

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1931/09-10
(The minutes have been seen by
the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Thursday, 13 May 2010, at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

- Members present** : Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan (Chairman)
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
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
Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai, BBS, JP
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee, GBS, JP
Dr Hon Samson TAM Wai-ho, JP
- Members attending** : Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, GBS, JP
Hon IP Wai-ming, MH
- Members absent** : Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung

Public Officers attending : Agenda item V

Education Bureau

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Ms Amy WONG
Principal Assistant Secretary (Higher Education)

Mr Jack M F CHAN
Chief Executive Officer (Higher Education)

Dr Edward FUNG
Chairman, Project Yi Jin Programme Management
Committee

Agenda item VI

Education Bureau

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Ms Mable CHAN
Deputy Secretary for Education (2)

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

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

Ms Eugenia CHUNG Nga-chi
Assistant Secretary (Language Education)

Agenda item VII

Education Bureau

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Ms Mable CHAN
Deputy Secretary for Education (2)

Ms IP Ling-bik
Principal Assistant Secretary (Education Commission
and Planning)

Professor Maurice Galton
Consultant, Study on Small Class Teaching

**Attendance by
invitation** : Agenda item VII

Mr IP Kin-yuen
Education Consultant

Jordan Valley St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Mr MAK Tin-chi
Principal

Subsidized Primary Schools Council

Mr CHEUNG Yung-pong
Chairman

Mr SIN Kim-wai
Vice-Chairman

Sun Fong Chung Primary School

Ms LO Sau-chee
Principal

Ms YEH Luk-sin
Teacher

The Hong Kong Institute of Education

Dr LAI Kwok-chan
Director, Centre for Development and Research in
Small Class Teaching

Mr TANG Yiu-nam
Centre Manager, Centre for Development and Research
in Small Class Teaching

Hong Kong Education Policy Concern Organization

Mr LAM Seung-wan
Member

Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union

Mr CHAN Kwok-kuen
Executive Committee Member

Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of
Hong Kong

Mr Vincent CHENG Wing-shun
Deputy Spokesman of Education Policy

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

Staff in attendance : Ms Catherina YU
Senior Council Secretary (2)7

Ms Judy TING
Council Secretary (2)6

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

Action

I. Confirmation of minutes
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1234/09-10]

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2010 were confirmed.

II. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1527/09-10(01)]

2. Members noted the letter dated 4 May 2010 from the Hong Kong

Education Publishers Association ("HKEPA") and the Anglo-Chinese Textbook Publishers Organisation ("ACTPO") concerning the results of a survey on parents' views on children's learning and schooling related expenses conducted by the Public Opinion Programme of the University of Hong Kong. Based on the findings of the survey, HKEPA and ACTPO concluded that the prices of school textbooks were not high as the spending on school textbooks was lower than that on extra-curricular activities and tutorial classes.

3. The Chairman disagreed with the conclusion of HKEPA and ACTPO. Noting that the Administration had discussed the prices of school textbooks with the publishers, she sought an update from the Administration. Under Secretary for Education ("US(Ed)") said that the two publishers associations had decided to freeze the prices of the recommended textbooks for the 2010-2011 school year. The Education Bureau had announced the prices of textbooks on the Recommended Textbook List for the coming school year on 10 May 2010. A circular memorandum on "Notes on Selection of Textbooks and Learning Materials for Use in Schools" had also been issued to all primary and secondary schools. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide written information on the matter for members' consideration of the need to follow up.

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[Appendices I and II to LC Paper No. CB(2)1484/09-10, LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1406/09-10(01) and CB(2)1424/09-10(01)]

4. Members agreed to discuss the education matters under the Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation at the next regular Panel meeting and include the subject of sex education in schools in the list of outstanding items for discussion.

5. Members noted the Administration's proposal to discuss the issues on exit pathways for students taking the 2010 Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination ("HKCEE") and education for students with special educational needs ("SEN") in July 2010. The Chairman, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Ms Audrey EU expressed concern that there might not be sufficient time for the Panel to discuss the matters and for schools to take necessary follow up actions before the commencement of the new school year in September 2010 if the matters were discussed in July 2010. Ms Audrey EU pointed out that the Panel held a series of discussions on education for students with SEN last year. As the Administration had already exchanged views with the parties concerned, the relevant information should be ready by June 2010. Given the busy business before the end of a session, she considered it more appropriate to discuss education for students with SEN at the meeting in June. The Chairman said that the Administration should at least brief members on issues relating to extension of stay for students with intellectual disability. US(Ed)

undertook to liaise with the Secretariat on the feasibility of discussing the two items proposed by members.

(Post meeting note: the issues relating to exit pathways for students taking the 2010 HKCEE and education for students with SEN had been included in the agenda for the next regular Panel meeting to be held on Monday, 14 June 2010, at 4:30 pm.)

IV. Proposal for setting up a subcommittee on issues relating to the relocation of the centres of the Christian Zheng Sheng Association [LC Paper No. CB(2)1484/09-10(01)]

6. The Chairman sought members' views on the proposal of Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che and Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong for setting up a subcommittee to discuss issues relating to the relocation of the centres of the Christian Zheng Sheng Association ("the Association").

7. Mr Andrew LEUNG said that a subcommittee appointed under the Panel should discuss policy issues instead of individual cases. While he had no intention of undermining the importance of the matter, he was of the view that the matter was an individual case. He considered it not appropriate to form a subcommittee under the Panel for the purpose. He added that the matter should be followed up by way of a case conference.

8. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che apologised for a typing mistake in the joint letter dated 5 May 2010 signed by Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and himself (LC Paper No. CB(2)1484/09-10(01)). He said that the proposed timeframe of the subcommittee should be 12 months and not 12 days. Mr CHEUNG pointed out that drug rehabilitation and the provision of school places for Mui Wo residents were policy matters. He understood that the subcommittee could not commence work right after its formation but he felt obliged to raise the proposal for discussion.

9. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong agreed that the matter concerning the Association alone was an individual case but the mode of operation, provision of subvention and monitoring measures for drug rehabilitation centres as outlined in the joint letter were all policy issues. Since the mode of operation of the Association was unique, it would provide a useful reference to drug rehabilitation centres wishing to operate in the same manner. Furthermore, the policies concerning the subvention and the monitoring of the Association's services could apply to other drug rehabilitation centres alike in future.

10. In response to Mr TAM Yiu-chung's enquiry on the procedures for forming a subcommittee, the Chairman said that a subcommittee could be formed under the House Committee if the subject matter straddled a number of

policy areas or under a Panel. If a subcommittee was proposed to be formed under the House Committee, the approval of the House Committee had to be sought.

11. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Clerk confirmed the Chairman's understanding on the formation of subcommittees. The Clerk explained that Rule 26(a) of the House Rules stipulated that the maximum number of subcommittees on policy issues that might be in operation at any one time should be eight. As of the date of the Panel meeting, the number of such subcommittees in operation had exceeded eight. Should the Panel decide to appoint a subcommittee, the subcommittee would be put on the waiting list and could not commence work unless approval from the House Committee for its activation had been obtained.

12. Mr TAM Yiu-chung considered it not necessary to appoint a subcommittee to follow up the matter. He opined that since the functions of the Panel, among others, were to consider policy issues, it would be more appropriate for the Panel rather than a subcommittee to deal with the subject matter. Moreover, it was time-consuming to set up a subcommittee, and the Panel could start the discussion earlier to address Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's concern over policy issues.

13. Ms Audrey EU said that since the activation of the proposed subcommittee would be subject to the approval of the House Committee and Mr Andrew LEUNG and Mr TAM Yiu-chung had already indicated their objection to the setting up of the subcommittee, she doubted if approval from the House Committee could be obtained. Given that the Administration had taken a series of measures to tackle drug abuse problems in schools and the issues relating to the relocation of the centres of the Association were relevant to other drug rehabilitation centres, there was a pressing need to formulate the necessary policies. She suggested that as an alternative to the formation of a subcommittee, the Panel could arrange a series of special meetings to discuss the matter.

14. Mr Andrew LEUNG clarified that he did not object to the discussion on the issues relating to the relocation of centres of the Association but did not see the need for setting up a subcommittee for the purpose. He remained of the view that the matter should be discussed at Panel meetings. Since the matter also involved drug rehabilitation which was under the purview of the Panel on Security, he considered that it should not be followed up by the Panel on Education only. He reiterated that a subcommittee should not be formed to study an individual case.

15. In response to Mr Andrew LEUNG, the Clerk said that the Panel could decide on how to handle the matter. If the Panel agreed to form a subcommittee, it should determine its terms of reference. She further said that

the Panel on Security had discussed issues relating to drug rehabilitation at its previous meetings.

16. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that the relocation of the centres of the Association and the provision of school places to residents in outlying islands were inter-related matters and should not be taken as an individual case. He said that there was currently no secondary school in Mui Wo and many residents in outlying islands had to travel a long way to go to school. He hoped that these matters could be discussed as soon as possible by a subcommittee.

17. The Chairman opined that there were pros and cons of forming a subcommittee. While a subcommittee could provide a dedicated discussion forum for members to focus on a specific topic, the Panel could hold special meetings speedily.

18. Noting that the Chief Secretary for Administration was leading a working group ("the Working Group") to study the relocation of the centres of the Association, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong sought information on its progress of work.

19. US(Ed) replied that the Working Group had active discussions on the matter and had exchanged views with the Association. He said that he could not provide a timetable on its work at this stage.

20. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong suggested that the Administration be requested to furnish an interim report on the work of the Working Group and the Panel could hold a meeting in July 2010 to discuss the matter and decide on the way forward.

21. The Chairman said that some 700 young drug abusers under the age of 21 in drug rehabilitations centres were not provided with formal education but tutorial classes only. Many of these tutorial classes were taught by two teachers only. She opined that young drug abusers undergoing drug rehabilitation should be offered a mainstream curriculum leading to the HKCEE. She suggested that the Panel also discuss the policies relating to the provision of such a curriculum and the ancillary facilities and resources required for its implementation.

22. Members agreed that the Panel should hold a special meeting in July 2010 to discuss the relocation of the centres of the Association and related policy matters. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that as the matter fell within the ambit of the Panel on Security and Panel on Education, a joint Panel meeting should be arranged. The Chairman replied that the Chairman of the Panel on Security would be consulted, and non-Panel members would also be invited to attend the special meeting.

(Post meeting notes: after consultation with the Chairman of the Panel on Security, it was decided that the special meeting be held by the Panel on Education and members of the Panel on Security and other non-Panel members would be invited to attend the special meeting. The special meeting was scheduled for Thursday, 22 July 2010 at 2:30 pm.)

V. Increase in financial commitment for Project Yi Jin
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1484/09-10(02) and (03)]

23. Members noted the background brief entitled "Project Yi Jin" prepared by the Legislative Council ("LegCo") Secretariat.

Briefing by the Administration

24. US(Ed) briefed members on the proposal for increasing the financial commitment for Project Yin Jin ("PYJ") to meet the projected funding requirement until the 2011-2012 academic year as detailed in the Administration's paper.

Provision of Secondary 5 ("S5") class for Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination ("HKCEE") repeaters

25. Noting that the current PYJ would cease after two years, i.e. until the 2011-2012 academic year, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong enquired about the feasibility of expanding the scope of PYJ to provide S5 repeater classes for students taking the HKCEE in 2010. He said that mainstream schools might not wish to offer HKCEE repeater classes as they had fully implemented the New Senior Secondary ("NSS") academic structure since September 2009. The 2010 HKCEE students might not be able to switch to S5 classes under the NSS academic structure since their academic attainment was not high. Against this background, Mr CHEUNG proposed that as a pathway for the 2010 HKCEE students, the scope of PYJ should be expanded to provide HKCEE repeater classes, as well as classes for articulation to the NSS academic structure.

26. Mr CHEUNG elaborated that the provision of such classes was viable as PYJ had all along been providing an alternative pathway for HKCEE students to attain a formal qualification which was comparable to five passes in HKCEE. As the operation of the current PYJ would cease after two years, the 2010 HKCEE students could make use of the remaining two-year of PYJ to articulate to the NSS academic structure. He further pointed out that as the operating principle of PYJ was to admit students without any prerequisite, the 2010 HKCEE students could repeat S5 classes under PYJ should they wish to.

He requested the Administration to adopt this flexible approach to help solve the problem of 2010 HKCEE students seeking exit pathways.

27. US(Ed) said that the current PYJ would continue until the 2011-2012 academic year, and a PYJ student who had successfully completed the programme would be awarded a certificate, which was comparable to five passes in HKCEE. The current design of PYJ was not to provide articulation to the NSS academic structure for taking the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education ("HKDSE") examination. The nature of PYJ programme was different from the mainstream secondary curriculum. Nevertheless, in developing a new PYJ under the NSS academic structure, the Administration would consider the needs of the current PYJ students and PYJ graduates as well as Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's proposal. US(Ed) added that taking evening secondary courses was an option for HKCEE repeaters.

28. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong stressed that the crux of the issue was that mainstream schools would no longer provide a safety net for the 2010 HKCEE students as they might not offer HKCEE repeater classes. Given the availability of teachers and curriculum, he considered it viable to operate such classes under PYJ.

29. In response, US(Ed) said that as the proposal of Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong would involve the revision of the approved purposes of the financial commitment for PYJ, the Administration had to consider it carefully.

30. At the request of Mrs Regina IP for further clarification of his proposal, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong elaborated that his proposal was for PYJ to operate both S5 repeater classes for taking the last HKCEE in 2011 and S5 classes for articulation to the NSS academic structures. The first priority was to offer HKCEE repeater classes in the 2010-2011 academic year to enable the 2010 HKCEE students to re-take HKCEE in 2011. As a second priority, classes for articulation to the NSS academic structure should be offered to enable students to take HKDSE in 2012.

31. Mrs Regina IP said that she had received very positive feedback on the PYJ programme. She pointed out that annually there were some 110 000 students sitting HKCEE, with some 6 000 students attaining zero score. Since these students could not meet the minimum requirement for S6 admission, they turned to PYJ for an alternative pathway. Mrs IP called on the Administration to exercise flexibility and offer assistance such as providing bridging programmes to these students as they faced tremendous pressure in pursuing further study and seeking employment.

32. Mr IP Wai-ming said that he was not a Panel member but he had all along been concerned about the PYJ programme. He pointed out that the 2010 HKCEE students were facing uncertain future in the transition period

while the current and the NSS academic structures overlapped. Although they could attend PYJ, they would only be awarded a certificate which was comparable to five passes in HKCEE. However, this qualification could not facilitate their articulation to the NSS academic structure. He called on the Administration to thoroughly review the current PYJ and to develop a new PYJ. The Administration should also clarify whether it would consider the proposal put forward by Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong.

33. US(Ed) said that PYJ was welcomed by many students. There were currently some 15 000 students enrolled in the PYJ programme, the nature of which was different from the mainstream secondary curriculum. To facilitate members' understanding of PYJ, he would welcome members' visit to the institutions offering PYJ programme. According to his experience of interacting with PYJ students, they preferred PYJ programme as it offered a wide range of practical subjects to suit their specific needs. US(Ed) also pointed out that upon completion of the current PYJ, a student was awarded a certificate which was comparable to five passes in HKCEE and level 2 under the qualifications framework. With the implementation of the NSS academic structure, the Administration was considering the implementation of a new programme based on the PYJ model. A student who had successfully completed the new PYJ would be awarded a qualification that would be comparable to level 2 in five subjects in HKDSE and level 3 under the qualifications framework.

34. US(Ed) further said that two ways were available for the 2010 HKCEE students to continue education. While some students would wish to re-take HKCEE in 2011 as private candidates to complete the secondary education, others might wish to switch to the NSS academic structure to pursue senior secondary education. He acknowledged the concern of Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong about having insufficient HKCEE repeater places, and stressed that the Administration had been encouraging schools to make use of the 5% quota to offer such classes. The feedback received from schools so far was positive.

35. US(Ed) also said that the funding proposal did not include the provision of HKCEE repeater classes under PYJ. Moreover, the availability of teacher would be a concern as existing PYJ teachers might not have experience in teaching subjects under the mainstream curriculum. Nevertheless, the Administration undertook to consider Mr CHEUNG's proposal. In the development of a new PYJ, the Administration would consider issues relating to the articulation of the PYJ qualification to the NSS academic structure.

36. Mr IP Wai-ming called on the Administration to provide opportunities for the current PYJ students to articulate to the NSS academic structure for pursuing continuing education. In reply, US(Ed) reiterated that students who had completed the one-year PYJ programme would be awarded a certificate

which was comparable to five passes in HKCEE. PYJ was not designed for articulation to S6. Nevertheless, in considering the new PYJ, the Administration would take into account the NSS structure. He stressed that the current PYJ and the new PYJ were two different programmes.

37. While expressing support for PYJ, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan was concerned about the qualification of a PYJ full certificate. He said that although a PYJ full certificate was comparable to five passes in HKCEE, these five passes did not mean passes in the subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. As a result, a PYJ full certificate did not meet the entry requirement of some civil service grades which required five passes in HKCEE, including Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. He was concerned that the same problem would recur in respect of the new PYJ qualification.

38. US(Ed) said that the PYJ qualification should be assessed in a holistic manner. He pointed out that the current PYJ certificate had been accepted by the Government as meeting the entry requirement of some 30 civil service grades which required five passes in HKCEE, including Chinese Language and English Language. He acknowledged that some civil service grades required a pass in the subject of Mathematics, and a PYJ graduate without attaining a passing grade in the subject of Mathematics in HKCEE would not meet the entry requirement of these grades. He stressed that the design of PYJ programme was to provide alternative education opportunities for HKCEE leavers which suited their interests and facilitated their attainment of a formal qualification.

39. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan considered that the subject of Mathematics should be strengthened under the new PYJ as the programme duration was expected to be two years. The Administration should consider the qualification of the new PYJ as comparable to level 2 in five subjects in HKDSE including the subject of Mathematics. US(Ed) replied that the Administration would consider Mr LEE's views.

40. Professor Patrick LAU expressed support for PYJ as the programme was designed with an emphasis on information technology application and practical skills training, etc. Noting the findings of a survey on the effectiveness of PYJ conducted in 2004 that 37% of the respondents were pursuing further studies, he sought information on PYJ graduates' articulation to vocational training programmes, such as those offered by the Vocational Training Council ("VTC"). Professor LAU welcomed the development of a new PYJ, and hoped that the new PYJ programme would articulate to different courses such as those offered by the Hong Kong Design Institute.

41. Quoting the results of a recent survey on PYJ graduates, US(Ed) said that about 40% of the respondents were pursuing further studies, of which 37%

took Higher Diploma courses. As VTC was one of the institutions that offered PYJ programme, a large number of PYJ graduates pursued continuing education by enrolling in courses offered by VTC. This showed that the practical skills training in PYJ programme had facilitated students to obtain a formal qualification.

42. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's proposal for adding HKCEE repeater classes to the current PYJ seemed to be a one-off measure. Notwithstanding its being a one-off measure, he was concerned whether there were adequate time, resources and manpower under PYJ for implementing the proposal. He was also concerned whether the proposed increase in financial commitment was sufficient to meet the increased demand for places for PYJ as many 2010 HKCEE students might turn to PYJ as an alternative pathway. He enquired about the projected number of PYJ students until the 2011-2012 academic year.

43. US(Ed) replied that the number of students in the current academic year was some 15 000, the highest since the launch of PYJ in 2000. The projected numbers of students for PYJ were 21 000 in the 2010-2011 academic year and 9 000 in the 2011-2012 academic year. The Administration had been working closely with the Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions ("FCE"), and had taken into account the projected increase in proposing the increase in financial commitment for PYJ. US(Ed) further pointed out that in addition to PYJ, there were other programmes to cater for the needs of students.

44. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that he supported the funding proposal but he remained concerned whether the proposed increase was adequate to meet the projected increased demand. He urged the Administration to consider increasing the commitment before submitting the proposal to the Finance Committee ("FC"). The Chairman echoed his view.

45. US(Ed) said that the projected number of PYJ places at 21 000 in the 2010-2011 academic year should be adequate because annually there were about 25 000 students who could not attain five subjects at level E or above in HKCEE. Besides PYJ, there were other vocational training programmes, such as those offered by VTC.

46. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che considered it necessary to have a complete picture on the estimated numbers of students who would pursue different pathways should their results in HKCEE be unsatisfactory. These included the number of students who would pursue PYJ programme, the number of students who would repeat S5 and the number of available places in repeater S5 classes. He pointed out that Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's proposal was to allay the worry of students who wished to pursue HKCEE repeater classes. The provision of articulation classes in PYJ to the NSS academic structure

would be a further step to address the need of the current S5 students. He requested the Administration to provide the relevant estimates.

47. US(Ed) said that current S5 students were strongly encouraged to study S5 under the NSS academic structure should their results in 2010 HKCEE be unsatisfactory. Should students repeat S5 for re-sitting HKCEE, they would have less than one year to catch up. However, if they chose to switch to the NSS academic structure, they would have a longer period to prepare for HKDSE examination in 2012. In his view, students should be able to switch to the NSS curriculum provided they worked hard. He stressed that the Administration had all along attached great importance to the provision of exit pathways for the 2010 HKCEE students. On top of the existing quota of 5% for repeaters, there were other education pathways to meet the needs of students, such as practical skills and vocational training programmes offered by VTC and other individual operators. Annually, there were some 5 000 to 6 000 students who would pursue further study after completing these programmes. He agreed to provide the information requested by Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che.

48. The Chairman enquired about the age limit of students for enrolling in PYJ. She was given to understand that new immigrants had been rejected by PYJ because they were not school-age students. She considered it necessary to consider the circumstances of new immigrants and provide education opportunities for them. US(Ed) replied that any S5 school leavers or adult learners at the age of 21 and above could join PYJ.

49. The Chairman noted the consideration of the Administration for developing new PYJ with the qualification comparable to S6 under the NSS academic structure. She was concerned whether top-up classes would be provided for PYJ graduates for obtaining a qualification comparable to S6 under the NSS academic structure. As the basic qualification after the implementation of the NSS academic structure would be S6, whether the entry requirement for many civil service grades would continue to be five passes in HKCEE had to be considered. US(Ed) said that the Administration would discuss the issue concerning top-up classes with FCE.

50. Mr IP Wai-ming said that he did not object to the funding proposal. However, he considered that the Administration should resolve the issue by immediately adjusting the current PYJ programme with a qualification comparable to S6 under the NSS academic structure.

51. US(Ed) explained that the last batch of students under the current academic system would complete S5 in 2010. The current PYJ should last until the 2011-2012 academic year to meet the education needs of these students. Therefore, the Administration proposed to increase the financial commitment for the current PYJ until the 2011-2012 academic year. US(Ed)

pointed out that it was not simply a matter of adjusting the duration of the current PYJ programme for its qualification to be comparable to S6 under the NSS academic structure. The content of the programme had to be changed as well. The new PYJ, if adopted, would be launched from the 2012/2013 academic year onwards.

52. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out the serious consequences of not meeting the education needs of the 2010 HKCEE students. He reiterated that some schools might not honour their promise to offer HKCEE repeater places as they did not want to keep low achieving students. Unless exit pathways were provided for these students, their dissatisfaction would be great. He therefore proposed the provision of HKCEE repeater classes and, if possible, articulation classes to the NSS curriculum under the current PYJ. PYJ should enroll as many 2010 HKCEE repeaters as possible. In his view, the availability of teachers should not be a concern as PYJ teachers were qualified to teach academic subjects. He considered that his proposal would be well received by parents and students. He requested the Administration to provide written information on its consideration of his proposal.

53. Mrs Regina IP asked whether the Administration would need to revise the project scope approved by FC should Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's proposal be accepted. US(Ed) answered in the affirmative. He stressed that the proposal for adding S5 repeater or articulation classes to PYJ did not align with the purpose of PYJ which was to provide skill-based programmes for students. He added that the Administration would review the exit pathways for the 2010 HKCEE students and revert to the Panel.

54. The Chairman concluded that although members had diverse views on the funding proposal, they supported its submission to FC.

VI. Injection into the Language Fund

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1484/09-10(04) and (05)]

55. Members noted the updated background brief entitled "Injection into the Language Fund" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat.

Briefing by the Administration

56. US(Ed) briefed members on the proposal for the funding injection into the Language Fund as set out in the Administration's paper.

Funding for the English Enhancement Scheme

57. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that in the some 300 schools using Chinese as the medium of instruction ("MOI") ("CMI schools"), a

notable number of students had yet to attain a satisfactory level of English proficiency. These schools would continue to use Chinese as MOI after the implementation of the MOI Fine-tuning in the 2010-2011 school year. Under the original English Enhancement Scheme ("EES"), the funding ceilings for CMI schools and EMI schools were set at \$3 million and \$0.5 million respectively. However, in the proposed Refined EES, the budgetary ceiling for each applicant secondary school would be \$1 million without classification of CMI schools and EMI schools. Mr CHEUNG considered that the reduced ceiling for CMI schools would not be conducive to their provision of an English learning and teaching environment. He said that a large number of CMI schools would not be able to increase the number of teaching hours in English as their students' English proficiency was too low. CMI schools needed more fund to create an English teaching and learning environment.

58. US(Ed) pointed out that the original EES was introduced in 2006 with different premise while a majority of schools were still using the fund for enhancing the English proficiency of their students. Upon the implementation of the MOI Fine-tuning in the 2010-2011 school year, schools would no longer be classified into CMI schools and EMI schools. In the light of the development, the Administration proposed a budgetary ceiling of \$1 million for each applicant school under the Refined EES. The school councils and associations agreed that after the implementation of the MOI Fine-tuning, students would be provided with more opportunities to get exposed to English at schools. They also agreed that, since schools would not be classified into CMI and EMI schools, the uniform budgetary ceiling of \$1 million for each applicant school would be appropriate.

Level of English proficiency of local students

59. Mrs Regina IP said that many employers including the Civil Service Bureau had criticized the low English standard of local students. As a substantial amount had been allocated by the Administration for enhancing language proficiency, she was concerned about the effectiveness of the various measures; whether it was based on the feedbacks from employers or on the results of HKCEE. She considered the HKCEE results not entirely reliable as there was a view that the examination papers of English Language were getting easier. She also opined that one of the ways to enhance English proficiency was to train the language teachers. She sought information on the Administration's strategy in this regard.

60. In response, US(Ed) said that language proficiency of local students had been evaluated by various means including from their performance in internationally recognized assessment programmes such as the Programme for International Student Assessment ("PISA") and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study ("PIRLS"). Among the 57 countries/regions participating into PISA which measured first language reading ability, the

ranking of Hong Kong students had risen from 10th in 2003 to third in 2006. As for PIRLS, Hong Kong P4 students ranked second in reading literacy in 45 countries under assessment in 2006, which was a notable progress as compared with their ranking at 14th in 2001.

61. As regards English proficiency, US(Ed) further said that local graduates scored 6.46 in 2002 and 6.69 in 2008-2009 (i.e. level six) in the International English Language Testing System ("IELTS") examinations. In response to the Chairman's enquiries on the reference point for comparison and the standard of local graduates as compared with their overseas counterparts, US(Ed) pointed out that level six in the IELTS examinations represented a competent user of English. Deputy Secretary for Education (5) ("DS(Ed)5") supplemented that a study of English and Chinese reading ability of 10-year-old students had been conducted in 2004 and 2007. The outcome of the 2004 study showed that 8% of the students' performance in English reading achieved international average, i.e. comparable to students whose first language was English. The percentage had gone up to 24% in 2007.

62. As regards employers' rating of English proficiency of local students, US(Ed) said that the American Chamber of Commerce ("AmCham") in Hong Kong had conducted surveys in this regard. In 2002, 47% of the members of AmCham considered the English proficiency of local employees satisfactory. The percentage had increased to 67% in 2004 and to 75% recently. US(Ed) further said that it was essential for local students to have a high standard of English to cope with the business environment in Hong Kong as an international finance centre. The Administration would endeavour to assist local students in raising their level of English proficiency.

63. Regarding the support provided to language teachers, DS(Ed)5 said that the Administration had set language proficiency requirements in 2003 and English language and Putonghua teachers were required to meet the requirements. Professional Development Incentive Grant Scheme was introduced in 2004 to encourage language teachers who had yet to obtain professional qualifications to upgrade their subject knowledge and pedagogy. In 2003, 30% of the language teachers had reached the professional qualification requirements and the percentage had risen to over 60% in 2008. Besides the provision of the incentive grants, a number of support teams had been set up to provide school-based support including curriculum planning and teaching strategies to about 300 to 400 schools a year. The support teams had received very positive feedbacks from the participating schools.

64. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that the assessments mentioned by the Administration referred to the overall English standard of local students. He was concerned about the English standard of students in CMI schools. He enquired if the English standard of the students in CMI schools had improved with the implementation of the various measures and whether information was

available on the English standard of the students in CMI schools as compared with their counterparts in EMI schools. If ESS had successfully helped improve the English standard of the students in CMI schools, he was worried that the reduction of the ceiling from \$3 million to \$1 million per school might adversely affect their efforts in this regard. He indicated support to the funding proposal and asked the Administration to provide further information on the above question.

65. In reply, DS(Ed)5 said that there were two syllabi in English Language in HKCEE before 2007. Syllabus A was mainly for CMI schools while Syllabus B was for EMI schools. Starting from 2007, the two syllabi were combined with a view to bringing the levels of the two syllabi closer. According to the feedbacks from the education sector, the performance of the students in CMI schools in English Language in HKCEE had improved after the introduction of the new syllabus.

66. Mrs Regina IP commented that IELTS tests were not compulsory and the English standard of the local graduates who took the IELTS tests voluntarily should be quite high. Hence the test results could not reflect the English standard of local students as a whole. She asked how the level of English Language in HKDSE examination would compare with that of Creative Writing in Scholastic Aptitude Test ("SAT"). DS(Ed)5 said that while HKDSE results had yet to be benchmarked with SAT, benchmarking had been made with General Certificate of Education ("GCE") A Level Examination results. Level 3 or above in HKDSE Examination was considered comparable to the current GCE A level Examination by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service of the United Kingdom.

67. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide written information about the English standard of local secondary school students as compared with their overseas counterparts and the English proficiency of students in CMI schools as compared with their counterparts in EMI schools after the implementation of the various measures to enhance English proficiency. Concluding the discussions, the Chairman said that the Panel supported the submission of the funding proposal to the Finance Committee for consideration.

VII. Final Report of the Study on Small Class Teaching

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1484/09-10(06) and (07)]

68. The Chairman welcomed representatives of the Administration and the eight deputations and individual to the meeting.

69. Members noted the updated background brief entitled "Small class teaching" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat.

Briefing by the Administration

70. US(Ed) briefed members on the findings of the Study on Small Class Teaching ("the Study") and the recommendations on the support for teachers in the implementation of small class teaching ("SCT") in public-sector primary schools ("primary schools") starting from Primary One ("P1") in the 2009-2010 school year as detailed in the Administration's paper.

Oral presentation by deputations

Mr IP Kin-yuen

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1553/09-10(01)]

71. Mr IP Kin-yuen presented his views as detailed in his submission.

Jordan Valley St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1556/09-10(01)]

72. Mr MAK Tin-chi presented the views of Jordan Valley St Joseph's Catholic Primary School as detailed in its submission.

Subsidized Primary Schools Council

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1556/09-10(02)]

73. Mr CHEUNG Yung-pong presented the views of Subsidized Primary Schools Council as detailed in its submission.

Sun Fong Chung Primary School

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1556/09-10(03)]

74. Ms LO Sau-chee presented the views of Sun Fong Chung Primary School as detailed in its submission.

The Hong Kong Institute of Education

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1519/09-10(01)]

75. Dr LAI Kwok-chan presented the views of the Hong Kong Institute of Education as detailed in its submission.

Hong Kong Education Policy Concern Organization

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1519/09-10(02)]

76. Mr LAM Seung-wan presented the views of Hong Kong Education Policy Concern Organization as detailed in its submission.

Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1553/09-10(02)]

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

Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1711/09-10(01)]

78. Mr Vincent CHENG presented the views of Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong as detailed in its submission.

The Study

79. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that as some of the deputations had pointed out, only about 70% of the primary schools had implemented SCT currently. Given the benefits of SCT as supported by the findings of the Study, the Administration's commitment to its implementation and the common vision of education bodies and the community at large for SCT, all primary schools should adopt SCT in the long run. He appreciated the practical difficulties in some school nets with an anticipated shortfall of school places. However, a number of schools still refused to implement SCT despite the adequate provision of school places as anticipated in their concerned school nets. He called on the formulation of a timeframe for these schools to implement SCT gradually and a target date by which all primary schools had to adopt SCT.

80. US(Ed) pointed out that there was no timeframe for the implementation of SCT in all primary schools, taking into account the major factors including the provision of school places and the wishes of schools and parents. Individual schools might have various reasons for not implementing SCT in earlier years. Nonetheless, with the positive results of other schools in implementing SCT, these schools were expected to turn SCT. While the Administration would continue to explore ways to enable more schools, in particular schools in Yau Tsim Mong District and Sham Shui Po District, to turn SCT, the wishes of individual schools should be honoured.

81. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong commented that the wishes of the schools should not override the benefits of SCT. A few schools might never adopt SCT if the implementation was not mandatory. Referring to the situation of secondary schools, Mr CHEUNG added that the Administration had made it a policy to reduce the allocated class size of secondary schools by two students per annum within a specified period. By the same token, the Administration should require all schools to implement SCT. He opined that the Administration might provide a transition period for schools situated in school

nets with sufficient school places to turn SCT.

82. In reply, US(Ed) recapitulated that the wishes and difficulties of individual schools should be addressed. It was worth-noting as pointed out in the Study that some teaching strategies would enhance learning effectiveness when applied in either small or regular classes. Parents' expectations and views for individual schools to turn SCT should be handled by the schools. The Administration would keep in view the overall implementation of SCT and take appropriate actions when necessary.

83. Mrs Regina IP referred to her experience as a parent and a university student and remarked that she had no doubt on the effectiveness of SCT. Many middle class families had spent a lot of money to send their children to schools which had adopted SCT. It would be more effective to learn subjects such as a foreign language in a small class setting as students could have more time for practice and interaction. She further said that some deputations had positive comments on SCT since teachers would have more time to participate in extra-curricular activities and develop students' leadership skills. Surprised to learn from the Study that the impact of SCT was not significant, she enquired about the possible reasons for the findings and the size of the classes under the Study.

84. Professor Maurice Galton responded that the main problem concerned the frequency and length of interaction between students and teachers. At the start of the Study, there was no exchange between teachers and individual students for 70% of a lesson. The percentage was reduced to about 65% at the end of the Study. Notwithstanding this 5% increase in the interaction time, a reduction of class size from 40 to 25 did not bring about any notable differences in the attention students would get from teachers. The key finding was that a more interactive way of teaching was the determining factor to maximize the benefits of smaller classes. Professor Galton added that SCT worked in western countries such as the United States because teachers in the United States had to spend a lot of time on classroom discipline and a reduction of class size mitigated the problem. However, there were no such disciplinary problems in Hong Kong. This was one of the reasons why SCT was not as effective in Hong Kong as in the United States and the United Kingdom in improving attainment scores.

85. Ms Starry LEE opined that theoretically, teachers could focus on teaching and the students could perform better in a smaller class. However, many parents, including herself, rarely considered SCT as a key factor for making school choice and would prefer renowned schools even though they did not opt for SCT. Noting that the Study had recommended teachers to take ownership for changing their classroom practice so as to increase students' understanding through increased participation, she sought information on the support measures for teachers in this regard.

86. US(Ed) responded that it was upheld that students could learn more with increased participation. Teacher education institutions had all along been encouraging teachers to shift from the conventional way of teaching to conducting more interaction with students. This was also one of the fundamental principles of the professional development programmes to be provided for teachers under SCT. Sharing sessions on good practices of student participation in class had been arranged for teachers. "Learning Circles" promoting both inter-school sharing across subjects and intra-school sharing of pedagogical issues had been introduced under the SCT Study. It was expected that teachers were able to strengthen their teaching skills through these sessions. US(Ed) further said that it was crucial for school principals to facilitate teachers to have paradigm shift and parents to understand the new teaching modes.

87. Ms Starry LEE noted that experience sharing sessions had not been held before the implementation of SCT. She was worried that teachers might still teach in a conventional way notwithstanding the reduced class size. She asked if there were plans or guidelines to assist schools in fostering more interactive teaching.

88. US(Ed) reiterated that the Administration had been supporting teachers to maximize the benefits of SCT and various professional development activities, including sharing sessions in the form of "Learning Circles", had been organized for teachers before the implementation of SCT in primary schools in the 2009-2010 school year.

89. Mr Tommy CHEUNG commented that SCT had been a controversial issue. There were diverse views on its cost effectiveness and whether it should be extended to secondary schools. Some deputations suggested that SCT should also be implemented in secondary schools but he held a different view. He could understand the wish of the education sector to implement SCT to avoid redundancy of teachers because of the decreasing student number. Reducing the class size might help some teachers to keep their jobs but it should not be the only solution. Schools should take into account the overall teacher-student ratio and the qualification of the teachers when considering the implementation of SCT.

90. Responding to Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's call for mandatory implementation of SCT in all primary schools, Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that he had known many teachers who resisted SCT. The reduction in class size would mean lesser opportunities for admission to renowned schools, which might not be welcomed by parents. Moreover, further study should be conducted to ascertain whether a class of 25 students was ideal for SCT. Given all these considerations, he did not see the need for mandating the schools to implement SCT within a specific timeframe nor to formulate

policies in this regard. He considered it necessary to consult the teachers and to allow more time to evaluate the benefits of SCT. The Administration should observe the development of SCT for a period of time and implement it to all primary schools after it had been proven to be cost effective. Mr CHEUNG enquired about the availability of alternatives, SCT aside, to improve learning and teaching in primary and secondary schools.

91. Professor Maurice Galton responded that evidence had shown that SCT was important in the early years of primary schools. As teachers in Hong Kong were not so engaged in dealing with discipline problems in classes as compared with their overseas counterparts, the focus should be on improving the quality of teaching. He was confident that with a more interactive way of teaching, students would benefit from SCT. There was strong evidence that the effects of SCT were the greatest at the beginning but would diminish with time. That was one of the reasons why SCT was not common in secondary schools. Most countries which had looked into SCT in the 1980s and early 1990s found that the effects of SCT declined in the later years of primary schools and considered that the effects were unlikely to be greater in secondary schools. Hence, they preferred to adopt "targeted intervention" to identify secondary students who were at risk and allocate resources to help them get back on track. The point where it could be best done appeared to be at the transition points such as when students moved from infant classes into junior classes, from primary schools to secondary schools and from S3 into S4. Most countries were working on the assumption that targeted intervention was the best way to maximize the effects and was more cost effective. There had been a study in the United States that there were other ways which were more cost effective than SCT but the data being used were outdated.

92. Mrs Sophie LEUNG said that she was not a Panel member and welcomed the opportunity for sharing her views with the Panel and the deputations. As expressed at a debate in the Council a few years ago, she had objected to SCT for the sake of implementing SCT. She was of the view that teachers had to change their mindset first before adopting SCT. Teachers should switch from an instructional approach to an enlightening approach in teaching. She shared her experience in successfully changing the mindsets of some students through a programme called School-Company Partnership ("SCP") launched in 2002. The objective of SCP was not to provide academic training to students, but to change their mindsets so that they could be better prepared for the business environment. Representatives from the business sector acted as mentors of students and conducted half-day workshops in 100 secondary schools on Saturday mornings for six months. There were three mentors in a school and 30 to 50 students participated in the exchange sessions. After the workshops, introvert students became more active and were willing to share their thoughts. SCP was effective particularly for students in schools admitting students of the 3rd Band. Having participated in SCP, some students had established a positive attitude towards life and some HKCEE

under-performers continued their studies after work. She was confident that teachers who had received professional training could also be as successful as the mentors in changing students' mindsets.

93. Mr IP Kin-yuen said that it was heartening to learn of the success of SCP. He believed that both teachers and students could be changed, but changes would never take place without taking the first step. The Study had indicated that there could be flexibility in the pace of implementing SCT. To suit the progress of individual teachers, SCT could be implemented first at schools where the teachers had already mastered the skills and were ready for it. He added that in the Mainland, the Ministry of Education had considered SCT one of the keys to quality education. Comparing with the schools in the Mainland where there were about 50 students in a class, teachers in Hong Kong could give a reasonable extent of attention to students. He believed that smaller classes would foster an environment for more interactions between teachers and students.

94. Mr IP commented that the United States should not be taken as the only reference. In some European countries, the objective of SCT was not merely to tackle discipline issues but to achieve more in-depth interactions and acquaintances in classes. This was what the education sector and parents in Hong Kong had been longing for. He showed the meeting a drawing by teachers and parents illustrating what they wanted SCT to achieve. They hoped that teachers and students could enjoy teaching and learning and have more opportunities to realize their potential. He added that time should be allowed for parents, students and teachers to adapt to the changes.

95. The Chairman said that according to the Study, the support of school principals was significant in the implementation of SCT and some teachers suggested that the existing lesson duration of 35 minutes should be extended. She was concerned that the extension of class time might have an impact on school administration, and invited Ms LO Sau-chee, the principal of a school which had participated in the Study, to give her views.

96. Ms LO Sau-chee said that her school supported the Study's recommendation on changing the mode of teaching, but extra resources and time would be required to effect the change. While agreeing that a new mode of teaching could also be adopted in standard classes, she opined that according to her experience, it would not be as effective as in smaller classes. Her school had adopted variable group teaching strategies in some standard classes, and it was found that students in these classes had less time for discussion than their counterparts in smaller classes.

97. As regards the lesson duration, Ms LO further opined that schools could adjust the timetable according to their situation. Citing her school as an example, she said that she had reduced the lesson duration from 35 minutes to

30 minutes for subjects that required a lower level of students' concentration. Two 30-minute consecutive sessions had been arranged for classes with small group activities so that the students could concentrate and spend more time on discussions.

98. The Chairman noted that SCT was implemented in P1 to P3 at Ms LO's school. She asked whether the school could manage in terms of administration work and manpower resources if SCT was to be extended to the upper levels.

99. In response, Ms LO Sau-chee said that the resources and manpower would need to be reviewed. She pointed out that her major difficulty was to provide teachers with sufficient time to prepare for lessons. Her school could allow sufficient time for teachers to prepare for P1 lessons as the Administration had provided additional resources for the current school year so that teachers' preparation time could be taken into account when arranging their lesson time. However, it would be difficult to allocate time for teachers to prepare for P2 and P3 classes as they had to teach different levels and different subjects. She would try her best to include their preparation time in the lesson time in the coming school year.

100. The Chairman envisaged that if all primary schools were to adopt SCT, schools would undergo fundamental changes. She called on the school principals and teachers to put forth their opinions on the resource implications so that the Panel could follow up with the Administration.

101. Mrs Sophie LEUNG remarked that a multi-pronged approach should be adopted to implement SCT. In addition to changing teaching strategies and teachers' mindsets, SCT should first proceed in schools where the teachers were well prepared. School autonomy was also important. Schools should increase their accountability while the Administration's involvement should diminish over time. Furthermore, the scope of the syllabus should be broadened. When there was a more interactive environment at school, teachers and students would become more flexible in teaching and learning. Mrs LEUNG was of the view that Panel meetings were not the right forum for such discussions. She hoped that EDB could form discussion groups with teachers to tap their views on the way forward. Instead of using the same yardstick across the board, teachers should be given the flexibility to maneuver and explore the right direction for SCT. She added that she was supportive to these discussion groups.

102. Referring to Mr Tommy CHEUNG's view that SCT might not be effective, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the Administration held the same view previously. However, the Administration had overturned its previous argument by its latest conclusions on SCT as stated in its discussion paper for the meeting. He pointed out that the Administration had recognized that the

overall results of the Study were encouraging as students' performance was more even across the ability range in a small class setting and that the sustainability of the effects of SCT on students would be realized if the encouraging features would continue to be developed.

103. Mr CHEUNG noted Mrs Sophie LEUNG's objection to implement SCT for the sake of SCT and highlighted that SCT had been implemented in many junior secondary levels in Nanjing and Dalian. He trusted that the move was taken after careful study and was not simply for the sake of implementing SCT.

104. Following up on Ms Starry LEE's remarks that many parents still preferred renowned schools notwithstanding their adoption of the conventional teaching mode, Mr CHEUNG commented that these parents wished these schools to maintain a standard class size so that their children would have a higher chance to get a school place there. After their children's admission, they preferred the schools to adopt SCT so that their children could benefit from it. In his view, these schools were admitting a few more students at the expense of depriving all their students of the benefits of SCT in their entire primary schooling which was inappropriate from the educational point of view.

105. Regarding the claim that one of the objectives of SCT was to keep teachers' jobs, Mr CHEUNG said that this argument could no longer stand as there was an uptrend in the number of primary school students. He stressed that he did not call for hasty implementation of SCT, but all primary schools should adopt SCT in the course of time. He considered it necessary to set a timetable for this purpose.

106. In response to Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's remarks, Mrs Sophie LEUNG said that she had put her words in actions. She had been trying to give students a different perspective over the past 10-odd years and had repeatedly raised her viewpoints with respect to the key elements for smooth implementation of SCT. In her view, it would be more meaningful to look forward as opposed to making criticisms.

107. Noting from the Study that the effectiveness of SCT was not so tangible, the Chairman asked whether there were other tools to assess the effectiveness of SCT and whether another set of indicators which had taken heed of the existing limitations and constraints could be used in case EDB had the resources to conduct another study. She expressed concern that the findings of the Study would lead the readers to conclude that SCT should not be implemented given its insignificant benefits.

108. Mr IP Kin-yuen said that he had raised two questions about the Study in his submission. One of them was that the researcher had too much intervention in the Study and, as a result, the teachers did not perform as usual. This might have an impact on the findings. He suggested that the parties

concerned should take note of it in future studies.

109. Dr LAI Kwok-chan said that he had commented on the design of the Study and the analysis of the data in his submission. When the Study started in 2004, 37 schools had adopted SCT in P1 in one go. The researcher could not directly compare the class size effects between students studying in the same level in the same school, who would have been assigned to control and experimental groups. As a result, the researcher had used a "compromise" approach in which normal classes were used to compare the class size effects. This approach might affect the findings. He added that as the teachers were trained in parallel with the Study, they might not have grasped the required skills before they were required to teach in a small class setting. In some schools, there were frequent changes in the teacher participants and, as a result, the objective of sustainable development could not be achieved. The situation had improved with the introduction of the "Learning Circles" which were found to be effective. Dr LAI pointed out that as there were certain limitations in the Study and SCT was only at its preliminary stage, the findings of the Study should be taken as a reference only.

110. Mr MAK Tin-chi said that as the teachers were required to participate in training courses, take part in the Study and provide analysis of the data, they might have conflicting roles in the process. However, it was obvious that the teachers had changed their mindsets in the course of the Study.

111. Ms LO Sau-chee said that the teachers participated in the Study were under great pressure when the research group observed their teaching, as they were well aware that the outcome of the Study would have great impact on the way forward for SCT. She was pleased that many teachers changed their mindsets as the Study progressed. The teachers had proposed to change their way of questioning, implement co-operative learning and apply high-level thinking, etc. Many schools had adopted these proposals and had turned them into systematic development programmes for teachers. The Study had provided schools with the opportunity to make changes. Had the Study not been implemented in the 2003-2004 school year, schools would not have realized the effects of SCT now.

112. Mr Vincent CHENG said that he had received feedbacks from many schools in Sham Shui Po and Tsimshatsui indicating their wishes to implement SCT. He considered that the choice should rest with schools while he personally supported SCT. According to his experience, the obvious difference between conventional teaching and SCT was that the average performers could have more care and attention from teachers under SCT.

113. Mr LAM Seung-wan said that he had exchanged views with teachers in over 50 primary and secondary schools on the development of SCT in the last few years. He shared with the meeting his observations in a secondary school

which had adopted small group learning alongside with conventional teaching. Their approach and the design of curriculum of small group learning were very similar to SCT. In the class where students were divided into small groups, the teacher was able to include his day to day experience in the small group activities. There was a noticeable difference in the extent of interactions in small group learning classes and regular classes and there was much interaction in the small classes. He was of the view that there were merits to further develop SCT.

114. Regarding the measuring tools for SCT, Professor Maurice Galton said that other researchers adopted a similar approach as the Study. In theory, the scope of the studies could be extended to include more variables, but it would be difficult to have reliable measures. Some studies had used teachers' assessment. But in his opinion, this was a less satisfactory approach because it was too subjective and would influence the assessment. That was one of the reasons for researchers' preference for standardized tests. There were potentially many differences between schools. To account for these differences, assessments were reported using a measure called the "residual gain scores" to remove the effect of any initial differences between schools. Most of the differences raised in the submissions were concerned about school effects, but internationally these only accounted for 12% of the changes in the test scores. The main differences were due to variations between teachers.

115. As regards the concern that teachers had to undergo training and practising SCT at the same time, Professor Galton said that it was inevitable in order to equip the teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to engage more interactively with the students. In his observations, a teacher's additional years of experience in SCT did not contribute any difference to the effectiveness of SCT. It was the form of teaching that would make a difference. As long as there was little interaction between teachers and students in most of the lessons, it would be unlikely that widespread effects on attainment would occur irrespective of whether the teachers were trained or not.

116. In relation to the six principles used in the Study, Professor Galton said that they were not meant to be prescriptive. They were guidelines only and could not be imposed universally because every classroom was different. Only the teacher in a particular classroom could make them work. He called on the teachers to start with whole class teaching and make modifications to instructional teaching slowly and be convinced that the students would eventually greatly benefit from the suggested changes in the classroom practice.

117. In his view, teacher education would be a big challenge, not only in Hong Kong but worldwide. It was very hard to change teachers' way of teaching unless teacher education institutions adopted a new approach of

training. They would need to review the nature of how teachers were trained, both at professional development and initial training levels. Teachers in these institutions as well as teachers on the job would need to be re-trained and explore the factors that hindered the change. It would be a challenge for both the institutions and the teachers, especially for those who had many years of teaching experience.

118. The Chairman thanked Professor Maurice Galton and the deputations for sharing their expertise with the Panel. She hoped that the Administration had well received their opinions and would take forward the proposals.

VIII. Any other business

119. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 7:35 pm.

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Legislative Council Secretariat
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