

立法會

Legislative Council

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Report of the Panel on Education for submission to the Legislative Council

Purpose

This report gives an account of the work of the Panel on Education during the 2007-2008 Legislative Council (LegCo) session. It will be tabled at the Council meeting on 2 July 2008 in accordance with Rule 77(14) of the Rules of Procedure of the Council.

The Panel

2. The Panel was formed by a resolution passed by the Council on 8 July 1998 and as amended on 20 December 2000, 9 October 2002 and 11 July 2007 for the purpose of monitoring and examining Government policies and issues of public concern relating to education matters. The terms of reference of the Panel are in **Appendix I**.

3. The Panel comprises 17 members, with Hon Jasper TSANG and Dr Hon YEUNG Sum elected as its Chairman and Deputy Chairman respectively. The membership list of the Panel is in **Appendix II**.

Major work

Sub-degree education

4. During the session, the subject of sub-degree education was of prime concern to members. Following the release of the Report of the Phase 2 Review of the Post-secondary Education Sector, the Panel discussed the 22 recommendations made therein by the Steering Committee. Members noted a robust development of the post-secondary education sector since the announcement of the policy target in 2000 to enable 60% of senior secondary school leavers to have access to tertiary education by 2010. The post-secondary education participation rate increased from 33% in 2000-2001 to 64% in 2006-2007. Members were concerned about the over-expansion of the self-financing

sub-degree sector which had led to excessive competition, compromising the quality of teaching and learning. Members supported the recommendations of the Steering Committee to strengthen measures to enhance the quality of sub-degree programmes. These included, among others, the establishment of a Tripartite Liaison Committee comprising the Education Bureau, the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) and the Joint Quality Review Committee to enhance comparability of the quality assurance mechanisms and the programmes offered by institutions with and without self-accrediting status, as well as the establishment of an Expert Group to draw up a set of "Good practices for the Sub-degree Sector". Members noted that the Administration would explore the options of promulgating clear minimum admission requirements for sub-degree programmes and making it mandatory for providers to follow, and of requiring providers to submit annual reports on student admission and performance.

5. While welcoming the decision of the University Grants Committee (UGC) to bring forward the creation of all the 1 927 committed senior year undergraduate places at intake level (Year 2) in the UGC-funded institutions by the 2008-2009 academic year, members considered the number of publicly-funded articulated places grossly inadequate to meet the aspirations of sub-degree graduates for further studies. Members requested the Administration to identify feasible ways to resolve the problem. The Administration stressed that sub-degree qualifications were standalone qualifications for both work and further studies, and there was practically a limit on the number of articulation places that could be provided in the UGC-funded institutions. Nevertheless, the Administration undertook to continue discussion with the higher education sector on the merit of adopting a credit-transfer system to enhance the provision of continuing education and life-long learning opportunities.

6. Insufficient recognition of the sub-degree qualifications was another major concern of members. Noting the reluctance by employers to recognize the sub-degree qualifications, members urged the Administration to enhance its recognition, in particular for civil service appointment purpose. Members also discussed matters relating to academic accreditation and professional recognition of sub-degree programmes. While appreciating the difference between academic accreditation and professional recognition, members considered it necessary for HKCAAVQ to enhance its cooperation and communication with the relevant professional accreditation bodies in conducting academic accreditation exercises. Members welcomed the proposed arrangement for HKCAAVQ to consider requesting course providers to give evidence or plans on how the basic criteria prescribed by the relevant professional accreditation body would be met. To help the 140 students who were studying the Hong Kong Institute of Technology's associate degree in nursing programme which was not recognized by the Hong Kong Nursing Council, members supported the decision of the Food and Health Bureau to commission the Hospital Authority (HA) to launch a one-off arrangement to assist them to be articulated into HA's nursing programmes for obtaining qualifications for registering or enrolling as nurses in due course.

Education for ethnic minorities

7. The provision of education for children of ethnic minorities remained high on the agenda of the Panel. The Panel visited one primary and two secondary designated schools which enrolled a relatively large number of non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students to better understand the teaching and learning of the subject of Chinese Language. Members noted from discussions with the teachers of these schools the great variations on the Chinese proficiency of NCS students and the school-based Chinese Language curriculum. While supporting the development of a supplementary guide to the Chinese Language curriculum for NCS students, members maintained the view that the development of an alternative Chinese Language curriculum for NCS students should be the long-term goal and actively pursued. In the meantime, the development of specially designed textbooks for NCS students was important. Members suggested designing these textbooks in series from the elementary to advanced levels, taking into account the variation of NCS students on the Chinese standard. To maximize the effectiveness of learning, members also suggested that the subject of Chinese Language should be learnt in small groups.

8. The Panel was pleased to note that the administration of the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) (Chinese) examination in Hong Kong starting from 2007 for NCS students in the public school sector was well received by NCS students, teachers and schools. Students obtaining Grade D or above in GCSE (Chinese) would be regarded as having met the Chinese Language requirement for entry to the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE). Members noted that more than 80 schools had responded positively to the Administration's invitation to accept alternative Chinese Language qualifications under the Secondary 6 Admission Procedure and to make conditional offers to applicants under specified circumstances. With effect from the 2008 Joint Universities Programmes Admission System (JUPAS) Cycle, the UGC-funded institutions would be prepared to consider alternative qualifications in Chinese Language, such as those under GCSE, General Certificate in Education and International General Certificate of Secondary Education, in lieu of the general Chinese Language requirement based on HKALE for JUPAS applicants under specified circumstances.

9. Members noted that the Education Bureau only started to collect as from the 2006-2007 school year information on students' ethnicity and spoken languages at home from Primary 1 to Secondary 7 through the Student Enrolment Survey. Members considered it important to keep track of the number of students at different key stages of education as this would indicate the effectiveness of the various measures in assisting NCS students in education.

Small class teaching

10. In the past years, the Panel had consistently requested the implementation of small class teaching (SCT). The Panel welcomed the decision of the Administration to implement SCT in public sector primary schools starting from the 2009-2010 school year in Primary 1 and extending to higher levels progressively up to Primary 6 in the 2014-2015 school year. Members noted that schools would be given the flexibility to decide whether or not to implement SCT, and the Administration would assess the feasibility of schools implementing SCT based on the projected demand for school places in each school net. Members discussed with the Administration the admission arrangements for schools which opted to or not to implement SCT, additional resources provided to schools opting to implement SCT or maintaining a larger class size, ways to resolve the shortfall of classes in individual school nets, and the length of the transitional period. Members were concerned about the absence of a timetable for the implementation of SCT in secondary schools. A suggestion was made to reduce the class size of secondary schools by two students per year starting from the 2008-2009 school year so that the cohorts of students receiving SCT could proceed to secondary schools with small class size after completing primary education in the 2014-2015 school year. Members were pleased to note the recent decision of the Administration to reduce the number of Secondary 1 students allocated under the Secondary School Places Allocation system from 38 to 36 students in 2009 and further to 34 students in 2010.

Early childhood education

11. The Panel monitored the progress of the pre-primary education voucher scheme (PEVS) since its implementation beginning from the 2007-2008 school year. Members noted that as of December 2007, a total of 838 of some 980 kindergartens had joined PEVS. Members reiterated their view that PEVS should cover all kindergartens, irrespective of whether they were non-profit-making or private independent. Members considered it inappropriate to compel private independent kindergartens to change their mode of operation to non-profit-making in order to be eligible for joining PEVS. Members discussed with the Administration the possibility of extending the three-year transitional period for private independent kindergartens satisfying all prescribed requirements save for the non-profit-making status to redeem the vouchers. In the Administration's view, since PEVS had just been implemented, it was too early to decide whether the transitional period should be extended.

12. Noting the increase of kindergarten tuition fees because of inflation, members considered it necessary to review the ceiling of tuition fee at \$24,000 per student per annum for a half-day kindergarten place as one of the eligibility criteria for PEVS. The Administration stressed that it had conducted a cost analysis of kindergarten operation in deciding the voucher value that would sustain the provision of quality education. The Administration would keep in view the situation and, where necessary, consider the need for adjusting the value of the

voucher. Members also urged the Administration to review the manpower establishment in kindergartens and provide a suitable teacher-to-class ratio to help relieving teachers' workload and facilitating their attendance at professional development programmes.

New academic structure for senior secondary education and higher education

13. The Administration reported to the Panel on the progress of the preparation work for the implementation of the new academic structure for senior secondary education and higher education. Members urged the Administration to ensure the provision of sufficient classrooms in special schools for offering the new senior secondary curriculum. Members noted that school-based assessment (SBA) for 12 new senior secondary curriculum subjects would be implemented in 2012 and that for 11 subjects deferred for two to four years. There would be no timetable for the implementation of SBA in Mathematics. Members called on the Administration to review the experience of SBA before proceeding further. The Administration informed members of its plan to review SBA together with the operational experience of the new academic structure in 2013.

14. Members supported the retention of two supernumerary posts of Principal Education Officer up to 30 June 2010 to provide dedicated professional support for the implementation of the new senior secondary curriculum, as well as to provide school-based support to individual schools to assist their transition to the new academic structure.

Project Yi Jin

15. Members welcomed the proposal to continue providing financial support for Project Yi Jin (PYJ) until the 2011-2012 academic year to provide an alternative route and to expand the continuing education opportunities for Secondary 5 leavers and adult learners. As the implementation of the new academic structure would have impact on PYJ, members considered it necessary to review the long-term development and positioning of PYJ. Members took note of the review undertaken currently by the Administration together with the Federation of Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions (FCE) in this regard and of its expected completion in the 2009-2010 school year. The majority of members were of the view that as some students might not wish to complete senior secondary education leading to Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) under the new academic structure, PYJ should be continued to provide an alternative path for these students.

16. A full certificate of PYJ programme was assessed by HKCAAVQ as comparable to five passes in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE). Members were concerned about the prospect for the existing PYJ students for further studies with the implementation of HKDSE and the abolition of HKCEE in 2012. The Administration assured members that despite the implementation of HKDSE, the qualification of five passes in HKCEE would

continue to be recognized by employers for employment purpose and post-secondary institutions for admission to their pre-associate degree or sub-degree programmes. The Administration would consider the issue of the provision of articulation programmes for graduates of the existing PYJ in its review.

Evening adult education

17. Members supported the Administration's proposal to continue with the Financial Assistance Scheme for Designated Evening Adult Education Courses with enhancements from the 2008-2009 school year onwards. The improvements included extending the scope of the Scheme to cover junior secondary courses and adding a 50% tuition fee reimbursement assistance level. Notwithstanding these improvements, members urged the Administration to consider introducing measures to further enhance the support for students attending evening adult education courses. The suggested measures included making evening adult education as an integral part of the 12-year free education policy; reviewing the existing payment mode to enable advance payment of tuition fee instead of reimbursement of fee; and establishing more designated centres under the Scheme. In view of members' suggestions, the Administration undertook to establish a new centre in Tseung Kwan O in the 2008-2009 school year, subject to the proof of adequate demand. The Administration also agreed to review the Scheme shortly after the completion of the 2008-2009 school year.

Development of universities

Matching Grant Scheme

18. The Panel supported the proposal to launch the \$1 billion Fourth Matching Grant Scheme for matching private donations secured by the eight UGC-funded institutions. Members welcomed in particular the expansion of the Scheme to cover the Open University of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Shue Yan University. Members considered it necessary to put in place measures to facilitate smaller and younger institutions with lesser fund-raising capabilities to secure a reasonable share of the matching grants. These included setting aside a guaranteed minimum of \$45 million for matching by each institution and an upper limit of \$250 million applicable to the aggregate amount received by each institution. Members urged the Administration to consider further expanding the scope of the Scheme to provide matching grants for private donations received by the UGC-funded institutions for their self-financing sub-degree programmes. The Administration considered it more fruitful to have thorough discussion on issues relating to self-financing post-secondary education before making any decision on the matter.

Special Equipment Grant

19. The Panel was briefed on the proposal to provide a one-off grant of \$200 million to UGC for establishing a Special Equipment Grant for the acquisition, replacement or upgrading of research equipment of the UGC-funded institutions. While expressing support for the introduction of the Grant, members were concerned that the full amount might be allotted to universities which had a long history and higher capability to raise private donations as the applicant institution had to shoulder a minimum amount of 25% of the cost of the equipment. While accepting the assessment of institutions' proposals on the basis of academic merits, members considered it necessary to give a fair chance to smaller and younger institutions for getting the Grant. Members suggested setting a guaranteed amount for each institution and allowing a reasonable period of time for their submission of proposals. Responding to members' views and in order to recognize that not all UGC-funded institutions were at the same stage of development, the Administration agreed that if the academic research merits of proposals were equal, the Research Grants Council would, when considering the final allocation of grant, give special/sympathetic consideration to an application if it came from institutions which would otherwise receive no funding from the Grant.

Recurrent funding

20. As the implementation of the new four-year undergraduate programmes under the new academic structure from 2012 onwards would entail significant changes to the UGC-funded institutions, the Administration decided that the 2005-2008 triennium should roll over for one year to cover the 2008-2009 academic year. Members accepted such an arrangement which would give the UGC-funded institutions, UGC and the Administration more time to consider the academic planning as well as the associated funding requirement from the 2012-2013 academic year onwards. As the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIE) had suffered a substantial reduction in recurrent funding for the 2005-2008 triennium and the funding for the roll-over year was based primarily on that triennium, the Panel wrote to HKIE to seek its view on the funding proposal for the roll-over year. HKIE confirmed that the proposed funding was slightly more than the allocation for the 2007-2008 academic year and was more than the planning estimate.

Funding for capital works

21. Members examined the funding proposal for the University of Hong Kong (HKU) to develop Phase I of the Human Research Institute to accommodate the existing eight specialized research laboratories and state-of-the-art inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary centres. Detailed information including the eight research centres to be accommodated, the space to be made available upon the relocation of those centres, the intended use of the vacated space and facilities and the management structure of the Institute were provided by HKU to members for scrutiny. Noting that HKU had an existing space shortfall of 35 000 square

metres and the Institute would only provide 6 000 square metres in net operational floor area, members urged the Administration to assist HKU to meet its space requirements. Members were given to know that HKU was working on a Centennial Development Project to facilitate its long-term development. The project would provide more than 40 000 square metres to meet the space requirements.

22. The Panel also scrutinized another capital works proposal for HKU to develop 1 800-space student residences at Lung Wah Street, Kennedy Town. While recognizing the need to construct new hostels to meet the shortfall, members noted the concern of residents in the vicinity about possible noise nuisance. Members sought information on the measures taken to minimize the possible adverse impact on the neighbourhood. According to HKU, it had adopted appropriate features and made adjustments to the design of the project such as reducing the development density at the site; locating the hostel blocks closer to the hill; adding architectural fins to the building facades to serve as noise barrier; and increasing the area for greenery. Members urged HKU to enhance communication with local residents and take all feasible measures to allay their concern.

Provision of hostels for tertiary students

23. The Panel continued to follow up the subject of the provision and allocation of publicly-funded hostels for tertiary students. Members noted the knock on implications of the additional year of undergraduate studies starting from the 2012-2013 academic year and the accommodation requirement arising from the increased quota for non-local students in publicly-funded programmes. As at May 2008, the UGC-funded sector had a shortfall of about 11 000 publicly-funded hostel places.

24. While recognizing the need to provide support measures to achieve the policy objective of developing Hong Kong as a regional education hub, some members considered it necessary to review the existing policy under which all non-local students attending UGC-funded programmes should be provided with hostel places throughout their studies, whereas local undergraduate students only for one year of their studies. Some members made reference to overseas practice and suggested that non-local students should be provided with hostel places for a limited period of their studies, say one to two years. In the view of other members, the existing policy and criteria for calculating the standard hostel provision should not be regarded as discriminatory against local students. These members considered it reasonable to provide hostel places for overseas students to facilitate their familiarization with the local conditions, in particular during their initial years of studies. After discussions, the Panel passed a motion urging the Administration to increase the provision of hostel places and to revise the existing policy to provide opportunities for local students pursuing the UGC-funded programmes to stay in student hostels for at least one year and to guarantee the provision of hostel places for non-local students only in the first two years of their studies.

Scholarship Endowment Fund

25. Members welcomed the establishment of a \$1 billion Scholarship Endowment Fund for providing Government scholarships to students studying in full-time publicly-funded degree or above level programmes in Hong Kong. Members considered the establishment of the Fund conducive to further develop Hong Kong as a regional education hub. Nevertheless, members noted that the proposed scholarship for local students would be \$40,000 per year and non-local students \$80,000. Members sought explanation for the differential treatment. The Administration pointed out that it had made reference to overseas practice in deciding the amount of scholarships for local and non-local students. Since non-local students had to shoulder higher tuition fees and accommodation and living expenses, their scholarships were generally higher than local students.

26. Members examined the need for setting a quota of scholarships for non-local students under the scheme. After discussions, members agreed that the autonomy of institutions in selecting recipients for scholarships should be respected as institutions had to consider their own circumstances and capacities in deciding the number of non-local students to be admitted to their programmes. The Administration undertook to review the scheme in one to two years' time after its implementation.

27. Members also considered the need to put in place measures to retain non-local students awarded with scholarships in Hong Kong after their studies. They accepted the Administration's explanation that the scheme would be less attractive to talented students should too many conditions be imposed.

Information technology in education

28. The Panel discussed the outcome of the consultation on the Third Strategy on Information Technology in Education and received the views of 14 organizations on the Administration's proposals to implement the Third Strategy. Members were gravely concerned about the inadequacy of the Composite Information Technology Grant (CITG) for recruiting and retaining experienced and competent Information Technology Co-ordinators (ITC), resulting in a high turnover of information technology (IT) personnel. Members supported the call of the school sector for a permanent post of ITC. The Administration pointed out that merging different IT-related grants into CITG was intended to provide schools with greater flexibility in managing their own resources according to their needs. To address the concern of members and the school sector about the inadequacy of CITG for the IT-related expenses in school education, the Administration undertook to conduct a holistic and evidence-based review of schools' IT expenditure which would cover all Government and aided schools including special schools.

29. Digital divide among students was another area of concern to members. Members noted that according to a household survey conducted by the Census and Statistics Department, about 3.3%, or 25 500 primary and secondary school students aged 10 or above did not have a computer at home. Members considered it important to devise measures to bridge the digital divide among students. They supported the continuation of the Computer Recycling Scheme to distribute refurbished computers to needy students. The Administration was urged to negotiate with Internet service providers to continue the service to students at a concessionary rate after the initial year of free service and to encourage schools to enable needy students to have access to computers after school.

School Development and Accountability Framework

30. The Panel was briefed on the implementation plan for the second cycle of the School Development and Accountability (SDA) Framework through a combination of internal School Self Evaluation (SSE) by schools and External School Review (ESR) by the Education Bureau. Members welcomed the Administration's decision not to conduct ESR in secondary schools and special schools in the 2008-2009 school year in response to the concern of the school sector. They, however, queried why the same did not apply to primary schools. The Administration explained 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.

31. Members were concerned about the consultation conducted by the Administration which had focused on principal associations and school councils. They considered it necessary to consult teachers and teachers' associations and enhance the participation of parents and students in the second cycle of ESR. The Administration noted members' view.

Legislative proposals

32. The Panel was briefed on three Member's Bills before their introduction into the Council. These were the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Declaration of C. W. Chu College, Wu Yee Sun College and Lee Woo Sing College as Constituent Colleges) Bill (CUHK Bill), the University of Science and Technology (Amendment) Bill 2008 (HKUST Bill) and the University of Hong Kong (Amendment) Bill 2008 (HKU Bill).

33. While expressing support for the CUHK Bill, members were concerned about the representation of the various constituent colleges in the CUHK Council. Noting that the CUHK Council was reviewing its structure, members urged for its early completion and stressed the need to ensure fair representation of old and new colleges in the CUHK Council.

34. Members supported the HKUST Bill to reduce the size of the HKUST Council and to create a new position of Provost in the senior management structure. Members expressed appreciation of the thorough consultation conducted by HKUST with stakeholders on the HKUST Bill. As HKUST was then consulting email polls on staff and students respectively on the method for electing their representatives to the HKUST Council, members requested that the outcome of the consultation be reflected in the HKUST Bill. The Panel was subsequently informed of the preference of both staff and students for direct election of their representatives to the HKUST Council and of the reflection of the election method under the HKUST Bill.

35. As regards the HKU Bill which sought to rectify the inconsistency in the role of the Court and the Council of HKU in the existing ordinance and statutes and to streamline the academic titles, members expressed diverse views. Some members supported the HKU Bill, whereas some other members considered it necessary to study it in connection with issues such as accountability and transparency of the Council of HKU. As the Panel was consulted on the HKU Bill in mid-June 2008, members expressed concern about the insufficient time for scrutiny should the HKU Bill be introduced within the current term. Members subsequently noted that the HKU Bill was not presented to the Council within the current term.

Meetings held

36. During the period between October 2007 and June 2008, the Panel held a total of 12 meetings and conducted one visit.

Panel on Education

Terms of Reference

1. To monitor and examine Government policies and issues of public concern relating to education matters.
2. To provide a forum for the exchange and dissemination of views on the above policy matters.
3. To receive briefings and to formulate views on any major legislative or financial proposals in respect of the above policy area prior to their formal introduction to the Council or Finance Committee.
4. To monitor and examine, to the extent it considers necessary, the above policy matters referred to it by a member of the Panel or by the House Committee.
5. To make reports to the Council or to the House Committee as required by the Rules of Procedure.

Panel on Education

Membership list for the 2007-2008 session

Chairman	Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, GBS, JP
Deputy Chairman	Dr Hon YEUNG Sum, JP
Members	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 Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
	(Total : 17 Members)
Clerk	Miss Odelia LEUNG
Legal Adviser	Mr Kelvin LEE