studies from nine to six; and
- (c) the Government planned to invest \$7.9 billion, compared to \$6.7 billion as originally proposed, to meet the preparation costs for the new academic structure.

14. The Panel received a briefing from SEM on the Government's plan to implement the reform. The Administration informed the Panel that it would solicit views from school sector in its second stage consultation on details regarding the design of the curriculum and assessment frameworks of the new senior secondary subjects. Members stressed that the Administration should explain clearly to the public the timeframe of its second stage consultation exercise, including the timetable as well as the scope and target of the consultation, so that stakeholders could have the opportunity to give their views.

15. The Panel discussed the Administration's proposed measures for supporting the development of the "3+3+4" academic structure. Members were supportive of the Administration's proposal of creating a non-recurrent commitment of about \$2,450 million to provide funding to facilitate University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions and secondary schools to gear up the preparation for the new academic structure. Some members requested the Administration to maintain sufficient flexibility in reshuffling the resources

among the support measures in view of emerging needs and changing circumstances. The Panel also discussed the Administration's proposal of creating two supernumerary directorate posts to provide professional support for the implementation of the new academic structure.

16. The Panel would receive regular reports from the Administration on the progress of preparing for the "3+3+4" academic structure.

Small class teaching

17. During the session, the Panel continued to discuss issues relating to small class teaching, including the progress of the three-year longitudinal pilot study on small class teaching being conducted by the Administration (the Study).

18. Some members were supportive of the early implementation of small class teaching so as to enhance teacher-student interactions, students' learning outcomes and development, and quality of school education. They expressed reservations about the reliability of the Study, the findings of which would be considered by the Administration in determining the way forward for small class teaching. These members pointed out that the Study covered only 37 participating schools over a period of three years, and the findings would be assessed by a Steering Committee comprising academics and frontline educators appointed by the Administration (the Steering Committee). They expressed concern that the outcome of the Study would be used by the Administration to justify a decision not to implement small class teaching.

19. The Administration stressed that it was in principle supportive of small class teaching. The Administration, however, considered that implementation of small class teaching should be strategically planned to ensure that the expected outcomes would be achieved, given the huge long-term financial commitment, the inconclusive findings of overseas studies on the effect on student learning, and the lack of local experience.

20. The Administration further explained to the Panel that the Study would assess students' achievements on standard tests, improvements in learning behaviour and abilities to develop generic skills and higher order thinking skills. The Study would also link students' learning outcome to the teaching pedagogies and strategies for small class teaching. The Administration also pointed out that apart from academic indicators, evaluation of the Study would also be made by way of questionnaires to be completed by schools, teachers, parents and students.

21. The Panel held discussions with the overseas consultant to the Study, members of the Steering Committee, representatives of some participating schools, academics in small class teaching and the Administration about the review of the progress of the Study. The Administration also briefed the

Panel on its proposal to extend small class teaching to primary schools with a high concentration of disadvantaged students.

22. Some members stressed that apart from academic results of students, the benefits of small class teaching should be assessed in terms of teacher-student interaction and learning attitude of students. They considered that small class teaching should be implemented as far as the resources permitted. These members, however, expressed reservations about the Administration's proposal of extending the Study to primary schools with a high concentration of disadvantaged students, as it might create a labelling effect against schools participating in the Study.

Funding for University Grants Committee-funded institutions

23. The Panel discussed the Administration's recommendation of the recurrent funding for UGC-funded institutions in the 2005-06 to 2007-08 triennium at three of its meetings, and received views from representatives of 27 staff associations and students unions from the higher education sector and concern groups.

24. According to the Administration, in the context of examining the funding recommendations for the 2004-05 academic year, the Heads of Universities Committee's (HUCOM's) member institutions reached a consensus that they would try their best to work with a "0-0-X" funding arrangement for the 2005-06 to 2007-08 triennium. This "0-0-X" funding arrangement meant that there would be no further funding cut in the first two years of the triennium but funding may be reduced in the third year of triennium by an undefined percentage, which should not be greater than 5% and would be determined nearer the time. The Administration adopted the "0-0-5" model as the planning assumption for the 2005-06 to 2007-08 triennium.

25. A member belonging to the Liberal Party (LP) indicated that LP was supportive of the adoption of the "0-0-5" model for the allocation of recurrent funding to UGC-funded institutions. Some other members expressed objection to the Administration's proposal as it might mean further funding cuts for the higher education. They suggested that the "0-0-0" model should be adopted.

26. A member pointed out that adoption of the "0-0-5" model would immediately affect the planning and development work of UGC-funded institutions. The member considered that as the prevailing economic outlook was favourable, the Administration could propose a lower reduction percentage for the third year of the triennium and conduct a review earlier.

27. The Panel noted that in his recent discussions with HUCOM, SEM had undertaken that EMB would conduct a review in mid-2006 to determine the

percentage of actual reduction of recurrent funding for the 2007-08 academic year, and hoped that the circumstances then would likely allow EMB to recommend a higher level of recurrent grant for the 2007-08 academic year, reflecting the "0-0-0" model. EMB would conduct the review in consultation with UGC and HUCOM and would revert to the Panel on the outcome. The Administration stressed that the eight UGC-funded institutions needed early confirmation of their funding level in order to finalise their budget and academic programmes for the 2005-08 triennium. The timing for conducting the review could be reconsidered at a later stage.

28. Some members expressed grave concern about the proposed 33% reduction in recurrent funding for the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) for the 2005-08 triennium. These members also noted with concern that the proposed reduction in student numbers was about 14% in aggregate across all levels at HKIEd and about 60% of the reduction in student numbers were related to professional development programmes for serving teachers.

29. The Administration explained to the Panel that the current situation of surplus teachers, projected demand for teachers and anticipated needs in upgrading existing teachers would determine the provision of teacher education places in the UGC sector. The Administration attached great importance to professional development of teachers and had increased allocation of funding to facilitate the implementation of various reform initiatives including the proposed "3+3+4" academic structure. HKIEd could obtain additional resources by providing appropriate professional development programmes for teachers.

30. Some members, however, pointed out that the provision of non-recurrent funding through competing bids to replace the recurrent funding for HKIEd would seriously affect its operation and development in the long run.

31. The Panel also discussed the Administration's proposal of introducing a \$1 billion Second Matching Grant Scheme for matching private donations secured by UGC-funded institutions.

32. Members in general were supportive of the implementation of the Second Matching Grant Scheme. They considered that continued operation of the Matching Grant Scheme would help promote a culture of making private donations to the higher education sector. Members suggested that the Administration should consider the provision of matching grants to UGC-funded institutions on a recurrent basis, and raising the ceiling for tax-exempted donations to encourage more private donations. Some members, however, were of the view that the higher education sector might shift its focus to commercial values in the long run for the sake of securing more private donations.

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

33. The Working Group on Review of Secondary School Places Allocation and Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools of the Education Commission (the Working Group) published a consultation paper to collect views on its proposals. The Panel held discussions with the chairman and members of the Working Group. The Panel also received views from 26 deputations on the Consultation Paper.

34. Some members were of the view 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. It was important to have a consistent policy for the medium of instruction. They considered that students who were able to learn through English should be provided with sufficient exposure to English. These members were concerned that the number of schools adopting English as the medium of instruction (EMI schools) might decrease as a result of the prescribed criteria of student ability for EMI schools.

35. The chairman of the Working Group pointed out that the Working Group only focused its attention on enhancing the overall effectiveness of teaching and learning in secondary schools. Moreover, there were diverse pathways to enhance students' language ability and learning through using English as medium of instruction was only one of them.

36. Members belonging to LP indicated that LP supported the broad direction of mother-tongue teaching and opposed the within-school approach (i.e. a school can operate both EMI classes and classes adopting Chinese as the medium of instruction. They considered that the current policy on medium of instruction which allowed the operation of both EMI schools and schools adopting Chinese as the medium of instruction (CMI schools) should continue. The Administration, however, should provide resources to CMI schools to enhance the English proficiency of their students.

Language education

37. The Panel discussed the Administration's financial proposal of injecting \$500 million into the Language Fund for initiatives which sought to enhance the quality of language education in Hong Kong. According to the Administration's proposal, \$300 million of the funding would be used for the expansion of the existing Professional Development Incentive Grant Scheme for Language Teachers, and \$200 million would be used to strengthen support in language education for children at pre-primary and primary levels. While members did not object to the proposal, a member stressed that the Administration must ensure that the funding would be distributed fairly for the

use of both Chinese and English language teachers.

38. The Panel subsequently held discussions with the Administration on its funding arrangements to strengthen support in language education at pre-primary and primary levels. Some members pointed out that there were some 6 000 kindergarten 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 kindergarten teachers upon harmonisation of pre-primary services. They considered it unfair that only \$20 million out of the \$500 million injection into the Language Fund would be used in professional development of pre-primary teachers.

39. The Administration explained to the Panel that it 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 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.

40. Some members pointed out that the provision of quality language education at kindergartens would facilitate language teaching and learning at primary and secondary levels. They 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 good language proficiency to join the pre-primary workforce.

41. The Administration informed the Panel that it 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. The Administration would provide more resources and support in the professional development of pre-primary teachers.

42. The Panel also discussed the Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme in primary schools. Members in general were supportive of the Scheme. They considered that the Administration should allocate sufficient resources for providing a native-speaking English teacher for each primary school.

43. Some members expressed concern about the problems in recruitment and retention of native-speaking English teachers in primary schools. Some other members also pointed out that there were a large number of native English-speaking persons who were capable of teaching English in primary schools, even though they might not possess the required qualifications. They suggested that the Administration should consider providing appropriate training to these persons who were capable and interested in teaching English

for primary students so that they could contribute to enhancing the quality of English teaching in primary schools in the long run.

44. The Administration explained to the Panel that the long-term policy objective was to provide all eligible primary schools with a native-speaking English teacher. The Administration would step up recruitment efforts so that each primary school would be allocated a native-speaking English teacher as soon as practicable. The Administration also pointed out that the original objective of the Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme was to provide qualified professionals to teach English language in primary schools. The Administration, however, was well aware that community support was paramount to enhancing student learning outcome in school education.

Special education

45. The Panel held a joint meeting with the Panel on Welfare Services to discuss the provision of boarding places, senior secondary education and employment opportunities for children with special educational needs. Members also received views from deputations on these issues.

46. Members were of the view that children with special educational needs were a disadvantaged group in the community and adequate support should be provided for them. They expressed concern that the needs of students with mental handicaps or specific learning disabilities would be neglected under the proposed “3+3+4” academic structure. Members considered that a subcommittee should be set up to follow up the various issues. Upon the recommendation of the two Panels, the House Committee set up a subcommittee to study the provision of boarding places, senior secondary education and employment opportunities for children with special educational needs.

Financial assistance scheme for evening adult education courses

47. The Panel discussed the financial assistance scheme for evening adult education courses. Some members reiterated their opposition to the Administration’s decision to outsource the provision of government evening school courses operated by EMB to non-profit-making service providers. They pointed out that as they had previously predicted, the decision to outsource the government evening school courses had resulted in a substantial increase in tuition fees, leading to a significant decline in student enrolment. These members considered that in the face of a knowledge-based economy, working adults who for various reasons had not attended or completed secondary education should be provided with another opportunity to complete their secondary studies so that they might be able to pursue higher education in the future.

48. As most of these adult learners came from low-income families and some of them were not eligible for enrolment to senior secondary courses, some members requested the Administration to include junior secondary courses and revise the level of subsidy under the Scheme.

49. The Administration explained to the Panel that the Government had introduced various initiatives to provide more diversified courses and training opportunities to adult learners in recent years. It had to be recognised that the junior secondary curriculum was designed for adolescents and might not be suitable for adult learners. Nevertheless, the Administration acknowledged that some adult learners would prefer to pursue mainstream secondary school courses. The Administration stressed that the Scheme was an optimal one taking into consideration the needs of learners and cost-effectiveness. The Administration would review the Scheme in the third year of its operation.

Harmonisation of pre-primary services

50. The Panel received a briefing from the Administration on the progress on the implementation of the harmonisation of pre-primary services from the 2005-06 school year. The Administration also briefed members on its proposals to amend the Child Care Services Ordinance and the Child Care Services Regulations, and to make some changes to the different financial assistance schemes to both parents and pre-primary service providers.

51. Some members expressed concern that the increase of the staff-to-children ratio from 1:14 to 1:15 would adversely affect the quality of services in child care centres. The Administration explained to the Panel that given that the number of children attending kindergartens was far greater than those attending child care centres, it was decided to adopt the staff-to-children ratio currently adopted by kindergartens after harmonisation. It was also considered that the marginal difference would not constitute a significant operational problem to child care centres.

52. Members noted that upon harmonisation, the Administration planned to provide financial assistance to all pre-primary children based on an enhanced Kindergarten Fee Remission Scheme (KGFRS) by expanding the scope of the existing KGFRS to cover all eligible children aged six or below in day nurseries, day crèches and kindergartens. The Administration would apply the “no worse-off” principle for existing Child Care Centre Fee Assistance Scheme (CCCFAS) recipients to opt to continue receiving assistance under the existing CCCFAS if they would receive less under the enhanced KGFRS, until their children left day nurseries, day crèches and kindergartens.

53. A few members expressed concern that some new applicant families which should be eligible for assistance under the existing CCCFAS would become ineligible under the enhanced KGFRS upon harmonisation. Some other members also pointed out that due to a decline in student population in

recent years, kindergartens and kindergartens-cum-child care centres might operate a small class of less than 10 students at different levels upon harmonisation. They were worried that these service providers would encounter financial difficulties as the current provision of subsidy for small classes on a pro-rata basis would not be sufficient to meet the costs of a teacher and other operational overheads incurred for the operation of a small class of nine pupils or less. These members considered that the Administration should review the existing criteria for provision of subsidy under the Kindergarten Subsidy Scheme.

Review of the School Building Programme

54. The Administration briefed the Panel on its proposed adjustments to the School Building Programme in the light of the latest population projections and other developments in the education sector. According to the result of the review of the School Building Programme, 19 school projects among the 41 school projects under review should proceed, 11 should be suspended and 11 dropped.

55. Members noted with concern that if the proposed adjustments were to be proceeded with, the allocation of school projects under planning to individual school sponsors would be revoked and the target date for converting all bi-sessional schools into whole-day operation would need to be deferred. Members expressed dissatisfaction that the Administration had failed to support its proposed adjustments with figure or explain the rationale for coming up with the review result. Some members also considered that the assumptions adopted by the Administration in considering possible adjustments to the School Building Programme unacceptable.

56. The Administration explained that it had exercised prudence in planning for the provision of new school infrastructure taking into account the population projections, the availability of resources and other policy considerations. Nevertheless, there were many imponderables and practical constraints which made planning difficult. For example, an apparent “over-supply” based on the district population project might not actually exist due to inflow of students from other districts and what might appear to be a shortfall was not a problem because parents had chosen to send their children to private schools or public sector schools in another district.

57. A majority of members were of the view that the Administration should take the opportunity to implement small class teaching in districts where the problem of under-enrolment had emerged. In order to achieve full implementation of whole-day primary schooling by the 2007-08 school year, existing bi-sessional schools for which school buildings had been allocated for whole-day conversion purpose should be given priority in the review of the School Building Programme. They also considered that the Administration should give due regard to the projected school-aged children population by

district in determining the number of schools to be built in each district.

58. Members requested the Administration to further review the School Building Programme, having regard to the views of members and school sponsoring bodies concerned. The Administration was requested to conduct the review as soon as possible. The Panel would follow up the issue when the review report was received from the Administration.

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

59. The Panel discussed the Administration's proposals of providing schools which had established an incorporated management committee (IMC) more autonomy and flexibility over the use of resources and providing time-limited support to help schools in establishing and familiarising with the operation of IMC. The Panel also received views from school sponsoring bodies on the proposals.

60. Members in general were supportive of the Administration's proposals of providing funding flexibility and support measures for schools with IMCs. Some members, however, expressed concern that these proposals might be perceived as discriminatory against those schools which had not yet established IMC. They considered that the provision of funding and supporting measures to all schools with or without IMCs should be made in an equal and non-discriminatory manner. A member held a different view. She pointed out that it should not be considered discriminatory if more support was provided to those schools when they were in the process of establishing a more participatory and accountable school governance structure.

61. The Administration stressed that it had treated all schools in an equal and non-discriminatory manner. All schools which had established IMC before the statutory deadline would be entitled to an initial time-limited cash grant of \$350,000 per annum in the initial years.

62. The Panel proposed that the Government should provide, on a reimbursement basis, a one-off cash grant of \$700,000 for two years to those schools which took the lead of establishing IMCs on a pilot basis before 2007. Schools which established IMC after 2007 but before the statutory deadline should receive a one-off average grant for two years for establishing IMCs. After two years, schools with IMC would receive an annual grant, which was equivalent to the sum of annual recurrent expenditure, for the purpose of continuing the operation of their IMCs.

63. The Panel requested the Administration to consider its suggestions and revise the financial proposals to be submitted to the Finance Committee accordingly.

Other issues

64. The Panel received a briefing from SEM on the Chief Executive's Policy Address 2005. The Panel had also discussed a wide range of other issues with the Administration. They included the progress of implementation of the School Development and Accountability Framework, implementation of the Second Information Technology in Education Strategy, the early retirement schemes for teachers in aided primary and secondary schools, review of student travel subsidy scheme, and increase of course fees by the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education.

65. The Panel also discussed two capital works projects on the construction of a direct subsidy scheme secondary school in Kowloon Tong and a private independent school (secondary-cum-primary) in Shatin before they were submitted to the Public Works Subcommittee.

Meetings and visit held

66. During the period between October 2004 and June 2005, the Panel held a total of 19 meetings, including a joint meeting with the Panel on Welfare Services. Members also visited four institutions which provided services for children with special educational needs.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
30 June 2005

Panel on Education

Terms of Reference

1. To monitor and examine Government policies and issues of public concern relating to education matters.
2. To provide a forum for the exchange and dissemination of views on the above policy matters.
3. To receive briefings and to formulate views on any major legislative or financial proposals in respect of the above policy area prior to their formal introduction to the Council or Finance Committee.
4. To monitor and examine, to the extent it considers necessary, the above policy matters referred to it by a member of the Panel or by the House Committee.
5. To make reports to the Council or to the House Committee as required by the Rules of Procedure.

Panel on Education

Membership list for 2004-2005 session

Chairman	Dr Hon YEUNG Sum
Deputy Chairman	Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
Members	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 MA Lik, JP Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, SBS, JP Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP (Total : 12 Members)
Clerk	Miss Flora TAI Yin-ping
Legal Adviser	Ms Bernice WONG Sze-man
Date	12 October 2004