

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1329/06-07
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 12 February 2007, 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 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
Hon MA Lik, GBS, JP
Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, SBS, JP
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
- Members attending** : Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
- Members absent** : Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP

Public Officers attending : Item IV

Professor Maurice GALTON
Consultant, Study on Small Class Teaching

Ms Bernadette LINN, JP
Deputy Secretary (Education and Manpower)2

Ms IP Ling-bik
Principal Assistant Secretary (Education Commission and Planning)

Ms CHUM Chui-che
Senior Education Officer (Research and Test Development)2

Item V

Professor Arthur LI, GBS, JP
Secretary for Education and Manpower

Mr Raymond WONG, JP
Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower

Mrs Betty IP
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower 4

Mr LEE Yuk-fai
Principal Assistant Secretary (Professional Development and Training)

Professor Edmond KO
Chairman of the Committee on Teachers' Work

Attendance by invitation : Item IV

Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union

Miss SY On-na
Vice-President

Mr IP Kin-yuen
Principal

Civic Party

Ms Annie KI
Hong Kong Island Branch District Development Officer

Centre for Development and Research in Small Class
Teaching, The Hong Kong Institute of Education

Dr LAI Kwok-chan
Head

Professor Peter BLATCHFORD
Professor, School of Psychology and Human
Development in the Institute of Education,
University of London

S.K.H. Yat Sau Primary School

Mr LI Wai-pak
Principal

Mr CHAN Yu-kwan
Senior Teacher

Choi Wan St Joseph's Primary School (PM)

Mr MAK Tin-chi
Principal

G. T. (Ellen Yeung) College

Ms Peggy CHAN
Gifted Education Officer

Education Convergence

Mr TSO Kai-lok
Vice-Chairman

Sun Fong Chung Primary School (AM)

Mr CHIU Lam-shing
Principal

Ms LO Sau-chee
Vice-principal

Hong Kong Policy Concern Organization

Mr LAM Seung-wan
Vice-Chairman

Item V

Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union

Miss SY On-na
Vice-President

Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers

Mr WU Siu-wai
Vice-President

Civic Party

Ms Annie KI
Hong Kong Island Branch District Development Officer

Education Convergence

Mr TSO Kai-lok
Vice-Chairman

Dr Raymond CHAN M. C.

Associate Professor, Department of Education Studies,
Hong Kong Baptist University

Hong Kong Primary Education Research Association

Mr LEE Siu-hok
Chairman

Hong Kong Policy Concern Organization

Mr Mervyn CHEUNG Man-ping
Chairman

Hong Kong Association of Careers Masters and
Guidance Masters

Dr HO Yuk-fan
Chairperson

Hong Kong Women Teachers' Organization

Ms Pauline CHOW Lo-sai
Chairwoman

Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of
Hong Kong

Mr Horace CHEUNG
Education Policy Deputy Spokesperson

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

Staff in attendance : Mr Kelvin LEE
Assistant Legal Adviser 1

Mr Stanley MA
Senior Council Secretary (2)6

Miss Carmen HO
Legislative Assistant (2)6

Action

I. Confirmation of minutes

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1029/06-07]

1. The minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2007 were confirmed.

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

2. Members noted the extract from the minutes of meeting between Legislative Council Members and Kowloon City District Council members on 9 November 2006 concerning mainland pregnant women giving birth in Hong Kong [LC Paper No. CB(2)950/06-07(01)].

Action

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[Appendices I and II to LC Paper No. CB(2)1041/06-07 and LC Paper No. CB(2)1058/06-07(01)]

Joint letter from eight members of the Panel

3. The Chairman referred members to the joint letter from eight members of the Panel requesting the convening of a special meeting to discuss how the Panel should follow up with the allegations made by Professor Bernard LUK Hung-kay, Vice President of the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd), concerning interference by the Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM) and other unidentified Government officials with the academic freedom and institutional autonomy of HKIEd (the allegations) [LC Paper No. CB(2)1058/06-07(01)].

4. Dr YEUNG Sum said that the Panel should hold a special meeting to gather facts and information from the parties concerned regarding the allegations as maintaining academic freedom and institutional autonomy was most important. He considered it inappropriate for the Chief Executive (CE) to have said that the allegations might be related to the upcoming CE election, for the reason that Professor LUK was a founding member of the Civic Party. Dr YEUNG further said that should information be obtained to substantiate the allegations, the Legislative Council (LegCO) should consider setting up a select committee to inquire into the allegations and summons the parties concerned to provide evidence at open meetings. This option was preferable to the appointment of an independent panel or commission by CE as meetings held by the latter would not be open to the public.

5. While expressing support for the proposal of appointing a select committee to inquire into the allegations, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong agreed that the Panel should first hold a special meeting to receive information from the relevant parties. He, however, stressed that the holding of a special meeting was not equivalent to the conduct of an inquiry. The Panel had not been authorized to summons witnesses to provide information and the persons attending the Panel meeting would not be given the protection and immunity under the Legislative Council (Powers and Privileges) Ordinance (Cap. 382).

6. As regards when and how the special meeting should proceed, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that taking into account the availability of the Chairman and Professor Paul Morris, President of HKIEd, the special meeting should be held after the Lunar New Year and before March 2007. SEM, Mrs Fanny LAW, the then Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower (PSEM), Professor Morris and Professor Bernard LUK should be invited to the special meeting. Mrs Fanny LAW should be invited as she was one of the key persons referred to in the allegations. As Mrs Fanny LAW was no longer the

Action

PSEM, Mr CHEUNG sought legal advice on whether the Panel could invite her to the special meeting, and the proper procedures to summons her should she refuse to attend the meeting by invitation.

7. Assistant Legal Adviser 1 (ALA1) responded that Rule 9(4) of the Rules of Procedure stipulated that a public officer might be invited by any committee or subcommittee of LegCo to attend its meetings if circumstances so required. If a public officer refused to attend a particular meeting of a committee, the committee might seek the approval of LegCo to exercise the powers under Cap. 382 to summons him/her to attend before it.

8. Ms Audrey EU expressed regret about the reported saying by CE that the allegations were election smearing activities solely because one of the key persons was affiliated with a political party. Ms EU considered that the only way to find out the truth regarding the allegations was to conduct an independent inquiry by a panel/committee appointed by HKIEd, or CE, or LegCo. She echoed Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's view that the holding of a special meeting by the Panel should not be taken as the commencement of an independent inquiry by the Panel. It was impossible for the Panel to establish all the facts relevant to the allegations by holding one special meeting. Ms EU considered that the University Education Concern Group, the submission of which was tabled at the meeting, and the staff associations of other universities should also be invited to express views on the subject of academic freedom and institutional autonomy at the special meeting.

9. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that the Liberal Party supported the Panel holding a special meeting to discuss the alleged Government interference with the academic freedom and autonomy of HKIEd. As the matter was related to the funding of tertiary institutions, he suggested that the University Grants Committee (UGC) should be invited to brief members on its funding mechanism for universities. This would help members understand the matter before considering the need for further action to be taken. Mr CHEUNG further said that the proper procedures should be followed in respect of the setting up of a select committee.

10. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that the focus of the special meeting should be broader to cover how the allocation of resources by the Administration had affected, if any, the academic freedom and institutional autonomy, including the employment of academic staff. He opined that apart from the four key persons, UGC and other interested academics and organizations should also be invited to give views on the subject. He agreed that the proper procedures should be followed in deciding whether a select committee should be appointed to inquire into the matter.

Action

11. Ms Emily LAU supported the Panel holding a special meeting as soon as practicable to discuss the subject. She also agreed with the suggestion that any persons or organizations which had information about the subject should be given an opportunity to express views at the special meeting. Ms LAU pointed out the different ways to take forward the matter, if necessary. Apart from the option of setting up a select committee, the Panel could consider seeking the authority of LegCo to exercise the powers to summons witnesses to provide evidence.

12. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung supported the Panel holding a special meeting expeditiously to discuss the subject. Noting the concern about the absence of legal protection to the persons attending the special meeting, Mr LEUNG said that the Panel, if necessary, should seek the support of the House Committee for the appointment of a select committee to inquire into the allegations. He considered it most important to ascertain whether academic freedom and institutional autonomy had in any way been interfered with by Government officials. He said that the public had expectation on LegCo to find out the truth of the matter.

13. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung did not consider it fruitful to hold a special meeting as it was unlikely for the Panel to obtain comprehensive information. He said that instead of convening the special meeting, the Panel should right away consider the proposal of setting up select committee to inquire into the matter. Mr LEUNG stated categorically that he did not believe SEM and the then PSEM as far as the allegations were concerned.

14. Dr KWOK Ka-ki expressed support for the Panel holding a special meeting to discuss the subject. He considered that even if the Administration conducted an independent inquiry, LegCo should also investigate the matter if it was of wide public concern, as in the case of the SARS outbreak.

15. Mr TAM Yiu-chung expressed support for the Panel holding a special meeting to discuss the subject. He suggested that the Chairman should liaise with the LegCo Secretariat to determine the date and time of the special meeting and the persons to be invited to the meeting.

16. Mr James TO said that he had written to request CE to appoint an independent committee to inquire into the allegations. However, in view of the reported response of CE to the matter and its latest development, he no longer considered it appropriate for CE to do so. Mr TO was of the view that the only appropriate way was for LegCo to set up a select committee to inquire into the allegations.

17. Mr Abraham SHEK said that the Alliance supported the Panel holding a special meeting to discuss the matter.

Action

18. Summing up, the Chairman said that members supported the Panel holding a special meeting to discuss the matter. After discussion, members agreed to hold the special meeting on 28 February 2007 from 2:30 pm to 6:30 pm.

19. As regards the persons to be invited to the special meeting, the Chairman said that the purpose of the special meeting was to collect information about the allegations and not to receive general views on the subject of academic freedom and institutional autonomy. He sought members' views on whether other persons and organizations not involved in the allegations should be invited to the special meeting, if they so requested.

20. Dr YEUNG Sum, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, Mr Tommy CHEUNG and Ms Emily LAU were of the view that the special meeting should focus on the allegations and the four key persons should be given sufficient time to express views and provide information. Ms Audrey EU, however, opined that the Panel should avoid possible misunderstanding by members of the public that it was only interested in the allegations. She considered that other organizations and academics who had views on the matter should also be invited to the special meeting.

21. Mr Tommy CHEUNG reiterated that UGC should be invited to the special meeting to explain the funding mechanism for UGC-funded institutions. Mr MA Lik said that HKIEd had allegedly been asked to dismiss four academics who had written articles in newspapers criticising the education reform and policies. These articles, if identified, should be circulated to members for reference.

22. After discussion, members agreed that apart from SEM, the then PSEM, Professors Morris and Professor Bernard LUK, the Academic Staff Association of HKIEd, the HKIEd Students' Union and the University Education Concern Group, the submissions of which were tabled at the meeting, should be invited to the special meeting. Members also agreed to post a notice in the Council's website to invite members of the public to provide information relevant to the subject and to make presentation at the special meeting.

Agenda items for the next meeting

23. Members agreed to re-schedule the regular meeting originally scheduled for 12 March 2007 and to determine the meeting date after seeking members' view. Members also agreed to discuss the following items -

- (a) Member's Bill on the governance structure of the English Schools Foundation;

Action

- (b) Retitling of the Hong Kong Institute of Education as a university; and
- (c) Grant to the Open University of Hong Kong for establishing a Centre for Innovation.

[*Post-meeting note* : The regular meeting was subsequently re-scheduled for 22 March 2007 at 10:45 am.]

IV. Progress of the study on small class teaching

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1041/06-07(01) and (02)]

24. Members noted the Administration's paper on the subject [LC Paper No. CB(2)1041/06-07(01)] and the background brief entitled "Small Class Teaching" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat [LC Paper No. CB(2)1041/06-07(02)].

Briefing by the Administration

25. Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower 2 (DS(EM)2) said that the Administration agreed that teaching in small classes would be better than in large classes if all other factors were equal. In order to assess the benefits of Small Class Teaching (SCT) in the local context in terms of both academic and affective outcomes, and to identify the teaching strategies and support necessary for maximizing the benefits of SCT, the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) considered it necessary to conduct a longitudinal study on SCT (the Study) in the 2004-2005 school year. She stressed that the findings and observations of the Study as set out in the Administration's paper were preliminary. The Administration had no intention to undermine the benefits of SCT through the preliminary findings of the Study. EMB had proactively assisted the 37 participating schools in implementing the Study and extended the Study for the first cohort to Primary 4 (P4).

26. Professor Maurice GALTON said that as an independent research consultant, he and the Steering Committee had been performing their roles and functions in the Study without any interference from EMB. He briefly explained the data collection process, and the major findings and observations in the interim report of the Study. He highlighted the need to conduct the Study in the local context in order to maximise the envisaged benefits of SCT during implementation, and the importance of the appropriate pedagogies and quality of teaching to facilitate cost-effective implementation of SCT in Hong Kong. He added that the Study should also be seen in the context of teachers' workload as there were competing demands for resources and the Study would have some

Action

insights to offer on this issue.

Release of the interim report

27. The Chairman pointed out that members were not provided with the interim report of the Study. DS(EM)2 explained that in order to maintain the independence of the Study and avoid unnecessary disturbances to the participating schools, EMB had all along adopted the practice of not disclosing the interim reports of research studies in progress. EMB would release the findings in the final report of the Study by the end of 2008.

28. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that EMB should release more information on the findings and observations in the interim report to facilitate meaningful discussion on the progress of the Study at the meeting. He opined that if members were provided with the interim report, the discussion at the meeting would be more effective and fruitful.

29. Professor GALTON responded that he was elaborating on the findings and observations of the Study as set out in pages three and four of the Administration's paper. He explained that although he did not consider releasing the interim report would affect the outcome of the Study, he respected the established practice of EMB and its property right of the Study. Nevertheless, he would be ready to brief individual members on the details of the findings should they so wished.

Oral presentation by deputations

*Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1077/06-07(01)]*

30. Miss SY On-na presented the views of the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union as detailed in its submission. She highlighted that in the light of the declining student population, the Administration should formulate a detailed plan to implement SCT of 25 students from P1 to secondary schools on a progressive basis, having regard to the student population in individual districts. The Union considered that the Administration had made use of the Study to delay the implementation of SCT in schools. The Union also urged the Administration not to exaggerate the financial implications of implementing SCT and the need for teachers to be well trained in appropriate pedagogies and strategies in order to be ready for implementing SCT in schools.

Mr IP Kin-yuen

31. Mr IP expressed doubts about the interim findings of the Study that there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate that pupils in small classes fared better

Action

than their counterparts in regular classes in terms of academic performance, subject attitudes and motivation. He considered that the outcome of the Study would be affected by the quality of teachers and the methodologies adopted for sampling, assessing and comparing the academic performance of student groups in small classes and regular classes. He pointed out that the emphasis on enhancing student-teacher interactions in small classes as well as the arrangements for teachers to teach in both small classes and regular classes might also affect the outcomes of the Study.

Civic Party

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1058/06-07(02)]

32. Ms Annie KI presented the views of the Civic Party as detailed in its submission. She highlighted that the Administration had all along exaggerated the financial implications and minimized the benefits of SCT. The Civic Party estimated that in the light of the declining student population, progressive implementation of SCT from P1 level in the 2007-2008 school year would incur additional costs of around \$40 million and \$600 million in the 2009-2010 and 2012-2013 school years respectively. The Civic Party considered that the adoption of SCT would enhance the quality of education in terms of teaching and learning outcomes in both academic and affective domains. Given the current fiscal surplus, the Administration should take the opportunity to implement SCT in order to upgrade the long-term competitiveness of Hong Kong in the international arena.

Centre for Development and Research in Small Class Teaching, The Hong Kong Institute of Education

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1090/06-07(01)]

33. Dr LAI Kwok-chan presented the views of the Centre for Development and Research in Small Class Teaching, The Hong Kong Institute of Education as detailed in its submission. He highlighted that in the absence of conclusive evidence on the benefits of SCT, the Administration should provide more information on the design of the Study and the methodologies employed for conducting the standardised assessments, and the analysis and comparisons of the academic and affective performance data between the students in small classes and the students in regular classes. In addition, the Administration should take into account the student profiles and their demographic data for analysis purposes. He also suggested that EMB should indicate the limitations of the Study in terms of the scope of the Study, the number and variety of the participating schools, the class sizes and support measures for the participating schools and teachers, etc.

Action

S.K.H. Yat Sau Primary School
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1134/06-07(01)]

34. Mr LI Wai-pak described the experience of the S.K.H. Yat Sau Primary School in the implementation of SCT under the Study. He highlighted that most teachers and parents were in support of SCT. He considered that SCT was essential for successful implementation of integrated education for students with special educational needs. He suggested that EMB should improve the arrangements for conducting the standardised tests for students at junior primary levels.

35. Mr CHAN Yu-kwan said that EMB should increase the number of lesson observations in order to better understand the benefits of SCT on students' performance in affective domains. He suggested that EMB should assign a member of the Steering Committee to station in individual participating schools to observe classroom interactions and student's learning behaviour in small classes for six months. He added that the Study should not emphasise on the performance of students in standardised tests.

Choi Wan St Joseph's Primary School (PM)
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1041/06-07(03)]

36. Mr MAK Tin-chi cited the experience of the Choi Wan St Joseph's Primary School (PM) to illustrate the benefits of SCT in terms of enhancing classroom interactions, reducing student diversity in learning, facilitating implementation of curriculum reform, and promoting students' all-round development. He considered that the benefits of SCT should not be assessed by students' improvement in academic performance solely as reducing class size was not the only factor to enhance teaching and learning outcomes. He added that the provision of quality education required the endeavour and cooperation of all stakeholders, and SCT would promote teachers' morale and facilitate implementation of the education reform.

G. T. (Ellen Yeung) College

37. Ms Peggy CHAN described the successful experience of G.T. (Ellen Yeung) College in the implementation of SCT across the primary and secondary levels. She highlighted that the merits of SCT had been reflected in various academic and affective domains, including students' performances in basic competency assessments, students' participation in teaching and learning activities and interactions with peers and teachers in classes, and students' self-image and self-confidence. She added that the School had conducted a questionnaire survey on the qualitative and quantitative impact of SCT and both parents and students had favourable comments about SCT. She added that with a class size of less than 24 students, students in the School enjoyed learning and demonstrated a high level of motivation to learn.

Action

Education Convergence

38. Mr TSO Kai-lok said that SCT was already adopted for non-language subjects at secondary six (S6) and S7 levels, and the merits of SCT at these levels were already reflected in the reports of external school reviews conducted by EMB. He considered it unreasonable to maintain the class size of 40 students in secondary schools under the new academic structure. He suggested that the Administration should also examine the impact of implementing SCT in secondary schools before the commencement of the new academic structure in the 2009-2010 school year.

Sun Fong Chung Primary School (AM)
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1041/06-07(04)]

39. Mr CHIU Lam-shing presented the views of the Sun Fong Chung Primary School (AM) as detailed in its submission. He highlighted that the School had implemented SCT in the past two years and ascertained the benefits of SCT in enhancing classroom interactions and students' all-round development. In view of the merits of SCT and parental preference, the School had used the Capacity Enhancement Grant to continue SCT at P1 in the current school year. He pointed out that students in small classes demonstrated a higher level of self-confidence and communication abilities. He suggested that the Administration should increase the standard classroom size to improve the learning environment and implement SCT to enhance the quality of education as soon as possible. He added that teachers would prepare test papers in the light of the average abilities of students, and students in small classes under the Study would unlikely achieve dramatic improvements in academic performance.

Hong Kong Policy Concern Organization

40. Mr LAM Seung-wan said that Hong Kong Policy Concern Organization considered that SCT would enhance classroom interactions and students' all-round developments. The Administration should plan the implementation of SCT from P1 and S1 and progressively extended it to higher levels in subsequent school years. The Organisation considered that SCT should not be implemented with a view to reducing student diversity in learning or combating poverty, such as the SCT Scheme for primary schools with a high concentration of disadvantaged pupils (the Scheme). The Organisation had conducted regular school visits and lesson observations in the past three years, and had identified the merits of SCT in various academic and affective domains. The Organisation considered that the Study was not comprehensive in terms of its scope, design and methodologies. The Administration should ensure the objectivity of the report of the Study in respect of the benefits of SCT in education.

Action

The need for the Study

41. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that since the Administration agreed that teaching in small classes would be better than in large classes if all other factors were equal, it was unnecessary to delay the implementation of SCT until the completion of the Study and the Scheme in end 2008. There was also no need to establish the importance of the quality of teachers nor their teaching pedagogies and strategies before SCT could be implemented. He pointed out that according to newspaper reports, CE had indicated that if he was re-elected, he would implement SCT in September 2007 and extend SCT to all primary and secondary levels in five years. He asked whether EMB would reconsider its plan for implementing SCT in the light of CE's election platform. DS(EM)2 responded that the Administration was not in a position to comment on the election platform of candidates for the CE election.

42. Dr YEUNG Sum said that teaching and learning in small classes would be better than in large classes if all other factors were equal, and everyone agreed that the quality of teachers, parental support and students' learning motivation were essential for enhancing teaching and learning outcomes in both academic and affective domains. There was no need to conduct the Study in order to bring out the importance of the quality of teachers in maximising the benefits of SCT in education. He considered that the Study was a political strategy to justify the non-implementation of SCT. Dr YEUNG expressed regret that Professor GALTON, being an expert in SCT, had accepted the commissioning of the Study. He considered it ridiculous to discuss whether SCT should be implemented, given that CE had already expressed his intention to progressively implement SCT in five years if he was re-elected.

43. Ms Audrey EU considered that CE should start implementing SCT now, instead of after his successful re-election. She considered it unreasonable to withhold the publication of the interim report of the Study, given the criticisms on its design and methodologies, such as the selection of the control groups for comparison purposes. She also considered that the Study was a political strategy to defer the implementation of SCT.

44. DS(EM)2 responded that CE was aware of the conduct of the Study, and so far had not directed that EMB should implement SCT in all public sector schools. She explained that the publication of the interim report would affect the independence of the Study and generate public comments that would create unnecessary pressure on the participating schools.

45. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung pointed out that by implementing the Scheme in schools with a large enrolment of disadvantaged students, the Administration had acknowledged the benefits of SCT. He also pointed out that apart from the small class size for non-language subjects at S6 and S7 levels, the remedial

Action

classes at junior primary levels were also small classes. He requested EMB to consult CE on the implementation of SCT without further delay. DS(EM)2 responded that she would relay Mr LEUNG's request to SEM.

46. Referring to the observation that there was no sufficient evidence to demonstrate that students in small classes fared better than their counterparts in regular classes in terms of academic performance, subject attitudes and motivation, Mr TAM Yiu-chung asked whether overseas researches on the subject obtained similar findings and observations.

47. Professor GALTON responded that researches on SCT in the United Kingdom and the United States were conducted initially at pre-primary levels. Based on the data and information collected from the Study, the academic performance of P1 students in small classes during 2005-2006 were better than their counterparts in 2004-2005. The end of year P2 scores of this latter group, the first cohort, were below those of pupils in regular classes in the 2004-2005 school year. If, however, the 2005-2006 P1 pupils maintained their rate of progress in P2, they would do better than the pupils in the larger classes. He therefore considered it essential to conclude the Study's findings and observations after completing the analysis and comparisons of the data and information collected in the 2006-2007 school year to test this prediction. He clarified that the Study aimed to identify the best teaching pedagogies and strategies for maximising the benefits of SCT in the local context for professional development of teachers and dissemination to other schools adopting SCT. The Study would also examine the effects of SCT on student performance in affective domains such as their learning motivation and behaviour in small classes.

48. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed regret that while the deputations and members supported the implementation of SCT in schools, the preliminary findings and observations of the Study conducted by EMB appeared not in line with the hands-on experience of the front-line teachers of the participating schools and the academics with substantial experience in SCT researches and studies. He considered that the Administration should explain the methodologies of the Study to clarify members' doubts about the objectivity and independence of the Study. He further said that EMB should examine the issue of SCT in the light of changing social and political circumstances.

49. Ms Emily LAU said that civil servants should remain politically neutral and refrain from involving in any activities relating to elections. She shared the view that the Administration should publish the interim report and explain the design and methodologies of the Study to enable public discussion on issues related to the implementation of SCT in the local context and enhance acceptability of the final report of the Study. DS(EM)2 replied that she would discuss with Professor GALTON on the provision of additional information on the methodology including design of the Study to the Panel.

Action

50. Mr Abraham SHEK said that he shared the views of the deputations and members that SCT should be implemented as soon as possible. Given that all parties including CE reckoned the benefits of SCT, there was no need to map out the way forward for SCT pending the completion of the Study. He highlighted the purpose and importance of education to the development of the next generation and Hong Kong, as well as the importance of family support to student learning. Mr SHEK considered that instead of assessing the benefits of SCT, the Study should aim to identify the conditions and strategies for maximising the benefits of implementing SCT in Hong Kong. He also requested EMB and Professor GALTON to provide the details of the interim findings and observations of the Study to members.

51. Professor Patrick LAU said that there was no need to continue with the Study to identify the benefits of SCT in order to justify its implementation in local schools. He considered that the Study should aim to explore and identify the effective ways to maximise the benefits of implementing SCT in Hong Kong. He pointed out that the deputations and members from the education sector were well aware of the benefits of SCT in enhancing teaching and learning outcomes. He stressed that SCT provided a better learning environment and students would certainly enjoy learning in small classes than in regular classes.

52. DS(EM)2 responded that as a responsible Government in the use of public resources, the Administration considered it necessary to conduct the Study to assess the benefits of SCT and more importantly, identify the cost-effective ways to maximise the benefits of implementing SCT in the local context. She pointed out that the Administration had not exaggerated the financial implications of SCT, and the recurrent expenditure for implementing SCT was estimated on the basis of the population projections prepared by the Census and Statistics Department. The savings arising from a declining student population in recent years had been redeployed to fund the new initiatives in education.

53. Professor GALTON said that he had been engaged in about 10 research projects commissioned by the Government of the United Kingdom, and well understood the need to maintain a high degree of autonomy in the course of the research work. He pointed out that although the Study aimed to assess the impact of SCT on student learning in three core subjects, most of the 37 participating schools had adopted SCT for other subjects as well. Responding to the criticism that the teaching approaches adopted might be inappropriate for local conditions, he emphasised that the Study was designed in the light of the education reform which emphasised "Learning to Learn" which aimed to change the convention of learning mainly by memorisation. The data and information collected from parents, students and teachers by way of questionnaire would be useful for consistent analysis and comparison purposes. He added that the

Action

teachers in the participating schools had demonstrated a high level of openness, honesty, enthusiasm and commitment in the implementation of the Study.

54. Professor GALTON further said that the Study also examined the impact of SCT on students' generic abilities and changes in learning motivation and behaviour, but so far no conclusive evidence had been drawn from the analysis and comparisons on data collected from small classes and regular classes. He added that the benefits of SCT varied among nations with different cultures, traditions and educational beliefs. He requested members to await the completion of the Study which would hopefully identify the most effective pedagogies and strategies for effective implementation of SCT in the local context.

The Scheme

55. Noting the increase of the number of participating schools under the Scheme from 29 in the 2005-2006 school year to 48 in the 2006-2007 school year, Ms Emily LAU asked whether the results of the Scheme would affect the outcome of the Study.

56. DS(EM)2 responded that the conduct of the Scheme was independent and its results would not affect the outcome of the Study. The Scheme was implemented in the 2005-2006 school year on the basis of overseas research findings that SCT had more significant effects on students with weak family support and in their early years of schooling. Under the Scheme, primary schools with 40% of their P1 to P3 pupils receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance or full grant under the Student Financial Assistance Scheme were provided with similar resources and support as the participating schools in the Study to implement SCT in P1 to P3. The large increase of participating schools in the ensuing school year might be attributed to an increase of schools with the prescribed concentration of eligible students, or the decision of individual schools to participate in the Scheme after a year's observation.

Follow-up

57. The Chairman said that the Administration should provide more information on the methodology and design of the Study in order to remove the doubts of members and the deputations about the findings and observations of the Study. DS(EM)2 undertook to follow up with Professor GALTON on the provision of additional information to the Panel.

Admin

58. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung suggested that the Panel should write to ask whether CE supported the implementation of SCT. Members agreed.

Action

[*Post-meeting note* : The Chairman's letter to CE dated 13 February 2007 and the reply from CE Office dated 22 February 2007 were issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1208/06-07 on 2 March 2007.]

V. Final report of the Committee on Teachers' Work
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1041/06-07(05) - (07)]

59. Members noted the Administration's paper on the subject and the background brief entitled "Workload of teachers" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat.

Oral presentation by deputations

Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1058/06-07(03)]

60. Miss SY On-na presented the views of the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union as detailed in its submission. She highlighted that the Union agreed that some of the recommendations in the final report of the Committee on Teachers' Work (the Final Report) would help relieve teachers' workload. The Union, however, considered that the increasing work pressure and stress on teachers was mainly a result of the Administration's policy on school consolidation, i.e., allocation of P1 class on the basis of a minimum enrolment of 23 students; refusal to implement SCT in all public sector schools in the light of a declining student population; and rapid implementation of the education reform initiatives.

Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1077/06-07(02)]

61. Mr WU Siu-wai presented the views of the Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers as detailed in its submission. He highlighted that EMB should collaborate with teachers to facilitate smooth implementation of education reforms. The Federation supported the recommendations in the Final Report and urged EMB to implement them as soon as practicable, in particular the recommendations to improve the class-to-teacher ratio from 1:3 to 1:4 and 1:5 for secondary schools with a large concentration of Band 1 and Band 2 students respectively, alleviate principals' work pressure and stress, and reduce the working hours of teachers. The Federation also suggested that EMB should educate parents on the selection of an ordinary or special school suitable for their children with special educational needs, and allow ordinary schools to highlight their professionalism in catering for students with a particular special education needs.

Action

Civic Party

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1058/06-07(04)]

62. Ms Annie KI presented the views of the Civic Party as detailed in its submission. She pointed out that the introduction of the nine measures to relieve teachers' workload in February 2006 had reduced the average working hours of teachers from 63 to 50 hours a week. She highlighted the findings of the Committee on Teachers' Work (the Committee) on teachers' workload in terms of their engagement in paper work, student management and administrative duties. She urged the Administration to increase resources allocated to schools to employ supporting staff to reduce teachers' paper work. In addition, the Administration should implement SCT and improve teacher-to-student ratio so that teachers would have more time and space to cater for student diversity in class.

Education Convergence

63. Mr TSO Kai-lok said that the recommendations in the Final Report were pragmatic and effective ways to reduce teachers' workload and stress, and should be implemented as soon as possible. He suggested that the Administration should consider creating more permanent teaching posts and improve the teacher-to-student ratio to alleviate teachers' workload and reduce their average class lessons in a week. The Administration should implement SCT to upgrade the quality of teaching and learning in classes. He added that school-based assessment should be implemented after thorough piloting, and schools should be allowed to decide the timing for incorporating school-based assessment in the assessment framework for new subjects under the new senior secondary curriculum.

Dr Raymond CHAN M. C.

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1041/06-07(08)]

64. Dr CHAN presented his views as detailed in his submission. He highlighted that the findings and recommendations of the Committee were pragmatic and visionary, and were basically in line with the findings of the research study on teachers' work pressure conducted jointly by the Education Convergence and the Hong Kong Primary Education Research Association. He hoped that the 18 recommendations in the Final Report could be implemented as soon as possible. He stressed that the Administration should seriously examine the actual workload of teachers and work out measures to improve the situation.

Hong Kong Primary Education Research Association

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1041/06-07(09)]

65. Mr LEE Siu-hok presented the views of the Hong Kong Primary

Action

Education Research Association as detailed in its submission. He highlighted that the Association supported the Committee's 18 recommendations and urged the Administration to follow up the implementation work. He pointed out that the workload of teachers was heavier in September to November, and lighter in December, January and the summer vacations. The Administration should plan the provision of professional development of teachers accordingly. The Association also suggested that the Administration should increase the School Development Grant for schools to employ additional teaching assistants and supporting staff to relieve the workload of teachers, in particular English Language teachers whose workload was generally heavier.

Hong Kong Policy Concern Organization
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1113/06-07(01)]

66. Mr Mervyn CHEUNG presented the views of the Hong Kong Policy Concern Organization as detailed in its submission. He highlighted that despite the substantial findings and recommendations in the Final Report, the Committee had not elaborated on the primary source of work stress, i.e., the implementation of the reform initiatives in recent years. The Organisation considered that apart from enhancing effective communication between principals and teachers in schools, the Administration should review the contents of the education reform and its implementation schedule. In the light of the declining student population and the fiscal surplus, the Administration should implement SCT and restore the minimum enrolment of students to 16 for allocation of P1 classes to schools in remote districts.

Hong Kong Association of Careers Masters and Guidance Masters
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1058/06-07(05)](revised)

67. Dr HO Yuk-fan presented the views of the Hong Kong Association of Careers Masters and Guidance Masters as detailed in its submission. She highlighted that the Committee had identified five sources of work stress, namely, "changes and innovation", "external stakeholders", "test-related", "school management" and "pupil-related", but had not elaborated on the fundamental cause of the increasing work stress on teachers. The Association considered that the disharmony between the spirits and values behind education reforms and the nature of education and professional ideologies of teachers was the fundamental cause of the increasing work pressure and stress in recent years. The Association agreed to Recommendation 18 of the Final Report that it was necessary to raise the public profile and standing of the teaching profession and vital to restore the trust and respect for the profession.

Action

*Hong Kong Women Teachers' Organization
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1090/06-07(02)](revised)*

68. Ms Pauline CHOW presented the views of the Hong Kong Women Teachers' Organization as detailed in its submission. She highlighted that the teaching workforce as a whole was dedicated and committed to education. She described teachers' daily work and involvement in extra-curricular activities to illustrate the non-teaching workload of teachers. The Organisation suggested that the Administration should systematically monitor and review teachers' teaching and non-teaching work in schools on an on-going basis and implement appropriate measures to relieve teachers' workload and stress as and when appropriate. The Organisation considered that teachers should be provided with more time and space to improve the quality of education as well as to take care of their children and families. The Administration should recognise and address the needs of teachers at different stages of their life and career so as to achieve a better work-life balance

Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong

69. Mr Horace CHEUNG said that the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB) accepted the Committee's Final Report and supported implementation of the 18 recommendations as soon as practicable. DAB agreed that EMB should assist schools to develop their school-based mechanisms to streamline administrative work and enhance the capacity of school leaders in organization through networks and professional development. DAB considered that for many teachers, long working hours had implications on work pressure and stress. DAB suggested that EMB should reinforce teacher training on management of pupils in classes; and make use of the Quality Education Fund (QEF) to enhance the physical and psychological well-being of teachers, such as by setting up a teacher health centre.

The Administration's response

70. SEM said that the Administration had all along attached importance to the improvement of teachers' working situation in order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. The Administration endorsed the Committee's 18 recommendations in the Final Report and had taken steps to implement 12 of the 18 recommendations (i.e. R1-5, R7, R11-14, R17-18) to help relieve teachers' workload and stress. As R8-9, R10 and R15 involved the use of QEF and the Education Development Fund, EMB had consulted the Steering Committees of these two Funds on the effective ways to implement these recommendations. The Administration would need careful consideration of R6 and R16 as they involved significant financial implications. R6 was about the provision of more permanent teaching posts and further improvement on teacher-to-student ratio, and R16 involved the creation of more time and space for teachers to reap the full

Action

benefits of professional development activities such as the provision of paid study leave. If necessary, the Administration would submit financial proposals for additional funding to implement the recommendations.

71. Professor Edmond KO, Chairman of the Committee on Teachers' Work, said that teachers' work was a complicated issue and there were a variety of sources for teacher's workload and stress. Fortunately, the Committee had received valuable advice and support from the teaching profession in the course of its study. The Committee had identified the sources of the work pressure and stress and had recommended 18 measures to relieve teachers' workload and stress. The Committee was impressed by the objective and constructive feedback on the Final Report and the recommendations. The Committee expected that the implementation of its 18 recommendations would relieve teachers' pressure and stress and enhance teaching and learning outcomes.

Sources of teachers' work pressure and stress

72. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong requested Professor Edmond KO to comment on the findings of the opinion survey conducted by the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union that in the light of a declining student population, the policy on school consolidation, the refusal to implement SCT in public sector schools, and the fast pace for implementing education reforms were the major sources of teachers' increasing work pressure and stress over the past years.

73. Professor Edmond KO responded that the Committee had considered the findings and recommendations of similar studies on teachers' work and had included the impact of the policy on school consolidation, the effects of implementing SCT and the education reforms on teachers' work pressure and stress in its study and the Final Report. In particular, the Committee had examined the possible benefits of SCT on the basis of the qualitative and quantitative data available and did not consider it justified to recommend full implementation of SCT at this stage.

Recommendations to relieve teachers' workload and stress

74. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that although the Administration had endorsed the Committee's 18 recommendations in the Final Report, R6 and R16 would not be implemented after the Administration had carefully examined their financial implications. He asked whether Professor Edmond KO was happy with the Administration's response on the two recommendations.

75. Professor Edmond KO responded that apart from the financial implications, the Administration should consult the stakeholders on the effective ways to implement R6 and R16, in particular the front-line teachers on the best schemes for their professional development. He considered it appropriate to

Action

examine the issues in detail before implementation. He added that the financial implications of the 18 recommendations were beyond the work purview of the Committee.

76. SEM said that from the 1995-1996 to 2006-2007 school years, the Administration had improved the student-to-teacher ratio from 23.9:1 to 17.6:1 and from 20.5:1 to 17.2:1 in primary schools and secondary schools respectively. Subject to availability of resources, the Administration would continue to improve the student-to-teacher ratios as appropriate. Responding to Mr TSO Kai-lok, he said that the Administration would review the student-to-teacher ratio at secondary level after the double cohort year in 2012.

77. Ms Audrey EU asked how the Administration would improve communication with teachers to facilitate a better flow of information and feedback that would help clarify query or misconceptions, and hence foster a climate of trust to facilitate long-term partnership.

78. Professor Edmond KO responded that the Committee was concerned that communication of ideas and strategies from EMB to schools and from management to front-line teachers often went awry due to the external pressure and misinterpretation along the hierarchy. The Committee considered that effective communication was a two-way process that required the conscientious efforts of the parties involved, and the establishment of trust between EMB and the teaching profession would definitely facilitate effective communication.

79. Dr HO Yuk-fan said that as a front-line teacher, she had the feeling that due to a lack of mutual trust, the speeches and statements of SEM or PSEM in recent years were often misinterpreted or distorted through media reports or other means. She considered that the lack of trust between EMB and teachers was probably a result of an unjustified assumption that the quality of teachers and principals was not up to the desired level.

80. PSEM said that the Administration respected the professionalism of teachers. Apart from communicating with principals through the established channels, EMB would continue to improve communications with front-line teachers through school visits. He pointed out that during school visits, he and his colleagues from the Regional Education Offices would schedule a session to discuss with front-line teachers their day-to-day teaching work and concerns about the implementation of the reform initiatives.

81. Mr Mervyn CHEUNG said that in recent years, SEM had visited schools frequently and improved communication with schools and teachers. He agreed that there was a communication breakdown between principals and teachers at the school level. He suggested that EMB should simplify the procedures and process in the conduct of external school review and other performance

Action

assessment to reduce teachers' workload. He added that EMB should assess the performance of schools on an on-going basis.

82. Ms Audrey EU was concerned whether the professional image and status of the teaching workforce had been adversely affected because HKIEd had yet to be retitled as a university. Professor Edmond KO responded that he did not consider that there was a direct relationship between the two issues.

83. Mr TAM Yiu-chung expressed support for the Committee's recommendations in the Final Report. He urged the Administration to consider the views and suggestions of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong, in particular its suggestion on promotion of a healthy teaching workforce.

VI. Any other business

84. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 8:01 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
21 March 2007