

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)2127/08-09
(The minutes have been seen by
the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 11 May 2009, at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan (Chairman)
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, SBS, JP
Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king
Hon Tanya CHAN
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon WONG Yuk-man
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
Dr Hon Samson TAM Wai-ho, JP

Public Officers attending : Agenda item IV

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Ms Amy WONG
Principal Assistant Secretary (Higher Education)

Mrs Dorothy MA CHOW Pui-fun
Deputy Secretary-General (1), University Grants
Committee

Agenda item V

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Mrs Alice CHEUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary (Education
Infrastructure)

Dr CHEUNG Kwok-wah
Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum
Development)

**Attendance by
invitation** : Agenda item IV

Chinese University of Hong Kong

Professor CHING Pak-chung
Pro-Vice-Chancellor

Professor FUNG Tung
Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor

Mr David LIM See-wai
Director of Campus Development

Mr MA Wai-kong
Senior Architect, Campus Development Office

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Ir Prof KO Jan-ming
Acting President

Mr CHAN Shu-keung
Director of Campus Development

Mr Daniel SUEN Chung-keung
Deputy Director of Campus Development

Ms Esther CHOW Yuen-sai
Consultant (Director of P&T Architect and Engineers
Ltd)

Ms LI Ling-chang
Consultant (Director of P&T Architect and Engineer
Ltd)

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Ir Prof KO Jan-ming
Acting President

Mr CHAN Shu-keung
Director of Campus Development

Mr Daniel SUEN Chung-keung
Deputy Director of Campus Development

Mr Vincent NG Wing-shun
Consultant (Director, AGC Design Ltd)

Mr Aubrey AU Long-hin
Consultant (Associate Director, AGC Design Ltd)

Agenda item V

Hong Kong Educational Publishers Association

Mr WONG Wai-man
President

Mr SHEK Kwok-kei
Vice-President

Mr Elvin LEE
Secretary

Committee on Home-School Cooperation

Professor WONG Po-choi
Chairman

The Anglo-Chinese Textbook Publishers Organisation Ltd

Mr LI Hing-sang
Chairman

Mr Edward WONG Sing
Vice-Chairman

Neighbourhood & Worker's Service Centre

Mr WONG Yun-tat
Community Affairs Officer

Hong Kong Subsidized Secondary Schools Council

Mr LIU Ah-chuen
Chairman

Mr Alex CHU Kai-wing
Executive Committee Member

Federation of PTA of Hong Kong Eastern District

Ms PANG Wai-ling
Committee

Subsidized Primary Schools Council

Mr TANG Kwai-tai
Chairman

Mr CHEUNG Yung-pong
Vice-Chairman

Consumer Council

Ms Rosa WONG
Head, Research & Trade Practices Division

Ms Lillian MAK
Research & Trade Practices Officer

Justice and Peace Commission of the Hong Kong
Catholic Diocese

Miss YIP Po-lam
Organizer

Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of
Hong Kong

Mr Vincent CHENG Wing-shun
Education Policy Deputy Spokesperson

Coalition of Education-Concerned Parents

Mrs Serenade CHAN
Vice Chairman

Mr Gilbert TAM
Spokesman

Hong Kong Women Workers' Association

Miss Ivy CHAN
Organizer

Concerning CSSA Review Alliance

Mr LEE Tai-shing
Chief Community Organizer

Concerning Group for Women Poverty

Ms HU Yi-lai
Member

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

**Staff in
attendance** : Mr Stanley MA
Senior Council Secretary (2)8

Ms Judy TING
Council Secretary (2)3

Miss Jenny LEE
Legislative Assistant (2)6 (Acting)

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I. Confirmation of minutes

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1377/08-09 and CB(2)1455/08-09]

The minutes of the meetings held on 15 January and 16 April 2009 were confirmed.

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

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1465/08-09(01) and CB(2)1499/08-09(01)]

2. Members noted the letter from the Secretary for Education dated 30 April 2009 seeking support for the proposal to increase the cost of the extension project for the provision of required facilities to Lai Chack Middle School. Members raised no objection to the Administration's submission of the proposal to the Public Works Subcommittee (PWSC) for consideration at its meeting on 3 June 2009.

3. Referring members to the letter dated 5 May 2009 from a group of educators, scientists and professionals concerning the Biology curriculum guidelines for secondary schools in respect of the origin of life, the Chairman drew members' attention to an earlier submission from Concern Group for Hong Kong Science Education which held different views on the issue. She suggested that the Administration should first be invited to give a written response to the two submissions.

4. Mrs Regina IP expressed support for the Chairman's suggestion. She pointed out the long-standing debate over Darwinism vis-a-vis Intelligence Design about the origin of life and the court cases in the United States on the matter.

5. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong shared the view of Mrs Regina IP that the debate on the origin of life was long-standing and complex, and would unlikely be resolved in the foreseeable future. He agreed that the Administration should provide a response to the two submissions. He pointed out that unlike the United States, some local schools offered the subject of Religious Studies, and issues concerning the origin of life could be explored in that context and not in the subject of Biology.

6. Members agreed to request the Administration to give a written response to the two submissions.

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[Appendices I and II to LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1457/08-09, CB(2)1472/08-09(01) and CB(2)1482/08-09(01)]

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7. Referring to the two letters from Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Mr WONG Yuk-man, the Chairman invited members' views on the proposed items for discussion at the next regular meeting scheduled for 8 June 2009.

Renewal of staff contracts of the City University of Hong Kong (CityU)

8. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that he had received a letter from the staff association of CityU and was informed that the management of CityU was discussing with staff representatives on the matter relating to renewal of staff contracts and it might not be appropriate for the Panel to take up the matter at this stage of development. He suggested that pending the development of the matter, the Panel would not discuss it for the time being. Professor Patrick LAU supported Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's suggestion. Members agreed not to discuss the matter for the time being.

Recognition of qualifications awarded by Taiwan universities

9. Referring to Mr WONG Yuk-man's suggestion to discuss recognition of qualifications awarded by Taiwan universities, Mr LEUNG Kwan-yuen said that apart from Taiwan universities, qualifications awarded by universities in some other jurisdictions were also not recognized by the HKSAR Government. He considered it more appropriate to expand the scope of discussion to cover qualifications awarded by universities in other countries.

10. Mr WONG Yuk-man considered that the subject of recognition of the qualifications awarded by Taiwan universities should be an independent item for discussion by the Panel. He pointed out that many Hong Kong students had pursued university education in Taiwan, particularly when Hong Kong had only two universities, i.e. the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong, many years ago. Before the establishment of the Hong Kong Institute of Education, holders of degree in teacher education awarded by the National Taiwan Normal University were appointed as primary and secondary school teachers. Even today, many Hong Kong students pursued university education in Taiwan. However, the qualifications awarded by Taiwan universities had yet to be recognized after all these years. He therefore considered it necessary to discuss the matter.

11. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that many Hong Kong students studied in overseas universities and their qualifications were also not recognized for appointment purpose. The Liberal Party had all along been concerned about the non-recognition of professional qualifications awarded by overseas higher education institutions such as medical and legal qualifications by the relevant professional bodies in Hong Kong. He considered it more appropriate to discuss the matter in a wider context and not to confine to the qualifications awarded by Taiwan universities only.

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12. Ms Audrey EU expressed support for adopting a focused approach in discussing the recognition of qualifications awarded by universities in specific jurisdictions such as Taiwan. In this connection, she invited members to specify the overseas places and the qualifications awarded by higher education institutions to facilitate focused discussion with reference to the local circumstances.

13. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered it prudent to narrow down the scope of discussion to the recognition of academic qualifications awarded by higher education institutions in certain places such as the Mainland and Taiwan. He pointed out that recognition of qualifications awarded by overseas institutions could cover professional qualifications which would involve the relevant professional and accreditation bodies in Hong Kong. Such issues had wide implications and would be outside the purview of the Panel on Education. As such, he considered that the Panel should focus its discussion on the recognition of academic qualifications awarded by higher education institutions in the Mainland and Taiwan.

14. Mr WONG Yuk-man said that given the improved relationship and enhanced interaction among the Mainland, Taiwan and Hong Kong and the same ethnic origin, he agreed with the view that the Panel should discuss the recognition of academic qualifications awarded by the Mainland and Taiwan higher education institutions first. Qualifications in teacher education and dentistry in certain Taiwan universities were recognized before. The Administration should provide information on the number of Hong Kong students pursuing higher education in Taiwan and their employment in Hong Kong. He added that the recognition of qualifications awarded by other jurisdictions could also be discussed at future meetings. Members agreed.

Allocation of student hostels by the Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU)

15. Mr WONG Yuk-man updated members on the latest development of students' protest against the allocation of hostels by HKBU. He opined that as the management of HKBU had responded to students' request and discussion between the two parties was going on, the Panel might consider discussion of the subject at a later stage. Members agreed.

Review of the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme

16. The Chairman suggested that the Panel should follow up its deliberations on the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme at the next regular meeting. Members agreed.

17. Summing up the discussions, the Chairman said that the Panel would discuss the following subjects at the next regular meeting scheduled for 8 June

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2009 at 4:30 pm -

- (a) start-up loan for post-secondary education institutions;
- (b) recognition of academic qualifications awarded by Mainland and Taiwan higher education institutions; and
- (c) review of the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme.

IV. Capital works projects of the University Grants Committee-funded institutions

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1472/08-09(02), CB(2)1482/08-09(02), CB(2)1457/08-09(01) and (02), and CB(2)1508/08-09(01)-(03)]

18. Members noted the updated background brief entitled "Capital works projects for the implementation of four-year undergraduate programmes in the University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions" prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat.

Extension to the existing University Library at Central Campus of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK)

Powerpoint presentation by CUHK

19. Professor FUNG Tung, Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor made a powerpoint presentation to explain the capital works project for CUHK to construct an extension to the existing University Library at its central campus in Sha Tin (the Project). Members noted the powerpoint presentation materials which had been provided by CUHK to the Panel before the meeting.

Project design

20. Professor Patrick LAU said that he supported the extension of the University Library. However, he was concerned about the construction of a single-storey basement beneath the existing concourse as this would be costly. In his view, more storeys should be built to meet the space requirement instead of constructing a basement.

21. Professor FUNG Tung explained that without the basement, an eight-storey or nine-storey building would be required to provide some 6 170 square metres in net operational floor area. Given the shape of the selected site, the floor layout of the extended building was long and narrow which was not ideal for specific library facilities such as the 24-hour learning commons. In contrast, a single-storey basement could be more spacious to facilitate different accommodation designs. Moreover, the construction of a nine-storey building at

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the site would affect the existing landscape of the university campus in particular the University Mall.

22. Ms Audrey EU said that some professors had complained about the need to search for books and materials in different libraries of CUHK. She asked whether the book collection in the University Library would be increased after the completion of the Project.

23. Professor FUNG Tung responded that the book collection in the University Library increased by about 80 000 to 100 000 books per year, some of which were donated by alumni. The University Library would also increase its collection of electronic books to save storage space.

24. Ms Audrey EU enquired about the energy saving and greening designs of the extended building. Given the time constraints, she requested CUHK to provide the information in writing.

25. Professor FUNG Tung explained that the 6-storey building was designed with a view to protecting the house swifts nesting on the facades of the existing University Library. There would be energy saving and greening designs at the rooftop of the building. Eight trees would be affected by the Project, with seven of them relocated and one felled. New trees would be planted within the University campus.

26. Dr Priscilla LEUNG declared interest as a graduate of CUHK. She shared the view that the existing landscape of the University campus in particular the University Mall should be preserved. As she had not received any complaints about the Project, she asked whether CUHK had consulted the student union and staff associations and had received any objection to the design of the Project.

27. Professor FUNG Tung responded that CUHK had briefed and consulted students and staff on the Project on different occasions, including student assemblies, engagement meetings and fora on the Campus Master Plan. CUHK would continue to consult the student leaders and staff representatives on the detailed design of the Project. The relevant information would be updated onto the CUHK's website. So far, CUHK had not received any objection to the latest design of the Project.

28. Miss Tanya CHAN said that the President of CUHK Student Union had expressed concern about the impact of the construction of the basement on the design and feature of the concourse. She pointed out that students had complained about the poor planning of the Teaching Complex at the Western Campus, and some space had been left unused but was prohibited from using by students. The students were concerned whether the same problem would arise in respect of the extended University Library.

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29. Mr David LIM See-wai, Director of Campus Development replied that the design of the basement, including its air ventilation system and fire escape routes, would not affect the existing design and feature of the concourse including the Beacon.

30. Professor FUNG Tung supplemented that CUHK was re-arranging the use of some space in the Teaching Complex at its Western Campus, having regard to the nuisance that would be generated in the course of the construction works for the Project starting from the fourth quarter of the year. He assured members that the space made available for student use would not be less than before.

31. Mr Tommy CHEUNG declared interest as a member of the Council of CUHK. He said that the Liberal Party supported the Project.

32. Professor Patrick LAU expressed grave concern about the proposed design of the extension to the University Library, in particular the basement which would be costly and without natural light. He considered that CUHK should consider other feasible design options to reduce the cost of construction of the basement without affecting the landscape of the concourse. For example, the extension could be on the southern side of the University Library. He considered that CUHK should work out a better design for consultation with students and staff.

33. Professor CHING Pak-chung, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, responded that CUHK had carefully considered the views of different experts and various design options for the Project, and had decided to adopt the proposed design for consultation with the key stakeholders.

34. Mr David LIM See-wai explained that CUHK had considered various designs before deciding to adopt the present one, after taking into account the surrounding environment and the distribution of the nests of the house swifts in the facades of the University Library. Given the main entrance to the Administration Building and the majority of house swifts nesting on the southern side of the University Library, CUHK therefore decided to build the extension on the northern side of the University Library and construct the basement beneath the concourse. The basement would be designed in such a way that there would be natural light. He also explained the soil conditions and the depth of the excavation of the selected site for the Project, and assured members that the adoption of the design for a basement would not increase the cost of the Project.

35. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that given the site constraint, it might be difficult to accommodate the view of Professor Patrick LAU to further move the extended Library towards the slope.

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Conclusion

36. Concluding the discussions, the Chairman suggested that CUHK should discuss with Professor Patrick LAU about the design of the Project. She also requested the Administration to provide a paper to set out the questions raised by members and the response of CUHK at the meeting before the proposal was submitted to PWSC for consideration.

37. As diverse views had been expressed on the Project, the Chairman put to vote the proposal for the submission of the Project to PWSC for consideration. Five members voted for and one member voted against the proposal, and one member abstained. The Chairman declared that the Panel supported the submission of the proposal to PWSC for consideration.

Student hostel, phase 3 of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU)

Powerpoint presentation by PolyU

38. Ir Prof KO Jan-ming, Acting President, made a powerpoint presentation to explain the capital works project for PolyU to construct the student hostel, phase 3 in Homantin. Members noted the powerpoint presentation materials which had been provided by PolyU to the Panel before the meeting.

Shortage of hostels

39. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong noted that PolyU had a shortfall of 2 070 hostel places and the proposed student hostel would provide 1 650 places. In other words, after the completion of the student hostel in 2013, PolyU would still have a shortfall of 420 places. He asked how the Administration would resolve the shortage problem in the UGC sector.

40. Under Secretary for Education (USED) responded that the Administration had identified two suitable sites for the construction of joint hostels to mitigate the shortfall of hostel places in the UGC-funded institutions. As the two joint hostels would be located in Tseung Kwan O and Ma On Shan, PolyU would not participate in those projects. Given the lack of available sites within the PolyU campus, the proposed student hostel block was located outside the campus and within a 20-minute walk from the PolyU campus. The Administration would continue to search for suitable sites for the construction of student hostels for the UGC sector.

41. Professor Patrick LAU noted some space in the selected site and enquired whether this could be used to increase the capacity of the proposed student hostel. He also sought information on the reasons for the orientation of the hostel rooms.

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42. Ir Prof KO Jan-ming replied that the site would be fully used and the hostel block was already designed to the maximum plot ratio. The orientation of the hostel units was planned with reference to the advice of the Environmental Protection Department concerning traffic noise.

Nuisance to residents

43. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that there were complaints from local residents about noise nuisance caused by PolyU hostel students. He sought information on the design of the proposed student hostel to reduce noise nuisance to nearby residents.

44. In response, Ir Prof KO Jan-ming acknowledged the noise nuisance caused by some PolyU students in hostels to nearby residents. He said that PolyU would continue to educate its students on the matter. It was observed that more complaints about noise nuisance caused by hostels students were lodged at the beginning of a new academic year and such complaints would decrease as time went by. This showed the positive result of the education process. After discussion with the Kowloon City District Council (KCDC) members, PolyU would arrange meetings between students and residents to enhance mutual understanding and respect for each other. PolyU would also work out guidelines on students' behaviour in hostels and measures to mitigate noise nuisance to residents in the vicinity.

45. Mrs Regina IP said that there were also complaints about noise nuisance caused by students in the hostels of the University of Hong Kong in the Central Western District. Referring to a recent visit to a student hostel of PolyU, she was impressed with the recreational facilities provided therein. She enquired whether the same facilities would be provided in the proposed student hostel and whether its design would mitigate noise nuisance such as by using sound-proof materials. She also asked whether PolyU would adopt a penalty system to discourage students from causing noise and other nuisances to nearby residents.

46. Ir Prof KO Jan-ming responded that activities were conducted in the communal areas in student hostels which were normally the source of noise nuisance. To mitigate noise nuisance to nearby residents, the communal areas in the proposed student hostel block would be positioned at the central part of the site which would be farther away from nearby buildings. Sound-proof materials for meeting rooms would also be used. Currently, students living in hostels were reminded not to disturb the local residents. In addition, PolyU was considering the feasibility of adopting a point system with respect to students' hostel conduct in the allocation of hostel places.

47. Dr Priscilla LEUNG pointed out the acute conflict between local residents and PolyU hostel students. She said that some residents felt infuriated

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as students had retorted in abusive language to residents' complaints about noise nuisance. As a KCDC member, she had participated in a reconciliation meeting between students and residents. She opined that as first-year students were the major target of complaints, PolyU should reinforce education for these students and advise them to be considerate. Activities such as orientation and induction programmes for first-year students should be conducted in areas away from residential areas.

48. Ir Prof KO Jan-ming reiterated that PolyU would continue to educate students to refrain from causing nuisance to local residents and adopt measures to reduce noise levels in student hostels, including the consideration of the introduction of a point system to discourage misbehaviour. PolyU would explore with the UGC on the feasibility of expelling students from residing in hostels for repeated misbehaviour.

Conclusion

49. As diverse views had been expressed on the hostel project, the Chairman put to vote the proposal for its submission to PWSC for consideration. Eight members voted for and one member voted against the proposal. The Chairman declared that the Panel supported the submission of the proposed project to PWSC for consideration.

Innovation Tower of PolyU

Powerpoint presentation by PolyU

50. Ir Prof KO Jan-ming made a powerpoint presentation to explain the capital works project for PolyU to develop an Innovation Tower within its campus in Hung Hom. Members noted the powerpoint presentation materials which had been provided by PolyU to the Panel before the meeting

Design of the Innovation Tower

51. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the former President of PolyU said in October 2008 that the estimated cost of the Innovation Tower would be around \$500 million. Noting that the latest estimated cost of the project was around \$707.6 million in money-of-the-day prices, he sought information on the reasons for the substantial increase of the project cost and the cost of the architectural design and consultancy services for the project. As the Government and PolyU would contribute about \$628.3 million and \$79.3 million respectively, he enquired whether PolyU had to shoulder part of the cost from private donations because of the specific design of the Innovation Tower.

52. Ir Prof KO Jan-ming explained that the \$79.3 million to be contributed by PolyU was for the purpose of enhancing the building features including the

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curtain wall and architectural fins on top of the standard provisions allocated by the UGC, as well as extra piling and substructure to facilitate future expansion. He added that the proposed architectural design of the Innovation Tower was the winning design in a competition with both local and overseas entries. Mr CHAN Shu-keung, Director of Campus Development, supplemented that the cost of the architectural design and consultancy services for the project was \$22 million and the successful bid was the lowest in the tender exercise.

53. Mrs Regina IP expressed support for the promotion of the development of cultural and creative industries by the Administration. She considered that PolyU should complement the efforts of the Administration. In her view, a good design should be meaningful and carry symbolic significance. The design of the Innovation Tower should be one of such examples. She asked about the meaning of the selected design of the Innovation Tower.

54. Mr Vincent NG Wing-shun, Consultant (Director, AGC Design Ltd), said that the proposed design of the Innovation Tower was the winning design in a competitive selection exercise involving five architectural teams, each comprising a world-class overseas architect and an experienced local architect. As the Innovation Tower provided space and facilities mainly to the School of Design, the design should be innovative and creative and not be of the conventional style. The winning design of the Innovation Tower had the feel of flowing. It was hoped that the Innovation Tower could be an exemplar of design and inspire the local community to enrich the building design. He added that the design was well supported by the staff and students of PolyU.

55. Mrs Regina IP expressed support for the creative design of the Innovation Tower.

56. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong noted that the specific design of the Innovation Tower had increased its cost which had to be shouldered by PolyU. He opined that while the UGC-funded institutions had the autonomy on the use of their donations and were accountable to their donors, given the prevailing economic downturns and the difficulty in raising donations, the UGC-funded institutions should be prudent to use donations. The contribution of about \$79.3 million from its own sources of funding was not a small amount to PolyU. As some \$7 billion of public fund would be used on the capital works projects for the UGC sector for the implementation of four-year undergraduate programmes, he called on the Administration to ensure that the Government would only fund the standard provision of the project, and any enhanced provision should be funded by PolyU.

57. Ir Prof KO Jan-ming responded that PolyU agreed with Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's view on the need to use private donations prudently. He added that the design of the Innovation Tower was creative by professional standard, and PolyU aimed to achieve a mission in its design. PolyU's contribution to the

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project had been limited to around 10% of the project cost.

Conclusion

58. As diverse views had been expressed on the proposed project, the Chairman put to vote the proposal for its submission to PWSC for consideration. Seven members voted for the proposal, and two members abstained. The Chairman declared that the Panel supported the submission of the proposed project to PWSC for consideration.

V. Prices of school textbooks and development of electronic learning resources

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1457/08-09(05) and (06) and IN14/08-09]

Oral presentations by deputations

Hong Kong Educational Publishers Association

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1520/08-09(01)]

59. Mr Elvin LEE presented the views of Hong Kong Educational Publishers Association as detailed in its submission. He highlighted that the gradual decline in the student population in Hong Kong and the education reforms over the years had forced many publishers to close down their business, leaving only about 10 or more publishers in the market. With no assistance from the Government, the textbook publishing industry required substantial investments and was not profiteering. Since the launch of the education reform in 2000, publishers produced different reference materials in addition to printed textbooks such as worksheets and examination papers. The role of publishers had changed from only providing printed textbooks and learning materials to providing supportive services to teachers and students. Mr LEE pointed out that schools could choose whether or not to use textbooks and students could use teacher-developed resources, reference books, and second-hand textbooks. Parents and teachers had found textbooks reliable because textbooks had to be submitted to the Education Bureau (EDB) for review for inclusion on the Recommended Textbook List. Publishers had to make reference to the curriculum in deciding the contents of textbooks.

60. Mr LEE clarified some misunderstandings prevailed among parents. He stressed that publishers had not frequently revised textbooks; woodfree paper was not cheaper than coated paper; and de-bundling textbooks into sections would not lower their costs. He also clarified that the media reports on high new senior secondary (NSS) textbook prices were misleading. He emphasized that textbooks had assumed an important role in the implementation of the education reforms and the promotion of the new mode of learning. Publishers had endeavoured to help alleviate the financial burden on parents. Many publishers

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had frozen textbook prices, offered interest-free instalments for purchase of textbooks, and provided more information on the textbook list. Mr LEE indicated that the industry was fully supportive of the task of the Working Group on Textbooks and E-learning Resources Development (the Working Group) to explore ways to lower the cost of textbooks to relieve the financial burden on parents. The industry considered it important that in developing e-learning resources, the quality of learning and teaching and the operation and development of the textbook publishing industry would not be adversely affected.

Committee on Home-School Cooperation

61. Professor WONG Po-choi presented the views of Committee on Home-School Cooperation. He said that the Committee had all along been concerned about the problems of increasing textbook prices, textbook weight, and gifts and donations to schools and teachers, and considered it necessary for the Administration to address these problems. He pointed out that the textbook publishing industry was not operated in an entirely free market. Publishers had to follow the curriculum prescribed by the Administration; schools had little choice for textbooks because only a few textbooks were available; and parents were given no choice but to follow the decision made by schools. Schools and teachers and not students were the customers of textbook publishers. Professor WONG considered it unfair to put all the blames on publishers because they were operating business with the goal to make profits. He pointed out that the content of textbooks had profound impact on teaching quality. Textbook content had been increased substantially over the years, and new content and exercise sheets were added to attract customers. The increase in textbook content had increased stress on teachers who could not make full use of the textbooks, and students found the content overwhelming and subsequently lost interest in study. Professor WONG pointed out the lack of a mechanism to monitor the development of textbooks and the inadequate manpower deployed to the area. He called on the schools to provide the price of each textbook on their textbook lists and make better use of exercise books contained in the textbooks.

*The Anglo-Chinese Textbook Publishers Organisations Ltd
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1520/08-09(01)]*

62. Mr LI Hing-sang presented the views of the Anglo-Chinese Textbook Publishers Organisations Ltd as detailed in its submission. He said that textbook publishers were fully supportive of the NSS curriculum and had put in substantial resources to cope with the changes. Publishers began to work on the publishing plan of NSS textbooks in 2005. The NSS textbooks were submitted to EDB for review in 2008, approved by EDB in 2009 and made available to schools. In Mr LI's view, the NSS curriculum was a mammoth education project, as it involved 24 subjects. He stressed that the media reports on the high prices of NSS textbooks were inaccurate. The reported price increase was based on the

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comparison of the three-year NSS curriculum and the existing two-year senior secondary curriculum. It was also erroneously reported that one set of textbooks included four instead of two elective subjects. Mr LI considered it inappropriate to compare the prices of NSS textbooks with those of the existing senior secondary curriculum because of the great difference in curriculum.

Neighbourhood & Worker's Service Centre
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1747/08-09(01)]

63. Mr WONG Yun-tat presented the views of Neighbourhood & Worker's Service Centre. He said that many parents could not afford the rising textbook prices which had increased by 7.7% in 2008. In addition to textbooks, parents had to pay for the cost of computers and internet access fee since both junior and secondary school students were required to access the internet for research and completing assignments. In his view, the increasing textbook prices were due to the rising operational cost of publishing textbooks, frequent revision of textbooks, and gifts and donations offered to schools/teachers by publishers. Notwithstanding the rising operational cost, he queried the justifications for substantial textbook price increases. He was concerned about the lack of transparency and monitoring mechanism in this regard. Mr WONG pointed out that the costs of gifts and donations given by publishers to schools/teachers were finally passed onto parents. While expressing support for the development of e-resources, he considered it important to address issues such as the cost of e-textbooks, frequent revision of hardware, and subscription fees for accessing the software. He urged the Administration to strictly enforce the 3-year rule in textbook revision, allow parents to select textbooks for their children to bring in competition to reduce textbook prices, and help schools and teachers to develop learning materials. He also suggested that the costs of computers and internet access service fee should be included in the School Textbook Assistance Scheme.

Hong Kong Subsidized Secondary Schools Council
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1520/08-09(02)]

64. Mr Alex CHU Kai-wing presented the views of Hong Kong Subsidized Secondary Schools Council as detailed in its submission. He pointed out the important role of textbooks in learning and teaching, and the problems of increasing prices and frequent revision. The Council recognized the large investments of textbook publishers and the keen competition in the industry. The Council suggested that publishers should formulate a code of practice to maintain the quality of textbooks as well as to reduce the publishing cost. Teachers should make use of the Hong Kong Education City (HKEdCity) to share their teaching experiences to save the cost of printing textbooks. Mr CHU further said that the Council supported the development of e-learning resources by the Administration and considered it important for relevant bodies to participate in the process. The Council called on the Administration to set up a

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steering committee to oversee the development, conduct pilot projects and allocate sufficient resources to schools for the purpose. In the Council's view, textbooks played an important role in teaching and learning and could not be completely replaced by e-learning resources. The core parts of the curriculum should be contained in textbooks while those in connection with current affairs, technological information, etc. could be in the form of e-learning resources. Mr CHU considered it necessary for the Administration to address issues such as copyright of e-learning materials, revision of software, increased workload of teachers, changed mode of teaching, training for teachers, and financial assistance to needy families to meet the various costs of e-learning.

Federation of PTA of Hong Kong Eastern District

65. Ms PANG Wai-ling presented the views of the Federation of PTA of Hong Kong Eastern District. She said that the Federation objected to the increase of textbook prices. It was noted that textbook prices had been increased in times of inflation as well as deflation. She queried the availability of a mechanism for increasing textbook prices. She pointed out that the Curriculum Development Institute of EDB had issued a guide for parents on the selection of textbooks and the role of the Administration in monitoring textbook prices. However, the issue of increasing textbook prices remained unresolved. Ms PANG added that the Federation supported the development of e-learning resources but considered it important to address various issues such as pricing and content of e-textbooks. Since e-learning would change the existing mode of education, the Administration should actively monitor its development. In the Federation's view, the most pressing issue was the NSS textbook prices because they would impact on the future pricing of textbooks.

Subsidized Primary Schools Council
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1552/08-09(01)]

66. Mr TANG Kwai-tai presented the views of the Subsidized Primary Schools Council. He highlighted that the Administration should urge textbook publishers to lower publishing costs in order to reduce textbook prices. The Council supported the development of e-learning resources but did not consider that e-learning materials could replace printed textbooks or solve the problems of increasing textbook prices. The increase of textbook prices and the development of e-learning resources were two separate issues. Printed textbooks not only helped alleviate teachers' workload but also fulfilled the psychological needs of parents and students. Mr TANG pointed out that many teachers had adopted digital materials such as powerpoint and interactive digital smart boards in teaching. Teacher-developed complementary materials included study notes and worksheets. In the Council's view, the most effective way of teaching was for teachers to develop their own teaching materials in printed and e-learning forms to cater for the needs of students. However, teachers could not afford to do such work with the existing heavy workload. For the purpose of

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carrying such work, the Administration should increase teachers' manpower, provide guidelines and frameworks for preparing learning materials, and solve the copyright issues. Mr TANG further said that high quality e-learning materials would enhance teaching and learning. Schools should create a learning environment for teachers and students to adopt information technology in education, and the Administration should provide sufficient resources to schools for the development of learning resources and change students/parents' reliance on printed textbooks.

Consumer Council

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1520/08-09(03)]

67. Ms Rosa WONG presented the views of Consumer Council as detailed in its submission. Echoing the views of Professor WONG Po-choi of Committee on Home-School Cooperation, she said that the textbook publishing industry did not operate in a free market. Once a particular textbook was selected by schools, it became a necessity and parents did not have the choice of whether or not to buy the textbooks. The Consumer Council had made many suggestions to address the issues of increasing textbook prices. Ms WONG elaborated that schools should include sufficient information on the textbook lists to facilitate parents to understand which books were for reference only. Students should be encouraged to buy textbooks collectively to bargain for lower prices. Textbook prices should be made available as early as possible for teachers' reference. Publishers should debundle textbooks from teaching materials and should not pass the cost of the latter onto parents. As for e-learning materials, the Consumer Council urged the Administration to address issues such as copyright and the revision of software.

Justice and Peace Commission of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1520/08-09(04)]

68. Miss YIP Po-lam presented the views of the Justice and Peace Commission of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese as detailed in its submission. She pointed out that information technology had become an integral part of learning for students, and the Working Group had recognized the inevitability of the use of e-learning resources. Students had to make use of the internet to do school assignments. She agreed with the views of the Hong Kong Educational Publishers Association and The Anglo-Chinese Textbook Publishers Organisation Ltd that the growing trend of e-learning must be recognized, and that the Administration should ensure "one student one computer" both at home and at school to facilitate on-line learning. She referred to the experience in San Francisco of the United States where low-income families were provided with free internet access service. According to the Information Note entitled "Use and development of electronic learning resources for school education in selected places" prepared by the Research and Library Services Division of the Legislative Council Secretariat (the Information Note), the definition of

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"textbook" had been expanded to include "electronic textbook" in Texas of the United States. It also mentioned that "Technology Immersion Pilot students who reported more frequent uses of laptops for learning, and especially outside of schools, had significantly higher scores in both reading and mathematics tests". Miss YIP was concerned that the extensive use of e-learning materials would create a "digital gap", marginalizing the students of low-income families. She urged the Administration to include the costs of e-learning resources and internet access service fee into the School Textbook Assistance Scheme.

*Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1520/08-09(05)]*

69. Mr Vincent CHENG Wing-shun presented the views of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB) as detailed in its submission. He said that in the midst of economic downturn and rising unemployment, the prices of textbooks continued to increase and remained a financial burden on many parents. During the past three years the textbook prices had increased by over 14%. DAB conducted a survey in April 2009 in which more than 600 parents were interviewed. About 90% of the respondents indicated that the increasing textbook prices had created a financial burden on the families, and about 78.7% indicated that schools had not consulted them with regard to the selection of textbooks. Mr CHENG elaborated DAB's suggestions to address the problem which included adding prices as a criterion for inclusion of textbooks on the Recommended Textbook List (RTL), issuing simplified versions of textbooks by EDB, providing textbook allowance of \$2,000 to all students, appealing to schools to consider parents' affordability in the selection of textbooks and organize activities for the donation and sale of second-hand books, providing more information on the textbook lists to facilitate purchase of second-hand books, and consulting parents on the selection of textbooks by schools.

Coalition of Education-Concerned Parents

70. Mrs Serenade CHAN presented the views of the Coalition of Education-Concerned Parents. She said that the issues of textbook prices and students' schoolbag weight had been discussed at a meeting of the Panel back in 1998. However, the issues had remained unresolved, and she was concerned whether the issues had been approached from a wrong perspective. Referring to the Information Note, she considered it of high quality and the information contained therein comprehensive. She also quoted the successful experience of South Korea where the Government developed a hub to coordinate teaching and learning materials and textbooks as well as information for parents.

*Hong Kong Women Workers' Association
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1588/08-09(01)]*

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71. Miss Ivy CHAN presented the views of the Hong Kong Women Workers' Association as detailed in its submission. She referred to the survey on poverty population conducted in the third quarter of 2006 by the Administration. According to the findings, during the period of 2001-2006, more women had joined the workforce. However, about 73% of the employees earning less than \$5,000 per month were women, and about 62% of women earned an average of \$3,900 per month, below the poverty line. Women took up mainly part-time and casual jobs on contractual terms. Miss CHAN considered that high textbook prices and expenses related to computers and internet access service had already been a financial burden on these women. Although EDB had introduced the Computer Recycling Scheme with one-year free internet access service for needy families, many parents were not aware of the Scheme. Low-income families who had signed service agreements of internet access service lasting 18 or 24 months could not enjoy free service under the Scheme. Miss CHAN called on the Administration to extend the Scheme, simplify its application procedure, and consider providing more assistance to low-income families such as by including internet access service fee in the School Textbook Assistance Scheme.

Concerning CSSA Review Alliance

72. Mr LEE Tai-shing presented the views of the Concerning CSSA Review Alliance. He said that information technology in education had become integral part of learning, and primary school students had to use computers and access the internet to complete school assignments. However, computer-related expenses and internet access service fee had not been included into the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme which had not been reviewed since 1996. The School Textbook Assistance Scheme had not been reviewed for even a longer period. Mr LEE pointed out that the Computer Recycling Scheme was only a short-term measure which failed to address the problem at root. Many low-income families who had signed service agreements lasting 18 or 24 months could not enjoy the free service provided under the Scheme. He called on the Administration to develop long-term and integrated measures to assist low-income families.

*Concerning Group for Women Poverty
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1645/08-09(01)]*

73. Ms HU Yi-lai presented the views of the Concerning Group for Women Poverty. She said that the current economic slowdown had aggravated the financial burden on low-income families. As revealed by the findings of the Consumer Council, textbook prices had increased above the Consumer Price Index for several years. Should the proposal for developing e-textbooks be implemented, she was concerned that low-income families could not afford the additional expenses. She urged the Administration to increase textbook allowances and include the expenses related to computers and internet access service into the School Textbook Assistance Scheme.

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The Administration's response

74. In response to the views of the deputations, USED said that the prices of school textbooks had been an issue of concern in the community over the years. He pointed out that pricing of school textbook was not regulated by EDB and textbook publishing was operated in a free market. EDB monitored the quality of textbooks through the issuance of RTL, and publishers produced textbooks on the basis of the curriculum guidelines set by EDB. Schools had the discretion to select textbooks from RTL or other textbooks in the light of their missions and the needs of their students. Schools could also choose not to use textbooks at all. USED added that in the Administration's view, the long-term solution to reduce textbook prices should be the development of e-textbooks and e-learning resources. For this purpose, the Administration had established the Working Group in 2008 to study the use and development of textbooks and e-learning resources. In the implementation of the three strategies for the use of information technology (IT) in education, EDB had allocated substantial resources to assist schools in the development of school-based as well as network-based e-learning and e-teaching resources, and had also collaborated with other stakeholders to develop an on-line depository of learning and teaching resources hosted in the HKEdCity for teachers' use. The Administration would adopt a gradual and diversified approach to develop the infrastructure for and a culture in the use of e-learning resources in schools.

Textbook prices and electronic resources

75. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the prices of school textbooks were expensive and specific measures should be made to address the problem. He pointed out that parents were concerned about the transfer of the costs of textbook advertising and promotion and of gifts and donations to schools onto textbook prices. He called on the Administration to reach a consensus with the schools councils to prohibit the acceptance by schools of gifts and donations from publishers except those for ceremonial purpose. The cost of gifts should not be included into the textbook prices.

76. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong further said that he noted an article of the Oxford University Press which mentioned that for the subject of the Chinese Language at primary levels, it had published a total of 72 textbooks and 320 sets of teaching materials. The cost of compiling the teaching materials was expensive. According to teachers, they would only use one to two sets of such materials to support the teaching of the subject. Mr CHEUNG suggested that EDB should discuss with the publishers to separate the costs of teaching resources from the costs of textbooks, and EDB should provide a certain amount of money to schools for purchasing teaching materials for teachers' reference.

77. USED responded that the Administration was aware of the problem of

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high textbook prices and was discussing with publishers on separate pricing of textbooks and teaching resources. He pointed out that schools had been provided with funds to purchase teaching resources and the HKEdCity provided a wide range of web-based teaching resources. Furthermore, EDB had worked closely with the Independent Commission Against Corruption and had provided guidelines to schools concerning the acceptance of free gifts and donations from publishers.

78. Mr Edward WONG responded that publishers had started to explore feasible options for de-bundling textbooks from complimentary resources. Publishers welcomed any suggestion which would facilitate the reaching of a consensus among stakeholders on an effective model to reduce the prices of textbooks. Given the diverse views in the school sector on adequacy of resources to purchase teaching resources, the publishers associations hoped that a specific grant would be provided to schools for the procurement of teaching resources.

79. In response to the Chairman's enquiry on the percentage of textbook prices that was attributed to the compilation of teaching resources, Mr Edward WONG replied that the percentage would depend on a number of factors including the publishers' background and the subject contents. He added that publishers would work out some rough figures for further discussion with EDB.

80. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan expressed regret that the problem of high textbook prices had not been resolved after extensive discussions in the community for 11 years, and was getting more serious as a wide range of teaching and learning resources such as CD-ROMs were incorporated in the prices of textbooks. As e-learning resources might take many years to develop and could not replace printed textbooks for the immediate future, he questioned how the Administration would regulate the prices of textbooks, in particular on the proposal for separate pricing of textbooks and teaching resources. He considered it confusing to say that EDB would enforce the 3-year rule in textbook revision strictly as it should have done so all along.

81. USED responded that EDB was negotiating with the publishers on separate pricing of textbooks and teaching resources. EDB had all along enforced the 3-year rule in textbook revision strictly. He pointed out that EDB had rejected publishers' applications to issue new editions without substantial justifications even if the textbooks had been published for more than three years. Responding to the Chairman's enquiry about the approval of textbook revision within three years, USED explained that textbook revision might be necessary to accommodate curriculum changes such as changes in the new senior secondary curriculum under the new academic structure.

82. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that as a serving teacher, he always received invitations from publishers to attend promotional activities of new textbooks

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before the commencement of a new school year which were often held in sumptuous venues. He did not attend these activities. He was concerned that such activities were costly and the costs would ultimately be passed onto parents in the prices of textbooks. He stressed that the Administration should enforce strict compliance by publishers and schools with the relevant guidelines and requirements for textbook sale as trading operations in schools.

83. USED responded that the Administration had advised publishers to avoid offering luxurious hospitality for the promotion of new textbooks and teaching resources to reduce the cost of textbooks. To facilitate the selection of textbooks by teachers, EDB had requested publishers to announce the prices of textbooks for the new senior secondary curriculum and other levels of studies in April and May 2009 respectively. EDB hoped that schools would also consult parents on the matter through their parent-teacher associations.

84. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that given the local culture and learning environment, printed textbooks were necessary. Teachers welcomed the development of e-resources for their reference and found such resources useful. However, they could not afford the time to produce e-resources. He considered it necessary to increase the quantity and enhance the quality of e-resources. He called on the Administration to collaborate with the HKEdCity to develop more e-resources or provide resources for schools to develop school-based e-resources. USED replied that under the Third Strategy on Information Technology in education, EDB was collaborating with the HKEdCity to develop an on-line depository of learning and teaching resources for certain subjects for teachers' use.

85. Miss Tanya CHAN noted with concern that some textbooks for the new senior secondary curriculum were excessively packaged and bundled with various teaching and learning resources. She considered it necessary to require publishers to de-bundle textbooks from teaching and learning materials such as audio-visual aids and CD-ROMs, and provide the prices for individual items. She also considered it necessary for the Administration to request publishers to announce the prices of textbooks for different primary and secondary levels to facilitate teachers' selection of textbooks.

86. In reply, USED responded that publishers had responded positively to the Administration's request and had announced the textbook pricelists for the new senior secondary curriculum in early April 2009 and other levels in early May 2009. The Administration supported de-bundling textbooks from teaching and learning resources, and considered that parents should be given the option of purchasing textbooks and learning resources separately. The Administration was discussing with the key stakeholders in this regard. At this stage, the Administration had no intention of imposing a mandatory requirement for de-bundling textbooks from teaching and learning resources.

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87. Ms Audrey EU expressed support for the development of e-textbooks but considered printed textbooks necessary for teaching and learning in schools. She considered that the pricing of textbooks and teaching and learning resources should be transparent and de-bundled, and specific measures had to be made to lower textbook prices. She disagreed with the view that production of textbooks should be Government-led in order to suppress their prices. She agreed that needy families such as recipients of CSSA should be given subsidy for access to internet service.

88. The Chairman requested the publishers associations to make known the publisher organizations which had agreed to freeze the prices of textbooks in the new school year and to provide the separate prices of textbooks and teaching and learning resources. She also requested the two schools councils to follow up with schools on measures to reduce the costs of textbook promotional activities which would be transferred to the parents. She expressed support for the production of textbooks by publishers and objected to the Administration taking over this activity as this could become a form of ideology control.

89. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered that the Administration should review the current criteria for the acceptance of free gifts and donations by schools under which the approval of the school management committee concerned was needed and no personal advantage was involved. In his view, such criteria were not adequate as school management committees readily accepted donations to schools which did not involve personal advantage. He suggested that gifts and donations to schools should be restricted to ceremonial purpose within a prescribed ceiling. He agreed with the view that specific grants should be provided for the purchase of teaching resources and the production of textbooks should not be Government-led.

90. Mr LI Hing-sang said that the value and contribution of textbooks in school education were apparent. Publishers were actively discussing with EDB on feasible options to reduce prices of textbooks within parents' affordability. Publishers had explored and implemented different measures to reduce parents' financial burden, including the freeze of textbook prices in the new school year. In fact, 80% and 50% of publishers of secondary and primary school textbooks respectively had frozen their textbook prices and their names were reported in the media and made available in the internet. The publishers associations would continue to liaise with retailers on the provision of 12-month interest-free instalment for purchase of textbooks. He added that the textbook publishing market was small and the prices of textbooks should be set at reasonable levels to enable the trade to survive on the one hand and to maintain the quality of textbooks on the other.

Textbook recycling

91. In response to Mr LEE Cheuk-yan's enquiry about the Administration's

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measures to lower the prices of textbooks, USED said that the Administration would continue to promote textbook recycling. He pointed out that EDB had discussed with some schools some years ago about the conduct of a pilot scheme on the provision of textbooks by schools for loan to students. However, the response of parents was not encouraging as local children were accustomed to making notes on the textbooks. With the increasing awareness of the importance of environment protection in the community, the Administration would continue to discuss with schools for the implementation of a pilot scheme in the near future.

92. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung expressed support for textbook recycling, but pointed out that parents and schools had no confidence in the initiative because textbook revisions were so frequent. He suggested that EDB should collaborate with the Committee on Home-School Cooperation to promote the benefits of textbook recycling to parents and students.

93. USED responded that EDB would continue to promote textbook recycling in schools and enforce the 3-year rule in textbook revisions strictly. EDB would plan the implementation schedule of curriculum changes so that schools could have regard to such changes for individual subjects, and this would enhance the feasibility of textbook recycling

94. Ms Audrey EU said that textbook recycling was common in overseas countries where parents and students had accustomed to the practice. In Hong Kong, textbook recycling was also implemented in international schools such as the English Schools Foundation schools. She noted the local culture where some parents considered it natural for their children to use new schoolbags and textbooks in a new school year. For the purpose of environmental protection and reducing textbook prices, she considered it necessary to implement textbook recycling in local schools, and invited views from the deputations in this regard.

95. Mrs Serenade CHAN responded that she was not aware of any objection from parents to textbook recycling. She was given to understand that many private independent schools and Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools provided textbooks to students on one-year loan. Students were required to return the books to the schools by the end of the school year, and to pay for any damage to the books. According to these schools, the costs of the textbooks on loan had been included in their school fees. Mrs CHAN said that most parents welcomed such an arrangement, and parents still had the choice to purchase new textbooks for their children.

96. Mr TANG Kwai-tai responded that schools were implementing various initiatives on environmental protection and would not object to textbook recycling in principle. He considered it more suitable to implement textbook recycling in secondary schools than primary schools as primary students were less capable of keeping their textbooks in good conditions. He also pointed out

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the different culture in Hong Kong and overseas in that overseas students seldom brought textbooks back home but local parents were accustomed to using textbooks to assist their children's revision at home.

97. Mr Alex CHU Kai-wing responded that secondary schools also supported textbook recycling in principle. Some secondary schools had been encouraging the sale and purchase of second-hand textbooks between senior and junior secondary students on a voluntary basis, and the result was favourable. However, owing to frequent revision of textbooks because of curriculum changes in recent years, purchase of second-hand books might not be viable.

Admin

98. Ms Audrey EU requested the Administration to follow up the matter and provide a paper for follow-up discussion at a future meeting.

99. The Chairman said that she had once participated in a textbook collection and sale event in a district. She pointed out that many textbooks were collected but the sale was not encouraging, except dictionaries. The sale of primary school textbooks was not as good as secondary school textbooks as parents would prefer their children to mark notes on the textbooks.

School Textbook Assistance Scheme

100. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan asked whether the amount of subsidies under the School Textbook Assistance Scheme was adjusted in accordance with the price increases of textbooks. USED replied that the amount of subsidies was adjusted in accordance with the findings of the annual textbook prices surveys conducted by the Consumer Council.

101. Miss YIP Po-lam requested the Administration to review the School Textbook Assistance Scheme to provide subsidies to needy families for access to internet service.

Admin

102. In concluding the discussions, the Chairman requested the Administration to provide a written response to the views and suggestions raised for follow-up discussion by the Panel.

VI. Any other business

103. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 7:30 pm.