

立法會
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the Administration)

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Panel on Education

**Minutes of special meeting
held on Tuesday, 20 October 2009, at 10:30 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 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 CHEUNG Kwok-che
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon WONG Yuk-man
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee, GBS, JP
Dr Hon Samson TAM Wai-ho, JP
- Members attending** : Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
- Members absent** : Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai, BBS, JP

Public Officers attending : Mr Michael SUEN Ming-yeung, GBS, JP
Secretary for Education

Mr Raymond H C WONG, JP
Permanent Secretary for Education

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Ms Michelle LI, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education (1)

Ms Mable CHAN
Deputy Secretary for Education (2)

Mrs Betty IP
Deputy Secretary for Education (3)

Mrs Michelle WONG
Deputy Secretary for Education (4)

Dr CHAN Ka-ki
Deputy Secretary for Education (5)

Ms Esther LEUNG, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education (6)

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

Staff in attendance : Mrs Vivian KAM
Assistant Secretary General 2

Ms Judy TING
Senior Council Secretary (2)8 (Acting)

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

Action

- I. Briefing by the Secretary for Education on the Chief Executive's Policy Address 2009-2010**
[LC Paper No. CB(2)35/09-10(01)]

Action

The Chairman welcomed the representatives of the Administration to the meeting.

Briefing by the Administration

2. Secretary for Education (SED) briefed members on the new education initiatives on the 2009-2010 Policy Agenda as detailed in the Administration's paper.

Electronic learning resources

3. Mr Andrew LEUNG was concerned about the timetable for implementing electronic learning and its effectiveness. He urged the Administration to expeditiously and proactively introduce electronic learning to replace printed textbooks.

4. In response, SED said that the Working Group on Textbooks and E-Learning Resources Development (WG), set up in October 2008 with the Under Secretary for Education (US(Ed)) as its chairman, studied the use and development of textbooks and electronic learning resources. The WG would shortly submit a report with recommendations to the Education Bureau (EDB) for consideration.

5. In response to Mr Andrew LEUNG's further enquiry on the yardsticks for assessing the effectiveness of electronic learning, US(Ed) said that the WG had reached a consensus on the implementation of electronic learning. Its report would include implementation details such as launching of a pilot scheme as well as various measures for assessing the effectiveness of electronic learning.

Cross-border students

6. Conveying the concerns of some school principals and parents in the North District, Mr WONG Kwok-hing said that about 40 000 Hong Kong residents were currently living in Shenzhen, and some 9 000 students including kindergarten students had to travel long distance daily from Shenzhen to go to schools in Hong Kong and bear the high cost of transport. He asked how the Administration would facilitate their travel.

7. SED explained that prior to the beginning of each school year, different bureaux including EDB, the Transport Department, the Hong Kong Police and the Immigration Department would coordinate the transport and immigration arrangements for the students travelling across the border to attend schools in Hong Kong. In view of the limited capacity of the Lo Wu control point which could not accommodate 3 000 plus such students, some students might have to be diverted to the Lok Ma Chau control point and the construction works of the

Action

Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai control point would soon commence. SED added that the Administration regularly communicated with the respective authorities of Shenzhen with a view to lowering the transport cost for cross-border students.

Internationalization and diversification of the education sector

8. Mr WONG Kwok-hing was concerned whether the internationalization of the education sector would limit the opportunities of sub-degree holders to attend local universities.

9. SED replied that the focus of internationalization of the education sector was to develop self-financing post secondary institutions. Both local and non-local students could attend such institutions, and there would be a prescribed percentage for non-local students. SED assured members that internationalization of the education sector would not adversely affect local students' opportunities to study in local universities.

10. Miss Tanya CHAN noted with concern that the number of non-local students studying in Hong Kong higher education institutions had increased by 16% from the 2007-2008 academic year to the 2008-2009 academic year, but the publicly-funded first-year-first-degree (FYFD) places had maintained at 14 500 for many years without adjustment and the total number of students admitted through the Joint University Programmes Admission System had reduced from 13 092 in 2000 to 12 038 in 2009. She pointed out that about 5 600 local students who were qualified for university education were not admitted for publicly-funded degree programmes. She asked how the Administration would help these students.

11. SED replied that there were both publicly-funded and self-financing degree places in the eight University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions. Non-local students enrolled mainly in self-financing places. He stressed that students who were qualified for but were not admitted to publicly-funded university programmes could pursue further study by enrolling in self-financing post secondary programmes. That explained the growth of the self-financing post secondary sector in the past years. SED clarified that the review of higher education conducted by the UGC would cover the quality assurance of the sector and other areas and would not include the number of FYFD places.

12. Ms Audrey EU asked whether the Administration would consider increasing the FYFD places which had remained unchanged for many years. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung regretted that the Administration adopted various measures in the past few years to facilitate non-local students to pursue degree programmes in Hong Kong, but more than 5 000 local students who were qualified for university education were not given the opportunity. He called on the Administration to address genuinely the education need of these local

Action

students.

13. SED reiterated that the direction of developing education services was to increase self-financing degree places. The Administration had reserved two urban land sites for the development of self-financing post secondary institutions to increase university places. He stressed that the Government expenditure on education was enormous. While the expenditure on education would not be reduced, the current fiscal position did not allow any further increase in publicly-funded degree places because the priorities as mentioned in the Policy Address would be in other areas such as health care financing and elderly services.

14. With regard to the two sites reserved for the development of self-financing post secondary institutions in Ho Man Tin and Wong Chuk Hang, Ms Starry LEE was concerned whether the sites were large enough for the purpose.

15. SED explained that the two sites would provide about 4 000 self-financing degree places without boarding facilities. The student size of the institutions to be built would be comparable to that of the Lingnan University. Apart from these two sites, the Administration would identify more suitable sites to facilitate the development of degree-awarding institutions in future.

16. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong opined that internationalization of the education sector would definitely affect the admission of local students to local universities. He elaborated that the average university student unit cost was \$200,000 and the tuition fee paid by non-local students for attending the publicly-funded degree programmes offered by the UGC-funded institutions was in the range of \$80,000 to \$100,000. The UGC-funded institutions were only recovering the marginal cost from the tuition fees paid by non-local students and Hong Kong taxpayers were subsidizing non-local students studying in Hong Kong. The general public was not aware of the latent subsidies received by non-local students studying in publicly-funded degree programmes offered by the UGC-funded institutions.

17. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong further opined that to resolve the conflict between local students and non-local students, the Administration should consider allowing local students who had attained the minimum requirements for university admission to pay the marginal cost for attending the publicly-funded degree programmes offered by the UGC-funded institutions. Alternatively, the Administration might consider providing these local students with fee subsidy to pursue self-financing degree programmes offered by local private universities. He cautioned that unless the Administration took action to redress the problem of local qualified students without access to university education, there would be resistance to internationalization of the education sector by using public resources to subsidize non-local students for studying local publicly-funded

Action

degree programmes.

18. SED said that he held a different view from Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong. In his view, the issue at stake was not subsidization of non-local students but a need for an increase of university places. In view of the limited resources and the current fiscal position, the Administration considered it an appropriate approach to internationalize the educator sector by developing the self-financing post secondary institutions to increase university places.

19. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that allowing local students to take up the untaken places reserved for non-local students for attending publicly-funded degree programmes would not incur additional public resources as the Administration had already subsidized the fixed cost of the UGC-funded institutions. SED responded that the existing policy allowed the UGC-funded institutions to admit non-local students up to 20% of the approved student number targets for the publicly-funded programmes.

20. Ms Starry LEE shared the view that the Administration must address the issue of local qualified students for university education. She opined that many local institutions enjoyed clear advantages. The Kellogg-HKUST Executive MBA programme was ranked first by the Financial Times 2009 EMBA global rankings. Also, there were five Hong Kong universities amongst the top 200 universities globally by the Times Higher Education – Quacquarelli Symonds World University Rankings 2009. Ms LEE pointed out that many Mainland students were interested in studying post-graduate degree and vocational training programmes in Hong Kong. She called on the Administration to relax the relevant policies to allow more Mainland students to study in Hong Kong and to facilitate the local institutions to attract these students.

21. SED said that the Administration had implemented various measures to facilitate more Mainland students to study in Hong Kong. He stressed that the respective authorities on both sides had been working together to facilitate the issuance of exit permits to Mainland students for entry to Hong Kong.

22. Mr WONG Yuk-man felt disappointed with the Policy Address 2009-2010. He commented that the Government had solely advocated economic development without regard to the well-being of the poor people in Hong Kong. The Policy Address had made no mention of poverty alleviation. He regretted the Administration for resorting to privatization of education services in order to contain its expenditure on education. He criticized the Administration for proposing the development of education services all of a sudden without undertaking any studies or public consultation or discussion by the Panel. He considered that the impact of the policy had not been thought through.

23. Mrs Regina IP was also concerned about the background and the reasons for the promotion of education services in Hong Kong. She said that according

Action

to a Mainland article, Mr WANG Yang, Secretary of Guangdong Provincial Party Committee considered the universities in Guangdong not good enough and requested the Hong Kong Government to expand the education market to absorb more Mainland students. Following that, the Chief Executive requested the Bauhinia Foundation Research Centre to look into the feasibility of the idea. Subsequently, a study report entitled "Hong Kong-Shenzhen Education Cooperation" was released which called for the enhancement of Hong Kong's long-term competitiveness and consolidation of its role as a regional education hub. Mrs IP requested SED to clarify the matter.

Non-means-tested loan schemes

24. Miss Tanya CHAN sought information on the review of the non-means-tested loan schemes and whether the risk adjustment factor in the interest rates for such schemes would be reviewed. Deputy Secretary for Education (6) (DS(Ed)6) explained that the Student Financial Assistance Agency was currently operating three non-means-tested loan schemes respectively for full-time students pursuing publicly-funded programmes in tertiary institutions, full-time students pursuing locally-accredited self-financing programmes at post-secondary and tertiary levels, as well as students pursuing continuing and professional education courses operated locally by recognized training bodies. The Administration would conduct a review on the schemes which would cover their scope, eligibility criteria, application procedures, interest rate, repayment arrangements and measures to address the default situation. The issue of risk adjustment factor embedded in the interest rate would also be covered in the review.

25. Dr Priscilla LEUNG enquired whether the Administration would consider extending the non-means-tested loan schemes to cover middle-aged unemployed persons to pursue continuing education with a view to helping them to learn new skills for re-employment. She said that instead of requiring such borrowers to repay the loans upon the completion of the courses, they should be allowed to make repayment after finding a job. The same repayment arrangements should also apply to sub-degree borrowers. Dr LEUNG was also concerned about the default situation and asked whether the Administration had examined the causes of the defaults.

26. DS(Ed)6 replied that one of the three existing non-means-tested loan schemes — the Extended Non-Means-tested Loan Scheme was offering loans to individuals who wished to pursue continuing and professional education by taking up part-time or full-time courses provided by self-financed and registered schools in Hong Kong. There was no maximum limit on the tuition fees for the purpose of the loans. DS(Ed)6 further said that the number of default accounts and the default rate under the three schemes were different. In response to Dr Priscilla LEUNG, the Administration agreed to provide written information on the profile of the borrowers who had defaulted payment.

Admin

Action

Project Yi Jin (PYJ)

27. Mr WONG Sing-chi was concerned about the future development of PYJ. He said that currently, the qualifications obtained after successful completion of the relevant programmes were comparable to five passes in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) for employment and continuing education purposes. With the phasing out of HKCEE under the new academic structure for senior secondary and higher education (the 334 structure), he was concerned about the continued operation or otherwise of PYJ and its articulation with other post secondary programmes. He urged the Administration to expeditiously review the future of PYJ to facilitate the programme operators to plan for their operation, such as the appointment of teachers. In his view, PYJ should continue under the 334 structure, otherwise a large number of students would lose the opportunities for continuing education. Mr WONG asked for a timetable for the review.

28. Permanent Secretary for Education (PSED) pointed out that a consultant had been engaged to review PYJ and the review covered the content of PYJ programmes, articulation as well as its future development. Deputy Secretary for Education (1) supplemented that the first stage of the review would be completed in the first half of 2010. The review would cover all relevant aspects and institutes offering PYJ programme would be consulted.

Revitalizing industrial buildings

29. Mr TAM Yiu-chung noted that the Administration would introduce a new policy to revitalize old industrial buildings which would enable institutions to run self-financing programmes. As the Administration had all along adopted stringent requirements for school premises, he was concerned about the feasibility of converting industrial buildings for teaching purpose. He asked about the number of industrial buildings identified to be suitable for such purpose and whether the Administration had undertaken any studies in this regard and whether it would take proactive steps to identify suitable industrial buildings for the consideration of school sponsoring bodies.

30. In response, SED said that as explained by the Secretary for Development, the policy objective of revitalizing old industrial buildings was to release the potential of these buildings for utilization. The existing usage and ownership of industrial buildings would have a bearing on whether they would be suitable for conversion for other uses. The Administration had no intention of identifying certain industrial buildings for conversion or redevelopment for certain purpose. Interested parties had to identify the industrial buildings suitable for certain industries and make applications to the Administration.

Action

Primary schools in Shenzhen offering Hong Kong curriculum

31. Referring to the operation of primary schools in Shenzhen offering Hong Kong curriculum to Hong Kong children residing in Shenzhen, Mr TAM Yiu-chung asked whether such schools would recruit Hong Kong teachers. SED responded that schools operating in Shenzhen would need to comply with the local requirements and related rules and regulations. The Administration had had discussion with the Shenzhen authorities and it was agreed that if the curriculum offered by Shenzhen primary schools was broadly in line with that of Hong Kong primary schools, the Hong Kong students studying in these schools could participate in the Secondary School Places Allocation System. PSED supplemented that EDB had made arrangements with the education authorities in Shenzhen to provide training for teachers of Shenzhen primary schools for Hong Kong residents.

Internet access service fee

32. Ms Audrey EU said that while the Administration promoted knowledge-based economy, it should also provide Internet access service fee for needy students to achieve the purpose. To help needy students benefit from electronic learning, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered it important to provide assistance to these students to replace outdated computers and to access the Internet. Ms Starry LEE also queried why the provision of Internet access service fee for needy students had yet to be implemented.

33. While acknowledging the need to facilitate needy students to access the internet for learning, SED said that the question was how the facilitation should be provided. The Financial Secretary would examine the various options to provide convenient and suitable electronic learning opportunities for students in need.

Small class teaching

34. Noting that the Chief Executive had promised to implement small class teaching, Ms Audrey EU asked whether the Administration would progressively implement small class teaching in secondary schools. SED said that small class teaching had been implemented progressively in primary schools. Although the Administration had no plan to implement small class teaching in secondary schools, it had provided additional resources for schools to implement the new senior secondary academic structure which would facilitate schools to flexibly deploy resources according to their specific needs.

Review of Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme

35. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che enquired about the timetable for conducting the

Action

review of the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme (PEVS) and whether the representatives of the pre-primary education sector would be invited to join the committee for that purpose. SED informed that the Education Commission had just been entrusted with the task to carry out the review of PEVS. There would be consultation in the process and the pre-primary education sector would be involved. PSED supplemented that a representative from the pre-primary education sector was sitting on the Education Commission and this representative had joined the group responsible for the review.

36. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that the review of PEVS should cover its impact on the operation of private independent (PI) kindergartens. He was concerned that the implementation of PEVS had driven PI KGs gradually out of the market. In his view, the choice for non-profit making or PI kindergartens should rest with parents. The Administration should only prescribe the maximum amount of fee subsidy for attending pre-primary education.

Primary school social workers

37. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che pointed out that the turnover rate of primary school social workers was high because of the existing subsidy amounts provided by the Administration for schools and the tender systems adopted by schools. In general, the social workers employed by many primary schools had little work experience. He enquired whether the Administration would conduct a comprehensive review of primary school social workers. PSED replied that there was currently no plan for such a review. The Chairman said that the issue of primary school social workers also fell within the purview of the Panel on Welfare Services.

II. Any other business

38. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11:32 am.