

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)2277/05-06
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 8 May 2006 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 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 Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, SBS, JP
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
- Member attending** : Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
- Member absent** : Hon MA Lik, GBS, JP
- Public Officers attending** : Items IV and V
Prof Arthur LI Kwok-cheung, GBS, JP
Secretary for Education and Manpower

Mr Michael V STONE, JP
Secretary-General, University Grants Committee

Mrs Betty FUNG
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower(1)

Item VI

Mr Chris WARDLAW
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower(5)

Dr Francis CHEUNG
Deputy Secretary General, Hong Kong Examinations
and Assessment Authority

Clerk in attendance : Miss Odelia LEUNG
Chief Council Secretary (2)6

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

Miss Carmen HO
Legislative Assistant (2)6

Action

I. Confirmation of minutes

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1879/05-06 and CB(2)1881/05-06]

The minutes of the meetings held on 27 March 2006 and 10 April 2006 were confirmed.

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

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

(a) letter dated 12 April 2006 from Sha Tin District Secondary School Heads Association to the Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower [LC Paper No. CB(2)1762/05-06(01)];

(b) paper provided by the Administration on “Early retirement scheme for aided primary school teachers” [LC Paper No. CB(2)1824/05-06(01)]; and

Action

- (c) letter dated 25 April 2006 from Tak Sun Secondary School to Sha Tin District Secondary School Heads Association [LC Paper No. CB(2)1876/05-06(01)].

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[Appendices I and II to LC Paper No. CB(2)1878/05-06]

3. Members noted that the Administration had proposed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting scheduled for Monday, 12 June 2006 at 4:30 pm –

- (a) Restructuring of classes under the new academic structure for senior secondary education;
- (b) Implementation of asbestos management plan on the premises of aided schools; and
- (c) Proposed revision of senior secondary school fees.

4. The Chairman informed members that item 3(a) was originally scheduled for discussion at today's meeting. In view of the complexity and controversy of the subject, he had requested the Administration to consult the school councils and associations with a view to reaching a general consensus on its proposals before submitting the proposals to the Panel for discussion.

5. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that restructuring of classes under the new academic structure for senior secondary education was highly controversial in the education sector as it would affect the continued operation of some secondary schools in the long term. The Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) did consult the school councils on the matter but had not reached a consensus with them. He recalled that when the Panel discussed the item on "Consolidation of high cost and under-utilised primary schools", the proposal of allocating primary one classes on the basis of a minimum enrolment of 23 students was included in the discussion. According to the Administration's then explanation, the proposal was targeted at the rural schools which had substandard premises and facilities and only one class at each level. However, claiming that it had consulted the Panel, the Administration then implemented the proposal to all primary schools, which had resulted in the closure of some 130 primary schools so far. Mr CHEUNG pointed out that as the decline in secondary student population would reach its peak in 2009, there was no haste to discuss the proposals to restructure classes under the new academic structure for senior secondary education. He considered that the Administration should first reach a consensus with the major stakeholders on the matter before consulting members in the next session.

Action

6. The Chairman and Ms Emily LAU shared the concern of Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong that the proposed restructuring of classes under the new academic structure for senior secondary education would have profound impact on the school sector. They agreed that the Administration should extensively consult the education sector before firming up its proposals on the matter.

7. Mrs Selina CHOW, Mr Jasper TSANG and Mr Andrew LEUNG considered it appropriate for the Administration to brief the Panel and exchange views with members on its proposals at an early stage. They were of the view that given the complexity of the subject, there was no need for the Panel to express its stance on the Administration's proposal at the initial stage of discussion.

8. The Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM) explained that the Administration had preliminary communication with the school councils and formulated the direction and broad principles for restructuring of classes under the new academic structure for senior secondary education. The Administration intended to consult the Panel on the direction and broad principles before proceeding further. SEM added that consultation with the school councils and associations would continue.

9. The Chairman proposed that while the Panel would discuss the proposals concerning restructuring of classes under the new academic structure for senior secondary education, the Administration had to undertake that it would only implement the proposals after reaching a consensus with the Panel. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung expressed support for the Chairman's suggestion. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that he supported the Chairman's suggestion in spirit.

10. SEM expressed reservation about the Chairman's suggestion. He said that the Administration was ready to have more communication with the Panel but it was the authority of the executive and not the legislature to decide whether a policy should proceed.

11. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong was concerned that in submitting its proposals to the Panel for consultation, the Administration had already decided on the underlying policy. Under the circumstances, consultation with the Panel would merely be a procedure in order to implement the policy.

12. Mr Jasper TSANG said that should the Administration implement a policy without the support of members, the public would know as Panel meetings were held in public.

13. Mrs Selina CHOW agreed with Mr Jasper TSANG's views. She said that members and the Administration should work with a common goal to get a thing done in the best way. However, it might not be feasible to reach a consensus on every fine detail.

Action

14. Ms Emily LAU said that if possible, the Chairman should summarise the views of the Panel on the matter under discussion at the end of each meeting.

15. The Chairman concluded that the Panel should discuss the item on restructuring of classes under the new academic structure for senior secondary education at the next regular meeting.

Item for discussion at future meetings

16. Mr Jasper TSANG suggested that the Panel should discuss the provision of education to gifted children at a future meeting. Members agreed.

IV. Third Matching Grant Scheme for University Grants Committee-funded institutions

Briefing by the Administration

17. SEM briefed members on the Administration's proposal to introduce a \$1 billion Third Matching Grant Scheme (the Third Scheme) for matching private donations secured by University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions as detailed in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(2)1878/05-06(01)]. SEM said that the Administration intended to seek funding approval from the Finance Committee as soon as possible before the end of June 2006. If approved, the Third Scheme could be open for application no later than from 1 July 2006 and would last for at least eight months up to 28 February 2007.

Operating terms and conditions

18. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed support for the Third Scheme. He, however, pointed out that the President of Lingnan University had openly said that smaller and younger institutions such as Lingnan University were exhausted in the solicitation of private donations before the deadline for application for matching grants under the Second Matching Grant Scheme (the Second Scheme). He queried the need to set the deadline for application at 28 February 2007 with the sole purpose of disbursing funds by the close of the financial year on 31 March 2007. He suggested that the Administration should extend the deadline for application beyond the end of the current financial year, and allow a longer period for smaller and younger institutions to secure private donations for matching grants up to the guaranteed minimum of \$45 million.

19. SEM responded that younger and smaller institutions, such as the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and Lingnan University, had been very successful in securing private donations for matching under the Second

Action

Scheme. He explained that the funding earmarked for the Third Scheme came from savings in SEM's operating expenditure envelope for the current financial year. If the Third Scheme was extended beyond the 2006-07 financial year, the Administration would have to set aside funds from the Budget for the next financial year which would be infeasible. He added that institutions should endeavour to secure private donations up to the "floor" amount within a reasonable period of time.

20. Dr Fernando CHEUNG considered that as a result of funding cuts for the UGC sector and the implementation of the First and Second Schemes in recent years, Heads of UGC-funded institutions were now engaged more in fund-raising work than in academic research and development work. He shared the concern that smaller and younger institutions were less competitive in fund-raising, and should be given better terms and conditions to secure private donations for matching under the Third Scheme. He also requested the Administration to explore the feasibility of extending the deadline for application under the Third Scheme beyond the 2006-07 financial year.

21. SEM responded that members had raised similar concern and request during the discussion of the Second Scheme on 20 June 2005. He pointed out that the Second Scheme was launched on 1 August 2005 and the \$1 billion under the Second Scheme was largely matched by October 2005. He considered that UGC-funded institutions were capable of raising private donations. In line with the international trend, heads of UGC-funded institutions should play a major role in solicitation of private donations for the long-term development of higher education in Hong Kong; otherwise potential local private donations might be diverted to reputable overseas institutions which were more proactive in solicitation of private endowments.

22. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that despite some opposing views in the UGC sector at the initial stage of implementation, the UGC sector as a whole was now more receptive to fund-raising. The Administration had successfully implemented the matching grant schemes and diversified the funding sources for the UGC sector. He pointed out that institutions such as the Chinese University of Hong Kong had formulated strategy to secure sufficient private donations for the provision of the maximum grant within two months. However, smaller and younger institutions, including the Baptist University, City University of Hong Kong, and Hong Kong Institute of Education might have difficulty in securing private donations up to the guaranteed minimum within a period of seven to eight months. He considered that the Administration should formulate terms and conditions which would facilitate smaller and younger institutions to benefit from the matching grant schemes.

23. SEM explained that while he would endeavour to provide a longer period of time for institutions to secure private donations, there were practical difficulties in carrying forward unspent funds earmarked for the Third Scheme

Action

from the current financial year to the ensuing financial year. He added that members should not underestimate the fund-raising ability of UGC-funded institutions. The Administration would continue to encourage the community to support local universities by way of private donations.

24. Secretary General, University Grants Committee supplemented that although the effective date for the Third Scheme was assumed to be 1 July 2006, the UGC-funded institutions were aware of the introduction of the Third Scheme a few months earlier. In fact, all institutions had started their fund-raising programmes and activities for the Third Scheme. He pointed out that after its meeting in January 2006, the UGC had written to SEM to express strong support for the concept and operation of the matching grant schemes, and the early introduction of the Third Scheme. The UGC believed that the matching grant schemes would benefit the higher education sector in Hong Kong. He added that in line with the prevailing international phenomena, heads of institutions should endeavour to raise private funds, although that might not be the kind of task they liked most.

Distribution and use of matching grants

25. Dr Fernando CHEUNG asked about the distribution of the \$1 billion matching grant to UGC-funded institutions under the Second Scheme.

26. Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (1) responded that under the Second Scheme, the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong were each allocated a total of \$250 million. The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, the Polytechnic University, the Baptist University were allocated a total of \$243 million, \$81 million and \$64 million respectively. The City University of Hong Kong and the Lingnan University were each allocated a total of \$45 million. The Hong Kong Institute of Education was allocated a total of \$22 million.

27. Ms Emily LAU was concerned whether the relaxation that institutions could use the matching grants to offer scholarships for meritorious non-local students would affect the award of scholarships to meritorious local students.

28. SEM responded that the provision of scholarships for meritorious local students was sufficient. Scholarships for meritorious non-local students were formerly supported by the Hong Kong Jockey Club. With the relaxation in the use of the matching grants, the UGC-funded institutions could exercise discretion in offering scholarships for meritorious non-local students.

Follow-up

29. Mr Patrick LAU asked about the future development of the matching grant schemes. SEM responded that the Administration would review the use of

Action

the matching grants in enhancing the quality of teaching and research in UGC-funded institutions after the completion of the Third Scheme and then decide on the way forward.

30. The Chairman requested SEM to convey to the Financial Secretary for consideration the request of members for extending the deadline for application of matching grants under the Third Scheme beyond the end of the 2006-07 financial year. SEM agreed to provide a written response after the meeting.

Admin

V. University tuition fees

31. Members noted the Administration's paper for the item [LC Paper No. CB(2)1909/05-06(01)] and the background brief on university tuition fees prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat [LC Paper No. CB(2)1878/05-06(03)].

Briefing by the Administration

32. SEM briefed members on the background on the development of the 18% cost recovery target for tuition fees of degree courses offered by UGC-funded institutions, and the substantial cash injections into the UGC sector in the past few years as detailed in the Administration's paper.

Cost recovery rate for university education

33. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong asked whether the policy of recovering 18% of the total recurrent costs for degree programmes in UGC-funded institutions, as decided by the then Governor in Council on 18 January 1991, was still in force. He pointed out that the allocations under the Matching Grant Schemes were not recurrent provisions and should not be included in the calculation of the cost recovery rate. The current tuition fees for degree and sub-degree programmes in UGC-funded institutions had exceeded 18%, which was not in line with the decision made in 1991. Mr CHEUNG added that it was reported that students might seek judicial review for refund of the overcharged tuition fees.

34. SEM responded that the current levels of tuition fees for degree and sub-degree programmes were not in conflict with the decision of the then Governor in Council in 1991 to increase the cost recovery rate by phases, from 12% by 1993-94 to 18% by the 1997-98 academic year. He explained that as a result of changing social and economic circumstances, the tuition fees had slightly exceeded the 18% of the total recurrent costs in certain academic years. However, this should not be interpreted as a violation of the policy decision made by the Governor in Council in 1991.

Action

35. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that at the Panel meeting on 19 June 2000, he had asked whether the Administration would refund the overcharged tuition fees of a few hundreds to students as a result of deflation over the past few years, although the tuition fee had been frozen since the 1997-98 academic year. The Administration then had responded that the Government did not have a policy for refund of overcharged tuition fees. The Administration had also clarified that the current funding for UGC-funded institutions was determined on a deficiency grant basis after deducting from the estimated gross expenditure an assumed income from tuition fees and other sources. The assumed tuition fee income was an estimate which had to be reconciled when the actual fee levels were approved by the Administration. This meant that if the actual fee levels for a certain academic year were lower than those assumed in determining the recurrent grant, the Government would normally provide additional funds to meet the shortfall. On the contrary, if there was a surplus income as a result of the actual tuition fee being higher than the assumed level, the excess in recurrent grant would be clawed back by the Government. Mr CHEUNG asked whether the above policy was still in force.

36. SEM responded that the Administration had never asked the UGC-funded institutions to refund the recurrent funding allocated to them, including when there were downward adjustments of civil service salaries in recent years. He pointed out that at the moment the Administration had no intention to adjust the tuition fee levels for degree and sub-degree programmes, which were frozen at the 1997-98 level.

37. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that the increase of the cost recovery rate above the 18% was attributed to the reduction of recurrent funding for the UGC sector in recent years. He considered that in line with its plan to increase secondary school fees to the 18% cost recovery rate by phases, the Administration should also reduce university tuition fees to the same rate.

38. SEM responded that the 18% cost recovery target was set against the background of a very low cost recovery rate some 15 years ago, with the aim of increasing the tuition fees gradually so as to achieve a more reasonable balance between the students/parents and the community at large in shouldering the cost of providing tertiary education. The tuition fees and cost recovery rates for different levels of study of the eight UGC-funded institutions in the past five academic years were set out in the Annex to the Administration's paper. In calculating the average student unit costs, the Administration had only taken into account the recurrent expenditure of the institutions, but not the new sources of non-recurrent funding, such as the two Matching Grants Schemes totalling \$2 billion.

39. SEM further pointed out that the cost recovery rates for different UGC-funded programmes were different due to different cost structures. The Administration had no intention nor would it be practical to enforce the cost

Action

recovery rate down to the institution, academic discipline and programme level. The Administration had not departed from its policy regarding the 18% cost recovery target, and would ensure that no students would be deprived of education because of lack of means.

40. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that it was understandable that the cost recovery rates for different undergraduate programmes of UGC-funded institutions were different. However, the subject of contention was not that there were different cost recovery rates for different undergraduate programmes but whether the policy of recovering 18% of cost was still in force and adhered to. He requested the Administration to clarify whether the policy intention was to fix the cost recovery rate at 18% for secondary school fees and university tuition fees.

41. SEM responded that at this point in time the Administration had no intention to change the current level of tuition fee for degree courses, which was frozen at \$42,100 since 1997-98. Responding to the Chairman, SEM said that the policy regarding the 18% cost recovery target for degree courses was still in force.

42. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered it contradictory that the Administration, on the one hand, continued to freeze the university tuition fee at \$42,100 which was above the 18% cost recovery rate, and, on the other hand claimed that the policy of 18% cost recovery rate was still in force. He considered that the decision to freeze the tuition fee at \$42,100 was made in line with the Government's decision to freeze fees and charges as an exceptional relief measures during a period of economic downturn. As the economy gradually recovered, the Government had already proposed increase of fees and charges. Given the decline in average student unit cost, the Administration should reduce the university tuition fees in the next academic year.

43. SEM clarified that the average student unit cost was calculated on the basis of the institutions' reported recurrent expenditure on UGC-funded activities over the total number of students participating in these activities. Apart from the recurrent subvention, the Government had made substantial cash injections into the UGC sector in the past few years. He added that reducing tuition fees would adversely affect the financial situation of the institutions and hence their plans to upgrade programmes and facilities which would not be in the interest of the institutions and the students.

44. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that in June 1994, the Legislative Council passed a motion calling on the Government to freeze the level of tuition fees for higher education and undertake a comprehensive review of the policy on the determination of tuition fees and the provision of grants and loans to students. After a review of the policy, the then Executive Council decided on 6 February 1996 that the 18% recurrent cost recovery target to be achieved by 1997-98 and

Action

thereafter should be maintained. He considered that the Administration should either adjust the tuition fees in the next academic year and provide additional resources to institutions as appropriate, or revise the cost recovery policy after public consultation and discussion with LegCo Members.

45. SEM responded that the 18% cost recovery rate for degree programmes in UGC-funded institutions was set in 1991 when there was no other substantial cash injection into the UGC sector. The cash injections were not reflected in the student unit costs and cost recovery rates. SEM stressed that if all the Government's funding support for the UGC sector was taken into account, the tuition fees paid by undergraduates would be less than 18% of the costs. He added that it was within the institutions' authority to set tuition fees. The Government should not and would not intervene in the institutions' decisions. Currently, some UGC-funded institutions set the tuition fees for non-local students higher than the indicative levels.

46. Ms Emily LAU considered that as the principles for setting tuition fees for higher education were decided by the Government, the Administration should clarify its cost recovery policy and provide justifications for any changes in the light of changing social and economic circumstances. Mrs Selina CHOW also considered that the Administration should explain the calculation of the cost recovery rate on the basis of the total recurrent funding and other cash injections into the UGC sector.

47. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered that the Administration should not attempt to change the 18% cost recovery rate for degree programmes in UGC-funded institutions without justifications. If costs other than the recurrent costs were included in the calculation of the cost recovery rate, the policy had been changed. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that the Administration should follow the necessary procedures for proposing any change of the cost recovery rate with justifications.

Follow-up

Admin

48. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide a paper to clarify its policy and calculations on the cost recovery rate for degree programmes in UGC-funded institutions. SEM agreed to provide a paper setting out the total funding support rendered by the Government to the UGC sector.

VI. Grant to support the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority in establishing its centralised onscreen marking centre on Hong Kong Island

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1878/05-06(04) and (05)]

49. Members noted the Administration's paper on the subject [LC Paper No.

Action

CB(2)1878/05-06(04)] and the background brief entitled “Implementation of a centralised onscreen marking system by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority” prepared by the LegCo Secretariat [LC Paper No. CB(2)1878/05-06(05)].

Briefing by the Administration

50. Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (5) (DS(EM)5) briefed members on the Administration’s proposal to provide the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) with a non-recurrent grant of about \$16 million and a capital grant of about \$5.9 million to support the establishment of a central onscreen marking centre on Hong Kong Island for a period of four years.

Improper use of mobile phone during examination

51. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed disappointment about the successive incidents on examination administration, including missing scripts, misreporting of candidates’ scores, etc, in recent years. He considered that these incidents had seriously affected public confidence in the reliability of HKEAA’s examination administration and systems. He queried the rationale for quoting the source of questions and providing the website address in the examination paper for English Language (Syllabus B) in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE). He asked how HKEAA would follow up the allegation of suspected improper use of mobile phones by some candidates to access the website for the correct answers.

52. Deputy Secretary General, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (DSG(HKEAA)) responded that in response to claims and reports of alleged cheating in media and from students that some candidates might have gone to the washrooms and used their mobile phones during the HKCEE English Language (Syllabus B) examination to access the website for the correct answers, HKEAA was actively following up the matter and was looking into each report received. HKEAA had encouraged students, centre supervisors and invigilators, and other people with specific information to come forward so that all reports could be investigated thoroughly. At this stage, HKEAA had received some 98 reports, five of which were provided with sufficient information for detailed investigation. He stressed that so far HKEAA was not aware of the identities of any individuals who had allegedly made improper use of their mobile phones during the examination.

53. DSG(HKEAA) assured members that HKEAA would thoroughly investigate all reported cases and take appropriate actions against any cheating in public examinations. In accordance with the examination regulations, a candidate might be disqualified from the whole HKCEE examination if he was found to have a mobile phone or any other electronic device that could display or

Action

store text on his desk, on his body or in his pocket during the examination. To facilitate investigative work, HKEAA had contacted the Police, the Telecommunications Authority, the communication service providers and the web administrator of the website concerned for assistance in its investigation. In addition, HKEAA had asked all examination centre supervisors and invigilators to provide a report on candidates who had requested to leave the examination venue and on any unusual or suspicious behaviour during the examination.

54. DSG(HKEAA) further said that the practice of quoting the source of materials in the examination papers had been adopted for six years. However, to prevent recurrence of similar incidents, HKEAA would review this practice, explore feasible measures to prevent candidates from carrying a mobile phone into the examination venue and propose appropriate amendments to the HKEAA Ordinance to empower HKEAA to implement the precautionary measures. HKEAA would study overseas practices in the formulation of the proposed amendments to the HKEAA Ordinance.

55. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that he agreed that cheating in public examinations was a serious wrongdoing, but HKEAA should in the first place adopt sufficient measures to prevent such from happening. The provision of the website in the examination paper was inappropriate and had facilitated cheating.

56. DSG(HKEAA) explained that in recognition of the need to respect copyright works, HKEAA had adopted the practice to quote the source of materials in examination papers for the past six years. However, he agreed that there was a need to review the practice in the light of the latest developments in information technology and changing social circumstances. He added that candidates might use their mobile phones to access useful reference materials available in the Internet even in the absence of a quoted source.

57. Ms Audrey EU pointed out that quoting the source of materials did not exonerate the users from infringing the copyright. She considered that instead of quoting the source of materials in examination papers, HKEAA should approach the copyright owner before or after the public examination in order to show its respect for the copyright works. DSG(HKEAA) explained that under the existing Copyright Ordinance, the use of materials for examination purposes was not regarded as an infringement of copyright. However, as an educational body responsible for examination administration, HKEAA considered it appropriate to quote the source of materials in the examination papers. He reiterated that HKEAA would review the practice in the light of the incident and members' concern on the matter.

58. Ms Emily LAU said that the incident had aroused much public concern and anxiety among candidates about the fairness and reliability of public examinations. She considered it inappropriate to support the proposal for provision of further grants to HKEAA at this stage. She considered that

Action

HKEAA should examine the problems with the Administration and take remedial measures to restore public confidence in HKEAA's capability in ensuring fair and reliable administration of public examinations. She asked when HKEAA would make a decision on the remedial measures to be taken.

59. DS(EM)5 responded that the Administration would not tolerate any cheatings in examinations and fully supported HKEAA to thoroughly investigate into the incident to ascertain whether there were candidates who had actually made use of mobile phones to access the website in question, and take appropriate remedial measures to ensure the confidence of candidates in examinations. He suggested that HKEAA should first ascertain the extent of any possible cheating and that this matter should be considered separately from the incident being discussed. He pointed out that the proposal to provide the two grants to HKEAA was made in the context of the Administration's commitment to support the modernisation and development of HKEAA examination systems to improve examination administration in the long term.

60. DSG(HKEAA) said that HKEAA would decide the appropriate remedial measures after completion of a thorough investigation into the incident. In this connection, HKEAA would need another week to collect sufficient information from candidates, centre supervisors and invigilators to assess the impact of the incident. He added that HKEAA would study the findings of the investigation and decide the appropriate remedial measures in accordance with the established procedures.

61. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that he was an invigilator of the HKCEE English Language (Syllabus B) examination on 4 May 2006. According to his observation, there were not many candidates who had requested to leave the examination venue. He, however, considered that HKEAA should use original texts for examination to avoid recurrence of similar incidents in future.

62. In response, DSG(HKEAA) explained the existing mechanism for setting examination papers and the importance of adopting authentic material in examination. He understood the view of Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung and said that HKEAA would review the mechanism and principles for setting examination questions in the light of the incident and members' views.

Follow-up

63. Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered it inappropriate to express support for the provision of the proposed grants to HKEAA before it had completed the investigation and proposed remedial measures to prevent recurrence of similar incidents. They suggested that the Panel should reconsider the proposal at the next regular meeting. Members agreed.

Action

VII. Any other business

64. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:37 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
8 June 2006