

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)759/06-07
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 11 December 2006, at 4:30 pm
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

- Members present** : Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon SIN Chung-kai, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
- Member attending** : Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
- Members absent** : Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon MA Lik, GBS, JP
Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, SBS, JP
Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
- Public Officers attending** : Item IV
Mrs Betty FUNG
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (1)

Miss Charmaine LEE
Principal Assistant Secretary (Higher Education)

Item V

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

Miss Mary TSANG
Deputy Secretary-General (1), University Grants
Committee Secretariat

Mrs Michelle WONG
Principal Assistant Secretary (School Development)

Miss Charmaine LEE
Principal Assistant Secretary (Higher Education)

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)544/06-07]

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2006 were confirmed.

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

2. Members noted that no paper had been issued since the last meeting.

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III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[Appendices I and II to LC Paper No. CB(2)543/06-07]

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting scheduled for 8 January 2007 -

- (a) Gifted education; and
- (b) Formulation of an alternative Chinese Language curriculum for non-Chinese speaking students.

4. Ms Audrey EU suggested that the Panel should write to the Administration requesting an update on the latest development of the pilot scheme on small class teaching. Members agreed.

[Post-meeting note: A letter in this regard was sent to the Administration on 12 December 2006. The Administration advised on 18 December 2006 that it proposed to discuss the subject at the regular meeting of the Panel in February 2007.]

IV. Articulation and employment opportunities for sub-degree holders

5. Members noted the background brief entitled "Sub-degree education" prepared by the Legislative Council (LegCo) Secretariat [LC Paper No. CB(2)543/06-07(02)].

Briefing by the Administration

6. Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower 1 (DS(EM)1) briefed members on the main points of the Administration's paper on the subject [LC Paper No. CB(2)543/06-07(01)].

Quality of sub-degree education and articulation for sub-degree graduates

7. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the Administration should formulate long-term policies for the development of the sub-degree sector. With some 32 000 first-year sub-degree students in the 2005-06 school year, the provision of 3 700 publicly-funded senior year places in the University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions and 2 700 undergraduate places in the three local self-financed institutions could hardly meet the demand of sub-degree graduates for articulation places. Mr CHEUNG suggested that the Administration should regulate the supply of sub-degree places and increase the provision of articulation places for sub-degree graduates. Otherwise, the community would face a potential social problem generating from the dissatisfaction of the sub-degree graduates in a few years.

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8. Dr Fernando CHEUNG considered it unrealistic to expect the provision of high quality sub-degree programmes in the market when the total funding allocation was reduced but the supply of sub-degree places had increased from about 2 000 to some 32 000 in five years. He cited his experience as an academic staff member in the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) to illustrate the adverse effect of the reduction in recurrent funding on the quality of sub-degree and undergraduate programmes operated by the UGC-funded institutions. He considered it difficult, if not impossible, to rely on market forces to enhance the quality of sub-degree programmes without Government's injection of sufficient resources to support the sub-degree sector. He requested the Administration to examine the issue in the Phase 2 of the Review of the Post-secondary Education Sector (Phase 2 Review).

9. DS(EM)1 responded that the Administration had identified the need to reinforce quality assurance (QA) for sub-degree programmes in the Phase 1 Review. The Phase 2 Review would examine further the relevant issues pertaining to the further development of the post-secondary education sector including measures to improve the articulation and employment prospects of sub-degree graduates and quality assurance of the sub-degree programmes. DS(EM)1 stressed that at present, self-accrediting institutions were subject to their own internal QA mechanisms; whereas for non-self-accrediting institutions, their programmes had to be validated by an external QA agency recognised by the Government. The Joint Quality Review Committee (JQRC) had been established by the Heads of Universities Committee (HUCOM) to oversee the self-financing programmes of the UGC-funded institutions at the sub-degree level.

10. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung expressed regret that the Administration had not in its paper provided sufficient information for discussion of the subject matter. He considered that the Administration should provide information on the supply of sub-degree places and the number of sub-degree graduates in the next few years, the potential problems arising from a rapidly expanding post-secondary sector, the demand of sub-degree graduates for senior year undergraduate places, and the allocation of additional resources to support the development of the sub-degree sector. He considered the growth of the sub-degree sector too fast and that the current problem with the sector was largely a decline in the quality of sub-degree programmes. He requested the Administration to provide detailed and updated information for discussion of the subject matter at a future meeting.

11. DS(EM)1 responded that the Administration had focussed its efforts and resources, over the past five years, on promoting the development of the local self-financing post-secondary sector in support of the policy objective to enable 60% of the senior secondary school leavers to have access to post-secondary education by 2010. To this end, the Administration had launched support

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measures such as providing land grants at nominal premium and start-up loans to providers. She added that the report of the Phase 1 Review contained detailed information on the development of the sub-degree sector including the supply and demand of sub-degree places in the past years.

12. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung remarked that the Administration should provide up-to-date information on the supply of sub-degree places and the number of sub-degree graduates in the next few years, as well as the additional resources that would be injected into the sub-degree sector.

13. DS(EM)1 responded that the Administration would provide an update on the latest developments of the sub-degree sector including the supply and demand of sub-degree places in the 2005-2006 academic year in the Phase 2 Review report. On provision of additional resources to support sub-degree students, she pointed out that following the publication of the Phase 1 Review report, the Administration had brought the means-tested grant under the Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-Secondary Students (FASP) on par with that of the Local Student Financial Scheme (LSFS) with effect from the 2006-2007 academic year and increased the loan ceiling for Non-means-tested Loan Scheme for Post-secondary Students (NLSPS) to cover academic expenses, in addition to tuition fees and living expenses for those students who did not receive the maximum grant. DS(EM)1 added that should members consider it necessary, the Administration could extract the relevant information from the Phase 1 Review Report for members' reference.

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14. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that the ambitious policy target to enable 60% of senior secondary school leavers to access post-secondary education had brought about the current imbalance in the supply and demand of sub-degree places and graduates. He considered that if the current situation continued for another five years, the surplus supply of sub-degree places and graduates would lead to serious social problems that could hardly be resolved by the mere provision of additional senior year undergraduate places or improvement of financial assistance to students. He considered that the Administration should take the initiative to suspend the growth of the sub-degree sector, and inject sufficient resources to support the development of sub-degree education.

15. DS(EM)1 responded that the Administration would formulate measures to reinforce quality assurance for sub-degree programmes in the Phase 2 Review. The Administration envisaged that with the implementation of appropriate QA measures, the supply of and demand for sub-degree places would gradually attain a balance. The Administration would continue with its aim to enable about 60% of senior secondary school leavers to have access to post-secondary education.

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Provision of degree places

16. Ms Emily LAU said that the ambitious policy to enable 60% of senior secondary school leavers to have access to post-secondary education in 10 years was achieved in five years at the expense of the quality of post-secondary education. She considered that to facilitate development of Hong Kong as an education hub in the region, the Administration should increase the provision of degree places. Ms Emily LAU further said that the current provision of 14 500 first-year-first-degree places in the UGC-funded institutions which enabled only 18% of students of the relevant ages to access university education was far below the figures in other places with comparable economic development. As far as she understood, about 50% of secondary school leavers in South Korea had access to university education. She called on the Administration to make reference to overseas places on allocation of public funds and utilisation of resources in the private sector to support the provision of university education. The Administration should increase the provision of senior year places in the UGC-funded institutions to cater for the needs of sub-degree graduates. Ms LAU requested the Administration to provide the percentage of secondary school graduates who had access to university education in overseas places, such as South Korea and Taiwan.

17. In response, DS(EM)1 said that different places had their own history of development and funding model in the provision of higher education. A comparison of the proportion of secondary school graduates admitting to the local universities would run the risk of overlooking the historical background and progress of individual places in the development of higher education with regard to their unique situations. She added that while some 50% of secondary school graduates in South Korea had access to university education, a large proportion of the undergraduate programmes was offered by self-financed private universities. DS(EM)1 agreed to provide the requested information after the meeting.

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Support for sub-degree students and graduates

18. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that the Quality Education Fund (QEF) and the Continuing Education Fund (CEF) together had accumulated reserves of around \$9.4 billion. He suggested that the Administration should review and extend the scope of QEF and CEF to provide assistance to sub-degree students so that low interest loans under the two Funds could be offered to sub-degree students in pursuit of quality undergraduate programmes in local or overseas institutions.

19. DS(EM)1 explained that QEF and CEF were established to cater for specific purposes under their current ambit/terms of references. For instance, CEF was established to provide financial assistance to Hong Kong citizens aged

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18 to 60 in pursuit of continuing education, with the maximum amount of reimbursement capped at \$10,000 per successful applicant. As regards the suggestion to provide low interest loans to students studying in overseas institutions, DS(EM)1 noted that comparing to the UGC-funded institutions, reputable overseas institutions generally charged higher tuition fees and accommodation costs. Indeed, there were views in the education sector that it would be more cost-effective to use the limited resources to support capable students to further their studies locally rather than overseas.

20. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that he understood the purposes of QEF and CEF. However, in view of the tight budget for the provision of financial assistance schemes administered by the Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA) and the substantial amount of accumulated reserves of QEF and CEF, the Administration should review the scope of QEF and CEF with a view to providing interest-free loans to sub-degree students with outstanding academic performance to pursue undergraduate or post-graduate studies in local or overseas institutions.

21. DS(EM)1 responded that so far over \$2 billion of the \$5 billion CEF had been committed to cater for the over 200 000 applications. The Administration had plans to expand the scope of the CEF to cover those industries which had joined the Qualifications Framework. The Administration would seek the Panel on Manpower's views on the proposal upon the enactment of the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Bill. She also had doubts about the feasibility of redeploying the QEF, which was allocated to successful bidders on a project basis, to provide low interest loans to sub-degree students and the proposal would need to be carefully examined by the Administration.

22. Mr TAM Yiu-chung said that the increase in the supply of sub-degree places could enable capable secondary school leavers who had not been admitted to the UGC-funded institutions to attain higher qualifications. From this perspective, it was beneficial. He considered that the Administration should provide sufficient financial support for needy students in pursuit of sub-degree studies. In view of the high tuition fees of sub-degree courses and the relatively modest incomes of sub-degree graduates, Mr TAM suggested that the Administration should reduce the financial burden of sub-degree students by deferring the calculation of interest for loans under the NLSPS until the students concerned had completed the sub-degree courses.

23. DS(EM)1 responded that NLSPS was applicable not only to persons pursuing post-secondary education courses but also those undertaking other types of educational programmes. Hence, its terms and conditions applied equally to all borrowers and it would be difficult to defer the effective date for calculation of interest on loans provided to sub-degree students only. Nonetheless, in view of the students' strong demand for means-tested loans and

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that loan interest under the means-tested loans started to accrue after the borrower had completed the programme, the Administration might explore the feasibility of providing means-tested loans to students of self-financed sub-degree programmes.

24. Mr TAM Yiu-chung remarked that sub-degree students for various reasons might not meet the eligibility criteria for means-tested loans. He reiterated the need for the Administration to revise the terms of NLSPS to take account of the circumstances of sub-degree students. The Chairman expressed a similar view.

25. DS(EM)1 explained that the Administration would have to examine the policy and financial implications of changing the terms and conditions for provision of loans to sub-degree students under NLSPS. She added that students with financial difficulty in repaying the loans could apply to SFAA for deferred payment. Responding to the Chairman, DS(EM)1 said that not many borrowers had applied for deferred payment.

Repayment of start-up loans

26. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong noted that the Finance Committee had approved on 6 July 2001 a package of support measures to facilitate the progressive expansion of self-financing post-secondary programmers, including a start-up loan scheme for course providers with a commitment of \$5 billion to cover the costs of accommodation, equipment and refurbishment. He opined that it was unreasonable for students, by paying high tuition fees, to share the financial burden of the course providers to repay the loans arising from initial set-up expenditure on college premises and facilities. He pointed out that with the increasing supply of sub-degree places in the market, course providers had encountered difficulty in recruitment of sufficient students to balance the operating costs and repay the start-up loans. As a result, some providers raised the tuition fees and one-third of the fees was used to repay the start-up loans.

27. Dr Fernando CHEUNG echoed Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's view that given the decrease in publicly-funded programmes and the need to repay the start-up loans in 10 years, many providers were forced to set higher levels of tuition fees, with one-third of the fee income being used to repay the start-up loans.

28. DS(EM)1 explained that in vetting applications for start-up loans, the Administration and the Vetting Committee concerned had examined carefully and were satisfied with the financial position of the course providers as well as their financial plans to run the courses and repay the loans in 10 years. The Administration had no intention to specify how the tuition fees should be used as far as repayment of start-up loans was concerned, but was confident that course

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providers with a long history should be financially capable of repaying the loans in 10 years. Principal Assistant Secretary (Higher Education) supplemented that course providers were required to repay the loans one year after the final drawdown of the loans.

Employment opportunities for sub-degree graduates

29. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the Administration should make planning for the provision of sufficient employment opportunities for some 32 000 sub-degree graduates in the next few years. He pointed out that the recruitment of only 1 206 sub-degree holders in the public sector in 2005 could hardly meet the job demand of some 32 000 sub-degree graduates from the 2009-2010 year onwards. He opined that the Business for Education Luncheon at a cost of around \$200,000 and the subsequent pilot job-matching scheme for sub-degree graduates failed to produce satisfactory results, as only 170 sub-degree holders had been arranged for job interviews.

30. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the overall recruitment of sub-degree graduates in both the private and the public sector largely depended on the quality of sub-degree programmes and graduates. The Administration should monitor the quality of sub-degree programmes and formulate policies to promote the understanding and recognition of sub-degree qualifications by employers in the long term.

31. DS(EM)1 responded that the Administration was well aware of the need to ensure the quality of sub-degree programmes and promote recognition of sub-degree qualifications by the community. The Administration was exploring feasible measures to reinforce quality assurance of sub-degree programmes under the Phase 2 Review. Apart from the self-accreditation mechanism in the UGC-funded institutions and the accreditation services provided by the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation for non-self-accredited institutions, the UGC-funded institutions had set up the JQRC to oversee their self-financing programmes at sub-degree level. The Administration would, in conjunction with the relevant QA bodies, work out measures to monitor the quality of publicly-funded and self-financing sub-degree programmes in the next couple of months.

32. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed concern that in 2005, the Government had recruited only 1 206 sub-degree holders out of some 4 800 persons with qualifications at sub-degree or above levels. He considered that unlike publicly-funded sub-degree programmes such as Higher Diploma or Associate Degree programmes offered by the City University of Hong Kong and PolyU which were widely recognised by the business community, most self-financed sub-degree programmes were not recognised by employers. To facilitate members' understanding of the acceptability of the sub-degree qualifications, he

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requested the Administration to provide a breakdown of the sub-degree qualifications held by these 1 206 recruits by the types of the sub-degree programmes attended and the name of the awarding institutions, and information on the nature of their civil service appointments, namely contract, temporary or permanent terms.

33. DS(EM)1 responded that the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) had not requested bureaux and departments to provide the information requested by Dr CHEUNG in compiling the information on the academic qualifications of new recruits in the civil service in 2005. Moreover, it would not be possible to differentiate between self-financing and publicly-funded sub-degree graduates as such information was not captured by the bureaux/departments for the purpose of recruitment. DS(EM)1 further explained that due to the recruitment freeze in the civil service in the past few years, the vast majority of Government recruitment would be under non-civil-service contract terms. She agreed to consult the bureaux/departments again and provide information on the breakdown of the recruits by institution in due course.

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34. Ms Emily LAU expressed disappointment that the Administration had taken eight months to provide information only on the number of sub-degree holders recruited in the civil service in 2005 in response to the Panel's request on 27 March 2006. She opined that the Administration was reluctant to provide the information because the small number of sub-degree holders being offered the civil service appointments had reflected the lack of confidence in the quality of sub-degree graduates on the part of the Government.

35. DS(EM)1 explained that the relatively small number of sub-degree holders recruited in 2005 was mainly due to the policy to freeze recruitment in the civil service in the past few years. With the recent lifting of the recruitment freeze in some civil service grades, it was envisaged that the employment opportunities for sub-degree holders in the civil service would gradually increase. As listed in the Annex to the Administration's paper, there were 22 civil service grades accepting sub-degree qualifications as entry qualifications.

36. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that the Administration should collaborate with the sub-degree sector to establish a platform to enable public access to information on all sub-degree programmes including their features and academic status. Ms Audrey EU shared the view of Mr LEE. She asked whether students were now provided with free access to relevant information on sub-degree programmes available in the market, including their titles, contents and academic levels. Should such information not be available at present, the Administration should set out a timetable for establishing such an information platform as soon as practicable.

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37. DS(EM)1 responded that currently, there were some 20 providers and a few hundred sub-degree programmes in the market. She shared the view that the establishment of a platform would facilitate public access to information on sub-degree providers and their programmes and students' choice of sub-degree programmes. She added that the Administration was considering the establishment of such information-sharing platform as a matter of priority.

38. Ms Audrey EU considered that the arrangement of 170 sub-degree graduates to attend job interviews after the hosting of the Business for Education Luncheon was more a show than a practical means to promote employers' recognition of the sub-degree qualifications and employment opportunities for sub-degree graduates.

39. DS(EM)1 clarified that the Business for Education Luncheon was an event organised by EMB to promote the awareness and recognition of sub-degree qualifications in the business community. The long-term goal should be to encourage providers to collaborate with the business sector in curriculum design and provision of internship and employment opportunities for their students/graduates. She added that some major course providers had established a partnership with different industries in providing sub-degree programmes that were designed to cater for the manpower needs of the industries concerned. The Administration would continue to collaborate with providers and employers associations to promote the acceptability of sub-degree qualifications for employment purposes.

Way forward

40. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan and Ms Audrey EU considered that the Administration should conduct a comprehensive review of the development of sub-degree education with the aim of resolving the prevailing problems in the sector, including the provision of sufficient articulation places and employment opportunities for sub-degree graduates. Mr LEE considered that while sub-degree students and their parents looked forward to better career development after graduation, both the public and private sectors appeared uncertain of the quality of sub-degree programmes. He considered that the Administration should set out the direction for future development of the sub-degree sector for public discussion. Specifically, the Administration should allocate resources to increase articulation places in the UGC-funded institutions and self-financing institutions, promote recognition of sub-degree qualifications in the community and assist sub-degree holders in finding employment.

41. DS(EM)1 responded that the Phase 2 Review was in progress. The Administration would review the operation and development of the sub-degree sector with a view to resolving the prevailing difficulties encountered by providers, teachers and students. The Administration would take into account

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the comments received during the public consultation exercise on the Phase 1 Review Report, and examine further the relevant issues pertaining to the development of the post-secondary education sector, including employment and articulation issues, and consider appropriate measures to promote the employment prospects and enhance the articulation opportunities of sub-degree graduates. The Phase 2 Review would be completed before mid-2007. The Administration would revert to the Panel in due course.

42. The Chairman asked whether the Administration would set out the objectives and targets for the provision of articulation and employment opportunities for sub-degree sector in its Phase 2 Review Report. DS(EM)1 responded that the Administration would consider this suggestion.

V. Provision of hostels for non-local students
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)543/06-07(03) and (04)]

43. Members noted the background brief on the subject prepared by the LegCo Secretariat. The Chairman and Mr Tommy CHEUNG respectively declared interests as managers of school sponsoring bodies which had applied for the construction of boarding facilities for non-local students.

Briefing by the Administration

44. DS(EM)1 briefed members on the main points of the Administration's paper on the subject.

Hostel places for non-local students in post-secondary institutions

45. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that like most LegCo members and the UGC-funded institutions, he supported the admission of more non-local students in the UGC-funded institutions in order to facilitate the development of Hong Kong into a regional education hub. However, the Administration would have to ensure the provision of sufficient hostel places to meet the boarding needs of both local and non-local students. He cited the recent cases of student complaints and conflicts between local and non-local students arising from the shortage in the supply of and the poor living conditions in hostel places in some UGC-funded institutions to illustrate the need and urgency to resolve the problem. He added that as a member of the Council of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), he participated in the discussion of the subject at meetings of CUHK Council and understood the practical difficulties and environmental constraints in identification of suitable sites within or outside CUHK's campus for construction of additional hostels.

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46. Referring to paragraphs 14 and 15 of the Administration's paper, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong further said that given the shortage in land supply, it was difficult for the UGC-funded institutions to identify suitable sites within or outside their campuses for construction of additional student hostels. He pointed out that from the 2005-2006 academic year onwards, local institutions were allowed to admit non-local students (including students from Mainland, Taiwan and Macau) at the sub-degree, degree and taught postgraduate levels to their full-time publicly-funded programmes up to 10% of the approved student number targets. Taking into account the increase of around one-third of undergraduate students arising from the implementation of four-year degree programmes in the 2012-2013 academic year, the demand of local and non-local students for hostel places throughout their studies in Hong Kong would continue to increase. He suggested that the Administration should proactively assist the UGC-funded institutions in meeting the anticipated demand in the years ahead.

47. DS(EM)1 responded that the Administration understood the difficulties encountered by the UGC-funded institutions in identifying suitable sites or existing buildings/facilities within their campuses for development of or redevelopment into student hostels, particularly for institutions situated in the urban areas. Should the need to identify sites outside campuses arise, the Administration would follow the established mechanism to help institutions identify land for hostel developments, and take forward the proposals supported by the UGC to the Public Works Subcommittee and the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council for approval. To address the current hostel shortfall, the Administration had been encouraging institutions to make the best use of their existing stock of student hostels and to explore all possible options, both interim and long-term, to meet the increasing demand for hostels. For instance, CUHK and PolyU had entered into collaboration arrangements with the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) whereby students of CUHK and PolyU would be able to take up HKIEd's student hostels and be provided with shuttle services transporting them to and from campuses. Meanwhile, some institutions were considering other short-term relief measures, such as temporary conversion of existing hostel units so as to accommodate more students.

48. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong suggested that the Administration should identify suitable sites outside the campuses of the UGC-funded institutions situated in the urban areas such as PolyU and the City University of Hong Kong for construction of student hostels to meet the increasing demand in the years ahead. For other institutions e.g. the University of Hong Kong (HKU) and those located in non-urban areas such as CUHK and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, the Administration should consider expanding their site boundaries for hostel and facility development purposes.

49. DS(EM)1 said that the Administration had earmarked funding for three new hostel projects, including a HKU's student hostel project at Lung Wah Street

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with a capacity of 1 800 places, and a CUHK's student hostel project within campus with a capacity of 1 500 places.

50. Deputy Secretary General, University Grants Committee Secretariat (DSG(UGC)) supplemented that the UGC was assisting institutions in the identification of suitable sites for construction of academic buildings and facilities, student amenities and hostels, etc to meet the anticipated demand under the new academic structure. In the meantime, some institutions were negotiating with relevant bureaux and departments for possible extension of their campus boundaries. On provision of additional student hostels, HKU was seeking the support of local communities and the Lands Department for the construction of a new student hostel at Lung Wah Street in Kennedy Town. CUHK was also liaising with the Lands Department on granting of a new site at Area 39, Pak Shek Kok for construction of academic and research facilities.

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51. In response to Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's request, the Administration agreed to provide supplementary information on the proposed and planned student hostel projects and campus development projects for the UGC-funded institutions in preparation for the implementation of four-year degree programmes under the new academic structure.

52. Ms Audrey EU asked whether the local communities supported or opposed the HKU's new student hostel project at Lung Wah Street. She pointed out that there were reports that local residents were opposing the project because the construction of the student hostel would create nuisances to the nearby residents and that the hostel would block the views of residents in nearby buildings. She also asked whether the construction of a student hostel in Lung Wah Street would require change of land use of the site in question.

53. DSG(UGC) responded that HKU was consulting the Central and Western District Council and the local communities on the proposed student hostel project in Lung Wah Street. She pointed out that the local communities supported making available the facilities in the future hostel for public use, but were concerned about the noise nuisance and traffic impacts etc arising from the operation of the student hostel on local residents. In this connection, HKU was working on the design of the proposed hostel, including the adoption of a suitable plot-ratio, that would reduce the impact. She added that the Lung Wah Street had been zoned for residential development and there was no need to change the land use for the construction of the student hostel which was a residential project. As for hostel developments at other UGC-funded institutions, she understood that as long as they were within the existing campus boundaries, the need for applying for change of land use would not arise, and hence submission to the Town Planning Board would not be necessary.

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54. Referring to paragraph 10 of the Administration's paper, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan asked whether the provision of a total of 27 800 publicly-funded student hostel places had included the estimated demand for additional places arising from the implementation of four-year degree programmes under the new academic structure.

55. DS(EM)1 responded that there were currently some 21 400 publicly-funded student hostel places provided at the UGC-funded institutions. The increase of the provision to 27 800 places would meet the existing shortfall calculated on the basis of the prevailing hostel policy. The Administration estimated that an additional 2 200 places would be required to meet the anticipated increase in demand arising from the implementation of four-year degree programmes from the 2012-2013 academic year. Institutions had been encouraged to submit proposals on hostel developments to cater for the additional demand.

56. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan sought information on the policy on the provision of publicly-funded hostel places for non-local students. DS(EM)1 responded that for the purpose of calculating the overall provision of publicly-funded student hostels at the UGC-funded institutions, the Administration would assume that all non-local students attending full-time sub-degree, degree and taught postgraduate programmes at the UGC-funded institutions would be provided with hostel places throughout their studies in Hong Kong. The institutions nonetheless had the autonomy in determining how to put their stock of hostels into the best use. For non-local students admitted to self-financing programmes of the UGC-funded institutions or other self-financing post-secondary institutions, the institutions were responsible for working out the boarding arrangements with the students concerned.

57. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan remarked that given the prevailing shortfall, the Administration should review and consult the UGC sector on whether hostel places should be provided to non-local students throughout their studies in Hong Kong. Mr LEE said that consideration should be given to providing non-local students with hostel places for a certain period, say one year. DS(EM)1 noted his suggestion.

Hostel places for non-local students in primary and secondary schools

58. Referring to paragraph 9 of the Administration's paper, Mr Tommy CHEUNG noted with concern that unlike the UGC-funded institutions, primary and secondary schools with enrolment of non-local students were not provided with publicly-funded boarding facilities. He asked whether the Administration would consider providing financial support for schools, such as the Direct Subsidy Scheme, in enrolment of non-local students.

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59. Principal Assistant Secretary (School Development) (PAS(SD)) responded that overseas students might be admitted to private schools in Hong Kong on a self-financing basis subject to the fulfilment of the relevant immigration requirements. There were non-local students in some schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme or the English Schools Foundation. Under the existing policy, non-local intake was not entitled to government subsidy. To encourage the development of student exchange activities for the benefit of secondary school students and to pave the way for an expanded scope of the sister school arrangement in the longer term, the Executive Council endorsed in July 2006 a proposal to relax the policy so that schools in operation might develop self-financing boarding facilities in-situ for the purpose of student exchange programmes, subject to the approval by the Director of Lands and support of the Secretary for Education and Manpower. Such boarding facilities could be developed within the site boundaries of non-profit-making primary and secondary schools offering full curriculum.

60. Mr Tommy CHEUNG considered that apart from a relaxation on the use of land for hostel development within the site boundaries of schools, the Administration should provide subsidies and land grants as appropriate for school sponsors to provide boarding facilities for non-local students.

61. DS(EM)1 responded that at this stage of development, the Administration did not have a policy to subsidise the provision of boarding facilities for non-local students in schools. PAS(SD) added that request for additional land to develop boarding facilities would continue to be subject to the approval of the Executive Council on a case-by-case basis.

62. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that he respected the enthusiasm of school sponsors to enrol non-local students to promote cultural exchanges between local and non-local students in schools. He, however, considered that given the resources constraints and the competing priorities in education, it was unnecessary to use public funds to subsidise the provision of boarding facilities for non-local students in schools at this stage.

VI. Any other business

63. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:35 pm.