

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)2759/07-08
(The minutes have been seen by
the Administration and
the University of Hong Kong)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Thursday, 12 June 2008, at 2:30 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 LEE Cheuk-yan
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 Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, 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

Public Officers attending : Agenda item IV

Ms Bernadette LINN
Deputy Secretary for Education (2)

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

Ms WU Po-ling
Principal Assistant Secretary (School Administration
and Support), Education Bureau

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

Agenda item V

Mr Chris Wardlaw
Deputy Secretary for Education (5)

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

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

**Attendance by
invitation** : Agenda item III

University of Hong Kong

Professor Richard Y C WONG
Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost and member of
the University Council until 4 December 2006

Mr Henry W K WAI
Registrar

Mrs Yvonne Y K KOO
Head, Human Resource Section of the Registry

Ms Dora K M YUE
Assistant Registrar, Registry

Ms Susanne Reynolds
University Lawyer

**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 No. CB(2)2157/07-08]

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 May 2008 were confirmed.

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

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

III. University of Hong Kong (Amendment) Bill 2008

[LC Paper No. CB(2)2164/07-08(01)]

3. The Chairman informed members that Dr LI Kwok-po, the Member-in-charge of the University of Hong Kong (Amendment) Bill 2008 (the Bill), was unable to attend the meeting due to other engagement. Members noted the supplementary information provided by the University of Hong Kong (HKU) which was tabled at the meeting [LC Paper No. CB(2)2281/07-08(01)].

Briefing by the University of Hong Kong

4. Professor Richard WONG briefed members on the background and purposes of the Bill. He highlighted that in response to the recommendation made in the University Grants Committee (UGC) Report on Higher Education in Hong Kong in March 2002, the Council of the University of Hong Kong (the Council) had set up an independent review panel (the Review Panel) comprising Professor John Niland, Professor Neil Ruderstine and the Chief Justice to conduct a review of the governance and management structure of HKU. In the report of the review entitled "Fit for Purpose", an inconsistency was identified in the role of the Court of HKU (the Court) and the Council as described in section 7 of the University of Hong Kong Ordinance (the Ordinance) and the University of Hong Kong Statutes (the Statutes). In addition, the Audit Commission conducted a value-for-money audit on the UGC-funded institutions

Action

including their governance in 2003, and recommended, among others, that UGC should request HKU to rectify the inconsistency in the role of the Court and the Council in the Ordinance and the Statutes. The recommendation was endorsed by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). The Bill sought to rectify the inconsistency. Under the Bill, the Court and the Council were defined as the "supreme advisory body" and the "supreme governing body" respectively.

5. Professor Richard WONG further said that the Bill also provided for the amendment to the existing academic titles of teachers used by HKU which would comprise Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Professor and Chair. Professor WONG stressed that staff and staff associations had expressed support for the proposed change during consultation in the Human Resource Reform exercise. The transitional provision in the Bill ensured that staff members who decided to retain the old academic titles of Reader, Senior Lecturer, Lecturer and Associate Lecturer would continue to enjoy the "good cause" protection in their employment with HKU. Professor WONG appealed to members to support the Bill.

Role and composition of the Court and the Council

6. Ms Emily LAU said that members of the Panel and PAC had all along been concerned about the governance and management structure of the UGC-funded institutions. She pointed out that unlike other UGC-funded institutions the governing bodies of which comprised Legislative Council (LegCo) representatives, LegCo Members only sat on HKU's advisory body (the Court) and not its governing body (the Council). She asked how members of the Council were appointed.

7. Professor Richard WONG said that in its report entitled Fit-for-Purpose, the Review Panel recommended that the size of the Council should be in the range of 18 to 24, with each member appointed or elected in his personal capacity and serving as trustee instead of delegate or representative of a particular constituency. Currently, the Council consisted of the Vice-Chancellor as an ex-officio member, four teachers, two students, one staff member, two members elected by the Court, and other members who were nominated and/or appointed by the Council and/or the Chancellor.

8. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong shared the concern of Ms Emily LAU about the absence of LegCo representation in the Council. He pointed out that except HKU, the Chinese translation of the governing bodies of all other UGC-funded institutions, i.e. Council, was "校董會" and not "校務委員會". He suggested that to avoid confusion about the role of its Court and Council, HKU should amend the Chinese name of the Council to "校董會" and that of the Court to "校務委員會".

Action

9. Professor Richard WONG responded that the Chinese names of the Court and the Council had been in use since the establishment of HKU in 1911, and there was no intention of misleading their roles. The Council had considered amending these names to reflect the advisory role of the Court and the governing role of the Council, but diverse views had been expressed. This was understandable as the two Chinese names had been used for about a century and might have sentimental value to some stakeholders. Professor WONG added that any proposal to change these names would require extensive consultation.

10. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that the academic titles had been used by HKU for a long period of time but legislative proposals were made to bring them in line with the conventional use. Similarly, legislative proposals should be made to change the Chinese names of the Court and the Council to bring them in line with those adopted by other institutions. He queried why HKU adopted different approaches with respect to these two issues. Mr CHEUNG added that notwithstanding its long history, the Faculty of Medicine of HKU had been renamed as HKU Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine.

11. Professor Richard WONG explained that personally, he would not object to change the Chinese names of the Court and the Council to bring them in line with those used by other institutions. However, HKU must respect the views of the stakeholders and many of them preferred to retain the existing Chinese names. He further said that the proposed amendment to the academic titles was made after extensive consultation. Around 98% of teachers had expressed support for the new titles which were in line with the academic titles adopted by local and overseas institutions.

12. Ms Audrey EU declared interest as a graduate of HKU. She pointed out that the renaming of the Faculty of Medicine had given rise to heated debate and discontent among the stakeholders because of lack of consultation. She accepted Professor WONG's explanations for the continued use of the existing Chinese names of the Court and the Council and the amendment to the academic titles. She recalled that before the change of sovereignty, there had been a proposal to change the Chinese name of barrister which was fiercely objected by the profession.

Transparency and accountability

13. Ms Emily LAU considered that to enhance transparency and accountability, the UGC-funded institutions should make available the agendas and minutes of meetings of their governing bodies for public information, except for those items which involved confidential or commercially sensitive information.

Action

14. Professor Richard WONG responded that the Panel had requested the eight UGC-funded institutions to consider making available the agendas and minutes of meetings of their governing bodies for public information. The Heads of Universities Committee had discussed the matter thoroughly and considered it inappropriate for the governing bodies to do so as personnel as well as strategically or commercially sensitive matters were often discussed at these meetings. Nevertheless, the UGC-funded institutions would make public announcement on decisions and policies which were of public interest through press conferences or press releases as appropriate.

15. Dr Fernando CHEUNG considered that the UGC-funded institutions as publicly-funded institutions should make available the agendas and minutes of meetings of their governing bodies for public access. Their operation should be transparent. He said that he had been an elected member of the Council of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University and found that matters relating to the appointment or terms of employment of individual staff were rarely discussed at the Council meetings. He could not see the reasons for keeping the discussions and the papers relating to institutional management and development confidential.

16. Professor Richard WONG explained that the Council would discuss property-related, staff management, and strategic and institutional development issues at meetings which involved confidential or commercially sensitive information that should not be disclosed to the public. Dr Fernando CHEUNG remarked that the Housing Authority was responsible for a large number of public estate development projects but its meetings were open.

17. Professor Richard WONG pointed out that HKU was the first UGC-funded institution to conduct a review on its governance and management structure, and had adopted the recommendations of the Review Panel to restructure its Council comprising eight internal members and a majority of external members. The Council had discussed the Panel's request for making public the agendas and minutes of its meetings and decided that it was inappropriate to do so. Other institutions had also considered the matter and decided likewise. Nevertheless, Professor WONG undertook to relay members' views on the matter to the Council for consideration.

Attendance at meetings

18. Ms Emily LAU noted with concern the non-attendance of some external members of the Council at Council meetings. She pointed out that of the 11 Council meetings held during February 2007 to May 2008, some members had been absent from five meetings or more. In her view, external members with low attendance rate at Council meetings should not be considered for reappointment.

Action

19. Professor Richard WONG responded that a nominations committee formed under the Council identified suitable candidates for appointment as lay members. In nominating candidates for reappointment, the committee would consider the expertise needed in the different areas to enable the Council to discharge its responsibilities effectively as well as the candidate's past performance and attendance at Council meetings. There were lay members who had not been reappointed in the past.

Conditions of employment

20. Referring to Annex B to the paper provided by HKU, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong asked whether the proposed amendments to section 12(10) of the Ordinance and Statute XXVIII paragraph 1(1)(b) would impact the terms and conditions of employment of serving staff .

21. Professor Richard WONG responded that the proposed amendments would not affect the terms and conditions of employment of serving staff. He pointed out that about 98% of teachers had used the new academic titles, and only 2% of teachers had retained the old titles for personal reasons. He added that for teachers not yet employed on substantiated terms with "good cause" protection, their employment was "probationary". The proposed amendments made it clear that the "probationary" employment status were contracts for a fixed term.

22. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan declared interest as a graduate of HKU. He sought information on the policy for the conversion of academic and non-academic staff on probationary terms into substantiated terms.

23. In reply, Professor Richard WONG said that all academic staff in HKU were employed on contract terms initially. Normally, they would be considered for substantiated employment after satisfactory completion of two three-year contracts. As regards non-academic staff, the maximum number for substantiated employment had been adjusted from 75% to 80% of the establishment.

Urgency of the Bill

24. Dr YEUNG Sum declared interest as a staff member of HKU. He enquired about the urgency for passage of the Bill, and the impact of not enacting the Bill in the current session. He said that the urgency or otherwise of the Bill would have bearing on members' consideration of the need for the formation of a bills committee to study it.

25. Professor Richard WONG replied that according to legal advice, it was desirable to rectify the inconsistency between the Ordinance and the Statutes concerning the respective powers and roles of the Court and the Council. Even if

Action

the Bill was not enacted in the current session, the operation of HKU would not be affected. However, the enactment of the Bill in the current session would enable the change of the academic title of "Instructor" to "Lecturer" with effect from the 2008-2009 academic year. He stressed that the change of the academic titles would not affect the terms of employment of the staff in question. The Council had assured teachers that their entitlement to "good cause" protection in employment would not be affected by the adoption or otherwise of the new academic titles. As "good cause" protection for teachers was enshrined in the Ordinance, a small number of staff members would feel comfortable if the Bill could be enacted to amend the titles of Teachers and to state clearly their enjoyment of "good cause" protection. Professor WONG added that subject to members' support, the Bill would be introduced into LegCo shortly.

26. Mr Tommy CHEUNG expressed dissatisfaction with the late introduction of the Bill with expectation of its enactment in the current session. He said that many LegCo Members had complained about the Administration's late introduction of bills into LegCo. He stressed that due process in scrutiny of legislative proposals must be adhered to. He would propose the formation of a bills committee to scrutinize the Bill at the relevant meeting of the House Committee.

27. The Chairman recapitulated Professor Richard WONG's advice in paragraph 25 above in response to Dr YEUNG Sum's question. Professor WONG clarified that HKU would certainly respect the due process of LegCo in scrutiny of legislative proposals.

28. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that while the due process should be adhered to, whether a bills committee should be formed to scrutinize a bill should be on a need basis. Should the Bill involve no controversial issues, it might not be necessary to set up a bills committee.

29. Mr Albert CHAN said that members should take into account the views of stakeholders and not just those of HKU's management in deciding on the formation of a bills committee to examine the Bill. He did not have confidence in the HKU's Council in the light of the renaming of the Faculty of Medicine as HKU Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine for the provision of a private donation. Under these circumstances, he considered it necessary to set up a bills committee to examine the Bill.

30. Professor Richard WONG explained that the stakeholders including students and staff and their unions and associations had been thoroughly consulted on the proposals in the Bill since 2004. The amendments to the respective roles of the Court and the Council were proposed in response to the recommendations of the Director of Audit. Mr Albert CHAN remarked that he had reservations about the role and composition of the Court and the Council and would propose the formation of a bills committee to study the Bill.

Action

31. Mr Abraham SHEK declared that he was one of the LegCo representatives sitting in the Court. He expressed support for the Bill and did not consider it necessary to form a bills committee. He pointed out that PAC had examined and supported the recommendations of the Director of Audit that HKU should rectify the inconsistency between the Ordinance and the Statutes concerning the powers and roles of the Court and the Council by legislative amendments.

32. Ms Emily LAU said that as the Deputy Chairman of PAC in 2003, she had examined the governance and management structure of HKU and considered that HKU should improve transparency of its management to enhance accountability as well as to uphold academic freedom and institutional autonomy. She supported the formation of a bills committee to examine the proposals in the Bill in detail.

33. Dr YEUNG Sum said that LegCo should adopt a prudent approach in the scrutiny of the Bill. As the Bill would unlikely be enacted in the current session should a bills committee be formed, he suggested that HKU might take this opportunity to consider including LegCo representation in its Council instead of the Court to enhance public participation in its management as LegCo Members were representatives of the public.

34. Professor Richard WONG thanked members for their views and suggestions and undertook to relay these to the Council for consideration.

35. Concluding the discussion, the Chairman said that he would report the deliberations of the Panel on the Bill to the House Committee after it was introduced into LegCo, and it was up to the House Committee to decide on the formation of a bills committee to examine the Bill.

[*Post-meeting note* : the Bill was not introduced into LegCo before the end of the term.]

IV. Education for ethnic minority students

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)2164/07-08(02)-(03), CB(2)2025/07-08(01), CB(2)1465/07-08(02), CB(2)1599/07-08(01)-(02), CB(2)1792/07-08(01) & (02) and CB(2)2032/07-08(01)]

36. The Chairman said that members agreed at the meeting on 29 February 2008 that the Panel should receive views from deputations when the subject of education for ethnic minority students was re-visited in June 2008. However, as the Panel had earlier agreed to discuss three items at this meeting and in consideration of the time constraint, the deputations were advised to give written views instead of attending the Panel's meeting. The Chairman informed

Action

members that Hong Kong Unison Limited and Growing Together had sent in their written submissions [LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1450/07-08(01) and CB(2)1971/07-08(01)].

37. Members were invited to note the following relevant papers -
- (a) the Administration's paper to the Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to the Provision of Boarding Places, Senior Secondary Education and Employment Opportunities for Children with Special Educational Needs (the Subcommittee) on "Education for non-Chinese speaking and ethnic minority children with special educational needs";
 - (b) copies of correspondence between the Chairman of the Subcommittee and the Administration; and
 - (c) letters exchanged between the Chairman of the Subcommittee and the Chairperson of the Equal Opportunities Commission.
38. Members also noted the background brief entitled "Education for non-Chinese speaking students" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat.

Briefing by the Administration

39. Deputy Secretary for Education (2) (DS(Ed)2) took members through the Administration's paper which provided an update on the progress of support measures for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students including ethnic minority students.

Access to post-secondary education

40. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed concern about the small number of NCS students progressing to senior secondary classes/admitted to undergraduate programmes. He noted from the Administration's paper that of the 225 NCS students studying in Secondary 5 in the 2006-2007 school year, 212 sat for the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) in 2007, with 73 having met the minimum requirements for admission to Secondary 6 (S6). Regarding Secondary 7 (S7), only six of the 23 NCS students who sat for the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE) in 2007 were admitted to first-year undergraduate programmes of the UGC-funded institutions for the 2007-2008 school year. The figures reflected the insufficient opportunities for NCS students to access post-secondary education. Dr CHEUNG expressed reservations about the effectiveness of the Supplementary Guide to the Chinese Language Curriculum for NCS Students in enhancing NCS students' opportunities to pursue tertiary education, as the Supplementary Guide was neither related to a teaching curriculum/assessment nor meant to be an alternative Chinese Language curriculum for NCS students.

Action

41. In response, DS(Ed)2 elaborated on the relationship between curriculum, assessment and teaching. She pointed out that it was a common practice for schools to design and develop the subject curriculum with reference to the syllabuses of the examination(s) for which their students sat, and school teachers to adapt textbooks or develop school-based teaching and learning resources to support their delivery. With the significant step taken by the UGC-funded institutions to consider alternative Chinese Language qualifications for admission to their undergraduate programmes, the Administration believed that the aspiration for higher education of NCS students who were studying in local schools and preferred to attain alternative qualification(s) in Chinese could be addressed, since they could sit for the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) (Chinese) examination, which was simpler than the Chinese paper in HKCEE or the future Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education by design.

42. Ms Emily LAU shared the view of Dr Fernando CHEUNG that NCS students did not have sufficient opportunities to access post-secondary education, as only 3% of NCS students were admitted to first-year undergraduate programmes of the UGC-funded institutions for the 2007-2008 academic school year. She enquired whether the university admission rate of NCS students was on the low side when compared with the Chinese-speaking students.

43. DS(Ed)2 responded that the university admission figure stated in paragraph 11 of the Administration's paper only included NCS students studying in public-sector secondary schools and taking HKALE in 2007. Noting the concerns about the movement of NCS students across the various levels in primary and secondary education and the rate of articulation to further education among the NCS students, the Education Bureau (EDB) had, beginning from the 2006-2007 school year, started to collect information on students' ethnicity and spoken language at home from Primary 1 to S7 through the annual Student Enrolment Survey. The Administration would continue to keep track of the statistics.

44. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong was pleased to note that more than 80 public sector schools had responded positively to the Administration's invitation to accept alternative Chinese Language qualification(s) under the S6 Admission Procedure and to make conditional offers to those applicants satisfying all the criteria (other than the one on Chinese Language) for admission to their S6 classes under specified circumstances at each stage of the Procedure, pending the release of the relevant examination results in late August. He hoped that these schools would honour their pledge when considering the application of NCS students fulfilling all the admission requirements and having attained equal or higher points compared with their counterparts for admission to S6.

Action

45. Responding to Professor Patrick LAU's enquiry about the reason for the small number of NCS students admitted to S6 and undergraduate programmes, DS(Ed)2 said that in considering an application for admission to S6, schools might take into account other factors in addition to the HKCEE results, such as the Chinese Language requirement for entry to HKALE. For applications under the Joint Universities Programmes Admissions System, the UGC-funded institutions had set Chinese Language requirements in the relevant HKCEE and HKALE subjects for admission. Hence, the failure of some NCS students to attain the requisite Chinese Language proficiency might be a reason for the low admission rate to S6 and undergraduate programmes. The Administration believed that with 80 public-sector schools and the UGC-funded institutions accepting alternative Chinese Language qualification(s) for admission to S6 and undergraduate programmes respectively, NCS students could enjoy better opportunities for access to higher education in future.

Designated schools

46. Ms Emily LAU expressed concern about the possible labelling effect on NCS students studying in designated schools.

47. DS(Ed)2 explained that in recent years, EDB had been providing focused support to schools designated to receive such support in enhancing the learning and teaching of NCS students, including children of ethnic minorities. The objective of providing focused support in these schools was to facilitate their accumulation of experience and development of expertise in the teaching and learning of NCS students, so that they might serve as the anchor point for sharing experience with other schools which had also admitted NCS students through a support network formed. Relevant learning and teaching materials developed by EDB in collaboration with these designated schools had been uploaded onto the EDB webpage with printed copies made available in the EDB Central Resources Centre for teachers' reference and adaptation. The approach of providing focused support aimed to benefit all NCS students studying in local schools.

Provision of relevant teaching and learning materials

48. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered that given the vastly different levels of proficiency of NCS students in Chinese Language, it was imperative that the teaching and learning materials, including textbooks, used by schools should meet the educational needs and abilities of NCS students. He was of the view that teaching materials and textbooks, if well designed, could enhance the learning effectiveness of NCS students. In this light, the Administration should organize a group of experts, including in-service teachers, to co-ordinate the development and publication of teaching materials/textbooks for Chinese Language for NCS students, which should be designed to the following specifications -

Action

- (a) the materials/textbooks should facilitate the progressive delivery of course curriculum, starting from the basics to the more advanced levels, to prepare the NCS students for public examinations in Chinese Language, including GCSE, General Certificate in Education and International General Certificate of Secondary Education;
- (b) to support NCS students in meeting the learning targets, the materials/textbooks should comprise as many learning modules as possible, each building on the previous level to enable Chinese Language learning on a step-by-step basis;
- (c) the learning modules should be flexibly designed to facilitate the multiple entry and exit of NCS students at various levels; and
- (d) the Administration should ensure a good interface, in terms of content and standard, between the Chinese textbooks/teaching materials designed for use by primary and secondary schools under the new senior secondary academic structure.

Mr CHEUNG further said that split-class teaching should be the recommended approach for teaching and learning of Chinese language by NCS students.

49. Dr YEUNG Sum fully supported Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's view about the need to produce specially designed and properly interfaced Chinese Language textbooks for NCS students. He was not convinced of the explanation as set out in the Administration's paper that it was more effective to make use of a variety of resources embracing both print and non-print materials rather than one single set of one-size-fits-all textbooks. He considered that three sets of textbooks should at least be produced for each grade in primary and secondary schools to meet the diverse needs of NCS students at various proficiency levels. Moreover, given the small market for publication of Chinese Language textbooks for NCS students, publishers would unlikely embark on such a business. It was therefore necessary for the Administration to provide financial support for publishers in this regard.

50. In response to Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Dr YEUNG Sum's views, Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum Development) (PAS(CD)) made the following points-

- (a) the Administration recognized the importance of providing appropriate textbooks for NCS students. As reported in February 2008, given the various language and cultural backgrounds, learning needs and aspirations among the NCS students, the Administration considered it more appropriate to develop learning resources for NCS students based on the teaching and learning materials developed by schools with NCS students;

Action

- (b) since 2003, EDB had been sponsoring production projects on Chinese Language teaching resources for NCS students through the Quality Education Fund (QEF). To address the concern over the lack of specially designed textbooks for NCS students, EDB had explored further utilization of QEF. It would produce and disseminate quality teaching materials through adapting QEF projects on teaching materials for Chinese Language developed in Hong Kong school settings. While the first set of teaching materials would be ready for publication and dissemination in a year's time, the Administration would continue to collect and enhance other school materials to make available additional set(s) of learning and teaching resources. It would, however, take some time for the Administration to complete the adaptation work;
- (c) initially the learning materials referred to in paragraph (b) above would be organized to support mainly the mode of Learning Chinese as a Second Language, starting with easier materials at the entry point of learning. At the same time, the Administration was adapting a series of existing Chinese Language learning and teaching materials, as outlined in Annex 1 to the Administration's paper, to suit the needs of NCS students at various proficiency levels. These existing learning and teaching materials were considered as important as textbooks; and
- (d) in future, primary and secondary teachers were expected to understand the achievements and abilities of their NCS students at various key stages of education. The Administration was currently launching a collaborative study on Chinese language standards of NCS students with the assistance of tertiary institutions. Upon the completion of the study towards the end of 2008, the Administration would proceed with the development of internal assessment tools that would help provide feedback on Chinese Language learning by NCS students and would in turn facilitate the teaching process.

51. Ms Audrey EU echoed members' view that the Administration should develop standardized Chinese Language textbooks for NCS students. Referring to the learning and teaching materials as described in Annex 1 to the Administration's paper, she asked whether the educational coursewares/softwares were designed to facilitate self-studies at home, and whether NCS students were required to possess Chinese word processing skills and be familiar with the operations of computer before they could make use of the learning packages. She held the view that Chinese Language textbooks, references and multi-media materials etc. for NCS students should be designed to match with the language ability of NCS students at different stages instead of their age.

Action

52. In response, PAS(CD) reiterated that EDB was still in the process of collecting teaching materials developed by designated schools for wider circulation to schools with NCS students. There was no pre-determined number for the sets of teaching materials to be developed. Initially, the Administration aimed to make available two to three sets of such resources embracing both print and non-print materials rather than one single set of one-size-fits-all textbooks for NCS students. Regarding the packaged materials described in Annex 1 to the Administration's paper, they were a series of online self-access learning materials, all with English annotation, exclusively designed for NCS students to learn Chinese. These resource packages could be used for class or after-class learning to raise the independent learning ability of NCS students. Experience showed that they were well received by schools and students. PAS(CD) further advised that to cater for NCS students with different standards, learning and teaching would be geared to students' different starting points in their Chinese learning with appropriate grouping to facilitate learning. For some older students with lower standards, teachers could set for them a lower starting point with relevant learning objectives. Different classes and groups could have different access points and learning objectives. Teachers need to assess students' learning progress constantly and re-group them accordingly to adjust to their learning.

Support for NCS students with special educational needs

53. Dr Fernando CHEUNG referred members to the submission of Growing Together which cited the international equivalents that up to 7% of school age children had special educational needs (SEN). He said that based on the results of the 2006 Population By-census, there were 28 722 full time NCS students in Hong Kong. Even if a lower rate (say 5%) was adopted, there were at least 1 400 NCS students with SEN in Hong Kong, which was far more than the 22 NCS students with SEN studying in the 18 designated schools for NCS students. He asked whether the Administration was aware of the actual situation.

54. Dr Fernando CHEUNG added that although the English Schools Foundation (ESF) and some international schools provided NCS students with SEN alternatives outside the public school sector, there were currently 103 NCS children with SEN on the waiting list for the limited places in ESF schools, and the average waiting time for enrolment ranged from 24 to 36 months. Citing the experience of a NCS student with SEN, who suffered from attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder and failed to secure a school place in any international schools as well as the ESF schools, he expressed concern about the provision of equal opportunities for NCS children with SEN. As independent international schools were reluctant to admit NCS children with SEN, many NCS children with SEN were given no choice but to enrol in public sector mainstream schools which adopted Chinese as the medium of instruction. These NCS children were struggling hard to learn in a language that was not conducive to the realization of

Action

their full potential. For this reason, Dr CHEUNG strongly requested the Administration to ensure the admission of NCS children with SEN by ESF or other international schools. As the Administration had stated in its paper that it was exploring the possibility of further enhancing the provision of school places and support for NCS students with SEN in the ESF system, he sought details in this regard. He also asked about the support and resources provided for other international schools to cater for the educational needs of NCS students with SEN.

55. In response, DS(Ed)2 made the following points -

(a) the international equivalents which suggested that about 5% to 7% of school age children had SEN might not apply to Hong Kong. The number of NCS students with SEN referred to in the Administration's paper only represented the enrolment of these students in the 18 designated schools. The number of NCS students studying in other public sector schools was currently not available. The Administration would collect the relevant data from public sector schools to compute the number of NCS students with SEN and would revert to the Panel once the information was available;

Admin

(b) it was the Government's established policy to facilitate early integration of NCS students, including students with SEN, into the local education system. In Hong Kong, eligible children irrespective of ethnic origin and physical or intellectual ability had the right to enjoy basic education in public sector schools. NCS children including those with SEN were encouraged to study in public sector schools so that they could integrate into the local community as early as possible. It should be emphasised, however, that studying under the local education system did not mean that the students would be forced to learn in the Chinese medium at all cost, as the local system also provided a number of schools, including some of the designated schools, adopting the English medium. The Government's role was to ensure that there would be an avenue for those NCS students with SEN who would indeed learn better in English to access English-medium learning in the public sector; whether the choice of schools available in the public sector met the wish list of individual parents would be another matter. Against this background, the Government had been providing ordinary public sector schools with additional support and resources to cater for the needs of students with SEN, including NCS students;

Action

- (c) in addition to the above, there were other education opportunities outside the public school sector for NCS students with SEN. ESF, which received some subvention from the Government, was operating a special school and learning support classes in its primary and secondary schools for NCS students with SEN. To help the ESF schools address its waiting list problem, the Administration had exceptionally provided ESF with an additional provision of \$2 million starting from the 2006-2007 school year, which had enabled ESF to operate three additional learning support classes with a provision of 21 new school places for students with SEN. The Administration was also exploring the possibility of further enhancing the provision of school places and support for NCS students with SEN in the ESF system; and
- (d) for the other international schools which provided alternatives for NCS students with SEN, it was noteworthy that they were operated on a self-financing basis in the commercial market, with minimum intervention from the Government. However, these international schools, like the ESF schools, should provide equal opportunities for all students in terms of student admission, teaching curriculum and assessment, etc.

56. Ms Emily LAU shared the concern about the Administration's under-estimation of the number of NCS students with SEN. She expressed strong dissatisfaction about the inertia on the part of the Administration in addressing the varied educational needs and aspirations of NCS students. She urged that more resources should be provided for strengthening the support for NCS students, including those with SEN.

Other support measures

57. Mr Albert CHAN considered that to further help NCS students integrate into the local community, the Government should provide more educational support for NCS students. He was disappointed that there was no mention in the Administration's paper of the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which had been providing a wide variety of supporting services for ethnic minority groups from South Asian countries. He suggested that EDB should make reference to the more flexible practices adopted by the Home Affairs Department to facilitate these NGOs in the acquisition of premises, e.g. vacant school premises or public rental housing units, to run Chinese Language Learning Support Centres, so that specific remedial programmes after school hours and during holidays could be arranged for NCS students. He also suggested that financial subsidy, in the form of tax concession, be provided for parents whose NCS children were studying in international schools.

Action

58. DS(Ed)2 responded that the Administration would continue to focus on enhancing the overall quality of school education and deal with improvement measures requiring additional resources in accordance with the established procedures of resource allocation. Regarding the suggestion of commissioning NGOs to run Chinese Language Learning Support Centres outside school education, the Administration would welcome constructive proposals from NGOs and consider when details were available.

59. Mr Abraham SHEK appreciated the Administration's effort in mapping out the support measures for NCS students. He, however, expressed concern about the effectiveness of these measures in enhancing NCS students' Chinese language proficiency. He said that from what he had observed during the Panel visit to schools with NCS students, the NCS students were not provided with an enabling environment conducive to their learning of Chinese Language. He cautioned that the proficiency of students of ethnic minorities in Chinese Language would affect their future development. The Administration should review its policy and strategies on education for NCS students, and allocate more resources to help NCS students to learn Chinese language effectively, with a view to enabling them to integrate into the local community. Moreover, it should make reference to the successful experience of ESF in teaching Chinese to children whose first language was not Chinese.

60. Dr YEUNG Sum said that it would be difficult for NCS students to follow the progress of Chinese lessons in normal class size. He shared the view that further support should be provided for schools which implemented integrated education and had an intake of NCS students with diversified backgrounds. The support measures should include the provision of additional Chinese Language teachers, diversified learning and teaching materials specially designed for NCS students, and partitions to create additional rooms for split-class teaching. Dr YEUNG was given to know from the Panel visit to schools with NCS students that some bright NCS students considered the GCSE examination relatively simple. He considered that it might be necessary to adopt more than one approach to suit the different needs, aspirations and development of NCS students in the same school.

V. Progress of preparation for the new senior secondary and higher education academic structure

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)2164/07-08(04) and (05)]

61. Members noted the updated background brief entitled "New academic structure for senior secondary education and higher education" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat.

Action

Briefing by the Administration

62. DS(Ed)5 briefed members on the progress of preparation for the new senior secondary and higher education academic structure as detailed in the Administration's paper.

School-based Assessment (SBA) of new senior secondary (NSS) subjects

63. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that he remained of the view that SBA should only be implemented for subjects currently with SBA in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE). He considered it inappropriate to fix a schedule for the implementation of SBA for the other NSS subjects, in particular for the Liberal Studies for which the preparation of the curriculum and the pilot studies on teaching pedagogies were in progress. He suggested that SBA for these other NSS subjects should be implemented in small classes on a pilot basis, and whether SBA should be formally implemented for these subjects should depend on the operational experience.

64. DS(Ed)5 responded that EDB had conducted four rounds of consultation on SBA and had made significant adjustments to the original implementation timeframe. With the support of the Curriculum Development Council and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA), SBA for 12 subjects, including those with SBA currently in the HKCEE, Liberal Studies and the laboratory component in the four science subjects would be implemented in 2012. SBA for 11 other subjects would be deferred for two to four years and there would be no timeframe for implementation of SBA in Mathematics. EDB hoped that the arrangements would provide sufficient time for schools to complete the development work and get familiar with the administration of planned SBA activities.

65. Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum Development) supplemented that EDB would provide professional development for teachers on the 24 subjects under the NSS curriculum. In addition, EDB would encourage schools to teach the 11 subjects for which implementation of SBA would be deferred by two to four years and gather relevant information to facilitate SBA implementation for these subjects in due course. She added that under the curriculum reform for basic education, the basic elements of SBA such as project and group assignments had already been incorporated in basic education for a few years. Schools and their students were becoming increasingly ready for implementation of SBA of NSS subjects. The Administration was confident that schools would be able to implement SBA in accordance with the revised schedule in a smooth and successful manner.

66. Secretary General, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority added that HKEAA would collaborate with EDB to conduct evaluation and analysis on the implementation of SBA for the first 12 subjects starting from

Action

2009. The useful experiences and the good practices identified would help SBA implementation in the remaining subjects in the long term. The Administration would review the implementation of the new academic structure together with SBA in 2013 using the experience of the early cohorts.

Additional classrooms for special schools

67. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that he had received complaints from special schools about the progress on the construction of additional classrooms for implementing the NSS academic structure in 2009. He was given to know that EDB had undertaken to arrange for the construction of additional classrooms for special schools, but the construction works had yet to be started. Mr CHEUNG pointed out that the planning and construction of additional classrooms would take time and affect teaching and learning activities in the special schools concerned. He requested EDB to provide written information on the agreed provision of additional classrooms for individual special schools.

68. DS(Ed)5 responded that EDB was collaborating with relevant departments on the preparatory work for the construction of additional classrooms for implementing the NSS curriculum in special schools. EDB envisaged that there should be no major problem with the provision of additional classrooms for special schools to support senior secondary classes. Should the required classrooms for some individual special schools not be completed in time, EDB would make contingency arrangements for these schools to implement the NSS curriculum. He agreed to provide written information on the construction of additional classrooms for special schools.

Admin

Provision of teachers for implementing the NSS curriculum

69. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that under the NSS curriculum, schools would operate more classes in order to offer a wider range of NSS subjects for their students. However, some schools had complained about a reduction of teaching staff establishment despite the increase in the number of classes. He sought information on the number of schools with increased and reduced teaching provision because of the implementation of NSS curriculum and the reasons for the reduced teaching provision.

70. DS(Ed)5 responded that with the improved teacher-to-class ratio for the implementation of the NSS academic structure, overall schools would have improvement in teaching workforce during the transitional and subsequent years. Specifically, EDB would advance the provision of the recurrent Senior Secondary Curriculum Support Grant by one year starting from the 2008-2009 school year, and provide a Diversity Learning Grant to encourage schools to develop a diversified NSS curriculum from the 2009-2010 school year. However, there might be schools with unique circumstances that historically had meant more teachers which would not be needed as a result of the

Action

implementation of the NSS academic structure. The five year toleration arrangements agreed with schools would allow schools to manage their resources effectively during implementation. He agreed to provide the requested information.

Admin

VI. Any other business

Increase of tuition fees of English Schools Foundation (ESF) schools

71. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung suggested discussion on matters relating to the increase of tuition fees of ESF schools at the special meeting of the Panel scheduled for 27 June 2008. He said that many ESF parents also wished to give views on ESF management.

72. Mrs Selina CHOW said that many members had received letters from ESF parents on the matter. She considered that the matter was indeed a complaint which should be handled by the Complaints Division of the LegCo Secretariat by convening a case conference. If necessary, Duty Roster Members would refer related policy issues to the Panel for follow-up.

73. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Clerk informed members that the Complaints Division was liaising with a group of ESF parents on the matter and was seeking a written response from the Administration. Pending the Administration's response, the Complaints Division would arrange interview with the ESF parents.

74. The Chairman said that he would get more information about the matter and consider the need to include it for discussion at the special meeting. He would inform members accordingly. Members agreed.

[*Post-meeting note* : the Complaints Division convened a case conference on the matter on 16 July 2008.]

75. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:55 pm.