

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(2)2643/05-06  
(These minutes have been  
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

**Panel on Education**

**Minutes of meeting**  
**held on Monday, 12 June 2006 from 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm**  
**in the Chamber 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 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
- Members absent** : Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung  
Hon MA Lik, GBS, JP
- Public Officers attending** : Item IV  
  
Mrs Fanny LAW, GBS, JP  
Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower  
  
Mr Chris WARDLAW  
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (5)

Mr LEE Kwok-sung  
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (4)

Mrs Michelle WONG YAU Wai-ching  
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and  
Manpower (School Development)

Item V

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

Mr Andrew POON Chung-shing  
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and  
Manpower (Quality Assurance)

Dr Peter W HILL  
Secretary General, Hong Kong Examinations and  
Assessment Authority

Item VI

Mr LEE Kwok-sung  
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (4)

Mrs Michelle WONG YAU Wai-ching  
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and  
Manpower (School Development)

Mr LAU Cheung-chee  
Senior Property Services Manager, Architectural  
Services Department

Mr WONG Yan-how  
Senior Property Services Manager, Architectural  
Services Department

Mr Kenneth CHAN  
Officer-in-charge (Territorial Control), Environmental  
Protection Department

Mr Allan W F LEE  
Senior Environmental Protection Officer (Territorial  
Control)2, Environmental Protection Department

**Attendance by invitation** : Item IV

Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union

Mr CHIK Pun-shing  
Vice-President

Ms SY On-na  
Vice-President

Education Convergence

Mr CHOI Kwok-kwong  
Chairman

Mr TSO Kai-lok  
Vice-Chairman

The Association of Hong Kong Chinese Middle Schools

Mr YIP Chi-tim  
Executive Committee Member

Hong Kong Teachers' Association

Mr KO Gar-yee  
President

Mr KWOK Man-leung  
General Secretary

Sha Tin District Secondary School Heads Association

Mr LAI Nai-pang  
Chairman

Mr CHAN Tak-hang  
Executive Committee Member

North District Secondary School Headmasters' Conference

Mr LIU Ah-chuen  
Vice-Chairperson

Mr YUEN Pong-yiu  
Executive Committee Member

Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers

Mr WU Siu-wai  
Vice-Chairman

The Association of Secondary School Heads, Tai Po District

Mr Chan Pak-ka  
Hon Secretary

Mr FUNG Sui-hing  
Member

Hong Kong Association of Heads of Secondary Schools

Mr William YIP Kam-yuen  
Chairman

The Association of English Medium Secondary School

Mr Lawrence LOUR Tsang-tsay  
Chairperson

**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

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**I. Confirmation of minutes**  
[LC Paper No. CB(2)2277/05-06]

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 May 2006 were confirmed.

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

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

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last meeting –

- (a) Joint letter dated 4 April 2006 from Yuen Long Primary School Heads Association and Yuen Long District Secondary School Heads Association to the Secretary for Education and Manpower [LC Paper No. CB(2)1978/05-06(01)];
- (b) The Administration's response dated 4 May 2006 to the joint letter from Yuen Long Primary School Heads Association and Yuen Long District Secondary School Heads Association [LC Paper No. CB(2)1978/05-06(02)];
- (c) Submission from the Parent Committee of the Hong Kong Down Syndrome Association [LC Paper No. CB(2)1995/05-06(01)];
- (d) The Administration's proposal for the construction of two primary schools in Area 13, Yuen Long [LC Paper No. CB(2)2042/05-06(01)];
- (e) Letter from Alliance for the Concern of Sub-degree Education to the Joint Committee on Student Finance dated 22 May 2006 [LC Paper No. CB(2)2129/05-06(01)];
- (f) Response of Student Financial Assistance Agency dated 24 May 2006 to the letter from Alliance for the Concern of Sub-degree Education to the Joint Committee on Student Finance [LC Paper No. CB(2)2129/05-06(02)];
- (g) Letter from Mr KWOK Ming-chi to the Secretary for Education and Manpower dated 22 May 2006 [LC Paper No. CB(2)2142/05-06(01)]; and
- (h) Letter dated 27 May 2006 from Aces Education Australia to Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee [LC Paper No. CB(2)2224/05-06(01)].

**III. Items for discussion at the next meeting**

[Appendices I and II to LC Paper No. CB(2)2276/05-06]

3. The Chairman informed the meeting that to allow more time for deputations to present their views on – “Restructuring of senior secondary classes under the new academic structure” under agenda item IV of this meeting, he had requested the Administration to defer discussion on “Proposed revision of senior secondary school fees” under agenda item VII to the next regular meeting. Members did not raise objection to the arrangement.

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Regular meeting on 10 July 2006

4. Members agreed to discuss the following items proposed by the Administration at the next regular meeting –

- (a) Development and way forward for the school development and accountability framework; and
- (b) Latest developments of the new senior secondary academic structure.

5. Referring to item 11 in the list of outstanding items for discussion, the Chairman was concerned about the progress in the provision of an alternative curriculum in Chinese Language as well as primary and secondary schools in each of the five electoral constituencies for children of ethnic minorities. Mr Jasper TSANG said that although some teachers and schools had designed curriculum tailored-made for ethnic minority students to learn the Chinese Language, ethnic minority groups considered it essential to put in place an alternative curriculum for their children to study Chinese Language as a second language in order to facilitate their access to post-secondary and continuing education after completing secondary schooling.

6. Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower (PSEM) responded that at present, the Administration had no plan to adopt an alternative curriculum in Chinese Language for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students in primary and secondary schools. The Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) had established a Language Support Group to support schools in the design and development of appropriate curriculum for NCS students who were interested in learning Chinese Language and taking the subject in the General Certificate of Secondary Education examination. PSEM explained that the new senior secondary curriculum for the Chinese Language subject included a number of elective modules to suit the different needs and abilities of students. NCS students who had chosen to learn Chinese Language from primary level could take the Chinese Language subject in the future Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination which would be based on standards-referencing. In addition, the Curriculum Development Council and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority were studying the feasibility of adapting the Chinese Language studies in Project Yi Jin for students, including NCS students with different levels of Chinese proficiency.

7. Mr Jasper TSANG considered that the Administration should proactively work out short-term measures to accommodate the needs of existing ethnic minority students in primary and secondary schools to study the Chinese Language with a view to enhancing their integration into the mainstream community. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered that ethnic

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minority students should be provided with opportunities to study Chinese Language and hence access to post-secondary education. Ms Emily LAU considered that the Administration should be more proactive in providing education for ethnic minority children. She suggested and members agreed that the Panel should follow up the matter at the next regular meeting. Members also agreed that the next meeting should be extended for one more hour.

*[Post-meeting note: Due to time constraint, the Chairman subsequently decided that the item in paragraph 4(a) should be deleted from the agenda for the next meeting and discussed at a future meeting.]*

Removal of the social needs test from the Kindergarten and Child Care Centres Fee Remission Scheme

8. Referring to item 11 in the list of follow-up actions, the Chairman asked about the Administration's consideration of members' request for removing the social needs test from the Kindergarten and Child Care Centres Fee Remission Scheme (KCFRS) from the 2006-07 school year onwards.

9. PSEM explained that the Administration was conducting a comprehensive review on the provision of pre-primary education which would be completed in three to six months. EMB was consulting the pre-primary sector on the priorities for allocation of resources for pre-primary education in the future. Both EMB and the pre-primary sector considered it more appropriate to consider the social needs test in KCFRS in the context of the comprehensive review.

10. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that at the meeting on 10 April 2006, the Panel had undertaken to follow up its request for removing the social needs test from KCFRS before the end of the current session. Ms Audrey EU suggested and members agreed to seek the views of the deputations attending the meeting on April 2006 on whether the issue should be discussed by the Panel before the completion of the review.

**IV. Restructuring of classes under the new academic structure for senior secondary education**

11. Members noted the Administration's paper entitled "Class restructuring of secondary schools" [LC Paper No. CB(2)2276/05-06(01)] and the background brief prepared by the Legislative Council (LegCo) Secretariat for the item [LC Paper No. CB(2)2276/05-06(02)].

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Oral presentation by deputations

*Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union*  
*[LC Paper No. CB(2)2348/05-06(01)]*

12. Mr CHIK Pun-shing presented the views of the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union as detailed in its submission. He highlighted that the Union requested the Administration to withdraw its proposals on class restructuring of secondary schools for implementation of the new academic structure and consult the school sector in a more extensive manner. The Union considered that the Administration should start the implementation of small class teaching (SCT) at Primary One (P1) and Secondary One (S1) on the basis of the decline of student population in individual districts. The Union considered that SCT would not only resolve the existing problems in education, such as reduction of classes and surplus teachers, but also improve the quality of education in the long term. The Union appealed to members not to support the Administration's proposals which, if implemented, would lead to fierce competition in student enrolment among schools, and closure of secondary schools with under-enrolment.

*Education Convergence*  
*[LC Paper No. CB(2)2374/05-06(01)]*

13. Mr CHOI Kwok-kwong presented the views of the Education Convergence as detailed in its submission. He highlighted that the Convergence considered that under the new academic structure, the majority of mainstream secondary schools should operate four classes at each level. Schools with two classes at each level should consider merging with another school to facilitate the provision of sufficient curriculum choice and accessibility. The Administration should discontinue the operation of floating classes and provide a transitional period of 10 years for schools to tackle the problem of surplus teachers after the double cohort year. The Convergence considered it too late to review the class sizes after the double cohort year in 2011 and suggested that S1 classes should be allocated on the basis of 30 students. The Convergence also considered that the illustration in the Annex to the Administration's paper concerning breadth and depth of curriculum was misleading. A school with two classes per level could offer a broad curriculum choice for students.

*The Association of Hong Kong Chinese Middle Schools*  
*[LC Paper No. CB(2)2276/05-06(03)]*

14. Mr YIP Chi-tim presented the views of the Association of Hong Kong Chinese Middle Schools as detailed in its submission. He highlighted that the Association supported the abolition of floating classes and the operation of four classes at each level in secondary schools under the new academic structure.



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The Association considered that the number of classes at S2-S3 and Senior Secondary 2 (SS2)-SS3 should be the same as those at S1 and SS1 respectively, despite any subsequent decrease in student population. The Association believed that a reduction of classes and class sizes in secondary schools would reduce teachers' workload and enhance the quality of education.

*Hong Kong Teachers' Association*  
*[LC Paper No. CB(2)2374/05-06(02)]*

15. Mr KO Gar-ye and Mr KWOK Man-leung presented the views of the Hong Kong Teachers' Association as detailed in its submission. They highlighted that the Association supported the guiding principles for class restructuring that students should be able to complete six years of secondary education in the same school, and schools should provide sufficient curriculum choice and accessibility for their students. The Administration should make use of the savings arising from the decline in student population to improve the quality of education through implementing SCT, improving teacher-to-students ratio and enhancing teachers' professional development. The Association supported the abolition of the Junior Secondary Education Assessment (JSEA) and implementation of SCT with reference to the standards of students in individual schools. The Association also called on the Administration to proactively assist schools with less than three classes at each level to merge as well as to arrange re-deployment of surplus teachers arising as a result of reduction of classes. The Association objected to the closure of schools on the ground of insufficient curriculum choice for students.

*Sha Tin District Secondary School Heads Association*  
*[LC Paper No. CB(2)2323/05-06(01)]*

16. Mr LAI Nai-pang presented the views of the Sha Tin District Secondary School Heads Association as detailed in its submission. He highlighted that the Administration should be held responsible for creating the problem of surplus school places in Sha Tin. The Association had long requested the Administration to restructure the secondary school classes from five classes to four classes per level. The Association considered that the Administration should exercise flexibility in the allocation of S1 classes to secondary schools with a large intake of low academic achievers. For those schools which did not have recruitment problems, it would be unfair to them if they were required to reduce classes, which would result in surplus teachers. Fierce competition among schools for student enrolment would ultimately affect the quality of teaching and learning in schools. The Association requested LegCo Members to urge the Administration to formulate appropriate policies for class restructuring in secondary schools to resolve the problem of surplus school places.

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*North District Secondary School Headmasters' Conference*  
*[LC Paper No. CB(2)2276/05-06(04)]*

17. Mr LIU Ah-chuen presented the views of the North District Secondary School Headmasters' Conference as detailed in its submission. He highlighted that the Conference supported the operation of 24-class secondary schools as the mainstream model under the new academic structure, and accepted the special arrangement for the operation of 18 or 30 classes under specified circumstances, such as change in the number of student population in individual districts and the availability of classrooms. The Administration should progressively reduce the class size to 30 students; resolve the problem of surplus teachers by natural wastage; and reach consensus with schools in planning for the number of secondary schools in individual districts and their class structure in the next decade.

*Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers*  
*[LC Paper No. CB(2)2276/05-06(05)(revised)]*

18. Mr WU Siu-wai presented the views of the Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers as detailed in its submission. He highlighted that the Federation supported the provision of the same number of classes at each level in secondary schools; the abolition of floating classes and JSEA; and the provision of sufficient curriculum choice and accessibility in schools to meet the different needs of students. The Federation requested the Administration to retain the savings arising from the decline in student population to improve the quality of secondary education and teacher-to-class ratios under the new academic structure, in particular for schools enrolling a large number of band 2 or 3 students. The Federation objected to the standardisation of S1 classes across the board. The Federation considered that the number of classes in individual schools should be determined on the basis of their special features and traditions, having regard to student enrolment and parental preference. The Federation objected to compulsory reduction to 24 classes for schools which operated 30 classes at present, as this would create surplus teachers. In districts where the student population had declined, the Administration should collaborate with the schools in the districts to work out the number of S1 classes to be offered, which should be adjusted on a biennial basis.

*The Association of Secondary School Heads, Tai Po District*  
*[LC Paper No. CB(2)2374/05-06(03)]*

19. Mr Chan Pak-ka presented the views of the Association of Secondary School Heads, Tai Po District as detailed in its submission. He highlighted that the Association supported the adoption of 24-class secondary school as the mainstream model to facilitate implementation of the senior secondary curriculum under the new academic structure. The Association was, however, concerned about the negative impacts of implementing the model on existing

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schools with more than four classes at each level, as reduction of classes in these schools would create surplus teachers and adverse labelling effects. The Association considered that the Administration should explain to the public and all relevant persons about the justifications for and details of the mainstream proposal. The Administration should allow a 10-year transitional period for schools to tackle the problem of surplus teachers. The Association considered that schools with one or two classes at S1 should be allowed to continue operation as long as they were selected by parents. Given the declining student population, secondary school class sizes should be progressively reduced to 30 students in 2010. The Administration should review the student population trend on an on-going basis and adjust the class size accordingly.

*Hong Kong Association of Heads of Secondary Schools*

20. Mr William IP said that the Hong Kong Association of Heads of Secondary Schools supported the three guiding principles for class restructuring in paragraph 9 of the Administration's paper; the abolition of floating classes; the adoption of 24-class secondary schools as the mainstream model for implementing the senior secondary curriculum under the new academic structure; and the provision of the same number of classes at each level. Given the decline in student population, the Administration should implement SCT and improve teacher-to-students ratio to enhance student-teacher interactions in classroom and the quality of education. The Association considered it inappropriate to arrange student transfer at SS1 as any change in the number of classes at SS1 level would affect stability in class structure, create uncertainties on staff and resources planning and unnecessary competition for student enrolment at SS1 level.

*The Association of English Medium Secondary Schools*  
*[LC Paper No. CB(2)2374/05-06(04)]*

21. Mr Lawrence LOUR presented the views of the Association of English Medium Secondary Schools as detailed in its submission. He highlighted that the Association supported the principle that students should be able to complete secondary schooling in the same school. The Association considered it appropriate to facilitate transfer of S3 graduates to schools offering senior secondary curriculum that suited their personal development and aspirations. The Association accepted the principle that schools should provide students with a broad and balanced senior secondary curriculum. The Association suggested that the Administration should provide schools with the projected student population in the next six years, alert schools likely to have less than three S1 classes at the Central Allocation stage of the Secondary School Places Allocation exercise, and assist schools with less than three classes at each level to merge. The Association considered it unfair to allow senior secondary schools to operate as mainstream schools and admit S1 to S3 students. The Association suggested that the Administration should reduce the class size for

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schools admitting a large number of band 3 students. The Administration should start to review the class size now so that reduction of class size could be implemented immediately after the double cohort year. Besides, the Association opposed the requirement that all schools adopting English as the medium of instruction should teach Liberal Studies in English four years after the implementation of the new academic structure.

*Other submission received*

*[LC Paper No. CB(2)2276/05-06(06) and CB(2)2348/05-06(02)]*

22. Members noted the submissions from the Hong Kong Subsidized Secondary Schools Council and Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung.

Discussion

*Over-supply of school places and implementation of small class teaching*

23. The Chairman shared the concern expressed by some deputations that implementation of the proposals for class restructuring would lead to fierce competition for student enrolment among secondary schools and create surplus teachers, which would increase the anxiety among teachers about their job security.

24. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the implementation of the principles and approach proposed in the Administration's paper for determining the class structure of secondary schools would entail the closure of secondary schools with insufficient enrolment of S1 students (less than 71 students) to operate three S1 classes. He pointed out that according to the information provided by the Administration, a surplus supply of 968 secondary classes within the 2005-10 school years was forecast. The Administration had failed to review the School Building Programme (SBP) in the light of a declining student population but continued with the school construction projects scheduled under the SBP in the past years. The planning mistakes on the part of the Administration had resulted in over-supply of school places in some districts, in particular in Sha Tin where the problem was most serious. He considered that the Administration should work out feasible and reasonable measures to resolve the problem of surplus school places.

25. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong further said that it would be unfair to secondary schools with insufficient enrolment if they had to be closed in order to resolve the problem of surplus school places. LegCo had passed a motion at its meeting on 1 December 2004 urging the Government to implement SCT. However, the Administration had only agreed to review the class sizes after the double cohort year. He sought explanations from the Administration for its refusal to progressively reduce the class sizes to 32-35 students as suggested by the Hong Kong Subsidized Secondary Schools Council so that schools could

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operate sufficient classes at each level and provide adequate curriculum choice and accessibility to students for the implementation of the new academic structure in the 2009-10 school year.

26. PSEM responded that LegCo Members with a long service should be well aware that secondary school places had all along been planned and provided on a territory-wide basis. School projects under the SBP were planned on the basis of the population projection published by the Census and Statistics Department, and each project had been submitted to the Finance Committee for funding approval. In planning the SBP, the Administration sought to balance the supply and demand at the district level as far as possible. Owing to a limited supply of suitable sites for building schools, the supply of school places in certain districts inevitably exceeded the local demand. PSEM considered it inappropriate to lay the blame on any parties for the problem of surplus school places as it was impossible to make accurate population forecast in the first place.

27. PSEM further explained that in working out the proposals on class restructuring of secondary schools, the Administration had first considered the interests of students. Under the existing senior secondary curriculum, students were required to select the stream of studies at S4 level, i.e., either the science, the arts, or the commerce stream. Students might be left with no choice but to take subjects not of their interest because popular classes were filled up. The fact that some 10 000 students failed in all subjects in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) every year had shed light on the present unsatisfactory situation. The new senior secondary curriculum was designed to provide diversified curricula to cater for different abilities and interests of students. Students who were not academically oriented might realise their potentials in other areas of learning. Having thoroughly examined the optimal class structure and time-tabling that would maximise curriculum choice and accessibility to students under a three-year senior secondary structure, the Administration concluded that 24 or 30 classes would be the desirable class structure. PSEM stressed that apart from school councils and teachers associations, the Administration must also take into account the views of parents and students on provision of school places, in particular the class sizes in popular schools. In planning the school projects under the SBP, the Administration would also need to consider the manpower needs of the community, the availability of resources to support the various initiatives, and their competing priorities in education.

28. PSEM further said that the recurrent savings arising from the projected decline in secondary student enrolment and reduction in the number of classes would be redeployed to finance a number of new initiatives to support and sustain the new senior secondary structure. Under the new senior secondary structure, all SS2 students would be provided with a SS3 place. The total number of teaching posts in secondary schools would increase as a result. In

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particular, the number of senior secondary students would increase by about 25% in the double cohort year in 2011-12, and around 1 200 additional teachers would be required during that year. Given this surge in the demand for teachers, the Administration considered it inappropriate to implement policies and measures now that would increase the demand for teachers and exacerbate the shortfall of teachers in 2011-12. The Administration had already undertaken to review the class size after the double cohort year with a view to resolving the problem of surplus teachers after the double cohort year. The Administration agreed that teaching in small classes would be better than in large classes granted the necessary pre-conditions. The Administration had implemented a pilot study on SCT in primary schools from the 2004-05 school year to assess the teaching strategies and support necessary for maximising the benefits of SCT in catering for student diversity in the local context. The Administration would report the progress of the pilot study to the Panel at an appropriate time.

29. PSEM added that the Administration had conducted a series of consultation with secondary schools councils, school sponsoring bodies, all secondary school heads and representatives, and parents, and had formulated the guiding principles for class restructuring after careful consideration of the views collected. For schools with less than three S1 classes in a school year, the Administration would allow them to continue operation if they could submit a proposal to assure the breadth and accessibility of curriculum choice for students through other means such as injecting additional resources, merging or collaborating with another school. In addition, schools with a sound professional standing and a good track record of student achievement might apply for a special quality assurance review. If the review confirmed that the school provided good quality education, the school might continue to participate in the Secondary School Place Allocation and would be allocated with three classes of S1 students for three consecutive years.

30. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that the Administration should not shirk its responsibility onto LegCo Members for the over-supply of school places. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that information was all provided by the Administration to support the building of new schools. The Administration should have adjusted the SBP to balance the demand and supply of school places in districts where the decline of student population was apparent. In considering the funding proposals for the school projects under the SBP at the meetings of the Panel and the Finance Committee in recent years, members had repeatedly urged the Administration to review the demand and supply of school places in the light of the decline in student population in individual districts before proceeding with the construction of the new school premises. The reason provided by the Administration for constructing new school premises was to create diversity and competition in the provision of education. In the circumstances, the Administration should implement SCT in a progressive manner to resolve the problem of surplus

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school places. Mr CHEUNG added that the Panel did not support the policy to allocate P1 class on the basis of a minimum enrolment of 23 P1 students, but the Administration had implemented the policy in the 2003-04 school year, and so far some 130 primary schools had been closed.

31. PSEM responded that the SBP was planned on the basis of the statistics on school-aged population provided by the Census and Statistics Department, which had been set out in the funding proposals for individual school projects. The Administration had allocated additional cash grants for teacher preparation and capacity enhancement in the run-up to 2009. Under the recently announced initiative for supporting low academic achievers, starting from the 2006-07 school year, the Administration would provide additional teachers to schools with large intakes of the academically weakest 10% and Band 3 students, which would facilitate schools to adopt small group teaching or flexible grouping of students based on student ability and the nature of the learning activities. With the introduction of an Early Retirement Scheme, the Administration anticipated balanced teacher supply and demand in the short-term. Given a projected shortfall of some 1 200 teachers in the double cohort year, any change in policy which would have the effect of increasing the demand for teachers would inevitably exacerbate the shortfall in the double cohort year.

32. PSEM also pointed out that although 40 students per class were adopted as the planning parameter, the Administration had exercised flexibility in determining the class size for schools with under-enrolment and teacher redundancy problem. This was a preferred and more targeted approach, without affecting the provision of student places in the more popular schools. For example, schools operating three S1 classes with 71 students would have a class size of 24 students. She added that given the diversity in the quality of education, parents did not wish to see a reduction of class size in the popular schools.

33. The Chairman invited deputations to comment on the Administration's view that it was inappropriate to implement SCT when some 1 200 additional teachers would be required in the double cohort year.

34. Mr KO Gar-ye said that given the resources constraints, SCT should be implemented in a progressive manner. Mr WU Siu-wai said that the Administration should reduce the number of weekly classes for teachers, improve teacher-to-class ratio, and conduct a pilot study on SCT in secondary schools in the 2006-07 school year. Mr CHIK Pun-shing said that the Administration should implement SCT in a progressive manner to improve student diversity in schools. Mr TSO Kai-lok said that teachers in popular schools would prefer a reduction of weekly classes to a reduction in class size. Mr CHOI Kwok-kwong said that the Administration should provide parents with a choice to send their children to learn in small classes in public sector

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schools.

35. Ms Audrey EU said that in debating the implementation of SCT on 1 December 2004, LegCo Members had requested the Administration to implement SCT in a progressive manner, taking into consideration the demand and supply of school places in individual districts. She clarified that LegCo Members had not requested the implementation of SCT in all schools with the same class size. She personally considered that a class size of 35 to 40 students was too large for effective teaching and learning.

36. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered that deputations in general supported the implementation of SCT with different sizes in districts with a declining student population in a progressive manner. He agreed that schools which would wish to operate larger classes should be allowed to do so.

37. Ms Audrey EU invited deputations to comment on the proposal that schools with less than three S1 classes should collaborate or merge with another schools to provide reasonable curriculum choice and accessibility to their students.

38. Mr KO Gar-ye and Mr Lawrence LOUR said that schools with only one or two S1 classes would consider collaborating or merging with another school in order to continue operation. Mr FUNG Sui-hin said that parents would send their children to schools providing continuity and quality education. Schools with one or two classes were less competitive in recruitment of students even though they collaborated or merged with another school to provide a reasonable curriculum and accessibility to students. Mr CHOI Kwok-kwong suggested that the Administration should specify the requirements on the provision of curriculum choice and accessibility to students so that schools which could not meet the requirement could consider collaborating or merging with another school.

39. The Chairman remarked that schools in general had reservations about merging with another school in order to provide reasonable curriculum choice and accessibility to students for continued operation under the new academic structure. He urged the Administration to consider the views of deputations in this regard.

Operation of floating class

40. Dr Fernando CHEUNG sought the Administration's comments on the views of deputations to discontinue the operation of floating classes in secondary schools.

41. PSEM said that at present, there should not be any floating class at S5 level or below. With the adoption of the year 2000 design for new school



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premises and the implementation of School Improvement Programmes (SIP), existing schools should have sufficient classrooms and special rooms to conduct small group teaching on individual subjects for students at S6 and S7 levels.

42. Mr TSO Kai-lok said that SIP was planned and implemented well before the policy decision to implement the new academic structure in the 2009-10 school year, and would unlikely provide sufficient special rooms for schools with less than 30 standard classrooms to discontinue the operation of floating classes for certain subjects. He suggested that the Administration should stock-take the number of classrooms and special rooms in all schools to facilitate planning for the provision of sufficient classrooms under the new academic structure.

43. Mr KO Gar-yee said that the operation of floating class should be discontinued as it was adopted as a temporary measure to resolve the problem of insufficient classrooms in schools some twenty years ago. Mr CHOI Kwok-kwong said that classes should be held in standard classrooms instead of special rooms. Since the majority of existing schools had 25 standard classrooms, the operation of floating class would continue in schools with five classes at each level under the new academic structure. Mr Lawrence LOUR said that with EMB's permission, some schools had volunteered to operate 31 classes even they had only 30 classrooms.

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44. Dr Fernando CHEUNG requested the Administration to provide relevant information on the operation of floating classes in schools. PSEM noted the request and said that schools with insufficient classrooms and special rooms could approach EMB applying for the necessary improvement works.

Adoption of 24-class as the mainstream model and provision of six years of secondary education in the same school

45. Dr Fernando CHEUNG sought the Administration's comments on the views of deputations on adoption of 24-class secondary schools as the mainstream model and the provision of six years of secondary education to students in the same school.

46. PSEM responded that there were divergent views among schools and parents on whether all secondary schools should move towards 24 classes as the norm. In general, parents did not wish to see a reduction in S1 classes in the popular schools, and principals of fully enrolled 30-class schools found it unnecessarily disruptive to cut classes, thereby creating redundancy of teachers, upsetting teamwork and staff morale as well as reducing curriculum choice and accessibility for students. At present, some 304 secondary schools had five S1 classes or 30 classes in total. To adopt 24 classes across the board would create more instability than what the proposals on class restructuring purported

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to avoid. Even in districts where student population was declining, it had proven difficult to reach consensus among schools to take collective action to reduce school size. To ensure continuity, the Administration would wish that all students could complete six years of secondary education in the same school. The Administration would consider providing a limited student placement service for students who needed to change schools when proceeding from S3 to SS1, for example, to enrol in elective subjects of their preference. For this reason, the Administration proposed to conduct another stock-taking of students at SS1 in early December to assess the number of students who had changed school for reasons of curriculum choice and accessibility or gone overseas after completing S3. Once the number of SS1 classes was finalized, the number of SS2 and SS3 classes for the same cohort of students would remain the same.

47. Dr Fernando CHEUNG agreed that students should be allowed to change schools to pursue subject studies more beneficial to their personal developments and aspirations. He, however, considered that any decrease in the number of students as a result of such transfer at SS1 level should not affect the number of operating classes in schools as it would affect curriculum and resources planning in the schools concerned.

Morale of teachers in schools

48. Dr Fernando CHEUNG asked how the Administration would promote the morale of teachers in secondary schools, in particular schools which would have to reduce classes as a result of under-enrolment.

49. PSEM responded that the morale of teachers in a school would depend on a number of variables, in particular the leadership of the principal in enhancing teaching and learning outcome. In general, the morale of teachers was good in schools with quality principals who were able to lead the teachers to achieve performance targets and improve the quality of education without creating excessive workload. As individual schools had their unique tradition and circumstances, the Administration had established a special working group to examine ways to reduce teachers' workload and promote teachers' morale from different perspectives. The working group would report its findings and recommendations by the end of 2006.

Stance on the Administration's proposals on class restructuring

50. Ms Emily LAU expressed concern about possible closure of schools as a result of class restructuring under the new academic structure, in particular the projected surplus school places and reduction of classes in Sha Tin, Tai Po and North District. She considered that parental choice should be respected in view of the diversity in the quality of education provided by schools. She invited deputations to indicate whether the Administration's proposals on class restructuring of secondary schools were acceptable.

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51. Mr KO Gar-ye said that the Administration should collaborate with the school sector to enhance the quality of education, in particular on areas where the school sector had reached a strong consensus. He suggested that the Administration should reduce the number of weekly classes for teachers to enhance student-teacher communications and review the curriculum and assessment to cater for student diversity in learning. Mr TSO Kai-lok said that any reduction of classes and class size in popular schools should take into account the views of parents. Mr CHOI Kwok-kwong said that the policies on restructuring classes of secondary schools should be decided when the new senior secondary curriculum was finalised.

52. Mr WU Siu-wai said that the Administration should improve teacher-to-class ratio in secondary schools and reduce the number of weekly classes for teachers. He added that so far reduction of classes in secondary schools as a result of a decline in student population was not a territory-wide problem.

53. The Chairman and Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong remarked that given the overall decline in student population, reduction of classes would sooner or later become necessary in secondary schools in each district.

54. At Ms Audrey EU's suggestion, the Chairman invited deputations to indicate by a show of hand whether they supported the Administration's proposals for class restructuring of secondary schools. One representative indicated support; four representatives indicated objection; and four representatives abstained. Other representatives did not make an indication.

55. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong suggested that since only one representative had indicated support for the proposals, the Administration should withdraw the proposals and conduct a more extensive consultation with a view to reaching consensus with the key stakeholders in the school sector on class restructuring of secondary schools under the new academic structure. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed a similar view and supported Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's suggestion. The Chairman asked members at the meeting whether they supported Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's suggestion. Members did not raise objection.

**V. 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), CB(2)1878/05-06(05) and CB(2)2085/05-06(01)]

56. Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (5) (DS(EM)5) briefed

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members on the Administration's paper on the subject [LC Paper No. CB(2)1878/05-06(04)].

Suspected improper use of mobile phone by candidates during examination

57. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the provision of the web address of the source of materials in the English Language (Syllabus B) Paper 2 examination on 4 May 2006 had once again dampened public confidence in the administration of public examinations by Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA). The speculation by a student in a web forum that the naming of websites in the question paper might tempt candidates to use mobile phone to access the websites for the correct answers was reasonable. The speculation had driven HKEAA to conduct an extensive investigation into suspected cheating by use of mobile phones during the examination and subsequently considered changing the format of acknowledgement on authorship of the articles and source materials used in examination papers. HKEAA had also implemented various measures to strengthen the compliance with the existing regulations on the use of mobile phones in all public examinations. All these remedial measures demonstrated that HKEAA had committed a mistake in the first place. He asked whether HKEAA would tender an open apology to the students and their parents for the inconvenience caused.

58. In response, Secretary General, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (SG(HKEAA)) highlighted the follow-up actions taken by HKEAA and the findings, reviews, conclusions and recommendations of its investigation into suspected cheating as detailed in its report on the incident [LC Paper No. CB(2)2085/05-06(01)]. He explained the latest developments of the investigation and said that up to now, there was no evidence suggesting that any candidates had made use of a mobile phone to access the website during the examination in question. He stressed that HKEAA would actively review the administrative feasibility and implications of banning all telecommunications devices including mobile phones in examination venues, and would consult the school councils on the matter in the coming few months. In addition, HKEAA would, in consultation with the Office of Telecommunications Authority, continue to investigate the use of mobile phone detection devices and devices for detecting other telecommunications gadgets.

59. SG(HKEAA) further said that giving an open apology for the incident would upset the dedicated teachers in schools and academics in tertiary institutions who had involved in setting the examination papers. He pointed out that quoting the source of materials in examination papers was a common practice among examination boards worldwide. HKEAA had been doing so since 2000. He assured members that in view of the concern of the community about the incident, HKEAA would change the format of acknowledging the sources of materials quoted in examinations. Given the

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increased sophistication and widespread use of mobile telecommunications technology, HKEAA would continue to review policies and measures to prevent improper use of mobile phones by candidates during examinations, having regard to the privacy rights of candidates.

60. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong agreed to the follow-up measures taken by HKEAA after the incident and its conclusion that there was no need for a re-sit or to cancel the marking of any particular part of the paper. He, however, remained of the view that the incident was caused by quoting the web address of the source of materials in the examination paper. He considered that HKEAA should apologise for its failure to alert to the possibility that such quoting would facilitate access to the source of the examination questions.

61. SG(HKEAA) responded that HKEAA would continue to explore the feasible ways to detect and prevent cheating by use of mobile phones by candidates during examinations. He, however, said that he was not in a position to give an open apology for the inconvenience caused by the incident.

62. Dr Fernando CHEUNG considered that being a responsible authority in examination administration, HKEAA should have the courage to apologise for its carelessness in quoting the web address in the examination paper. He considered that HKEAA should give an apology to students for the anxiety caused by the incident.

63. SG(HKEAA) responded that HKEAA would do its utmost to improve reliability in administration of public examination. He explained the extent of the collaboration of the many persons in HKEAA, schools and universities in setting examination papers and administering public examinations, and said that he would give an apology on behalf of the examination team of staff in HKEAA if members so wished, although he thought that none was warranted.

64. Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Ms Audrey EU expressed disappointment that SG(HKEAA) did not consider it necessary for HKEAA to apologise for the incident.

Establishment of a centralised onscreen marking centre on Hong Kong Island

65. Mr Patrick LAU asked why the Administration had failed to identify suitable vacated school premises for the establishment of the proposed marking centre on Hong Kong Island for four years. He considered that the renting of commercial premises was not an ideal long-term solution for the purpose.

66. DS(EM)5 assured members that the Administration had tried very hard to identify suitable vacated school premises or other suitable surplus government accommodation for immediate use by HKEAA. He explained that the target venue should be available by June/July 2006 for installation and

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testing of the onscreen marking system and easily accessible by MTR or bus on Hong Kong Island. He added that the centralised onscreen marking centres needed to be in place on a timeline to commence onscreen marking from 2007, as well as to build sufficient experience in onscreen marking to ensure a smooth transition to full implementation for the first examination of Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education in 2012.

67. In concluding, the Chairman asked whether members supported the submission of the proposal to the Finance Committee for consideration. Members raised no objection.

**VI. Implementation of asbestos management plan on the premises of aided schools**

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)2276/05-06(07) and CB(2)2276/05-06(08)]

68. Members noted the Administration's paper on the subject and the background brief entitled "Management of asbestos in school premises" prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat.

69. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that although the problem of asbestos was identified in 1994, the asbestos investigation on the premises of aided schools was only completed in 2005, and the removal of all asbestos containing-materials (ACM) from school premises would be completed even far away in 2012. He questioned why the Administration needed 18 years to identify and remove the ACM from all aided school premises.

70. Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (4) (DS(EM)4) explained that the Administration had started to remove ACM on the premises of aided schools in the mid-80s. In the course of conducting the asbestos investigations on the premises of aided schools, the Architectural Services Department (ArchSD) and the Housing Department had collaborated with EMB to arrange the removal of ACM that might cause imminent release of asbestos fibres as soon as they were identified. The remaining ACM were chalkboard, vinyl floor tiles and corrugated cement roofing sheets, which were in good conditions and made of durable materials of insignificant risk to public health. Under proper management and maintenance, these low-risk ACM could be left in place undisturbed and removed at the time when major repairs for schools were being held. Nevertheless, EMB intended to remove all ACM from school premises in five years to eliminate any possible risks, and would arrange the removal works to be carried out in major school holidays to minimise disturbance to schools.

71. In response to Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's enquiry as to why arrangements had not been made to remove those low-risk ACM during the asbestos investigation process, DS(EM)4 explained that the limited number of

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registered asbestos contractors available in the market who were qualified for carrying out asbestos works had restricted the scale of removal programme that could be held each year for schools with ACM.

72. Mr Patrick LAU asked whether the estimated total expenditure of \$55.44 million covered the necessary reinstatement works arising from the removal of ACM in school premises. DS(EM)4 responded that the amount covered the implementation of the asbestos management plan only. The costs for reinstatement works would be covered by the budget for the annual maintenance works for schools.

73. Members supported the proposed implementation of asbestos management plan on the premise of aided schools. Dr Fernando CHEUNG added that the Administration should appoint qualified consultants and contractors to carry out the removal works to protect the health of students.

**VII. Any other business**

74. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 7:33 pm.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
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