

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(2)2132/09-10  
(The minutes have been seen by  
the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

**Panel on Education**

**Minutes of meeting**  
**held on Monday, 14 June 2010, at 4:30 pm**  
**in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

- Members present** : Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan (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  
Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai, BBS, JP  
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che  
Hon WONG Sing-chi  
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP  
Dr Hon Samson TAM Wai-ho, JP  
Hon Tanya CHAN  
Hon WONG Yuk-man
- Members absent** : Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
- Public Officers attending** : Agenda item IV  
Education Bureau  
  
Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP  
Under Secretary for Education

Ms Amy WONG  
Principal Assistant Secretary (Higher Education)

Mr Steve LEE  
Principal Assistant Secretary (School Development)

Agenda item V

Education Bureau

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP  
Under Secretary for Education

Mr Daniel CHENG  
Principal Assistant Secretary (Further Education)

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

Agenda item VI

Education Bureau

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP  
Under Secretary for Education

Mrs Michelle WONG  
Deputy Secretary for Education (4)

Miss WU Po-ling  
Principal Assistant Secretary (School Administration  
and Support)

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

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

**Staff in attendance** : Mr Kelvin LEE  
Assistant Legal Adviser 1

Ms Catherina YU  
Senior Council Secretary (2)7

Ms Judy TING  
Council Secretary (2)6

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

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The Chairman welcomed Miss Tanya CHAN and Mr WONG Yuk-man who had re-joined the Panel.

**I. Confirmation of minutes**

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1571/09-10 and CB(2)1788/09-10]

2. The minutes of the meetings held on 12 and 30 April 2010 were confirmed.

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

3. Members noted the following papers issued since the last meeting -

(a) a letter dated 20 May 2010 from the Public Administration and Politics Society of the Open University of Hong Kong ("OUHK") raising concerns about the lack of subsidy, campus site and student hostels for OUHK (LC Paper No. CB(2)1647/09-10(01)) and the Administration's response dated 11 June 2010 (LC Paper No. CB(2)1807/09-10 (01)); and

(b) a press statement dated 26 May 2010 from Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor concerning the suicide of a Secondary 4 student in Tung Chung (LC Paper No. CB(2)1761/09-10(01)).

4. Regarding (b), the Chairman said that the letter had been referred to the Complaints Division for follow-up. Should the Complaints Division identify policy matters relevant to the Panel after handling the matter, the Panel would consider appropriate follow-up actions.

**III. Items for discussion at the next meeting**

[Appendices I and II to LC Paper No. CB(2)1741/09-10]

5. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting scheduled for 12 July 2010 at 4:30 pm -

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- (a) grievance procedures of the University Grants Committee ("UGC")-funded Institutions; and
  - (b) progress report of the implementation of the New Academic Structure and Liberal Studies.
6. The Chairman informed members that an informal closed meeting had been scheduled for 22 June 2010 at 10:45 am to discuss the draft research report on "Complaint handling mechanism in higher education sector in selected places" prepared by the Research and Library Services Division of the Legislative Council ("LegCo") Secretariat.
7. Members noted that a special meeting had been scheduled for 22 July 2010 at 2:30 pm to discuss issues relating to the relocation of the centres of the Christian Zheng Sheng Association ("CZSA").
8. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that according to his understanding, while CZSA would pursue the relocation of its drug treatment and rehabilitation centres in Ha Keng to the ex-Heung Yee Kuk South District Secondary School as a long-term solution, it was discussing with the Administration short-term in-situ improvement measures to ensure the safety of the residents before the relocation. He had received a letter and a list of the proposed improvement works from CZSA. Based on CZSA's proposal, he had drawn up 10 items of improvement works. He noted that the Administration's initial response to CZSA's proposal was positive. Mr CHEUNG suggested that the Administration be enquired of the development of the matter and depending on its response, the Panel would decide whether the special meeting should be convened.
9. At the invitation of the Chairman, Under Secretary for Education ("US(Ed)") said that discussion with CZSA was underway and there was no update at this stage.
10. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che and Mr Andrew LEUNG agreed with Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's suggestion. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che said that if CZSA and the Administration could agree on the short-term solution, there would be no pressing need to discuss the relocation of the centres of CZSA in July 2010. Mr Andrew LEUNG pointed out that the matters relating to CZSA were not policy issues but an individual case. He reiterated that the Panel should focus on policy matters. Moreover, the matters relating to CZSA had already been discussed many times at Panel meetings and given the various issues of concern to the Panel, he did not consider it necessary for the Panel to further discuss the case even if CZSA and the Administration could not come up with an agreement.
11. The Chairman said that the Panel had held three meetings to discuss

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issues relating to the relocation of the centres of CZSA. She had pointed out before that given the unique mode of operation of CZSA as a drug rehabilitation school, issues relating to its operation and relocation were policy matters, hence the need for the Panel to discuss the subject.

12. The Chairman requested Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che to make available to other Panel members CZSA's letter. She further said that if members wished to discuss policy issues relevant to the relocation of CZSA's centres, they should provide the relevant information to the Panel as early as possible. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that subject to the consent of Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che and Professor Patrick LAU who were also the addressees of CZSA's letter, he would give a copy of the letter to members for reference. Members agreed that the Administration should be requested to provide a written response on its consideration of CZSA's proposal before the Panel decided on the need to convene the special meeting.

*(Post meeting note: a letter dated 21 May 2010 from Mr LAM Hay-sing of CZSA to Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and a list of the 10 proposed items were issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1864/09-10(01) on 21 June 2010.)*

**IV. Education matters under the Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation**  
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1741/09-10(01) and FS22/09-10]

13. Members noted the fact sheet on "Current Development on Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation" prepared by the Research and Library Services Division of the LegCo Secretariat.

Briefing by the Administration

14. US(Ed) briefed members on the specific measures on education under the Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation ("the Framework Agreement") and the existing co-operation on education between Hong Kong and Guangdong Province as detailed in the Administration's paper.

Academic freedom

15. Mr WONG Yuk-man commented that academic freedom should be the premise of co-operation on education under the Framework Agreement. He noted that some local higher education institutions were running schools in the Mainland in collaboration with their Mainland counterparts. He considered that the mission of education, in particular higher education, was to change the values and develop the capability and quality of the young generation. He was concerned whether academic freedom of the local universities would be hampered by such co-operation because of the differences in the education

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systems in Hong Kong and the Mainland; whether there were any student autonomous organizations in the relevant Mainland institutions; and whether there were any elected student representatives in the Councils of such institutions.

16. Mr WONG Yuk-man further said that the primary objective of national education was to enable the local residents to have in-depth understanding of their mother country's culture and history and the mere arrangement of primary and secondary school students to pay visits to the Mainland was not national education. He criticized that Chinese History was no longer made a mandatory subject in junior secondary education. Without knowledge of the Chinese history, he queried how the students would be able to understand the national dignity and cultivate moral values. He sought the reasons why Chinese History was deleted as a compulsory subject in secondary education.

17. US(Ed) said that academic freedom had along been the pillar of institutional operation and would continue to be upheld. There was positive experience in Hong Kong/Guangdong co-operation on education and the United International College in Zhuhai jointly operated by the Hong Kong Baptist University and the Beijing Normal University was one successful example. At the request of the Chairman, the Administration agreed to provide a written reply to Mr WONG Yuk-man's questions.

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Assistance to cross-boundary students

18. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed concern about any enhancement of assistance to cross-boundary students concerning on-board clearance, transportation arrangement and travel subsidy after the signing of the Framework Agreement. He pointed out that most of the cross-boundary students went to schools through the control points at Man Kam To, Sha Tau Kok, Lok Ma Chau and Shenzhen Bay. On-board clearance was only available at Man Kam To and Sha Tau Kok. He enquired whether on-board clearance would also be available at the other two control points.

19. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong also said that many kindergarten and junior primary school students took school coaches on the Hong Kong side via the Lo Wu Control Point. Since there was only a one-way road in the area concerned, the Administration had been requested for some time to change it into two-way to accommodate a larger traffic flow and provide convenience for the coaches to pick up and put down the children. Mr CHEUNG asked when this request would be acceded to.

20. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong further said that currently the student travel subsidy was calculated on the basis of the travel fee within Hong Kong without taking into account the transportation cost between the Mainland and a control point. Cross-boundary students spent an average of \$10,000 a year on transportation but the travel subsidy obtained was only about \$5,000, and they

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had to make up the difference. Furthermore, they needed to pay the full train fare between Sheung Shui and Lo Wu, costing \$700 to \$1,000 a month. He called on the Administration to review the travel subsidy for cross-boundary students and discuss with MTR Corporation the provision of concession fare for the section between Sheung Shui and Lo Wu.

21. US(Ed) responded that the Administration encouraged students to study nearby so that they did not need to travel a long distance for schooling. To this end, it had been agreed that two Shenzhen schools could participate in the Secondary School Places Allocation ("SSPA") system of Hong Kong with a view to facilitating Hong Kong children to further their studies in Hong Kong when necessary.

22. As regards on-board clearance, US(Ed) said that many students preferred to interchange to school coaches at Lok Ma Chau. Principal Assistant Secretary (School Development) ("PAS(SD)") supplemented that on-board clearance services were helpful to kindergarten children but more grown up children found it faster to alight the bus for immigration clearance. The Education Bureau ("EDB") would continue to liaise with the departments concerned for improvement in this regard.

23. PAS(SD) said that the student travel subsidy had already taken into account the fare between the control points and the school in Hong Kong. Appreciating the high fare of some through buses, the Administration had assisted in arranging more bus services to make the fares more competitive.

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24. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide written replies to Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's questions which had not been answered.

Co-operation on vocational education

25. Mr TAM Yiu-chung said that various government authorities in Guangdong were enthusiastic about vocational education. In view of the great demand for vocational education, the authorities in Guangdong would like the Vocational Training Council ("VTC") to organize vocational training programmes for them. He considered that this could be profit-making and enquired whether VTC would be interested in providing such programmes.

26. Mr Andrew LEUNG declared that he was the Chairman of VTC. He said that VTC had co-operated with the Department of Human Resources and Social Security of Guangdong Province in establishing the Hong Kong Design Institute (Guangdong Industrial Design Training Institute) in Nanhai to train up talents for the industrial design and creative industries in 2009. However, as no fund was set aside for this project, VTC could only offer human resources support. In fact, many cities in the Guangdong province, particularly Shunde, had requested VTC to organise training programmes for them. As the resources allocated by the Hong Kong Government to VTC could not be used

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outside Hong Kong, VTC could only utilize its own resources which were limited. Mr LEUNG considered that financial support from the Administration was important to foster the Hong Kong/Guangdong co-operation on vocational education, and it was necessary to formulate policies in this regard.

27. Mr TAM Yiu-chung echoed Mr Andrew LEUNG's view, and said that resource support from the Administration was necessary for Hong Kong/Guangdong co-operation on vocational education.

28. US(Ed) said that VTC had promising developments in Guangdong and other provinces. Besides the establishment of the Hong Kong Design Institute (Guangdong Industrial Design Training Institute), VTC also provided teacher vocational training in the Guangdong province. The Administration was working with its counterparts in Guangdong and VTC and hoped that in the near future, one examination would be recognised by both Hong Kong and the Guangdong authorities and the relevant professional bodies. The Administration would maintain close liaison with VTC in respect of the co-operation on vocational education.

Mutual recognition of academic qualifications

29. Professor Patrick LAU said that it was not easy for local degrees to be recognized by the Mainland universities and vice versa. Hong Kong universities had their own autonomy in the recognition of degrees and degrees in architecture obtained in some Mainland universities had already been recognized in Hong Kong. He sought information on mutual recognition of academic and professional programmes run by the institutions under the Framework Agreement.

30. US(Ed) replied that the Mainland and Hong Kong signed the Memorandum of Understanding between the Mainland and Hong Kong on Mutual Recognition of Academic Degrees in Higher Education ("MoU") in 2004. A number of institutions were included in the MoU. Academic degrees awarded by the institutions included in the MoU were mutually recognized for further study purposes. US(Ed) further said that certain professional qualifications had already been mutually recognized and each profession had its own system of recognition. US(Ed) added that professional recognition was beyond the purview of EDB.

31. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the UGC-funded institutions were undergoing various developments such as the implementation of the new four-year undergraduate programmes, internationalization of the higher education sector, provision of taught programmes, self-financing degree and sub-degree programmes, etc. The UGC-funded institutions needed to put extra efforts to cope with all these developments. Should they further run programmes in collaboration with their Mainland counterparts, he was



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concerned whether the quality of their local programmes and their missions might be overlooked.

32. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong enquired whether the qualifications awarded under such collaborative programmes would be recognised by local institutions and for employment purpose such as civil service appointment. He was concerned about the large number of graduates from such collaborative programmes. Following up on this point, the Chairman said that local students needed to know whether the academic qualifications were awarded by the local institutions or the Mainland institutions before enrolling in such collaborative programmes.

33. US(Ed) replied that there were established mechanisms under the UGC to ensure the quality of the UGC-funded programmes. In relation to the recognition of academic qualifications, US(Ed) said that the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications was responsible for the assessment of non-local academic qualifications, whereas MoU provided for mutual recognition of degrees awarded by the institutions covered therein. He added that the degrees conferred by a number of Mainland institutions were recognized by local employers. There were separate mechanisms for the recognition of academic qualifications on individual and institutional basis. US(Ed) further said that the arrangements for each collaborative programme were different, and the Administration would provide supplementary written information to the Panel.

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Basic education

34. Referring to the phrase "to promote mutual opening up of the resources of both secondary and primary schools (推動雙方中小學教育資源相互開放)" under Article one "Education" of Chapter 7 in the main text of the Framework Agreement (Annex I to the Administration's paper), the Chairman sought clarification of the meaning of "mutual opening up (相互開放)" and whether it involved the use of public money.

35. US(Ed) responded that cooperation in basic education covered various aspects. Two private schools in Shenzhen were currently running programmes for Hong Kong children. Hong Kong children studying in these two schools could take part in the SSPA system and be allocated secondary one places in Hong Kong secondary schools. The Administration was also exploring the feasibility of opening up local senior secondary school places for the Mainland students. The principle was that resources allocated for education purpose should benefit Hong Kong students only.

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**V. Exit pathways for students taking the 2010 Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination**

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1741/09-10(02) and (03)]

36. Members noted the background brief entitled "Education pathways for students taking the 2010 Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat.

Briefing by the Administration

37. US(Ed) briefed members on the study pathways and arrangements for the last cohort of Secondary 5 (S5) graduates in 2010, and measures adopted by EDB in helping them make informed choices on their further study or future career as detailed in the Administration's paper.

Provision of S5 repeating places

38. Miss Tanya CHAN noted that according to the Administration's assessment, the projected number of places for S5 repeaters would be around 15 000 in the 2010-2011 academic year. Given some 400 secondary schools in Hong Kong, each school should offer around 37.5 repeating places. As S5 graduates were concerned about the actual number of repeating places, Miss CHAN asked whether schools had confirmed to provide these places, or whether the provision of such places would be subject to the discretion of schools.

39. US(Ed) clarified that the number of secondary schools was more than 400. The 15 000 projected places comprised around 8 500 places to be offered by government schools and aided schools, around 1 800 places by schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme ("DSS") and around 4 700 by private schools. The Administration had been communicating with schools and was confident that they would offer the places. He highlighted that the demand for S5 repeating places had been decreasing in recent years owing to the multiple pathways available for S5 graduates, such as sub-degree programmes, vocational education or training courses, Project Yi Jin ("PYJ"), etc. Currently, there were some 15 000 students enrolled in PYJ, the highest since its launch in 2000. He stressed that repeating S5 was not the only pathway available for S5 graduates.

40. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong opined that the figure of 15 000 places might not be realistic as schools had to take into account various factors in deciding whether to offer repeating places including the resources required for operating tutorial and Liberal Studies ("LS") classes for the repeaters. He pointed out that many parents and students aspired to get a full certificate of the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination ("HKCEE"). However, the 2010 S5 graduates might face the predicament of not being able to switch to S5

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under the new academic structure ("NAS") in their own schools. Neither would they be able to repeat S5 for resitting HKCEE as the Administration did not encourage them to pursue S5 repeating classes. Mr CHEUNG cautioned that the dissatisfaction from S5 graduates and their parents would be strong. He asked how the Administration would assess the situation.

41. US(Ed) explained that some 6 000 students attended S5 repeating classes in the 2009-2010 academic year, and the number of S5 repeaters had been declining. The figure of 15 000 repeating places was a projected number and not the actual number of places to be taken up by students. This projected number was worked out on the basis of the approved 5% repeater quota. It did not mean that 15 000 students would repeat S5. US(Ed) added that a number of factors would affect students' choices. While some students might choose to repeat S5, others might opt for different education pathways according to their own circumstances.

42. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong doubted the availability of the projected number of repeating places as the Administration itself estimated that only 6 000 students would need such places. The Chairman shared his concern, and called on the Administration to ensure that schools would honour their promise to offer repeating places.

43. US(Ed) reiterated that the number of S5 repeating places in the 2010-2011 academic year was projected to be around 15 000 on the basis of the figure of 14 800 in 2009 HKCEE. The actual number of S5 repeating places taken up by students in 2009 was around 6 000. It was not anticipated that the projected places would be fully taken up by S5 graduates in 2010 as they would choose other pathways that suited their plans for the future.

44. Following-up US(Ed)'s explanations, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong queried whether there had been a large number of S5 repeating places without being taken up by students in 2009. He pointed out that many students had not been able to secure S5 repeating places in 2009. He stressed that it was the responsibility of LegCo Members to ensure the accuracy of the projected number of repeating places to meet the education needs of 2010 S5 graduates.

45. The Chairman sought information on the tuition fees to be charged by DSS schools and private schools. She was concerned that students might not be able to afford high tuition fee.

46. US(Ed) responded that schools admitted repeaters according to their HKCEE results. Students who were not able to secure a S6 place scored zero to over 10 in their HKCEE results. Government schools and aided schools would not charge tuition fee for repeating S5, and the tuition fees charged by DDS schools varied greatly. Students attending evening secondary courses in designated centres were eligible for subsidy under the Financial Assistance Scheme for Designated Evening Adult Education Courses. He stressed that

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the projected repeating places for 2010 S5 graduates were accurate. However, it could be not known whether all these places would eventually be taken up. Students might not prefer repeating S5 as other education pathways might best suit their abilities and interests.

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47. To facilitate better understanding of the projected number of S5 repeating places, the Chairman, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Miss Tanya CHAN requested the Administration to provide a breakdown of the 15 000 places to be provided by individual government schools, aided schools, DDS schools and private schools.

48. US(Ed) said that it was difficult to ascertain the number of places to be provided by private schools. The projected places to be provided by private schools were based on the figures in previous years. The number of S5 repeating places of each school would depend on the number of S4 students proceeding to S5. Schools would be allowed to flexibly make use of the approved 5% repeater quota on a whole school basis for the last cohort of S5 graduates in 2010. EDB had also encouraged schools to admit their S5 students for repeat of class as far as practicable. US(Ed) undertook to provide the requisite information requested by members.

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49. The Chairman further requested the Administration to provide the number of S5 repeating places to be offered by evening schools. She also requested the EDB to coordinate and post the information on the number of available S5 repeating places in 2010 on its website. US(Ed) undertook to consider the suggestion.

50. The Chairman raised the concern that as the approved 5% repeated quota could be used on a whole school basis, this would affect S1 to S4 students seeking repeating places. She sought information in this regard. US(Ed) said that the Administration had been closely communicating with school councils since the planning of the NAS in relation to the provision of repeating places. Schools were encouraged to exercise flexibility in meeting the needs of students for repeating places. He believed that relevant information would be uploaded onto the school websites at appropriate time.

Supporting measures for students switching to NAS

51. Miss Tanya CHAN enquired about the supporting measures to be provided to students switching to NAS and undertaking the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education ("HKDSE") examination.

52. In reply, US(Ed) explained that in terms of the design of the NAS curriculum, the content of most New Senior Secondary ("NSS") subjects overlapped with those under the old academic structure. Students studied fewer subjects under the NAS than the old academic structure. Under the former, they took four core subjects and two or three elective subjects, whereas

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under the latter, they studied seven to 10 subjects. Furthermore, where students chose to resit the 2011 HKCEE, they would have less than one year to make preparation. However, if they chose to switch to the NAS, they would have a longer period to prepare for the HKDSE examination in 2012.

53. US(Ed) acknowledged students' concern about not having sufficient knowledge base to study LS. He explained that the subject did not require rote learning, but aimed to develop students' multiple perspectives in analysis. Students had gained experience in LS as schools had incorporated the content of LS in some subjects under the old academic structure. He further said that many schools were prepared to operate relevant courses in the summer holiday with a view to assisting S5 students to switch to the NAS.

54. Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum Development) ("PAS(CD)") supplemented that students should not find switching to the NAS difficult as they would study fewer subjects. Moreover, they would likely choose to study those subjects that they had studied before. As for LS, students should not be concerned about their knowledge base as rote learning was not required. In fact, the teaching mode of LS was not uncommon in secondary education.

55. PAS(CD) pointed out that students were concerned whether they would be able to catch up in Independent Enquiry Study ("IES") when they switched to the NAS. He explained that students would start IES in S5. As such, S5 repeaters switching to NAS would start IES with the existing S4 students in the next academic year. He acknowledged that students would need adaptation when they switched to NAS. However, students would have a longer study period, i.e. S5 and S6, to prepare for the 2012 HKDSE examination. Should students choose to resit HKCEE in May 2011, the lesson time would only last until January or February 2011.

56. PAS(CD) stressed that repeating S5 should not be the first consideration of 2010 S5 graduates in case they did not obtain S6 places. Based on the past statistics, only a small percentage of S5 graduates chose to repeat S5. Students should consider other pathways, such as PYJ and sub-degree programmes, that suited their interests and abilities.

Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination ("HKALE")

57. Professor Patrick LAU enquired about the opportunities for S7 students taking HKALE in 2012 to gain access to university education. US(Ed) explained the arrangements for the double cohort year in 2012. He said that S7 graduates under the old academic structure and S6 graduates under the NAS would be admitted to 3-year and 4-year undergraduate programmes respectively in 2012. After 2012, the 3-year undergraduate programmes would no longer be available. Students who were not admitted to the 3-year programmes in 2012 could sit HKDSE for enrollment to the 4-year undergraduate programmes.

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58. Principal Assistant Secretary (Further Education) supplemented that the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority would administer the last HKALE in 2013 for private candidates. It would rest with the higher education institutions to decide how the eligible candidates should articulate to the four-year undergraduate programmes.

**VI. Education for students with special educational needs**  
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1741/09-10(04) and (05)]

59. Members noted the background brief entitled "School leaving arrangement for students studying in schools for children with intellectual disability" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat.

Briefing by the Administration

60. US(Ed) briefed members on the latest development of the school leaving arrangements for students in schools for children with intellectual disability ("ID schools") after the implementation of NSS academic structure, and the assessment and recognition of qualifications of these students as detailed in the Administration's paper.

Ebenezer School and Home for the Visually Impaired ("the Ebenezer School")

61. The Chairman informed members that a group of parents of the students of the Ebenezer School had lodged a complaint to the Complaints Division about the reduction of classes by EDB. She considered that as the Ebenezer School was the only local school for the visually impaired, the complaint was not an individual case but a policy matter. She therefore considered it appropriate to bring the case to the attention of the Panel. She invited US(Ed) to brief members on the latest position of the case.

62. US(Ed) said that the Complaints Division had referred the Ebenezer School's case to EDB on 8 June 2010 and EDB had given its written reply to the Complaints Division on 11 June 2010. He elaborated that the Administration had approved the Ebenezer School to run eight classes for the 2010-2011 school year, the same as for the 2009-2010 school year, with an approved capacity of 120. The number of approved classes was based on the estimated number of 83 students. The Ebenezer School would have 20.6 teachers (excluding the school principal) and the actual teacher-student ratio would be 1:4. The number of students for each level of Primary One ("P1") to P5 was nine or less, and the total number of P1 and P2 students were less than 10. In the past five years, the average number of students in a class had all along been about 12, with a teacher-student ratio at 1:5. US(Ed) further said that the Administration was aware of the parents' request for a smaller class size and would endeavour to consider improvement measures in the light

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of the actual situation in the Ebenezer School. The Chairman requested US(Ed) to provide his verbal report in writing.

63. The Chairman commented that the Administration had avoided the question of class reduction. She pointed out that according to the Administration, there were 120 approved places in the Ebenezer School and the actual student number was 83. In other words, there were still surplus places. Nevertheless, the Administration had cut the number of classes in the last school year resulting in the merging of P1 and P2 classes. The alumni of the Ebenezer School had indicated that the visually impaired required a high level of concentration in learning. P2 students' concentration would be pulled down in the combined class. She called on the Administration to maintain at least one class in each level and enquired about the rationale for combining P1 and P2 classes.

64. US(Ed) clarified that the number of approved classes for the 2010-2011 school year for the Ebenezer School remained at eight which was the same as for the 2009-2010 school year. He said that the concern about combined P1 and P2 classes should be considered having regard to the teacher-student ratio. There were 80-odd students, 20.6 teachers (excluding the principal and the non-teaching staff) and the teacher-student ratio was 1:4. In the Administration's view, as there were less than 10 students in the combined class, the school with such a teacher-student ratio should have capacity to provide the students with a suitable learning environment and the appropriate level of attention. The Administration would continue to communicate closely with the parents and the Ebenezer School and actively look into the areas that required improvements.

65. Deputy Secretary for Education (4) ("DS(Ed)4") supplemented that in addition to the visually impaired students, the Ebenezer School also enrolled students with mild ID. The Ebenezer School had all along adopted cross-level group learning. The students were divided into groups according to their ability. Academic assistance apart, the students also needed support in areas such as orientation and mobility training. To this end, the Administration had allocated extra manpower to the Ebenezer School. For students with normal intelligence, the Ebenezer School would prepare them for studying in the mainstream schools after completing S3 by providing orientation and mobility training and counselling, etc. After the students had been admitted to the mainstream schools, the Administration would provide extra manpower to the Ebenezer School so that it could provide resource support to these students by sending resource teachers to visit them and assist them in adapting to the new school environment. The resource teachers of the Ebenezer School would keep constant contact with the students concerned and discuss with the mainstream school teachers the support required for these students. If the students with mild ID wished to continue their studies in mainstream schools, the Ebenezer School would make the necessary arrangements for them. Otherwise, the usual school leaving arrangements for ID students would apply

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to them.

66. In response to Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che on the number of teachers in the Ebenezer School when there were nine classes, US(Ed) said that there were 23.5 teachers in the Ebenezer School in the 2007-2008 school year when there were nine classes. The teacher-student ratio at that time was 1:4, the same as the situation of eight classes.

67. The Chairman said that some students in the Ebenezer School were visually impaired as well as intellectually disabled. If the calculation of subsidy and manpower of teachers for the Ebenezer School did not take into account the intellectually disabled component, the Ebenezer School would not have adequate resources to take care of these students. She opined that extra manpower resources should be allocated to the Ebenezer School and comprehensive policies should be formulated to address the needs of students with different disabilities.

68. The Chairman further said that in the past, a 3-year pre-school programme was specially organized for the students to be enrolled in the Ebenezer School. Through the programme, they learnt how to use the tools and equipment to prepare for their primary schooling in the Ebenezer School. The programme was no longer available and children with disabilities attended classes organized by the special child care centres of the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") instead. The Chairman pointed out that some children, after having attended these classes, did not know how to use the braille and were unable to cope with the learning environment in the Ebenezer School. As the children using the services of the special child care centres had different types of disabilities, she enquired how these centres allocated resources to cater for their different training needs.

69. US(Ed) responded that SWD had set up special child care centres since 2006 to take care of the pre-school educational needs of children with developmental problems including visual impairment. The Administration would relay members' observations on the services provided by the special child care centres to SWD and a written reply would be provided by SWD to the Panel.

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70. The Chairman said that the grant for information technology for the Ebenezer School was the same as for other schools. In her view, the Administration should provide the Ebenezer School with additional information technology grants for it to purchase special equipment.

71. US(Ed) said that the Ebenezer School received an information technology grant of over \$200,000 per annum. In the 2009-2010 school year, such grant was about \$250,000. In 2009, a special grant amounting to \$110,000 was provided to the Ebenezer School for the procurement of special equipment. US(Ed) further said that the rate of the Composite Furniture and



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Equipment Grant allocated to the Ebenezer School was the largest among the special schools.

Support to students with special educational needs ("SEN")

72. Miss Tanya CHAN was pleased to see the measures taken by the Administration concerning the school leaving arrangements for ID students. Noting that conversion works had started in some ID schools to accommodate their students for extension of years of study ("EoS"), she enquired about the progress of these conversion works and the measures to expedite the works.

73. US(Ed) responded that of the 41 ID schools, 10 would be able to fully implement the improvement measures on EoS while 31 would require further evaluation of the feasibility of the conversion works for additional classrooms. The 31 schools had been very co-operative and the Administration had already identified short-term solutions for the provision of additional school places. He said that the duration and extent of conversion works required would depend on the situation of individual schools.

74. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che sought information on the number of visually impaired students in mainstream schools, the number of visually impaired pre-school children, and the specialists required for a school with students having different types of disability.

75. In response, US(Ed) said that there were 138 students with visual impairment studying in mainstream primary and secondary schools. As for the number of visually impaired pre-school children, he would request SWD to provide it to members after the meeting.

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76. As regards the support to special schools, DS(Ed)4 said that the needs of SEN students varied. For the Ebenezer School, she pointed out that the students requiring speech therapy might receive such service provided by EDB. Some parents had requested for occupational therapy for their children. Having assessed the situation, the Administration suggested that they could use the services provided by the Hospital Authority ("HA"). DS(Ed)4 further said that schools could use different resources to cater for the special needs of students, including the recurrent fund allocated by the Administration, private donations or charging fees for the services provided. Given the limited resources, it might not be viable to provide each school with different types of specialists. Nonetheless, the Administration would ensure the provision of different specialist services for the needy students within the existing system.

77. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che sought information on whether the 138 visually impaired students preferred to study in mainstream schools or in special schools. He said that visually impaired students were very different from ID students and physically disabled students in that they required mobility training which might not be provided by mainstream schools. He suspected

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that one of the reasons for children with visual impairment going to mainstream schools was that their parents were not aware of the Ebenezer School. He was of the view that integrated education might not be suitable for the visually impaired, and the Ebenezer School might be a better option.

78. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che further said that pre-school education was essential for the visually impaired as it could help them develop the abilities for subsequent education and development. He called on the Administration to critically look into pre-school education for the visually impaired.

79. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che opined that the resources allocated to schools providing integrated education were insufficient for them to acquire the necessary services. He had known of some parents who had acquired outside services such as speech therapy because the lessons offered by the schools were inadequate. He pointed out that the number of teachers in the Ebenezer School had been reduced from 23.5 in the 2007-2008 school year to 20.6 in the 2010-2011 school year. The cut had upset its usual operation of one class per level. He stressed that the operation of the entire school would be jeopardized unless the Administration provided it with sufficient resources.

80. US(Ed) explained that with the consent of parents and at the recommendations of ophthalmologists, the Administration would refer children with moderate or severe visual impairment to the Ebenezer School. Training was provided to these students so that they could adapt in mainstream schools for pursuing senior secondary education. For students with lesser degree of visual impairment, integrated education was appropriate. With improved technology, mainstream schools could provide a suitable learning environment to the visually impaired. US(Ed) further said that every year, EDB arranged a number of seminars for parents on the services available for children with SEN. EDB would continue to liaise with SWD regarding pre-school education for the visually impaired children and its articulation with the Ebenezer School's primary level programmes and make improvements if necessary.

81. US(Ed) clarified that the merging of P1 and P2 classes in the Ebenezer School had started since the 2008-2009 school year. Such an arrangement was considered practicable in view of the low teacher-student ratio.

82. The Chairman said that the Administration should not consider merging P1 and P2 a desirable learning approach merely on the ground of no complaint received. According to her understanding, the training programmes provided by the special child care centres of SWD were not tailor-made for children with a specific type of disability. Instead, children with different types of disabilities were trained together. To cater for the ability of ID students, teachers would tend to provide basic training to the entire class. As training was not provided according to the attributes of children with normal intellectual ability, their progress was pulled down and as a result, their development was adversely affected. The Chairman further said that the

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coping ability of students with visual impairment would be no different from that of persons without such impairment if they were provided with proper training. She called on EDB to obtain more information from SWD regarding pre-school education for children with disabilities and the services provided by the special child care centres.

83. With respect to the support for students with multiple disabilities, DS(Ed)4 said that as mentioned earlier, EDB would provide speech therapy service if needed. Based on the conditions of each student, the speech therapist would make recommendations on the extent of service needed. The Administration would enhance the central support if necessary. The Administration was very concerned about the learning progress of the visually impaired students in mainstream schools. As such, EDB had arranged resource teachers of the Ebenezer School to help the visually impaired students in the mainstream schools. In the past few years, EDB had been discussing with the Ebenezer School and was looking into ways to strengthen the support provided to these students.

84. Ms Starry LEE said that she was given to understand that some severe ID students had to stay at home after they had left the ID schools as they could not get a place in the sheltered workshops or hostels. She sought information on the number of such students and the support including the vocational training provided to these students after they had completed schooling.

85. In response, US(Ed) said that it was relatively easier for the students with mild ID to receive vocational training and find an employment. Students with moderate and severe ID were placed on the waiting list for sheltered workshops and hostels. Some voluntary organizations had been providing assistance to the students on the waiting list. As hostel places could not be increased within a short time, SWD had also provided home-based services to help these students. EDB and SWD would continue to work together to enhance the assistance in this regard. The Chairman said that according to her understanding, the average waiting time for sheltered workshops was 27 months.

86. Ms Starry LEE said that the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong had conducted a research on learning diversity. The findings of the research had shown that diversity in learning should be assessed in an early stage so as to avoid the delay in the provision of suitable assistance. In reply to her question at the special meeting of the Finance Committee held in March 2010, the Administration had agreed to make reference to the experience of foreign countries and consider the feasibility of providing assessment service for learning diversity at the pre-school stage. She requested an update of the matter. She further pointed out that some teachers and parents had indicated that they did not have enough support or information concerning learning diversity. There were no training programmes on learning diversity for kindergarten teachers. She asked

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whether the Administration would provide more support in this regard.

87. The Chairman added that she had requested the Administration 18 months ago to provide assessment service to identify children with learning difficulties at early childhood. She sought information on the timetable for providing such service.

88. US(Ed) said that the Health Department was providing assessment services for children with developmental problems. He would relay members' concerns and questions about learning diversity at pre-school age to the relevant department for their response.

89. At the invitation of the Chairman, Assistant Legal Adviser 1 briefed members on the judicial review concerning a rejection of the application of an 18-year-old young person with Down's Syndrome for extension of stay in an ID school as outlined in Appendix I to LC Paper No. CB(2)1741/09-10(05).

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90. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che sought information on the classification of SEN. He said that he had raised a question concerning the number of persons with autistic spectrum disorder in 2008. The Administration responded then that 3 800 persons with autistic spectrum disorder had used the government service. Based on the formula adopted by overseas countries, there should be 50 000 to 100 000 autistic persons in Hong Kong. He enquired if there was any mechanism for identifying autistic spectrum disorder at early childhood and any services available for children with autistic spectrum disorder.

91. DS(Ed)4 said that there were eight major types of SEN including autistic spectrum disorder and children with autistic spectrum disorder were diagnosed by doctors. The Administration would provide the relevant information after the meeting. Currently, various support measures were provided to students with SEN through a three-tier intervention model at schools. Tier-1 support was the basic provision for students who lagged behind. For students with persistent learning difficulties, tier-2 support was provided on top of the basic provision. Tier-3 support would be provided to students who needed intensive support and special accommodation due to severe disabilities. In addition, teacher training and development, resource materials and professional advice on pedagogy were also provided. A five-year professional development programme on SEN had been formulated to provide teachers with the training in a systematic manner. A dedicated team of EDB paid regular visits to schools with a view to facilitating and advising schools on the implementation of integrated education.

92. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che was given to understand that some professional development programmes on hearing impairment for teachers were under-enrolled. He suggested that as the participation of teachers in professional development programmes on SEN was voluntary, the Administration should encourage or even require teachers to attend such

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programmes to better equip them with the skills for implementing integrated education. He opined that as schools required a lot of resources for implementing integrated education, in particular in providing training and professional development for teachers, it might be more cost effective to run special schools for specific types of disability.

93. US(Ed) said that the assessment service for visual and hearing impairment had been provided for a long time and the assessments had been accurate. With the decrease in the number of visually and hearing impaired children, the need for the assessment service had diminished. As for other types of SEN such as autistic spectrum disorder, language delay, dyslexia, etc, the rate of identification had risen as a result of more understanding on the problems. US(Ed) further said that there were about 40 to 50 visually impaired students in primary schools which accounted for an average of one student in every 10 schools. Given their small number, it was relatively easier for the teachers to take care of these students.

94. US(Ed) added that students with dyslexia were the largest group of SEN students. A number of measures had been put in place to provide assistance to these students such as relevant projects sponsored by the Quality Education Fund, research and professional development programmes on dyslexia, the catering of the need of these students in the planning of e-learning, etc.

95. US(Ed) further said that there had been divergent views on integrated education. Integrated education provided an opportunity for students with or without disability to relate with each other. It would be a useful experience for students with disability as they had to live and work after schooling in an integrated society. The Administration had reservations about placing all students with certain specific type of SEN in special schools.

96. The Chairman opined that as there were pros and cons for special education and integrated education, the Administration had to strike a balance of the two approaches. She was worried that the Administration had put the emphasis on integrated education and neglected the need for special education. Without publicity by the Administration, parents of children with SEN were simply not aware of the availability of special schools such as the Ebenezer School. They had no choice but to send their children to mainstream schools although the degree of disability of their children was severe.

97. US(Ed) stressed that the Administration had never overlooked special education. The Administration would refer the visually impaired students to the Ebenezer School according to professional advice, the practical need of the students and the consent of the parents.

98. The Chairman commented that special education was not merely about accommodating students in special schools. She and many political parties

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had urged the Administration to allocate fund for undertaking research on special education policies. She enquired about any development in this regard.

99. Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum Development) said that EDB had commissioned five consultancy studies on the development of NSS curriculum for ID students from 2007-2008 to 2009-2010. The outcomes of these studies had been provided to members at the special meeting of the Finance Committee in March 2010.

100. The Chairman said that one of the proposals in the Minimum Wage Bill was to assess the productivity of employees. Noting that there would be systematic assessment on the learning outcome of ID students in ID schools, she suggested that EDB should liaise with the Labour and Welfare Bureau ("LWB") and explore the viability of pegging the two assessments so that ID students would not need to go through the productivity assessment when they looked for an employment.

101. In response, US(Ed) said that as there was no public examination for students studying in ID schools, the assessment referred to in the Administration's paper was to evaluate their learning outcomes. He believed that the productivity assessment under the Minimum Wage Bill had a different objective. He would obtain more information from LWB in this regard.

**VII. Any other business**

102. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 7:00 pm.

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Legislative Council Secretariat  
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