

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)2537/08-09
(The minutes have been seen by
the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

**Minutes of special meeting
held on Saturday, 11 July 2009, at 9:30 am
in the Chamber 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-yee, GBS, JP
Dr Hon Samson TAM Wai-ho, JP
- Public Officers attending** : Agenda item I

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education

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

Dr George Pook
Deputy Secretary General/Director – Public Examinations
Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

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Ms Christina LEE
General Manager–Assessment Development, Hong
Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

Agenda item II

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education, Education Bureau

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

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

Dr George Pook
Deputy Secretary General/Director – Public Examinations
Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

Ms Christina LEE
General Manager–Assessment Development, Hong
Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

Agenda item III

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education, Education Bureau

Ms Mable CHAN
Deputy Secretary for Education (2), Education Bureau

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

Agenda item IV

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education, Education Bureau

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Ms Mable CHAN
Deputy Secretary for Education (2), Education Bureau

Mrs Betty IP
Deputy Secretary for Education (3), Education Bureau

Agenda item V

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education, Education Bureau

Mrs Michelle WONG
Deputy Secretary for Education (4), Education Bureau

Miss WU Po-ling
Principal Assistant Secretary (School Administration & Support), Education Bureau

Attendance by invitation : Agenda item I

Education Convergence

Mr HO Hon-kuen
Vice-Chairperson

Mr WONG Ka-leung
Executive Committee Member

Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union

Mr LAI Chun-kit
Executive Committee Member

Committee on Home-School Cooperation

Professor WONG Po-choi
Chairman

Principal AU Yuet-ching
Vice Chairman

The Association of Heads of Secondary Schools of Tsuen Wan, Kwai Chung & Tsing Yi District

Mr HO Moon-tim
Secretary

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Hong Kong Liberal Studies Teachers' Association

Mr CHEUNG Yui-fai
Chairman

Mr YEUNG Ying-fai
External Vice-Chairman

Agenda item III

Civic Party

Mr LAM Seung-wan
Principal

HKSKH Lady MacLehose Centre

Mr Matthew LEE Ping-fai
Organizing Officer

Ms Sara Jabeen
Education Officer

Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers

Dr WU Siu-wai
Vice-Chairman

Ms WOO Man-yee
Assistant to Chairman

Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union

Mr CHAN Kwok-kuen
Executive Committee Member

Committee on Home-School Cooperation

Professor WONG Po-choi
Chairman

Agenda item IV

Association of School Heads of Island District

Mr CHUNG Chuen-ming
Chairman

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Ms YUEN Wai-kwan
Vice-Chairman

Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union

Mr CHAN Kwok-kuen
Executive Committee Member

Civic Party

Ms Ophelia LAM
Member, NTW Branch

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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Proposal for holding a special meeting to discuss school-based voluntary drug testing pilot scheme

Before proceeding to the agenda items and at the invitation of the Chairman, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that given the Administration's announcement of launching a trial scheme of school-based voluntary drug testing in some secondary schools in Tai Po in September 2009, he considered it necessary to convene a special meeting in end of July or early August 2009 to discuss the matter. He appealed to members to support his proposal.

2. The Chairman agreed that there was urgency to discuss the matter. She sought members' view on the proposal to convene an additional special meeting in July 2009.

3. While agreeing that the matter was of public concern, Mr Tommy CHEUNG stressed the need to consider the Legislative Council (LegCo) Secretariat's manpower resources as the Panel had held many special meetings in

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the past few weeks. He considered that the purpose of holding special meetings was not apparent on some occasions. He would be out of town during the summer recess. Under these circumstances, he did not agree to the proposal for convening another special meeting.

4. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung agreed to the proposal for holding another special meeting as soon as practicable on account of the urgency of the matter. In his view, it was necessary to understand the content as well as the various implications of the trial scheme before launch, and LegCo had to monitor Government policies.

5. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong was concerned about the heavy workload of the Secretariat. He said that many members would be out of town during the summer recess. In his view, the trial scheme would not be launched in September 2009 at the commencement of a new school year with the implementation of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) academic structure. Moreover, many schools had yet to form their views on school-based voluntary drug testing and the Administration had yet to thoroughly consider the relevant issues. Mr CHEUNG considered it more fruitful to hold a special meeting in September 2009 to discuss the matter.

6. Ms Audrey EU said that while she appreciated the heavy workload of the Secretariat, she considered it necessary to discuss the matter. She would be out of town soon and would return in early August 2009.

7. Dr Priscilla LEUNG expressed the concern of some members about the frequency of special meetings and the clash of committee meetings. She stressed the importance to consult members on their availability for the special meeting. Dr LEUNG said that she would be out of town from 19 July to 10 August 2009.

8. While agreeing to the need for discussing the matter, Mr WONG Sing-chi said that members should carefully consider the timing for holding the special meeting. It would be appropriate to discuss the matter when the Administration had come up with details of the school-based voluntary drug testing pilot scheme. He added that he would be out of town from mid-July to early August 2009.

9. The Chairman said that she noted the concern of members about the matter and the many special meetings held by the Panel. She pointed out that it would be difficult to avoid clash of committees meetings since many members had joined various committees. To facilitate members' attendance at the special meeting, she would propose different dates in July, August and September 2009 for members' choice. The special meeting would be held on the date chosen by most members.

10. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that should the trial scheme be launched in

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September, a special meeting had to be convened as soon as practicable. The special meeting could be held at a later date should the trial scheme be launched in November 2009 or after.

11. In response to the Chairman, Under Secretary for Education (US(Ed)) said that the Administration hoped to launch the pilot scheme in the next school year and would discuss with the school sector on the implementation details in the following week.

12. In view of the urgency of the matter, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan considered it necessary to convene a special meeting as soon as practicable. He agreed to the Chairman's proposal of arranging different meeting dates for members' choice.

I. Liberal Studies under the new senior secondary curriculum

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)2122/08-09(01) and (02)]

Oral presentation by deputations

Education Convergence

[LC Paper No. CB(2)2122/08-09(03)]

13. Mr WONG Ka-leung and Mr HO Hon-kuen presented the views of Education Convergence as detailed in its submission.

Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union

[LC Paper No. CB(2)2179/08-09(01)]

14. Mr LAI Chun-kit presented the views of Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union as detailed in its submission.

Committee on Home-School Co-operation

[LC Paper No. CB(2)2205/08-09(01)]

15. Professor WONG Po-choi presented the views of Committee on Home-School Co-operation as detailed in its submission.

The Association of Heads of Secondary Schools of Tsuen Wan, Kwai Chung & Tsing Yi District

[LC Paper No. CB(2)2167/08-09(01)]

16. Mr HO Moon-tim presented the views of the Association of Heads of Secondary Schools of Tsuen Wan, Kwai Chung and Tsing Yi District as detailed in its submission.

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Hong Kong Liberal Studies Teachers' Association
[LC Paper No. CB(2)2167/08-09(02)]

17. Mr CHEUNG Yui-fai presented the views of Hong Kong Liberal Studies Teachers' Association as detailed in its submission.

The Administration's response

18. US(Ed) said that the Administration had always upheld the belief of equipping students with a broad base of knowledge and independent thinking. Liberal Studies (LS), a core subject in the NSS school curriculum, had been designed to provide such learning experiences. The school sector had contributed enormously to the implementation of LS, and the community had high hope of the subject. US(Ed) urged the LS teachers to positively support the implementation of LS.

19. US(Ed) stressed that the Administration had been providing a wide range of resources to schools for implementing LS, and professional development programmes for teachers. The Administration was actively developing a LS Network Scheme on a district basis with a view to providing immediate and effective support to schools on School-based Assessment (SBA), and would make announcement as soon as practicable on the details. US(Ed) assured that the Administration would work closely with Hong Kong Liberal Studies Teachers' Association to monitor the implementation of LS, and would increase resources to schools when needed.

Small class teaching

20. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that LS was of focal attention because it was a core subject in the NSS school curriculum. There was consensus among stakeholders that the adoption of small class teaching was necessary for teaching LS to enhance interaction between students and teachers. Although the Administration had provided additional resources to schools for supporting the implementation of the NSS academic structure, the resources were not designated for LS. Mr CHEUNG enquired whether dedicated resources would be allocated to schools to enable their adoption of small class teaching for LS, such as by employing teaching assistants, as requested by the Hong Kong Liberal Studies Teachers' Association.

21. In response, US(Ed) said that the Administration had provided additional resources to schools for implementing the NSS curriculum including, among others, the advanced provision of the Senior Secondary Curriculum Support Grants (SSCSG) from the 2008-2009 school year for appointing teachers or teaching assistants and procuring learning and teaching materials. Under the principle of school-based management, schools were allowed full autonomy in

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the deployment of resources according to their needs. Other resources included the recurrent provision of the Capacity Enhancement Grant (CEG) and the one-off Operating Expenses Block Grant.

22. Ms Audrey EU said that she had all along supported small class teaching, in particular for LS. In campaigning for the 2004 LegCo election, one of her election platforms was the proposal for implementing small class teaching. Ms EU sought views of the deputations on the appropriate number of students in a small class or in a small group for teaching LS, and the resources required.

23. Mr CHEUNG Yui-fai of Hong Kong Liberal Studies Teachers' Association said that the purpose of adopting small class teaching was to facilitate and enhance interaction between teachers and students. The ideal way would be to divide students into small groups with 25 to 26 students at most in each group. Mr CHEUNG further said that although the Administration had disbursed SSCSG to facilitate the implementation of the NSS curriculum, it was not designated for LS and some schools had deployed the resources to other subjects such as languages.

24. Mr HO Hon-kuen of Education Convergence said that he had proposed the adoption of medium-class teaching with 30 students in each secondary class four years ago. Given that the sixth and seventh forms had already adopted medium-class teaching, it would be appropriate to extend it to other secondary classes upon the implementation the NSS academic structure. However, the Administration had not responded to his proposal.

25. Miss Tanya CHAN opined that the Administration should provide members with LS examination papers for completion so that members would have first-hand experience. She agreed to the view that without basic knowledge, it was doubtful whether students could make connections across knowledge areas and apply the knowledge gained from elective subjects to LS. Miss CHAN supported small class teaching and sought information on the time-table for implementing it in secondary schools, or at least for teaching LS.

26. US(Ed) explained that some schools had been implementing small class teaching by dividing the students of two classes into three groups with 25 to 28 students in each group. While small class teaching would facilitate interaction and communication between teachers and students, there were also occasions when large class teaching could achieve the purpose of the curriculum. Some schools had allocated resources to LS while others had deployed the resources to other areas having regard to their practical needs. In his view, the deployment of resources should rest with individual schools.

27. Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum Development), Education Bureau (PAS(CD)Ed) supplemented that the Administration would closely monitor the implementation of LS. Some secondary schools had incorporated

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LS in a small number of subjects at junior level such as Humanities. The lesson time allocated to LS under the NSS curriculum was about 10% of the total lesson time, which was on a par with the allocated time of an elective subject. PAS(CD)Ed stressed that LS would provide a platform for students to make use of the knowledge gained from other elective subjects to explore new issues or contexts so that they could further integrate and synthesise knowledge. The issue-enquiry approach in curriculum design as well as pedagogy would not encourage "empty talk". Students would be encouraged to support their views with reasons and knowledge acquired in basic education at junior secondary level as well as other subjects in basic education.

School-based assessment

28. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that the stakeholders had divergent views on the framework for public assessment of LS. According to a recent survey conducted by the Federation of Alumni Association of the Chinese University, many teachers had doubts about the reliability and fairness of the public examination of LS, in particular about SBA. Mr CHEUNG proposed that the Administration should allow schools to decide whether or not to adopt SBA for three years. For those schools choosing to adopt SBA, the SBA marks of students would be counted in the public assessment of LS. For those schools choosing not to adopt SBA, only the marks in the public examination would be counted. The Administration should conduct a review after three years to decide whether SBA was an integral part of LS and should be adopted by all schools. Mr CHEUNG stressed that Independent Enquiry Study (IES) should remain a core part of LS and would not be affected by the choice of a school for adopting SBA or not. The issue of SBA was a policy matter and should be addressed by the Education Bureau (EDB) instead of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA).

29. US(Ed) explained that IES was a core part of LS and provided an invaluable opportunity for students to learn to become self-directed learners. It was difficult to assess IES in the mode of public examination. US(Ed) acknowledged the concerns of some parents and teachers about SBA, and assured that workshops and sharing sessions would continue to be provided for new teachers.

30. Deputy Secretary General/Director – Public Examinations, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (DSG(HKEAA)) elaborated that SBA was an integral part of LS and was not designed as an option for schools and students. Ninety hours of learning time within the three years of senior secondary education were reserved for IES. A recent survey of schools on their attitude towards LS showed that a majority of schools were confident of the structure and design of the subject and more than 80% supported the assessment model. In terms of their confidence about undertaking LS, it was on a par with other subjects of the NSS curriculum.

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31. DSG(HKEAA) further said that considerable training had been provided for teachers to equip them with the essential knowledge and skills needed to teach LS. So far, some 3 500 teachers had been trained in the relevant courses, and further training would be provided over the next two years. Training workshops with a focus on assessment would help prepare teachers to teach LS and to generate data for HKEAA. To ensure the reliability of marking, double-marking, an independent marking of each script by two markers, would be adopted. If there was a large discrepancy between the marks awarded by the two markers, a third marker would be introduced. With regard to recruiting and training markers, DSG(HKEAA) assured that policies and procedures were in place for the purpose.

32. Since there would be no model answers for marking examination papers, Mr TAM Yiu-chung was concerned about the fairness of marking. He said that although the Administration would adopt the system of double-marking to ensure the reliability of marking, it would involve a large amount of manpower and resources. He urged the Administration to carefully study the relevant issues before implementation.

Course design of LS

33. With regard to the mode of teaching LS, Dr Priscilla LEUNG asked whether the Administration had made reference to the experiences of other jurisdictions. She shared Professor WONG Po-choi's view that many students had found the subject difficult, including the high-achieving students. Dr LEUNG recalled the experience of a recent visit to a school in the Guangdong province in the Mainland. While the school enrolled largely students of rural background, about 93% were admitted to universities. To raise the interest of students in various subjects such as Geography and History, the school employed different teaching approaches including the use of laboratory. Dr LEUNG asked whether a new mode of teaching would be employed by local LS teachers to enhance interaction between teachers and students.

34. US(Ed) said that the experiences of other jurisdictions had been referred to with a view to improving the teaching of LS. The teaching of LS did not aim to deliver knowledge to students but to facilitate them to make connections across knowledge areas and to expand their knowledge. He emphasized that many teachers had profound experiences in teaching LS, in particular at the Advanced Supplementary Level (ASL) which had been implemented for 17 years.

35. PAS(CD)Ed added that overseas experiences had been taken into account in coming up with the design of LS. Reference had been made to similar subjects in General Certificate of Secondary Education and Australian Council for Educational Research, as well as the Theory of Knowledge of International

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Baccalaureate Organization. The design of LS was to broaden the knowledge base of students by encouraging them to draw knowledge from different disciplines. In fact, good practices had been developed and experiences had been gained from teaching LS. Currently, some 280 schools offered at least one subject in ASL LS, Integrated Humanities, or Science and Technology.

36. In response to Dr Priscilla LEUNG's further enquiry about the new mode of teaching LS, PAS(CD)Ed pointed out that interaction between students and teachers constituted the main part of teaching LS. By ways of discussion and enquiry into a range of issues, students would be guided by teachers to explore the issues and form their own knowledge. Role playing and debating would help explore deeper knowledge. Also, the knowledge gained from other elective subjects would help student understand the issues from different perspectives.

37. Mrs Regina IP said that while the goals of LS were widely accepted, the crux was its curriculum design and mode. In her view, the EDB-developed LS had serious problems with its concepts and implementation. She pointed out that it was irrelevant to refer to the Theory of Knowledge of International Baccalaureate Organization because it was not a mandatory subject. Mrs IP opined that all along, dissemination of knowledge was not the desired approach for effective teaching of conventional subjects such as History and English Literature, and interaction between teachers and students was essential. She requested the Administration to provide overseas examples where LS was developed by the local education authorities and was a mandatory subject, and the teaching of the subject had successfully strengthened the knowledge base of students as well as developed their skills of critical thinking and problem solving.

38. Mrs IP further pointed out that in the universities of the United States, LS was taught by a dedicated team of teachers with expert knowledge, and emphasis was placed on the teaching of foundation knowledge. However, in Hong Kong, textbooks were not recommended for LS. Without textbooks, the teaching of LS might become empty talks and discussion. She noted that there were some textbooks available but they varied greatly in price. Without equipping students with foundation knowledge, she was concerned about the possible disastrous impact on the younger generations. Without the required resources for implementing small class teaching for LS, it was doubtful how teachers could achieve the objective of the subject.

39. In reply, US(Ed) said that in view of the evolving and ever-changing nature of issues to be studied in LS, teaching of the subject should not rely on textbooks. Students should access to a wide range of materials so that they were not bound by a small number of perspectives as well as static knowledge. EDB had made available many types of resources including the teaching and learning materials offered on the website of the Hong Kong Education City. Additional resources had been provided to schools to help them prepare for the NSS

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academic structure which included, among others, training workshops for teachers and the web-based resource platform for LS (the Platform). US(Ed) reiterated that in order to comply with the principle of school-based management, schools had been given the autonomy and the flexibility in determining the use of the additional resources according to their circumstances. The Administration did not agree to the view that the additional resources should be earmarked for LS only.

40. DSG(HKEAA) explained that the Theory of Knowledge of International Baccalaureate Organization was an essential requirement to be undertaken by students which helped train them to think broadly, critically and multi-disciplinarily. The course was highly regarded by teachers and students. The original design of LS was to assume a comparable role within the NSS academic structure. Having regard to the different abilities of students, LS finally adopted a less academic format. He added that LS courses in other jurisdictions were not mandatory but this should be separate from the issue of practicality of the courses.

41. PAS(CD)Ed elaborated that there were several approaches in teaching LS in local universities. While some would encourage students of science subjects to study arts subjects, other universities would teach classical literature to broaden the knowledge base of students. Also, some universities would adopt the thematic approach which was comparable to LS in the NSS academic structure. He stressed that textbooks were not appropriate for teaching contemporary issues such as the financial tsunami and Human Swine Influenza. A large amount of materials were available and being developed and would be offered on the Platform.

42. Professor Patrick LAU said that the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Hong Kong had adopted the mode of project-based learning and small class teaching for many years. Architectural study required students who had both the knowledge of arts and science subjects. Its multi-disciplinary curriculum helped train students with analytical skills. The Hong Kong Institute of Architects could assist in the design of LS. Professor LAU urged the Administration to address the various issues raised such as enhancing the knowledge base of students before implementing LS, adopting small class teaching and improving the assessment framework. He suggested that the Administration might consider designing "multiple-choice" in examinations to help improve assessment.

43. Dr Priscilla LEUNG said that the Administration should consider broadening the teaching mode of LS to cover non-classroom learning experiences such as students' involvement in production of school newsletters, etc.

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Provision of resources to schools for LS

44. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered textbooks important because secondary school students were too young to choose the correct materials for study. He pointed out that IES would involve outdoor activities to enhance learning, and the manpower of teachers for such activities was substantial. Unless the Administration had personal experience of teaching and conducting outdoor activities, it could not appreciate the manpower resources required. He urged the Administration to allocate sufficient resources to schools to address the issue of teachers' manpower and small class teaching.

45. Mr HO Moon-tim of the Association of Heads of Secondary Schools of Tsuen Wan, Kwai Chung & Tsing Yi District pointed out that adequate manpower was essential for teaching LS. Unless there were adequate resources, students could not be divided into small groups. Where a school did not give high priority to LS, LS teachers would have limited resources to conduct small class teaching. He further said that some resources were provided for specific purposes. For example, CEG was provided for the specific purpose of appointing additional teachers during the period of education reforms from 2004-2005 to 2006-2007.

46. Mr CHEUNG Yui-fai of Hong Kong Liberal Studies Teachers' Association urged the Administration to provide adequate resources to schools to facilitate small class teaching for LS and employ additional administrative staff to reduce teachers' administrative duties.

47. US(Ed) reiterated the principle of allowing flexibility to schools in using resources according to their needs. He said that the Administration noted the views of the deputations and would discuss with the stakeholders on whether certain resources could be earmarked for LS.

II. Mechanism for checking and marking examination papers for examinations administered by Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)2122/08-09(04) and (05), CB(2)2150/08-09(01) and (02)]

Briefing by the Administration

48. At the invitation of the Chairman, US(Ed) referred members to the mechanism for checking and marking examination papers for written examinations administered by HKEAA as set out in the Administration's paper. He highlighted that to meet the public expectations of quality public examinations and assessment services, HKEAA had introduced a number of

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initiatives to enhance service delivery including, among others, the establishment of onscreen marking centres and public examination information centre.

Causes for examination errors

49. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the recurrent blunders in public examinations had seriously affected public confidence in the reliability of HKEAA's examination administration system. Students were resentful because examination results had a far-reaching impact on their future. Despite HKEAA's fairly elaborate checking and monitoring mechanism for question setting, moderation, checking and proofreading of question papers and review after examination, the system had time and again failed to identify apparent errors. He noted that the Investigation Report of the Direct Investigation on System for Development of Question Papers in Public Examinations (the Report) released by the Office of The Ombudsman (The Ombudsman) had made severe remarks on HKEAA, which was said to be negligent, complacent and reluctant to acknowledge errors.

50. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong further pointed out that HKEAA had responded to the comments of The Ombudsman in a bureaucratic manner by maintaining that it had reservations about the Ombudsman comments regarding staff mindset as a general issue. He asked HKEAA whether it had assessed the implications of the recurrent errors on the confidence of the general public in its credibility and on the future of students.

51. In response, Secretary General, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (SG(HKEAA)) said that HKEAA had always attached importance to the future of students, and fully understood the high expectation of the general public on HKEAA examination system. Many overseas jurisdictions were facing similar problems of administration of public examinations, which in his view, was a risky business.

52. SG(HKEAA) elaborated that annually there were about 10 000 examination personnel working in collaboration with each other to deliver quality services of public examinations. The part-time examination personnel included experienced teachers, university professors and subject experts working for HKEAA on a voluntary basis. The development of question papers was a professional process involving human judgement. While human errors were unavoidable in the whole process, HKEAA had put in place a variety of measures and procedures to ensure that the affected students would be treated in a fair and open manner.

53. SG(HKEAA) further pointed out that of the 13 recommendations contained in the Report, HKEAA had either completed or in the process of completing 11 of them. For the remaining two recommendations on which

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HKEAA had reservations, HKEAA would discuss with The Ombudsman with a view to clarifying the relevant issues. The three reported cases in the Report involved eight examination personnel with six of them being university staff and teachers, and two of them full-time personnel of HKEAA. He stressed that the majority of HKEAA personnel were committed to delivering quality examination and assessment services, and HKEAA would continue to adopt an open and humble attitude in listening to the views of the public. SG(HKEAA) assured that HKEAA would continue to communicate with The Ombudsman to enhance its staff culture. In fact, The Ombudsman had commended HKEAA on the implementation of various improvement measures.

54. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong agreed that administration of public examinations was risky because commission of errors was irreversible and the future of the candidates concerned would be affected. Since re-sitting of examinations was not viable, he urged HKEAA to exercise extreme care in its administration of public examinations. Mr CHEUNG further said that various funding applications to support HKEAA's work had been approved in the past few years but examination blunders continued to occur, such as the unclear radio signal reception in listening examinations.

55. The Chairman said that HKEAA had sought funding approval from the Finance Committee including improvement of radio signal reception at examination centres and information technology infrastructure and systems to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. She opined that the recurrent errors of HKEAA had profound implications on students' future.

56. With regard to the funding approval on 9 January 2009 for the provision of FM radio signal repeaters addressing the problem of unclear signal for listening examinations, SG(HKEAA) said that the signal repeaters had yet to be installed in schools. He elaborated that the energy-saving light bulbs recently installed in many schools serving as examination centres had been found to affect the radio signal reception. In view of this, Radio Television Hong Kong and the Office of the Telecommunications Authority had studied the problem and found out that the said signal repeaters would further worsen the radio signal reception. To solve the problem, they proposed to install infrared radiation system, and the result of which was so far satisfactory.

57. Mr TAM Yiu-chung noted that many examination personnel were working for HKEAA on a semi-voluntary basis and were not liable for errors in the examination process. He was concerned whether this might be the cause for the recurrence of examination blunders and how this could be addressed. He also sought information on the funding source of HKEAA.

58. SG(HKEAA) explained that the approach adopted by many overseas jurisdictions was to employ semi-volunteers as examination personnel. These professional personnel included teachers, university professors and subject

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experts. These personnel were appointed on a yearly basis, and only those with satisfactory performance would be re-appointed. SG(HKEAA) further pointed out that the other approach adopted by some overseas jurisdictions was to appoint a few examination personnel who had to reside in a designated place for a month or two with the sole responsibility for question setting, but errors were still found. With regard to the funding source of HKEAA, he pointed out that HKEAA operated on a self-financing basis to maintain its independent status and did not receive any recurrent subvention from the Administration. While HKEAA received one-off grants from the Administration for specific purposes, the recurrent expenses of HKEAA were met by the income of examinations fees. HKEAA had to take into account the affordability of the general members of the public in setting the examination fees, and faced many constraints. HKEAA was discussing with the Administration on its long-term financial arrangements.

59. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung had the impression that there were more reported errors in public examinations in recent years. He asked whether HKEAA had compared the past and present mechanisms for checking and marking examination papers in order to identify the causes for the recurrent errors. Mr LEUNG also requested HKEAA to provide information on the number of reported errors in the past and recent years.

60. SG(HKEAA) pointed out that HKEAA reviewed its relevant mechanism on a yearly basis, and had taken on board many recommendations made by The Ombudsman. He clarified that there were lesser errors in public examinations in recent years than in 1970s and 1980s. In fact, both HKEAA and The Ombudsman had reviewed the relevant mechanism last year and confirmed that the situation had improved. SG(HKEAA) was of the view that the primary reasons for more reported incidents nowadays were the advancement of information technology and the demand from the general public for enhanced transparency of the performance of public organizations.

Remedial measures

61. Mrs Regina IP agreed to the view of Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong that commission of errors in examination administration was irreversible and might jeopardize the future of the affected candidates. She was disappointed with the unrepentant attitude of HKEAA as shown in its response to the Report. HKEAA had not expressed any regret for the errors but was self-defending. Mrs IP asked whether HKEAA would consider tendering an apology to the affected candidates, and how HKEAA had compensated them.

62. In reply, SG(HKEAA) pointed out that following the complaints about the 2008 Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE), HKEAA had promptly expressed regret for the incidents. In order to show HKEAA's sincerity, he was willing to convey his regret once again to the affected candidates, and hoped the general public would appreciate the difficulties and challenges faced

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by HKEAA in the administration of public examinations which involved considerable manpower and human judgement. SG(HKEAA) pointed out that the examination papers of the affected students were re-marked which was in line with the general practice of overseas jurisdictions, and the affected candidates had found the arrangement satisfactory. He reiterated that HKEAA would continue its effort to strive for excellence in its delivery of services.

63. The Chairman sought information on the measures taken by HKEAA to assist affected candidates to pursue further study, either in the sixth form or in the universities, following adjustments to the marks.

64. SG(HKEAA) replied that a mechanism for appeal against examination results had been put in place. With the support of EDB, HKEAA would inform the universities of the marks adjusted after appeal and the applications of the HKALE candidates concerned for university admission would be considered on a par with those of other candidates in an open and fair manner. This practice had been in force for almost 20 years. Similarly, EDB would render assistance to the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination candidates concerned for enrolment to the sixth form should their marks be adjusted after appeal. SG(HKEAA) added that The Ombudsman did not investigate every complaint about public examinations, and HKEAA always took the initiative to make appropriate remedial arrangements should errors in examination administration be found and to tender apologies.

Missing of examination scripts

65. Miss Tanya CHAN said that examination scripts were found missing in 2002 and there was another incident of missing examination scripts as reported by the media recently, although the scripts were eventually found. She sought information on the progress of implementing the recommendations put forward by The Ombudsman for preventing the loss of examinations scripts.

66. SG(HKEAA) explained that prior to 2006, examination scripts were marked manually by markers. There were a few thousand markers who marked the scripts at their selected places, such as homes or schools. Clear guidelines were provided specifying the requirement for ensuring the confidentiality and safe custody of the scripts. Should markers be found losing examination scripts, they would not be re-appointed and had to immediately return all the scripts in their possession to HKEAA. HKEAA had implemented the recommendations put forward by The Ombudsman including, among others, allowing the affected candidates to re-sit the examination and notifying them of the loss of examination scripts.

67. SG(HKEAA) further elaborated that from 2006 onwards, all examination scripts would be scanned. HKEAA would keep the original scripts, and the copies of the scripts would be sent to markers. As regards the recent

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incident of losing examination scripts in a taxi, HKEAA had requested the marker to return all the examination scripts. Under the present arrangement, some scripts were marked manually and some in the centralized on-screen marking centres. Examinations scripts would not be lost should they be marked in the centralized on-screen marking centres. SG(HKEAA) stressed that since HKEAA kept the original examinations scripts, affected candidates would not be disadvantaged in the case of missing examination scripts.

School-based assessment of Liberal Studies

68. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered that HKEAA should understand the genuine concerns of students and their parents about errors in public examinations because examination results had profound impact on the future of students. He urged EDB to monitor the work of HKEAA before and after public examinations with a view to improving past mistakes and addressing new ones. Mr CHEUNG further said that HKEAA should ensure excellence in the marking of LS examination papers. He asked whether the fairness of the public assessment of LS without SBA would be jeopardized.

69. In response, SG(HKEAA) said that whether LS should include SBA was a policy matter and HKEAA fully supported the policy decision made by EDB. While the assessment of LS without SBA was technically viable, it would have impact on its recognition by overseas universities and academic qualifications assessment authorities. It had been accepted by these overseas bodies that SBA was an integral part of LS, and the LS assessment framework should comprise SBA and public examination. Without SBA, the recognition of the qualification of Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Examination by overseas jurisdictions might be affected.

70. US(Ed) said that the Public Examination Board of HKEAA included representatives of EDB which made decisions on matters concerning the conduct of public examinations. EDB would continue to work closely with HKEAA to implement the various improvement recommendations put forward by The Ombudsman.

71. Referring to paragraph 17 of the Administration's paper, the Chairman sought information on the number of markers who were not re-appointed due to unsatisfactory performance. SG(HKEAA) said that about 10% to 12% of markers were newly appointed each year, and he would provide the requested information.

[*Post-meeting note* : HKEAA provided the requested information which was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)2251/08-09(01) on 20 July 2009.]

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III. Fine-tuning the medium of instruction for secondary schools

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)2122/08-09(06) and (07)]

72. Members noted the Administration's paper on the subject and the updated background briefed entitled "Medium of instruction for secondary schools" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat.

Oral presentation by deputations

Civic Party

[LC Paper No. CB(2)2205/08-09(02)]

73. Mr LAM Seung-wan presented the views of the Civic Party as detailed in its submission.

HKSKH Lady MacLehose Centre

[LC Paper No. CB(2)2122/08-09(08)]

74. Ms Sara Jabeen and Mr Matthew LEE Ping-fai presented the views of the HKSKH Lady MacLehose Centre as detailed in its submission.

Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers

[LC Paper No. CB(2)2179/08-09(02)]

75. Dr WU Siu-wai presented the views of the Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers as detailed in its submission.

Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union

[LC Paper No. CB(2)2179/08-09(03)]

76. Mr CHAN Kwok-kuen presented the views of the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union as detailed in its submission.

Committee on Home-School Co-operation

[LC Paper No. CB(2)2205/08-09(03)]

77. Professor WONG Po-choi presented the views of the Committee on Home-School Co-operation and the survey results collected at the recent parents' briefings as detailed in its submission.

The refined medium of instruction (MOI) framework and arrangements

78. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the community was misled by the word "fine-tuning" which was in effect a substantial change in the MOI policy for secondary schools, hence underestimating the risks associated. He had expressed his worry that under the cover of the refined MOI framework and in

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the face of the declining student population, schools would be inclined to operate more classes adopting English as the medium of instruction (EMI classes) in order to boost enrolment, regardless of their students' ability to learn through English. Consequently, students' interests in learning would be sacrificed and labeling of low academic achievers within schools would arise. His worry turned out to be true. Mr CHEUNG pointed out that upon receipt of information on the banding distribution of their allocated students under the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) system, seven schools, located in Tseung Kwan O, Tuen Mun, Yuen Long, Tsuen Wan and the North District, had announced through various channels the number of EMI classes to be operated in the 2010-2011 school year in order to promote enrolment. He expected that other schools in the districts would follow suit and would make known their "by-class" or even "by-subject" arrangements so as not to lose out in the competition for students. He asked how EDB would monitor the MOI arrangements in individual schools to prevent schools from luring parents.

79. Referring to Professor WONG Po-choi's presentation, US(Ed) said that parents were aware of the criteria for devising the MOI arrangements by individual schools. In fact, schools had to start planning for the Secondary 1 (S1) cohort to be admitted in the 2010-2011 school year. They were required to spell out the MOI arrangements for non-language subjects in the School Profile, submit the school-based MOI plans to EDB in mid-Oct 2009 and include their whole school language policy, including MOI plans with specific arrangements in their School Development Plans. He stressed that EDB would monitor the implementation of the refined MOI arrangements and take appropriate actions against non-compliance.

80. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong remarked that the conscious disclosure of information on MOI arrangements and intention to operate EMI classes by schools showed that they were eager to attract enrolment. He remained concerned that schools would transform the lesson time for extended learning activities in English (ELA) to EMI teaching of not more than two non-language subjects such as Mathematics and Integrated Science to lure parents. He opined that the tendency of schools to adopt EMI by-class or by-subject would not be changed notwithstanding the results of parent surveys conducted by the Committee on Home-School Co-operation.

81. US(Ed) pointed out that some of the seven schools referred to by Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong in paragraph 78 above had all along adopted EMI teaching. Regarding monitoring of the implementation of the refined MOI framework, EDB would ensure schools' adoption of EMI teaching in accordance with the prescribed criteria. He highlighted that since the announcement of the refined MOI framework in the end of May 2009, EDB had, in conjunction with the Committee on Home-School Co-operation, organized a series of parent forums to share with parents the key considerations for selecting schools for their children. So far, EDB had conducted nine workshops on whole-school language

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policy planning for secondary schools. These workshops aimed at empowering schools to formulate whole-school language policy with due consideration to students' abilities, learning progress, interests and needs as well as school's circumstances including teachers' readiness. Participants were thoroughly briefed on the monitoring mechanism for the implementation of the refined MOI framework.

82. Miss Tanya CHAN shared the concern of Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, and said that principals were worried about the inclination of schools to disclose at an early stage the number of EMI classes to be operated, to prevent possible closure due to under-enrolment. She asked how EDB would enforce compliance with the prescribed criteria for EMI teaching under the refined MOI framework, apart from the issuance of warning letters.

83. US(Ed) responded that the policy objective of the refined MOI framework was to enhance students' exposure to English under which schools could exercise professional judgement to formulate their whole-school language policy. Under the existing School Development and Accountability Framework, schools should include in their annual development plans the whole-school language policy, the school-based MOI arrangements and the rationale for the arrangements adopted. EDB would not establish an investigation team to inspect the number of EMI classes in each school. EDB would carefully examine the school plans submitted and had reached a consensus with the Committee on Home-School Co-operation that schools were not allowed to publish the number of EMI classes in the secondary school profiles. In line with the School Development and Accountability Framework, schools were held accountable for their MOI arrangements in relation to students' learning outcomes. Special attention would be paid to those schools without a critical mass of students capable for EMI teaching or had never adopted EMI teaching but intended to adopt the by-subject arrangements. Based on parents' response in the briefing sessions, parents understood and agreed that the quality of teaching and learning did not solely hinge on the MOI arrangements.

84. DS(Ed)2 supplemented that EDB would continue to work in partnership with the Committee on Home-School Co-operation to conduct parent briefings during the S1 admission for 2010-2011 in December 2009. The briefing sessions to be held would be platforms for parents to have a better understanding of the MOI arrangements to be adopted by secondary schools. She continued that monitoring and provision of support to schools were both important for the success of the refined MOI framework. While schools were required to consult their stakeholders in formulating the annual plans which should be endorsed by their school management committees. EDB would carefully examine the MOI plans proposed by individual schools and, where necessary, give professional advice to schools to ensure students' learning effectiveness.

85. Referring to the reservations and objection of the Hong Kong

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Professional Teachers' Union (HKPTU) and the Association of Hong Kong Chinese Middle Schools about the refined MOI framework respectively, Ms Audrey EU asked how the Administration could implement the fine-tuning proposal without the support of the school sector.

86. US(Ed) responded that the fine-tuning proposal would be implemented in the 2010-2011 school year with the objective of allowing schools to exercise professional judgment on the appropriate MOI arrangements for their students, having regard to teachers' capability, students' ability and schools' support measures. The Administration had not made the fine-tuned arrangement mandatory for schools and schools should exercise their professional judgment to choose to continue with mother tongue teaching for all non-language subjects, or implement their school-based MOI fine-tuned arrangements in an incremental manner. He pointed out that the MOI fine-tuning aimed to address the community's expectation to improve students' biliterate proficiency and student population drop as well as the implementation of the NSS curriculum were separate issues. In fact, the Administration had proposed additional development options for schools with unsatisfactory enrolment to continue operation.

87. Ms Audrey EU said that according to HKPTU, the fine-tuning proposal was introduced for political reasons and was in conflict with the basic educational beliefs. HKPTU requested suspension of the fine-tuning proposal as secondary schools had to concentrate on the implementation of the NSS curriculum. In her view, if the fine-tuning proposal was in conflict with the basic educational beliefs, it should be abandoned and not suspended. She sought clarifications from HKPTU in this regard.

88. Mr CHAN Kwok-kuen of HKPTU replied that HKPTU had considered the fine-tuning proposal from educational and practical perspectives. From the educational perspective, HKPTU considered it necessary to uphold the mother tongue teaching policy as it enhanced teaching and learning effectiveness. From the practical point of view, as the fine-tuning proposal was controversial, further consultation was necessary. Moreover, schools, teachers, parents and students should concentrate on the implementation of the NSS academic structure from the 2009-2010 school year, and they should not be overloaded with the implementation of the fine-tuning proposal. Under these circumstances, HKPTU called for the suspension of the fine-tuning proposal and the conduct of a new round of consultation to decide on the way forward.

89. Professor WONG Po-choi of the Committee on Home-School Co-operation pointed out that the fine-tuning proposal was supported by educational beliefs as it was student-centred premised on the scaffolding theory and outcome-based. Its objective was to enhance students' biliterate and trilingual proficiency at junior secondary level progressively. From the practical point of view, schools could exercise professional judgment in the formulation

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of their school-based MOI arrangements, and had the discretion to adopt mother tongue teaching for non-language subjects.

90. Ms Audrey EU was concerned that schools might use the MOI arrangements to boost enrolment. She invited views of other deputations in this regard.

91. Mr LAM Seung-wan of the Civic Party said that the fine-tuning proposal could address parents' expectation to enhance students' exposure to English and views from the front-line teachers should further be sought.

92. Mr Matthew LEE Ping-fai of the HKSKH Lady MacLehose Centre said that apart from educational bodies, the Administration should consult parents on the fine-tuning proposal, including their views on the tendency of schools to operate more EMI classes to boost enrolment.

93. Dr WU Siu-wai of the Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers said that the Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers had expressed reservations with the fine-tuning proposal. As it had been decided to implement the proposal, he suggested that the Administration should set out the implementation details clearly for schools and teachers to follow.

94. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that despite the provision of different development options for schools with unsatisfactory enrolment to continue operation, schools were under the risk of closure in the face of the declining secondary school student population. There was a genuine concern that schools might plan their school-based MOI arrangements with a view to promoting enrolment. He asked how the Administration could help remove the risk of school closure.

95. US(Ed) responded that to alleviate the impact of the declining student population on secondary schools, the Administration had reduced the number of students allocated to each S1 class and the required minimum number of students for S1 had been further reduced from 67 to 61. In addition, the Administration had introduced additional development options for schools with unsatisfactory enrolment to continue operation. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung remarked that EDB should address the concern about competition for students among secondary schools by using the MOI arrangements under the school consolidation policy.

96. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung also requested the Administration to address the concerns of the non-Chinese-speaking (NCS) students under the refined MOI framework and asked if they would be given more support such as priority for admission under the by-class arrangement.

97. US(Ed) responded that the Administration understood the needs and aspirations of NCS students. He pointed out that schools with a critical mass of

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NCS students had been encouraged to exercise professional judgment for these students if they were assessed to learn better in English by the schools even under the prevailing MOI policy. Under the refined MOI framework, schools would have greater flexibility in MOI arrangements and NCS students would have more chances to learn through English. Besides, the Administration had put in place a number of measures to facilitate NCS students to integrate into the mainstream community. In the coming school year, the Administration had undertaken to increase the number of designated schools to 25. The Administration would brief NCS parents and groups in August 2009 on the refined MOI framework including the support measures for NCS students in learning Chinese Language.

98. In concluding the discussions, the Chairman remarked that the Panel might consider following up with "consolidation policy" for secondary schools in the new session.

(The Chairman suspended the meeting for 15 minutes.)

IV. Provision of school places on Islands

[LC Paper No. CB(2)2122/08-09(11)]

Oral presentation by deputations

Association of School Heads of Island District
[LC Paper No. CB(2)2209/08-09(01)]

99. Mr CHUNG Chuen-ming presented the views of the Association of School Heads of Islands District as detailed in its submission. He provided the updated information showing that originally there were eight public sector secondary schools in the school net (NT9) of the Islands District. As Buddhist Fat Ho Memorial College in Tai O would join the Direct Subsidy Scheme in the 2009-2010 school year, the number of public sector secondary schools in the Islands District would be reduced to seven.

Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union
[LC Paper No. CB(2)2209/08-09(02)]

100. Mr CHAN Kwok-kuen presented the views of Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union as detailed in its submission.

Civic Party
[LC Paper No. CB(2)2209/08-09(03)]

101. Ms Ophelia LAM presented the views of the Civic Party as detailed in its submission.

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The Administration's response

102. At the invitation of the Chairman, US(Ed) briefed members on the provision of school places in the Islands District as detailed in the Administration's paper. He added that the vacant classrooms were not clustered in any particular island but were distributed among different islands. The Administration had already exercised flexibility in applying the requirement on the minimum number of Primary One (P1) students for operating P1 classes for the two primary schools in South Lantau. In view of the declining student population, the Administration had reduced the minimum number of students from 67 to 61 for the operation of three S1 classes in the coming school year.

Need for a secondary school in Mui Wo

103. To address the issue of inadequate number of students in Mui Wo for the operation of a secondary school in Mui Wo, Dr Priscilla LEUNG quoted her experience of visiting a secondary school with boarding facilities in the Mainland which had been successful in attracting students from different rural schools. She suggested that a similar approach could be adopted by building a secondary school with boarding facilities in Mui Wo. As long as the school could provide quality education, enrolment should not be a problem. Such an arrangement would compensate the Mui Wo residents for the relocation of Christian Zheng Sheng Association (CZSA) to former New Territories Heung Yee Kuk Southern District Secondary School (SDSS) which was not welcomed by them. Dr LEUNG invited views of the Administration and the deputations on her suggestion.

104. US(Ed) said that the situation in Hong Kong was different from the rural areas in the Mainland. In Mui Wo, the number of P6 students taking part in the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System had been stable. In general, about half of the P6 students in Mui Wo had been allocated school places within the school net through Central Allocation, while some students were allocated to secondary schools outside Mui Wo according to their choices. It took about 45 minutes to travel from Mui Wo to the Central and Western District by fast ferry, and from Tung Chung to the urban areas by bus. Under the existing policies, public sector secondary schools did not provide boarding facilities. Given relatively stable demand from P6 students and the existing policy, the Administration did not see the need for establishing a secondary school or a secondary school with boarding facilities in Mui Wo. The Administration would continue to exercise flexibility with regard to the requirement of student enrolment for public sector primary schools in the Islands District. Nevertheless, for secondary schools, the minimum number of classes to be operated at each level was essential in order to provide a broad and balanced curriculum under the NSS academic structure.

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105. Ms YUEN Wai-kwan of the Association of School Heads of Islands District said that according to the findings of a recent survey, there were about 655 primary students (P1 to P6) in South Lantau, including Peng Chau, Mui Wo, and those of Lantau International School. This number included NCS students. In her view, 655 primary students were sufficient for operating an 18-class secondary school with two classes using Chinese as the medium of instruction and one class using English at each level. Ms YUEN also said that NCS students had been increasing steadily in the area, constituting about 22% of the student population of Mui Wo School, and their learning of the Chinese language had been a growing concern.

106. Mr CHAN Kwok-kuen of Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union said that the Administration did not consider the option of providing a secondary school with boarding facilities because of resources and policy considerations. With some 50 P6 students in Mui Wo taking part in the SSPA system each year, a secondary school could operate three classes at each level with 18 students in each class. Such a school would incur less resources than a secondary school with boarding facilities. The crux of the issue was for the Administration to change its policies to accommodate the demand of Mui Wo residents for a secondary school in Mui Wo.

107. Ms Ophelia LAM of the Civic Party said that the option of a secondary school with boarding facilities in Mui Wo should not be ruled out altogether, in view of the time needed to travel between Mui Wo and other places.

108. Dr Priscilla LEUNG urged the Administration to attach importance to the genuine needs of Mui Wo children for local secondary school places.

109. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that students took two to three hours but not 45 minutes to travel from Mui Wo to schools as the journey should include the travelling time between home and pier/bus station as well as pier/bus station and school. He considered it necessary to formulate a special policy about schools for the Islands District. In his view, the Administration should provide at least one primary school and one secondary school in each island should the student population reach a reasonable level, allow flexibility in terms of class size and provide adequate teaching staff irrespective of whether the parents selected the local schools or not. As the Administration had already allowed flexibility in respect of the class size of primary schools in the Islands District, he called for the extension of the policy to secondary schools. Mr CHEUNG also raised concern about the facilities of the 20 rural schools which he considered were in urgent need for improvement. He pointed out that as these rural schools had continued operation until now, they had their values.

110. US(Ed) said that the Administration would discuss with Mui Wo School and Bui O Public School to explore the need for improving their facilities. He pointed out that there were one secondary school in South Lantau (Tai O), one in

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Discovery Bay, seven in Tung Chung and two in Cheung Chau. US(Ed) said that while he shared the view that the Administration should provide enough primary and secondary schools to meet the educational needs of students in a district, he stressed the importance of interaction among students in the process of learning. He added that a secondary school with a small number of students could not provide a broad and balanced curriculum under the NSS academic structure.

111. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong commented that as long as the class size could be reduced, a secondary school with a smaller number of students could also provide a broad and balanced curriculum. In response, US(Ed) said that the minimum S1 enrolment had been reduced from 67 to 61 students in the 2009-2010 school year. In his view, students in the Islands District should not be deprived of the opportunities for interaction with schoolmates as compared with their counterparts in the urban areas.

112. Deputy Secretary for Education (3) (DS(Ed)3) supplemented that two factors had been taken into account in formulating the policy of the three-class requirement for each level in public sector secondary schools. First, there should be sufficient teaching manpower and expertise for deployment. Second, there should be a critical mass of students, say around 700, to facilitate effective peer and collaborative learning as interaction among students was important for learning in secondary schools. The minimum S1 enrolment had been reduced from 71 in the 2006-2007 school year to 67 in 2008-2009 and further to 61 in 2009-2010. A further reduction in the standard class size would affect learning effectiveness.

113. Miss Tanya CHAN reminded EDB to provide the information on the supply and demand for public sector school places in different areas in the Islands District as she had requested earlier. She sought clarification on the discrepancy in the numbers of P6 students in Mui Wo seeking secondary school places as provided by the Administration and the Association of School Heads of Islands District. According to the former, the number was about 50 annually, but according to the latter, it was 655. She pointed out that a survey conducted by the Civic Party had shown that more than 78% of the respondents supported a secondary school in the area. She enquired about the reasons for not extending small class teaching to secondary schools.

114. US(Ed) explained that there were 51 P6 students in Mui Wo in the 2006-2007 school year and 55 in 2007-2008 taking part in the SSPA system. He emphasized that the school net of the Islands District covered a large number of schools both in and outside the Islands District for parents' selection. In the 2008-2009 school year, 58 P6 students took part in the system with 17 students being allocated to the secondary schools in the Islands District and 6 to those of other districts. The remaining 35 students were offered places through the stages of Discretionary Places Admission or Central Allocation under unrestricted

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school choices. US(Ed) reiterated that the number of P6 students in Mui Wo was too small for the operation of a secondary school with at least three S1 classes. He agreed to provide the information requested by Miss Tanya CHAN after the meeting.

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115. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung pointed out that the long travel between home and schools would affect the learning of students, and many students would be discouraged from participating in after-school activities. In his view, small class teaching with about 15 to 20 students in each class would enhance communication and relationship between teachers and students and facilitate the adoption of different teaching approaches to cater for the specific needs of students. Mr LEUNG said that while there were about 50 P6 students in Mui Wo participating in the SSPA, the number of students would add up to about 300 from S1 to S6 and could sustain the operation of a secondary school.

116. DS(Ed)3 said that it was difficult to estimate the number of students in Mui Wo participating in the SSPA who would choose the local secondary school should there be one. According to past records, there was only one S1 class in the last few years before SDSS ceased operation. Furthermore, the number of S1 students decreased from 18 in the 2002-2003 school year to 13 in 2003-2004, while the overall student population in Mui Wo then was not declining. This reflected that many Mui Wo parents preferred sending their children to schools outside the area. She stressed that building a secondary school with a small number of students would not only lead to ineffective use of public resources but also limit the learning opportunities of students.

117. Ms Audrey EU did not agree to the saying of Dr Priscilla LEUNG that the provision of a secondary school in Mui Wo would compensate the Mui Wo residents for the relocation of CZSA to former SDSS which was not welcomed by them. She considered that such a saying would deliver a negative message to the general public concerning the relocation of CZSA. She said that the Civic Party was in favour of a win-win situation by supporting both the relocation of CZSA as well as the provision of adequate secondary school places in Mui Wo.

118. Ms Audrey EU further said that some parents had expressed to her that rural schools were more suitable for their children. Some high-achieving students chose to study in rural schools because they offered a more relaxing environment for study. In her view, rural schools had their unique environment and special features. There should be diversity in schools and pedagogies to cater for the different needs of students. St Stephen's College in Stanley was one of the examples offering boarding facilities. A secondary school with boarding facilities in Mui Wo could attract students from Mui Wo and other areas. Ms EU called on the Administration to broaden its vision and implement appropriate policy for providing different types of secondary schools.

119. Mr CHUNG Chuen-ming of the Association of School Heads of Islands

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District said that primary students receiving small class teaching might find it difficult to adapt to "large class teaching" when they proceeded to secondary education. Some parents welcomed rural schools because they offered a more stable environment for children, particularly during the adolescent stage.

120. Mr CHAN Kwok-kuen of Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union stressed that rural schools should be maintained to meet the needs of students living in remote areas. The notion of building a secondary school with boarding facilities in Mui Wo was viable.

121. Echoing the view of Ms Audrey EU, Ms Ophelia LAM of the Civic Party said that different types of schools should be made available to meet the varied needs of students. She recalled a case concerning a student who lived in Tung Chung but chose to study in a rural school in Bui O because the student could not adjust to the environment of urban schools.

122. In response, US(Ed) said that under the existing policy, some Direct Subsidy Scheme schools could provide boarding facilities subject to compliance with certain criteria. He reiterated that the provision of both public sector primary and secondary school places in the Islands District was sufficient to meet the demands of students. Having regard to the overall decline in student population, EDB had to be prudent in planning for the construction of new schools.

123. Mr TAM Yiu-chung said that according to a survey on the provision of school places in the Islands District, there was a shortage of school places, in particular secondary school places. Such information was inconsistent with that provided by the Administration. There was also a claim that approval was not given to some schools in the Islands District to operate additional classes, thus forcing the students to go to schools in other areas. Mr TAM sought clarification on the matters. He also asked whether the Administration had conducted any studies on the modes of transport to schools and travelling time of students living in the Islands District.

124. US(Ed) replied that EDB would closely monitor the implementation of small class teaching in primary schools from the 2009-2010 school year onwards and would consider increasing classes in the Islands District when necessary. Students from the low-income families living in the Islands District were provided with travelling subsidies. The travelling subsidies for primary students going to schools in the urban areas ranged from \$2,800 to \$3,700 per year, and those for secondary students ranged from \$6,300 to \$17,000. The annual travelling subsidies for primary students going to schools within the Islands Districts ranged from \$700 to \$1,100, and \$6,000 to \$6,900 for secondary students. US(Ed) agreed to provide the relevant information in writing.

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125. DS(Ed)3 supplemented that depending on the residence of the students

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and the location of the schools, on average, the travelling time from Mui Wo to schools in Tung Chung should take less than one hour, and about one and a half hours to schools in the Central and Western District.

126. In response to Mr TAM Yiu-chung's further enquiry about increasing classes in primary schools, DS(Ed)3 elaborated that EDB would ensure adequate supply of places in each school net to meet the demand of students for implementing small class teaching. Should a student not be allocated to the school of his first preference, EDB would advise the parent concerned to go to the schools in the same school net with vacant school places. Where no school places in the same school net were available, EDB would consider approving additional classes in the schools in the net. She pointed out that this approach was similar to that for meeting the demand of school places of the newly arrived children from the Mainland. DS(Ed)3 added that Bui O Public School still had vacant school places to absorb the P1 students who could not be accommodated in Mui Wo School.

127. Mrs Regina IP said that while she agreed that interaction among students would enhance learning, she did not accept the point that the number of students in a secondary school should be around 700. She pointed out that the number of students in the top-tiered private secondary schools in the United States was around 200 to 300, and the teacher-to-student ratio was 1:7. Mrs IP considered that student mix was most important in fostering learning and helping students with different background and ethnicity to accept each other. In her view, it might not be ideal for students to stay in rural schools for a long period of time as they could only mix with students of the same background. Mrs IP sought clarification on the significant difference in the number of P6 students living in Mui Wo as given by the Association of School Heads of Islands District and the Administration. She noted from Ms Ophelia LAM of the Civic Party that parents looked for quality schools and preferred those outside Tung Chung. She sought Ms Lam's view on the type of secondary schools most suited to the needs of the Islands District.

128. Ms YUEN Wai-kwan of the Association of School Heads of Island District said that the notion of operating a secondary school with boarding facilities had been considered by some school operators. Normally rural schools operated one class at each level with about 25 to 30 students. The small number of students helped build closer relationship between teachers and students as well as teachers and parents. As for the difference in the number of primary students living in Mui Wo as provided by the Association and the Administration, Ms YUEN explained that the figure provided by the Administration did not include NCS students because these students normally did not participate in the SSPA as they were not proficient in the Chinese language and were not allocated to their preferred schools. NCS students normally chose secondary schools using English as the MOI under the Direct Subsidy Scheme. The figure provided by the Administration also did not include

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the number of students in Peng Chau and Lantau International School.

129. Ms YUEN Wai-kwan further said that the foreign students of Mui Wo School were entitled to study in local public sector schools. She said that without a secondary school in Mui Wo, 655 students could be affected; and the figure was worked out on the basis of 18 classes for a secondary school. She added that there were no schools in Mui Wo in NT9, and Mui Wo students had no choice but to choose schools in other districts.

130. The Chairman considered that the Administration should provide information on the secondary school choices of students in the Islands District under the SSPA.

131. Ms Ophelia LAM of the Civic Party pointed out that many parents living in Tung Chung preferred sending their children to the secondary schools outside the area because a number of secondary schools in Tung Chung had problems in students' behaviour, such as drug abuse and bullying. Having regard to the growing population of NCS students, Ms LAM urged the Administration to consider building a school in Tung Chung with small class teaching to meet the needs of these students.

V School leaving arrangements for students studying in schools for children with intellectual disability

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)2122/08-09(13) and CB(2)2179/08-09(04) – (06)]

Briefing by the Administration

132. US(Ed) briefed members on the main points in the Administration's paper on the subject. He added that in response to members' requests at the meeting on 27 June 2009, EDB had discussed with the Hong Kong Special Schools Council (HKSSC), and he had visited schools for students with mild, moderate and severe intellectual disability (ID schools) and had discussed with the principals, teachers, social workers and parents on the leaving school arrangements for ID students. While all students would enjoy 12 years of education, there were fundamental differences in curriculum design, class structure and size, manpower provision and administrative arrangements between special schools and mainstream schools. It was not appropriate to compare the school leaving arrangements for ID students in special schools and other students in mainstream schools. Like other parents, parents of ID students hoped that their children could integrate into the community and live independently after leaving schools. The teachers in ID schools would assist parents in selection of appropriate post-school placements for their children approaching the age of 18. He stressed that there was an established mechanism for handling applications for extension of stay in ID schools, and EDB was considering such applications and would advise parents of the outcomes within a

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week, barring unforeseen circumstances.

Members' concerns

133. Referring to the provision of 12 years of education for all children under the NSS academic structure, Ms Audrey EU sought clarification on whether this meant 12 calendar years or 12-year curriculum. Should it be the latter, whether ID students were allowed to repeat a year of study at different levels. She pointed out that the applications for extension of stay were submitted to EDB last year and the ID schools had to plan their manpower requirements for the new school year. However, the ID schools and parents had yet to know the results of their applications. She asked whether the schools would be informed of the results of individual applications or only the number of successful applications.

134. US(Ed) responded that EDB would advise the ID schools of the results of individual applications for extension of stay. He explained that while 3% and 5% of places in mainstream primary and secondary schools respectively were reserved for repeaters at each level, the mechanism for handling applications for extension of stay in ID schools was not the same. Under the established arrangement, ID students reaching the age of 18 could apply for extension of stay on justifiable grounds. In designing the NSS academic structure for ID schools, the Administration had agreed with the special school sector including HKSSC that ID students would be provided with 12 years of education and they should be provided with individualized education programmes which would be reviewed and adjusted in accordance with the learning needs and progress of individual ID students on a continuous basis. Unlike students in mainstream schools, students in ID schools varied in mental ability and could not be assessed solely on the basis of learning outcomes in determining whether they should proceed to the next level of study.

135. Mr TAM Yiu-chung hoped that EDB would approve the 350 applications for extension of stay on justifiable reasons. Referring to a letter from a group of parents and a member of the Islands District Council, he asked whether the Administration would provide a special school for ID children residing in the Islands District.

136. US(Ed) replied that the Administration was planning to relocate an existing special school to Tung Chung for the provision of education and boarding facilities to students with mild, moderate and severe ID. He undertook to provide further information on the matter including the timetable of the relocation and the capacity of the special school.

137. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong enquired about the total number of applications for extension of stay in the following school year received by EDB, the number of successful and unsuccessful applications, the criteria for approving and the reasons for rejecting the applications.

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138. DS(Ed)4 responded that up to the date of the meeting, EDB had received some 380 applications for extension of stay in ID schools. As the number of applications had been increased substantially and the applications would be individually assessed, EDB would need more time to consider all the applications. In line with the established arrangement, applications with justifiable reasons would be approved as long as there were vacancies in the approved classes.

139. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong sought confirmation on whether the applications would be approved provided there were vacancies in the approved classes or whether there were other criteria for approving applications for extension of stay.

140. US(Ed) replied that ID students aged 18 or above who were absent from school for half a school year due to health or other justifiable reasons had been counted towards demand, and students, including newly arrived children, NCS children and students transferred to special schools from other schools who had yet to complete 12 years of education, would be allowed to extend their stay for one year as long as there were vacancies in the approved classes.

141. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung enquired whether the available vacancies in ID schools were adequate to accommodate the 380 applications for extension of stay. The Chairman said that according to the information provided by 關注學生留校權校長小組, the available vacancies should be adequate. They sought information on the number of available vacancies in ID schools.

142. US(Ed) said that the number of applications quoted by 關注學生留校權校長小組 was based on the results of a survey, and the number of applications for extension of stay received by EDB was greater. DS(Ed)4 supplemented that the number of available vacancies would depend on the number of new students and the number of students who would be leaving school at the age of 18. Based on the existing enrolment, the estimated number of new students and the number of school leavers, EDB would determine the number of approved classes and handle the applications for extension of stay. For the coming school year, there would not be sufficient vacancies in the approved classes of individual schools to accommodate all students applying for extension of stay.

143. Mr WONG Yuk-man expressed dissatisfaction that the Panel had discussed the subject matter at various meetings but to no avail. He said that the Government had the obligation to provide education to ID students in accordance with the relevant international conventions. There should be flexibility in handling ID students' applications for extension of stay instead of following the established practice to the letter. He asked whether the Administration had made reference to the practices adopted by other places such

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as the Mainland and Taiwan for the provision of education to ID students. In his view, the Hong Kong Government should be ashamed should she treat ID students worse than the Mainland and Taiwan.

144. US(Ed) replied that the Administration had considered the practices adopted by other places including the Mainland and Taiwan for the provision of education to ID students. He pointed out that different places had their own arrangements in the light of their own circumstances.

145. Mr WONG Yuk-man enquired about the progress in processing the 380 applications for extension of stay in ID schools, including the number of completed cases and the timetable for considering the remaining applications. He considered that EDB should take the initiative to identify ID students who needed to extend their stay in ID schools but had yet to make applications.

146. DS(Ed)4 replied that EDB would soon complete the consideration of the applications for extension of stay from all special schools and would advise schools of the results the following week. In response to members' request, EDB undertook to provide written information on the number of new students in the following school year and of school leavers in the current school year.

147. The meeting ended at 2:08 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
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