

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1398/07-08
(The minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Friday, 29 February 2008, at 2:51 pm
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon SIN Chung-kai, SBS, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
Hon LI Kwok-ying, MH, JP
Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, SBS, JP
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP

Members absent : Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP

Public Officers attending : Agenda item IV

Mr Michael MY SUEN
Secretary for Education

Ms Bernadette LINN
Deputy Secretary for Education (2)

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

Agenda item V

Mr Chris WARDLAW
Deputy Secretary for Education (5)

Mr Tony TANG
Principal Assistant Secretary (Quality Assurance),
Education Bureau

Mrs HONG CHAN Tsui-wah
Principal Education Officer (Quality Assurance),
Education Bureau

Agenda item VI

Ms Bernadette LINN
Deputy Secretary for Education (2)

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

Dr Catherine CHAN Ka-ki
Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum
Development), Education Bureau

Mr TAM Koon-che
Principal Education Officer (Hong Kong), Education
Bureau

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

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

Miss Josephine SO
Council Secretary (2)1

Miss Carmen HO
Legislative Assistant (2)6

Action

I. Confirmation of minutes

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1155/07-08 and CB(2)1181/07-08]

The minutes of the meetings held on 14 and 31 January 2008 were confirmed.

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

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)962/07-08(01) and CB(2)1034/07-08(01)]

2. Members noted the following papers issued since the last meeting -

- (a) a joint submission from seven educational institutions on the adoption of Putonghua as the medium of instruction for teaching Chinese Language in schools; and
- (b) an information note on bullying in schools provided by the Administration.

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[Appendices I and II to LC Paper No. CB(2)1180/07-08]

Items for discussion at the next meeting

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the regular meeting scheduled for 26 March 2008 at 2:30 pm -

- (a) Review of the financial assistance scheme for designated evening adult education courses; and
- (b) Creation of a deputy head rank in public sector primary schools.

4. Members agreed to receive deputations for item 3(a). Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong requested the Administration to include in its discussion paper the following information:

- (a) student enrolment on designated evening adult education courses over the past few years;

Action

- (b) changes in the mode and amount of subsidy for evening adult education courses pursuant to the cessation of operation of such courses by the former Education and Manpower Bureau; and
- (c) focus of the review of the financial assistance scheme for designated evening adult education courses to be conducted.

Items for discussion at future meetings

Review of first-year-first-degree places

5. Mr SIN Chung-kai suggested that the Panel should discuss the provision of first-year-first-degree places in the University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions which had remained at 14 500 for many years. He also expressed concern about the limited number of articulation places for sub-degree holders. Members agreed to include the subject matter in the Panel's list of outstanding items for discussion.

Planning of public sector primary school places

6. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung suggested that the Panel should discuss the planning of public sector primary school places in the light of the fluctuations in student population. Members agreed to include the subject matter in the Panel's list of outstanding items for discussion.

7. Ms Emily LAU enquired whether some issues concerning the Race Discrimination Bill under scrutiny by the relevant Bills Committee should be discussed by the Panel from the policy perspective, for example issues about the media of instruction in educational establishments. The Chairman responded that as the Bill fell within the policy portfolio of the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, he would discuss with the Secretary and revert back to members.

Cancellation of meeting on 14 July 2008

8. Members noted that the Panel would report its work in the 2007-2008 session to the Council at or before its last meeting on 9 July 2008. Members agreed to cancel the Panel meeting scheduled for 14 July 2008, and to hold a special meeting in late June 2008 if necessary.

IV. Proposed implementation details of small class teaching in public sector primary schools

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1180/07-08(01)-(02) and CB(2)1107/07-08(01)]

9. Members noted the background brief prepared by the Legislative Council (LegCo) Secretariat [LC Paper No. CB(2)1180/07-08(02)].

Action

Briefing by the Administration

10. Secretary for Education (SED) briefed members on the progress of the Administration's preparation for the implementation of small class teaching (SCT) in public sector primary schools, as detailed in its paper [LC Paper No. CB(2)1180/07-08(01)]. He added that the Administration had earmarked funding in the 2008-2009 school year for the creation of about 700 teacher posts, time-limited for two years, to support the preparation for SCT by those primary schools which had indicated their readiness to implement SCT beginning 2009-2010.

Implementation schedule

11. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Dr YEUNG Sum expressed support for the Administration's decision to implement SCT in public sector primary schools, starting from the cohort of Primary One (P1) students in the 2009-2010 school year. Mr CHEUNG appreciated the need to allow a certain degree of flexibility in implementing SCT at the initial stage. He noted that an enrolment cap at 10% above the approved class size was proposed under which a buffer of two to three places per class was allowed. For schools opting for SCT, the cap would be 27 students per class, whereas for those which had indicated their intention to admit students under the Primary One Admission System (POA) on the basis of 30 students per class, the cap would be 33 students per class. He considered that given the policy direction of promoting 25 students per class, it was necessary for the Administration to draw up a concrete timetable for achieving that aim. For instance, he suggested that instead of setting the enrolment cap at 27 and 33, those schools not opting for SCT could be required to reduce their P1 enrolment by one student per year, with a view to achieving the standard class size of 25 across the board in five years' time. He welcomed the creation of 700 time-limited posts and asked for further details.

12. SED reiterated the need for flexibility in implementing SCT and agreed to consider lowering the enrolment cap in the longer term. As regards the details for the 700 time-limited posts, SED said that these were being worked out. He just wished to share with members the overall direction in the first instance.

13. Dr YEUNG Sum also welcomed the creation of time-limited posts to support preparation for SCT. While agreeing that SCT should not be implemented in all public sector primary schools in one go due to practical considerations, Dr YEUNG was of the view that the Administration should be firm in its stance on implementing SCT as the Chief Executive (CE) had pledged during the election campaign to implement SCT if he was re-elected. As the Administration had not announced any timetable for implementing SCT in secondary schools, he enquired whether the Administration had given consideration to the proposal put forward by the Democratic Party previously

Action

that the class size of secondary schools should be reduced by two students per year starting from the same school year when SCT was implemented in primary schools so that the cohorts of students receiving SCT could proceed to secondary schools with smaller class size after completing their primary education.

14. SED responded that the Administration was fully committed to fulfilling CE's pledge concerning SCT during his term of office, and had drawn up an implementation plan for public sector primary schools. The Administration would consider the feasibility of reducing the standard class size of secondary schools. As SCT in primary schools and the new senior secondary academic structure would be implemented from the same school year, the Administration, in the run up to 2009, would concentrate its work on the preparation and arrangements for these two initiatives.

15. Mr SIN Chung-kai opined that small class should mean no more than 20 students. He enquired whether the standard class size of 25 was the ultimate goal of SCT, and whether the Administration would consider further reducing the size in future. With regard to the consolidation policy of under-utilized primary schools, Mr SIN asked about the minimum threshold for the operation of a P1 class upon the implementation of SCT.

16. In response, SED and Deputy Secretary for Education (2) (DS(Ed)2) made the following points -

- (a) the standard class size of 25 was already a big step forward and compared favourably with the average class size for public sector primary schools in Australia, Japan and the United Kingdom which were 24.2, 28.5 and 26 students respectively. The Administration had to take into account the practical circumstances of Hong Kong in formulating plans to implement SCT; and
- (b) with the reduction in the standard class size of public sector primary schools from 32 or 37 to 30 or 35 under POA with effect from the 2008-2009 school year, the minimum threshold for operation of a P1 class had been reduced from 23 to 21 correspondingly. Upon the implementation of SCT in 2009-2010, the standard class size for allocation purpose under POA would be reduced to 25 for schools practising SCT and 30 for other schools adopting larger class size and the minimum threshold for the operation of a P1 class would be further reduced from 21 to 16.

17. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung shared Mr SIN Chung-kai's view, and highlighted the need to further reduce the standard class size in order to maximise the benefits of implementing SCT. He called on the Administration to review whether 25 students per class was an ideal class size for primary education, and

Action

if not, to formulate an appropriate target. Mr LEUNG also asked about the timetable for implementing SCT in secondary schools. Referring to paragraph 18 of the background brief prepared by the LegCo Secretariat, he expressed the view that as there was already a phased plan for implementing SCT in primary schools, the Administration should decide as soon as possible the way forward for SCT in secondary schools, instead of deferring the decision to 2009-2010.

18. SED said that the Administration had not yet come to any decision concerning SCT in secondary schools at the present stage. During the next few years, the Administration would focus its work on the implementation of the new senior secondary academic structure. As regards the suggestion to further reduce the standard class size in public sector primary schools, DS(Ed)2 pointed out that the resource implications would be significant and have to be considered carefully. It should also be borne in mind that even for implementation of SCT in primary schools at 25 students per class, the Government already had to tackle infrastructural constraint in certain school nets.

19. Noting that 140 public sector primary schools participating in the current cycle of POA had opted to remain in larger classes, Ms Emily LAU enquired about the Administration's plan to implement SCT in these schools.

20. SED said that the Administration was heading for the policy direction of promoting rather than mandating the implementation SCT. The Administration would allow schools the flexibility to decide whether or not to implement SCT. Over the years, there had been wide support within the community and the school sector for implementation of SCT in primary schools. As the majority of schools (i.e. 70% of 463 public sector primary schools) had confirmed their readiness to implement SCT in the 2009-2010 school year, the Administration was reasonably optimistic that most of the schools which did not wish to implement SCT for various reasons for the time being would join the rest of the sector in due course. Schools which had opted to remain in larger classes would be allocated students under POA on the basis of 30 students per class. They were welcome to come forward for SCT at any time, and would be given the option of using alternative school-based measures to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

21. Ms Audrey EU shared the view that SCT should be implemented in both primary and secondary schools. She was concerned about the length of the transition period for all public sector primary schools to implement SCT and the arrangements in respect of additional resources offered to schools after the transition period. She sought information on the estimated cost if all schools opting for small class (323 schools in total) were allowed to implement SCT from the 2009-2010 school year.

Action

22. SED responded that the Administration was still in the course of consulting the stakeholders on the implementation issues. It was difficult to estimate at the present stage the additional resources to be incurred. Although the Government was committed to implementing SCT in all public sector primary schools, the progress of implementation would depend on schools' preference and readiness to operate small classes, as well as the feasibility of implementing SCT in individual school nets taking into account the projected supply and demand for school places. The period of transition could not be ascertained at this stage. The Administration would consider members' views in finalizing the implementation details. In due course, additional funding would be earmarked for implementing the initiative in the 2009-2010 school year.

SCT in special schools

23. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed support for members' views that the Administration should expedite the implementation of SCT in secondary schools as well as special schools. He stressed that with a smaller class size, more individual attention could be given to students with special educational needs (SEN students).

24. SED responded that the Government had been catering for the needs of SEN students primarily through the implementation of integrated education and the provision of a whole range of measures to support learning of SEN students. As research studies had shown that the benefits of SCT were more prominent in primary than secondary education, the Administration therefore decided to implement SCT in primary education first. The initiative would benefit students including SEN students. Given the significant financial implications as well as the competing demands for resources, the Administration was of the view that the implementation of SCT should be strategically planned. SED further said that different types of special schools had already been operating in small classes ranging from 8 to 20 students per class. Such class sizes had been set with reference to the circumstances of students in different types of special schools. The Administration was reviewing the class sizes of different categories of special schools, having regard to their practical needs and the relevant policy considerations.

25. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong noted that special schools for mildly and moderately mentally handicapped children were operating on the basis of 20 students per class. He considered such a class size for special schools unacceptable. He urged the Administration to review and reduce the class sizes of special schools to improve their teaching and learning environment. He also urged the Administration to conduct thorough consultation with the stakeholders, including parent representatives, in the review. At the request of Mr CHEUNG, SED undertook to report the outcome of the review to the Panel in a few months' time.

Action

Assessment of feasibility to implement SCT

26. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong noted that the Administration would assess whether SCT could be implemented in a school net based on the projected supply and demand for school places in each school net. He said that as the student population in the primary sector might fluctuate from year to year, the shortfall of school places could be short-term. The Administration should explore ways to resolve the shortfall, such as borrowing school places from adjacent school nets with surplus, as well as consulting individual schools in the relevant net on possible increases in the number of classes through changes in the use of rooms or minor conversion works before considering school building plans. Dr YEUNG Sum echoed Mr CHEUNG's view.

27. SED responded that the Administration planned to conduct an assessment of the supply and demand for school places in each school net for a six-year period beginning 2009-2010. For school nets with anticipated shortage of classes during the six-year period, the Administration would assess the scope to see if the shortfall could be addressed through measures which could be delivered in the short term. Where the shortfall could not be addressed in the short term, it was possible that some or all schools in the net might have to remain in larger classes for the time being. For these school nets, the Administration would, as a longer term measure, consider plans for school building and/or revisions to the delineation among school nets.

28. Ms Emily LAU noted from paragraph 11 of the Administration's paper about the proposed priority to implement SCT in the event that not all schools in the same school net could afford implementation of SCT at the same time. She expressed concern that the proposed arrangement might create a negative labeling effect whereby only schools with less popularity would implement SCT.

29. SED responded that the Administration was of the view that the proposed criteria would not have a negative effect on schools practising SCT. Under the present regime, schools might opt for a standard class size of 32 or 37. The majority of schools had opted for 32 (or 30 in the 2008-2009 school year) but labeling had not been an apparent concern. Parents formed their impression of schools on the basis of many factors, and the popularity of a school was usually established over a period of time. Even if all schools were to implement SCT at the same time, parents would still have their own perception of which schools were to them the more popular schools. Furthermore, if schools implementing SCT could make use of the small class environment to improve teaching and learning, they should, all things being comparable, have a competitive edge over schools which did not practise SCT.

Action

30. Following up Ms Emily LAU's question, Dr Fernando CHEUNG was concerned about the criteria for identifying schools with a higher concentration of disadvantaged students or newly-arrived children/non-Chinese speaking children/children with SEN for priority implementation of SCT. DS(Ed)2 explained that the criterion for selecting schools to participate in the existing SCT Scheme for Disadvantaged Students was based primarily on a pre-determined percentage of the student population receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance and student financial assistance. This kind of absolute criteria would not be used in assessing individual schools for priority implementation of SCT. This was because priority assessment would entail a comparison among schools in the same school net wishing to implement SCT and it would be a matter of relativity. The comparison would also be triggered off only when individual school nets could not accommodate the preferences for SCT in the nets concerned. As such, the Administration could not confirm at the present stage the number or types of schools that would be accorded priority for implementing SCT.

Additional resources for schools maintaining a larger class size

31. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong sought information on the functions and responsibilities of the additional Assistant Primary School Master (APSM) posts to be provided for schools operating approved classes with class size of 30 students. Mr LI Kwok-ying also enquired about the additional resources provided for schools maintaining 30 students per class.

32. SED explained that schools operating two approved classes or more with class size of 30 at each grade level (excluding classes operated under the Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme) would be granted additional resources in the form of additional APSM posts to be provided over a six-year period by phases, according to the total number of operating classes in P1 to P6 -

- (a) two additional APSM posts for schools operating 12 - 23 classes;
- (b) three additional APSM posts for schools operating 24 - 35 classes;
and
- (c) four additional APSM posts for schools operating 36 classes or more.

33. Mr LI Kwok-ying was concerned whether additional resources would be provided for schools wishing to implement SCT but without sufficient students for operating a standard class size of 25 students and for schools opting for SCT but with over-enrolment of students.

Action

34. DS(Ed)2 explained that the minimum threshold for the operation of the last P1 class in a school, irrespective of whether the standard class size for the school was 25 or 30, would be reduced from 21 to 16 after the implementation of SCT. Additional classes after the approval of class structure of public sector schools in March each year would only be operated if the vacancies in the school net/district were insufficient to meet the demand. She added that schools implementing SCT should not exceed the proposed enrolment cap of 27.

35. Responding to Ms Audrey EU's concern about plans for professional development of teachers for implementation of SCT, SED explained that the implementation of SCT should not simply involve a sheer reduction in class size. It should be complemented by schools taking forward school-based measures, including professional development of teachers, curriculum alignment, corresponding changes to the pedagogy and production of appropriate teaching and learning packages. In the coming months, the Administration would also draw up plans for the professional development of teachers and the provision of school-based support to help schools make the best use of the reduction in class size to enhance teaching and learning.

36. DS(Ed)2 supplemented that the Administration had started initial discussions with the teacher training institutions on necessary professional development programmes to be offered for pre-service and in-service teachers. The training courses would aim at enhancing teachers' capabilities to make use of the small class environment to enhance teaching and learning. Theme-based workshops and seminars would also be organized. Furthermore, schools experienced in SCT would be identified as seed schools for the provision of support to other schools in the form of experience sharing. The Administration would make reference to the findings of the SCT Study to be available in 2008 and the recommendations of the consultant before finalizing the professional development plans.

37. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered it unnecessary to await the completion of the Study, as the teacher training institutions were experienced in providing training courses for teachers to take forward SCT. DS(Ed)2 responded that the Administration would take forward discussions with teacher training institutions and the planning work for professional development while awaiting completion of the Study. The Administration aimed at finalizing the details as early as possible so that teacher training could be conducted by the relevant institutions at the end of this year or in early 2009.

Follow-up

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38. Ms Audrey EU requested the Administration to -

- (a) set a transition period after which additional resources should no longer be provided for schools maintaining 30 students per class;

Action

- (b) explain the arrangements after the transition period; and
- (c) advise the amount of additional resources required for the implementation of SCT in the 323 schools (70% of the public sector primary schools participating in the current cycle of POA) which had opted to operate small classes in the 2009-2010 school year, as compared with the resources required in the 2008-2009 school year when SCT was not implemented in these schools.

V. The School Development and Accountability Framework - the planning for the second cycle of implementation

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1180/07-08(03) and (04)]

39. Members noted the background brief on school development and accountability (SDA) framework prepared by the LegCo Secretariat.

Briefing by the Administration

40. DS(Ed)5 briefed members on the implementation plan for the second cycle of External School Review (ESR) for public sector schools as detailed in the Administration's paper.

Implementation of the second cycle of External School Review

41. Referring to paragraphs 12 and 19 of the Administration's paper, Dr YEUNG Sum welcomed that EDB would not conduct ESR in secondary schools and special schools in the 2008-2009 school year in response to their concern. He noted that EDB would only start ESR in primary schools from the second term of the 2008-2009 school year. He enquired about the possibility of furthering deferring the implementation of the second cycle of ESR for primary schools.

42. DS(Ed)5 pointed out that according to feedback collected during the consultation on the second cycle of ESR, secondary schools were concerned about starting ESR in the 2008-2009 school year as they were busy preparing and finalizing programmes for the new senior secondary academic structure and curriculum. The primary school sector raised no such concern, and expressed support for the implementation of the second cycle of ESR. Some 300 experienced principals and teachers had joined EDB in conducting ESR to provide professional support and advice to primary schools in the course of the implementation. Basically, the second cycle of ESR would follow up the findings in the first cycle, and would start with the primary schools which had responded favourably in consultation.

Action

43. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong held the view that the implementation of the second cycle of ESR for primary schools should also be withheld in the 2008-2009 school year. He considered it unnecessary to start the second cycle of ESR immediately after the completion of its first cycle as both primary and secondary schools needed time to follow up the findings and their areas of improvement identified in the first cycle. He expressed support for withholding the implementation of the second cycle of ESR for secondary schools in the 2008-2009 school year, and asked whether the second cycle would need to be completed before the 2013-2014 school year.

44. DS(Ed)5 responded that primary schools should be ready for the second cycle of ESR as the implementation of the first cycle of ESR was completed over four to five years and EDB would arrange the conduct of ESR having regard to the sequence of their ESR in the first cycle. To facilitate implementation, a timeframe of six years was planned for completing the second cycle of ESR in the 2013-2014 school year.

45. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong noted from paragraph 18 of the Administration's paper that for the second cycle of ESR, schools needed not submit an school self-evaluation (SSE) report. He was concerned that as schools would still need to submit their school development plans, annual school plans and reports, they were inclined to include as much information as possible to avoid the possibility of attracting any adverse comments in ESR that might affect their reputation and enrolment. He called on the Administration to remind schools not to submit lengthy and voluminous reports for ESR.

46. DS(Ed)5 responded that EDB was well aware of the concern of the schools about preparation for ESR and had strongly advised schools to avoid over-preparation and over-documentation since 2005. EDB would continue to advise schools to simplify their submissions for ESR. The planning for the second cycle further reduced the documents for preparation as those which would be prepared in the normal school development cycle of schools. According to the latest feedback collected from the Impact Study on the Effectiveness of ESR in Enhancing School Improvement through School Self-evaluation in Hong Kong, schools and teachers had raised less concern than before about the paper work arising from the preparation and documentation for ESR.

47. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong remained of the view that it was inappropriate to implement the second cycle of ESR in primary schools in the 2008-2009 school year, since the first cycle was only completed in the 2007-2008 school year. Schools should be given sufficient time to implement the necessary measures to improve in the areas identified in their first ESR. In addition, there were other ways to assess school performance and assist them to plan, develop and improve, such as conducting regular visits by EDB officers under the existing quality assurance mechanism. Should EDB insist on proceeding with the second cycle of ESR, it should collaborate with schools to address the

Action

concerns of teachers to minimize the additional workload and pressure generated.

48. DS(Ed)5 responded that inspection and quality assurance of school performance could take different forms and be carried out in different ways. While EDB officers would continue to visit and advise schools on specific issues, the review process under ESR would help schools identify their strengths and areas for improvement. Schools valued the feedback from the review teams consisting of experienced principals, teachers and professionals with a wide spectrum of expertise in performance evaluations. Hong Kong had established a reputation in the conduct of ESR. Some overseas jurisdictions had approached EDB for experience-sharing, and some had sent a delegation to Hong Kong to observe the ESR process and activities in schools.

Consultation

49. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that many teachers had complaints about the additional workload and pressure arising from the conduct of ESR, but EDB had not consulted teachers associations such as the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union on the implementation of the second cycle of ESR.

50. DS(Ed)5 responded that evaluation of the implementation of ESR had been conducted continuously through questionnaires to teachers, principals and school improvement teams since the 2003-2004 school year. So far, over 32 000 teachers and 203 school improvement teams had responded to the questionnaires or had given written comments on specific issues. After the completion of the first cycle of ESR, teachers had a better understanding of the SDA framework and became more receptive to the concept and benefits of ESR. EDB would continue to consult schools and teachers as well as parents and students in the implementation of the SDA framework.

51. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that EDB had focused on principal associations and school councils in carrying out the consultation on the second cycle of ESR. He had doubt on the reliability of the findings of the questionnaires to teachers as the questionnaires were distributed and collected by the school management. He requested the Administration to address the concerns of teachers and state clearly to schools what should and should not do concerning ESR. In response, DS(Ed)5 said that EDB would continue to collaborate with teachers concerning the implementation of the second cycle of ESR.

52. Dr YEUNG Sum said that he did not oppose to the implementation of ESR which had generally been accepted by the school sector. He, however, considered it important to consult teachers and teachers' associations before the implementation of the second cycle of ESR.

Action

53. Principal Assistant Secretary (Quality Assurance) explained that EDB had all along worked closely with teachers in implementing ESR. So far, some 32 000 teachers had provided feedback to EDB on SSE and ESR through questionnaires. In general, teachers agreed that ESR could help schools formulate their development and improvement plans. In particular, some teachers had joined the ESR teams and provided invaluable feedback to schools and EDB on the implementation of ESR.

54. DS(Ed)5 added that there were a range of issues arising from the implementation of the first cycle of ESR since the 2003-2004 school year, and EDB had modified and refined the procedures and requirements in the light of the feedback from teachers and other stakeholders. EDB would continue to consult and collaborate with the teaching profession to improve implementation, and was prepared to discuss with teachers and teachers' associations on their concerns on what should be done and should not be done in the ESR process. He said that EDB would be happy to consider consulting teachers' associations on the implementation details of the second cycle of ESR if needed.

55. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed support for withholding ESR in secondary schools in the 2008-2009 school year. He considered that as the key stakeholders and end-users of educational services, the participation of parents and students had been small so far. Parents and students should be given more opportunities to participate in the SSE and ESR processes. He asked how the Administration would promote parental and student participation in the second cycle of ESR to improve the quality of education.

56. DS(Ed)5 responded that parents and students were important stakeholders in education and had been heavily involved in the SSE and ESR activities and assessment processes. EDB had issued some 300 000 questionnaires to collect feedback from the key stakeholders including parents and students. While students were invited to comment on the learning activities and process in classes, parents were encouraged to take part in the work of the school management and advisory committees and parent-teacher associations and to give feedback on the school processes. The Administration recognised that their participation was fundamental to the smooth and successful implementation of SSE and ESR in schools.

57. Principal Education Officer, (Quality Assurance) (PEO(QA)) supplemented that under the SSE and ESR exercises, some 50 000 and 100 000 questionnaires had been issued to students in primary and secondary schools respectively, and over 60 000 and 80 000 questionnaires to parents of primary and secondary students respectively. In validating the SSEs, the review teams would select students from schools at random to obtain direct feedback on the learning environment and activities in their schools.

Action

58. Dr Fernando CHEUNG remarked that parents and students might tend to provide favourable answers in questionnaires. EDB should interview parents and students to obtain direct feedback on SSE and ESR. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong added that EDB should not ask teachers to return the questionnaires to their principals and should improve its mechanism for collection of feedback from teachers. PEO(QA) responded that a meeting with parents including representatives from the parent-teacher association was scheduled in the process of ESR, and starting from the 2005-2006 school year, teachers feedback on ESR were collected directly through an electronic platform.

VI. Education for children of ethnic minorities - progress of support measures

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1180/07-08(05) and (06)]

59. Members noted the background brief entitled "Learning of Chinese Language by non-Chinese speaking students" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat.

Briefing by the Administration

60. DS(Ed)2 briefed members on the salient measures introduced to support non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students, including ethnic minorities in education as detailed in the Administration's paper.

Alternative Chinese Language qualifications for admission to undergraduate programmes and Secondary Six (S6)

61. Dr YEUNG Sum welcomed the acceptance of alternative Chinese Language qualification such as the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) (Chinese) qualification, in lieu of the general Chinese Language requirement based on the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE) under specified circumstances, in applying for admission to undergraduate programmes under the Joint Universities Programmes Admission Systems (JUPAS). He also supported the acceptance of a Grade D or above attained in the Chinese Language paper of the GCSE, General Certificate of Education (GCE) or International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) as satisfying the corresponding subject requirements at Grade E or Level 2 in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) for the purpose of meeting the HKALE entry qualification. As the examination results of GCSE, GCE and IGCSE were released normally in late August after the deadline of S6 Admission and university admission, Dr YEUNG asked how the Administration would assist NCS students in this regard.

Action

62. DS(Ed)2 responded that most students attended GCSE, GCE or IGCSE examination at S5, and as such, they would be able to submit the examination results in applying for admission to undergraduate programmes under JUPAS. As regards admission to S6, starting from 2008, EDB would invite secondary schools to consider giving conditional offers for students satisfying the criteria other than the one on Chinese Language for admission to their S6 classes under specified circumstances, pending the release of GCSE, GCE or IGCSE Chinese Language examination results. In other words, NCS students would be considered for admission to S6 on a par with their Chinese counterparts on the basis of their attainments in other subjects.

63. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed appreciation of the Administration's efforts in enhancing support for NCS students in education, but remained concerned about the enrolment of NCS students at key stages of education in school including Primary Six (P6) to S1, S5 to S6, and S6/S7 to the undergraduate programmes. He requested the Administration to provide the number of NCS students at these key stages. Ms Emily LAU expressed a similar concern about the number of NCS students receiving primary, secondary and university education.

64. DS(Ed)2 responded that currently, some 6 000 and 3 000 NCS students were attending primary and secondary schools respectively. She added that a considerable number of NCS students would go back to homeland or overseas for study at senior levels. In 2007, around 200 NCS students had participated in the HKCEE and about 70 attained the minimum qualification for admission to S6. Around 20 NCS students had completed S7 studies and participated in the HKALE; seven met the minimum qualification for admission to undergraduate programmes, and five were reported to have admitted.

[Post-meeting note : According to latest information received, six NCS students were admitted to undergraduate programmes.]

65. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the competition for admission to S6 was fierce. Given the large number of local students competing for S6 places, there was little incentive for secondary schools to make conditional offers for NCS students whose attainment in the Chinese Language could only be confirmed in late August. He considered that EDB should encourage and at least secure the support of a cluster of secondary schools, in particular schools designated to receive focused support for enhancing the learning and teaching of the NCS students, to give priority to their NCS students for admission to S6. He suggested that EDB should set up a team to assist NCS students in matters relating to S6 Admission. Dr YEUNG Sum expressed support for Mr CHEUNG's suggestion, and added that EDB should consider designating a secondary school in each of the 18 districts to admit NCS students to S6 level.

Action

66. DS(Ed)2 responded that secondary schools normally accorded priority to their S5 graduates for admission to S6, and schools designated to receive focused support did try to facilitate the admission of their NCS students to S6 in 2007. EDB would continue to encourage schools to provide equal opportunities for NCS students for admission to S6. Responding to Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, she said that nine of the 10 NCS students taking the Chinese Language paper in GCSE in 2007 were awarded a Grade A*, and the remaining one was awarded a Grade D.

67. Dr Fernando CHEUNG referred to Annex A of the paper and sought clarification about the undergraduate programmes to which the alternative Chinese Language qualifications would be accepted. DS(Ed)2 explained that the UGC-funded institutions would accept the alternative Chinese Language qualifications for admission to all their undergraduate programmes, other than those specified in the third column of Annex A as these programmes required a higher level of Chinese Language proficiency for admission.

68. Ms Emily LAU asked whether schools and ethnic minority organizations were satisfied with the support measures for NCS students in this regard. DS(Ed)2 replied that the exercise of further flexibility by the UGC-funded institutions in the application of the Chinese Language requirement for admission to their undergraduate programmes and the provision of conditional offers for NCS students for admission to S6 had been put in place having regard to the feedback from ethnic minority organizations. Schools with NCS students considered these measures a significant improvement in the provision of support for NCS students in education.

Development of a supplementary guide to the Chinese Language curriculum for NCS students

69. Dr YEUNG Sum considered the development of a supplementary guide to the Chinese Language curriculum for NCS students (the Guide) inadequate. He called on the Administration to develop a central Chinese Language curriculum in the light of the operational experience of the Guide. Moreover, given the small market for publication of Chinese Language textbooks for NCS students, publishers would unlikely embark on such a business. There was thus a need for the Administration to provide financial support to publishers in this regard. Mr TAM Yiu-chung echoed the view to provide financial support to publishers.

70. Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum Development) (PAS(CD)) responded that EDB recognized the importance of providing appropriate curriculum and textbooks for NCS students in schools. However, in view of their diverse ethnic origins, EDB considered it more appropriate to develop learning resources for ethnic minority students from South Asian countries including Pakistan, India and Nepal based on the teaching and learning materials

Action

developed by schools with NCS students. EDB would explore the use of the Quality Education Fund (QEF) to produce these learning resources which would serve largely as textbooks.

71. Dr YEUNG Sum and Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong requested EDB to expedite the development of the Chinese Language curriculum as well as the provision of textbooks for NCS students and to arrange appropriate training courses for teachers teaching the Chinese Language for NCS students. PAS(CD) noted members' view, and said that it would take about a year to complete the adaptation of the first set of the learning and teaching resources developed by QEF project or schools for NCS students. EDB would arrange appropriate training programmes for teachers who had indicated interest to teach the Chinese Language for NCS students.

72. Mr TAM Yiu-chung noted that the English version of the consultation paper on developing the Guide was published only recently. He enquired about the possibility of extending the deadline for the consultation.

73. PAS(CD) acknowledged that the English version of the consultation paper was available recently, and said that EDB would continue to accept submissions after the deadline on 22 March 2008 as the Guide would be finalized in mid-2008. She pointed out that EDB had prepared an executive summary of the consultation paper in major ethnic minority languages including the Tagalog, Thai, Hindi, Urdu and Nepali; and had distributed the different versions to ethnic minority organisations, parents and students.

74. Mr TAM Yiu-chung asked whether the Administration would develop an assessment framework or mechanism for assessing the Chinese Language proficiency of ethnic minority students at various levels.

75. PAS(CD) responded that EDB would develop an on-line depository on Chinese Language learning resources for NCS students of different ethnic origins. In addition, EDB would develop instruments to assess the Chinese Language proficiency of NCS students at key stages of learning to facilitate their pursuit of study of a higher level of Chinese Language.

Inclusive culture in schools

76. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that schools should respect the traditions and cultures of ethnic minorities. He pointed out that according to feedback collected during his visits to schools, ethnic minority students with religious belief had experienced problems in school uniforms and choice of meals in schools. He called on the Administration to work out measures to promote an inclusive culture in schools.

Action

77. DS(Ed)2 explained that the development of an inclusive culture in schools would require efforts not only on the part of the school personnel but also on the part of the community as a whole. EDB would continue to promote racial harmony in schools and would collaborate with the Equal Opportunities Commission to develop a Code of Practice in this regard for schools' reference. Nevertheless, at the individual level, how teachers and local students interacted with NCS students depended on their own values and attitudes.

Articulation and employment

78. Mr Albert CHAN considered that despite the measures implemented or proposed to be implemented to support NCS students in education, the existing articulation arrangements for NCS students to proceed from P6 to S1, S5 to S6 and S7 to undergraduate programmes as well as the employment opportunities for ethnic minorities after secondary or post-secondary schooling were far from satisfactory. He asked how the Administration would improve the interface between the various key stages of education for NCS students.

79. In response, DS(Ed)2 said that EDB had implemented a number of measures in the past few years to enhance support for NCS students in education. Schools and teachers had developed school-based curriculum and teaching and learning resources to support NCS student in learning, and many NCS students were able to learn the Chinese Language with satisfactory results. EDB had also reached a consensus with the UGC-funded institutions on acceptance of alternative Chinese Language qualifications for admission of NCS students to their undergraduate programmes. She added that the employment and career development of individual ethnic minorities were not just dictated by education and depended on a number of factors including social, economic and personal factors.

80 Mr Albert CHAN pointed out that the current articulation arrangement for ethnic minority students from South Asian countries to proceed from P6 to S1 was very unsatisfactory. Most NCS students learned in English in primary schools, but were not allocated to secondary schools adopting English as the medium of instruction (EMI schools). Besides, there were NCS students residing in Tin Shui Wai but attending secondary schools located on the Hong Kong Island. He had doubt on the effectiveness of the various support measures for NCS students in schools.

81. DS(Ed)2 explained that under the existing Secondary School Places Allocation System, NCS students competed with the local students on an equal basis for admission to EMI schools as their attainment in Chinese Language in the relevant attainment test was not taken into account for the purpose of scaling their performance in primary schools. For NCS students who wished but failed to secure a place in EMI schools and would have difficulties learning in the Chinese medium, EDB would assist them to enrol in other schools adopting EMI,

Action

notably those which were designated to receive focused support from EDB to facilitate accumulation of experience and development of expertise in the teaching and learning of NCS students. To facilitate members' understanding of the learning activities and environment for NCS students in schools, DS(Ed)2 suggested that the Panel might consider conducting a visit to schools with NCS students.

82. The Chairman and Mr Albert CHAN supported the Administration's suggestion. The Chairman requested the Administration to organize the visit and arrange observation of teaching and learning activities in class, in particular the teaching and learning of Chinese Language.

83. Mr TAM Yiu-chung asked whether the Chinese Language qualifications in GCSE, GCE and IGCSE examinations were recognised for appointment to civil service posts.

84. DS(Ed)2 responded that the Civil Service Bureau had issued a circular to advise bureaux and departments on the acceptance of a Grade D or above attained in the Chinese Language paper of the GCSE, GCE or IGCSE as equivalent to a Grade E or Level 2 in HKCEE for appointment to civil service posts. NCS applicants would be considered for civil service appointment as other applicants on a competitive basis. Depending on the job nature, specific or higher requirements in Chinese Language proficiency were specified for individual civil service posts.

Follow-up

85. Ms Emily LAU suggested that the Panel should invite the views of ethnic minority organizations on the support measures for NCS students in education. Members agreed to revisit the subject matter in June 2008 and receive views from deputations.

86. Ms Emily LAU also requested EDB to conduct tracking surveys for NCS students at different key stages of education to assess the effectiveness of support measures.

87. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Dr YEUNG Sum expressed support for conducting tracking surveys for NCS students in education. They requested the Administration to -

- (a) provide periodic update on the progress on the development of the Chinese Language curriculum and the provision of teaching and learning resources including textbooks for the education of NCS students in schools;

Admin

Action

- (b) track and advise the number of NCS students at different key stages of education including P6, S1, S5, S6/S7 and university; and
- (c) advise the number of Government departments and bureaux accepting GCSE (Chinese) qualification for appointment to civil service posts.

VII. Any other business

88. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 5:38 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
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