

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)2235/09-10
(The minutes have been seen by
the University Grants Committee
and the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 12 July 2010, at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

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

Public Officers attending : Agenda item III
University Grants Committee

Mr Michael V Stone, JP
Secretary-General

Miss Joyce CHAN Nga-sze
Assistant Secretary-General (Quality Assurance)

Agenda item IV

Education Bureau

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Dr Catherine K K CHAN
Deputy Secretary for Education (5)

Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

Dr George Pook
Deputy Secretary General/Director, Public Examinations

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

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

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

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I. Confirmation of minutes

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1931/09-10]

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2010 were confirmed.

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

2. Members noted the information note entitled "Early Retirement Scheme for aided secondary school teachers" provided by the Administration (LC Paper No. CB(2)1851/09-10(01)).

Special meeting on 22 July 2010

3. The Chairman said that members agreed at the Panel meeting on

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14 June 2010 that depending on the Administration's response to the 10 proposed items in relation to the improvement works to the Christian Zheng Sheng Association's ("CZSA's") drug treatment and rehabilitation centres ("DTRCs") in Ha Keng, the Panel would decide the need to convene a special meeting on 22 July 2010 to discuss the subject matter. The Administration's response had been sent to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)2008/09-10(01) on 6 July 2010 and members were invited to indicate whether they considered it necessary to hold the special meeting as scheduled. The Chairman informed members that as at 3:30 pm on 12 July 2010, the Secretariat had received replies from 10 members. Two members considered it necessary to hold the special meeting; six members considered it not necessary; and two members had no preference. She sought members' view on the need to hold the special meeting.

4. The Chairman added that the Administration had indicated in its response that the relevant bureaux and departments were deliberating on the proposed improvement works and would provide more information to members later. The Administration was also of the view that it would be more appropriate for the Panel on Security to discuss the policy governing the rehabilitation services for drug abusers and future development of DTRCs. The Chairman disagreed with the Administration's view, and said that given the unique mode of operation of CZSA as a drug rehabilitation school, issues relating to its operation and relocation were not only a case but also policy matters and hence the need for the Panel to follow up. She considered it necessary to make it clear to the Education Bureau ("EDB") that the Panel would continue to follow up the policy matters of DTRCs.

5. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung and Ms Audrey EU said that the special meeting would only be fruitful if there were new developments of the matter. The Chairman suggested that an enquiry be made with the Administration on the progress of its discussion with CZSA. If there was material progress, the special meeting on 22 July 2010 should be convened to discuss the matter. Mr Abraham SHEK opined that the special meeting should be convened as scheduled to discuss policy issues relating to education irrespective of the availability of new information.

6. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong shared the Chairman's views that both the Panel and the Panel on Security had a role to play in the matter. He informed members that subsequent to its proposal for the improvement works to its DTRCs in Ha Keng, CZSA had recently approached him, proposing the consideration of the feasibility of relocating the DTRCs to Green Island. Mr CHEUNG was of the view that while the Legislative Council ("LegCo") was ready to assist CZSA in solving the relocation problem of its centres, CZSA should first make up its mind on the relocation site before LegCo could offer help. To avoid abortive work of the Panel, he considered it more appropriate for the Panel to discuss the matter after the Administration and

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CZSA had reached an agreement on the short-term and long-term measures relating to the reprovisioning of CZSA's DTRCs.

7. Members agreed that the Panel should continue to follow up the matter. The Chairman said that the Administration should discuss the matter with CZSA in the meantime. Depending on the progress of the discussion, the Panel would consider the need to hold a special meeting in early October 2010. The Chairman considered that the Panel should also discuss the provision of a mainstream curriculum leading to the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination or the future Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education ("HKDSE") Examination to young drug abusers undergoing drug rehabilitation at the meeting. Members agreed that the special meeting scheduled for 22 July 2010 be cancelled.

8. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that as drug rehabilitation at DTRCs fell within the responsibility of the Security Bureau ("SB"), a clear message should be conveyed to EDB and SB that they should try to arrive at an agreement with CZSA on the site for the relocation of its DTRCs before October 2010 so as to provide a basis for the Panel's discussion.

(Post meeting note: a letter dated 14 July 2010 was sent to the Secretary for Education and copied to the Security Bureau conveying members' views and decision.)

9. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that some residents in Mui Wo had made an application to operate a secondary school at the ex-Heung Yee Kuk South District Secondary School but the Administration had yet to respond. He enquired whether the matter should be discussed in conjunction with the CZSA issue. The Chairman said that the Panel had discussed the provision of school places on Islands, and suggested that the overall policy and not the individual case could be discussed at the October meeting.

III. Grievance procedures of the University Grants Committee-funded institutions

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1576/09-10(01) and CB(2)1996/09-10(01)]

10. Members noted the updated background brief entitled "Grievance and complaint mechanisms of the University Grants Committee-funded institutions" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat.

Briefing by University Grants Committee ("UGC")

11. Secretary-General of University Grants Committee ("SG(UGC)") briefed members on the guidelines of best practices in redress mechanisms developed by the UGC having regard to the findings of the research on

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grievance procedures of 10 reputable overseas institutions and the responses of the local institutions to these best practices as detailed in the UGC's paper.

Recommended improvement measures

12. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong welcomed the UGC's recommendations in four areas, namely appointment of mediators, stipulating the time limits for handling grievances, guarding against retaliation and involvement of external parties in the final level of appeal. He said that the UGC had taken an active move in improving the redress system. He commended the setting of time limits in handling grievances as certainty on the time for resolution of a complaint would mitigate the stress on the complainant.

13. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong agreed that mediation was an effective way to resolve disputes of less complicated nature. He noted the view of the UGC that individual institutions should be given the flexibility to decide whether internal and/or external mediators should be involved. He opined that to increase the credibility of mediation, both the institutions and the complainants should have the right to decide whether to engage internal or external mediators.

14. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong welcomed the stipulation of explicit provisions in the grievance procedures to guard against retaliation. He enquired whether the staff concerned could lodge complaints if they were retaliated. Noting that the decision would rest with the Councils of individual institutions to set up appeal committees to hear appeals at the final level comprising external parties, Mr CHEUNG considered that the right for invoking such a mechanism should be made available to the complainants to put into practice independent checks and balances in institutions' grievance procedures and to be seen as such.

15. SG(UGC) responded that there were different levels of mediation. Mediation could be conducted at the initial stage of a complaint in an informal manner or at a later stage in a formal manner. Given the different levels of complexity of complaints, the institutions should be given the flexibility to decide whether internal or external mediators should be involved. Since mediation as a means of conflict resolution had yet to be well developed in Hong Kong, the institutions might consider engaging reputable external mediators to a larger extent when the development of mediation became more mature.

16. SG(UGC) was of the view that the proposed best practice in grievance procedures should be able to handle the problem of retaliation. Since the involvement of external parties was recommended at the final level of appeal, impartiality could be upheld. SG(UGC) further said that all institutions had agreed to consider involving external parties at the final level of appeal and

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would need a few months to deliberate on the issue in their Councils. Some institutions had already had such a procedure in place and some might invoke the procedure if necessary. The UGC had requested the institutions which had yet to have such a procedure to look into it seriously. SG(UGC) undertook to relay Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's suggestions to the institutions for consideration.

17. Dr Priscilla LEUNG declared that she was an associate professor of the City University of Hong Kong and had dealt with grievances relating to institutions. She echoed Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's views and said that mediation was a good start for an independent redress system. However, the complainants would not be convinced that their complaints were handled fairly and independently unless they had been involved in the appointment of mediators. Since mediation was not binding on the institutions and the complainants, there should be a final level of appeal if either party was not satisfied with the outcome. She suggested that institutions should invite respectful individuals who were interested in providing mediation services to form a pool of mediators. This pool of mediators could comprise external parties and individuals who were familiar with the systems of the institutions. To increase the credibility of the mechanism, both the institutions and the complainants should agree on the mediators to be appointed.

18. SG(UGC) said that mediation was generally used in the early stage of the grievance procedures in overseas institutions with a view to avoiding the need for escalating the grievances to higher levels. The idea of using mediation at the final stage was a very different way of organizing and resolving disputes and was not commonly adopted by overseas institutions. Since mediation had yet to be well developed in Hong Kong and there was uncertainty of its development, he was not sure if the institutions would actively consider using mediation at the final stage of appeal. However, he would put forth the suggestion to the institutions for consideration.

19. SG(UGC) agreed that it might be difficult to have volunteers to sit on the final appeal panels as mediators and it would take a long time for the institutions to find persons who would be viewed as neutral by all parties. However, he was confident that the institutions would be capable of finding the people who were of that nature.

20. Mr WONG Yuk-man opined that all complaints and grievances involved power. He regretted to see the confrontational attitude adopted by the management and the staff of tertiary institutions at previous Panel meetings when the subject matter was discussed. He despised the heads of certain institutions for their conduct and actions which did not tally with their role and capacity. In his view, the UGC's recommendations in the four specific areas were only technical in nature and could not resolve the problems at root which involved the desire for power, the distribution of power and the human nature.

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21. Ms Audrey EU was of the view that if mediation was made integral to the redress system, there should be elaborate procedures including the mediators available for appointment. All the relevant information should be provided to the staff, including whether the mediators were to be sourced from the market or whether the institutions had invited certain persons to form a pool of mediators for appointment and whether the institutions or the complainant had to pay for the mediation service. Ms EU pointed out that professional mediation service was available in the market. It would be unrealistic to expect that many qualified persons would be ready to provide free mediation service on a regular basis. Lay members of the Councils of the institutions should not be regarded as possible mediators. She called on the UGC to sort out all these relevant issues if mediation was to be made part of the redress mechanism.

22. SG(UGC) said that mediation referred to in the UGC's paper would be an informal way to resolve disputes at an early stage. The institutions might engage a suitable mediator within the institutions to handle complaints which were not complicated. He added that mediation might be used in two areas, one was before the start of the more complicated procedures in the redress system and the other was, as members mentioned, when the dispute resolution reached an impasse at a more final stage. SG(UGC) further said that having formal mediations binding on both parties was a different approach, compared with the current practice, and the decision on whether or not to use such mediation should rest with the institutions. SG(UGC) shared the view that formal mediation service had to be paid. He undertook to consider and discuss the issue with the institutions.

23. In response to the Chairman's enquiry on whether the institutions had agreed to take forward the UGC's recommendations, SG(UGC) said that all institutions considered mediation a good idea in principle and agreed to look further into it. All institutions had agreed to set time limits in handling grievances. As the time required to handle complaints might vary according to their nature and level of complexity, the institutions would draft the appropriate clauses with respect to time limits for various stages of the procedures. All institutions, including those which had yet to have such procedures, had agreed to include an explicit provision to guard against retaliation. Some institutions had already had such procedures in place. As regards the involvement of external parties at the final level of appeal, SG(UGC) said that institutions had all agreed to consider actively this recommendation. He pointed out that since it would be a major change for some of the institutions, the institutions needed to seek the view of their Councils before they could revert to the UGC.

24. The Chairman requested the UGC to provide an update of the institutions' responses to the UGC's recommendations to the Panel for

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follow-up.

25. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong commented that the redress mechanism had been discussed for quite some time and it was worthwhile to try out the UGC's recommendations and members' suggestions made at this meeting. He requested the UGC to collaborate with the institutions to provide an updated complaint/grievance handling flow charts of individual institutions to the Panel by October 2010. Upon receipt of the flow charts, the Panel might consider seeking the comments of the staff of the institutions on the new procedures. Mr CHEUNG was of the view that the UGC and the institutions should promulgate jointly the new procedures to the staff of the institutions.

26. Dr Priscilla LEUNG said that one of the reasons for championing an inter-institutional redress mechanism was that the staff of the institutions had no confidence in the existing mechanisms and as a result, complaints often led to legal proceedings. Even if no legal proceedings were instituted, the management of the institutions would often seek legal advice in the resolution process and the cost incurred was substantial. Although mediation was not binding normally, she hoped that the institutions and the complainants could respect the outcome of mediation.

27. Dr Priscilla LEUNG supported Ms Audrey EU's view on the need for paying mediation service. In her view, the persons included in the pool of mediators should be paid for providing mediation service. Dr LEUNG suggested that as the institutions were publicly-funded, they should shoulder a larger share of the mediation costs and the complainants should also share part of the cost to avoid abuse of the mechanism. Given that the mediation fee would be much lower than the legal fee and the mediation would be independent and impartial, she considered that the staff would find this arrangement acceptable.

28. SG(UGC) responded that the UGC would look further into the feasibility of using mediation at the final stage of the procedures. He said that the institutions would update their flow charts after they had re-examined their grievance procedures. He would provide the updated flow charts to the Panel when available.

UGC

29. The Chairman thanked the UGC for its efforts in drawing up the recommendations for the redress mechanisms. She said that at the informal Panel meeting held on 22 June 2010 to examine the draft research report on the complaints handling mechanism in higher education sector in selected places prepared by the Research and Library Services Division ("RLSD") of the LegCo Secretariat, members had requested RLSD to incorporate supplementary information in the research report. The Chairman hoped that the research report would be ready for discussion by the Panel in October/November 2010.

IV. Progress report of the implementation of the New Academic Structure and Liberal Studies

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1996/09-10(02) and (03)]

30. Members noted the updated background brief entitled "Implementation of the new academic structure" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat.

Briefing by the Administration

31. Under Secretary for Education ("US(Ed)") briefed members on the progress on the implementation of the New Academic Structure ("NAS") for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education and related issues as detailed in the Administration's paper.

Liberal Studies

32. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the greatest dissatisfaction upon the implementation of NAS was the inadequate support given to Liberal Studies ("LS") teachers. The Hong Kong Professional Teachers Union ("HKPTU") had conducted a survey on the stress level of LS teachers and on whether schools had adopted small groups for teaching LS. According to the findings of the survey, 32% of the respondents were at stress level 9 or level 10 (level 10 being the highest) and the average stress level was 7.7. The survey had indicated that many LS teachers were at full stretch.

33. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong further said that 26% of the schools participated in the survey had not adopted small group teaching for LS. Some schools had used the additional resources allocated for the implementation of the new senior secondary ("NSS") curriculum in English Language and Chinese Language subjects. He opined that if LS was not taught in small group settings, class discussions would not be fruitful.

34. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that the Hong Kong Association of Heads of Secondary Schools ("HKAHSS") had conducted interviews at 150 secondary schools on issues relating to LS. 65% of the respondents had indicated that they were short of manpower for conducting school-based assessment, teaching LS in small groups and catering for learning diversity. The problem of manpower shortage would escalate with the increased operation of LS classes from Secondary 4 ("S4") to S5 and then S6.

35. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong highlighted that Hong Kong Liberal Studies Teachers' Association ("HKLSTA") had requested the Administration to provide more support in four areas. Since schools were at liberty to use the additional resources allocated for the implementation of NAS, many schools

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used the resources in other major subjects such as English and Chinese. HKLSTA had requested that a three-year special allowance be granted for teaching LS. To tackle the problem of manpower shortage, one additional permanent LS teaching post should be created in each school. A network of LS teachers should be established for providing mutual support. As the assessment of LS was based on the judgment of the markers and in the absence of uniform assessment criteria, LS teachers were worried about the possible disputes on the assessment results. The support to teachers in respect of the assessment of students' performance in LS should be strengthened.

36. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong stressed that the surveys conducted by HKPTU and HKAHSS had reached the same conclusions that the Administration had failed to provide adequate support to the LS teachers. He asked how the Administration would deal with the problems.

37. US(Ed) said that a LS School Network Scheme comprising 25 district coordinators recommended by HKLSTA was set up in November 2009 to provide support to both schools and teachers on the curriculum and assessment of LS. These coordinators were experienced in teaching LS and assessing LS examination papers. The Administration recognized the importance of school network building and would continue to arrange the district coordinators to provide on-site school-based support. Training and development activities for 449 school coordinators from 421 schools had been arranged last year.

38. US(Ed) further said that the Administration would strengthen the support to schools regarding LS in the coming school year. The Administration and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority ("HKEAA") would review the school-based assessment ("SBA") having regard to the experience gained in the first assessment and provide useful examples through the EDB website and the school network for the reference of schools and teachers. Noting that some schools had not adopted small group teaching for LS, the Administration would send professional teams to schools to assist them in improving the learning and teaching of LS.

39. Deputy Secretary for Education (5) ("DS(Ed)5") supplemented that the findings of the surveys of HKPTU and HKAHSS quoted by Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong accorded with the Administration's observations and the results of the "NSS Curriculum Implementation Study 2009/10" commissioned by EDB and conducted by the Chinese University of Hong Kong ("CUHK"). The Administration noted that small group teaching for LS had not been fully implemented in schools and some schools had encountered difficulties in teaching LS. To improve the situation, the Administration would integrate the school network scheme, the school-based support scheme and university-school partnership projects with a view to enhancing the coordination among these schemes and identifying the schools which required assistance. The Administration would scale up the leadership role of the

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teachers who were in the middle level of the schools. The Administration would also discuss the assessment and teaching issues with representative organizations in the education sector, the Curriculum Development Council and HKEAA in the annual review meeting to be held in July 2010.

40. On the issue of special allowance for LS, DS(Ed)5 said that the Administration was actively considering the feasibility of allocating non-recurrent funds to meet the imminent needs of schools. The Administration noted HKLSTA's request for the creation of one additional teaching post for LS in each school.

41. Deputy Secretary General/Director – Public Examinations, HKEAA ("DSG(HKEAA)") recapitulated HKEAA's support to LS teachers. He said that a web-based service of electronic resources was made available in the HKEAA website to give teachers more background information to help them with the teaching of the course. In view of the evolving and changing nature of the issues to be studied in LS, the web-based resources provided teachers with constantly developing information of the issues. HKEAA also provided a lot of support to teachers through the district coordinators who had been maintaining continuous contact with teachers through workshops and meetings. The district coordinators also responded to teachers' questions about the teaching of the course and how SBA should be organized and built in to the course. The coordinators would continue to provide feedbacks and further support to teachers.

42. DSG(HKEAA) added that sample examination questions and students' responses over a range of different levels of performance would be put in the HKEAA website. Teachers could have an idea of the standards of responses expected from students and how the questions would be marked. A training programme for markers would be conducted throughout the territory in the coming school year. Teachers could practise the marking of examination questions to find out the marking standards. The training programme had the dual benefits of providing teachers with professional development and facilitating HKEAA to identify markers who could act according to the standards in 2012. Recognizing that many teachers needed a lot of support to develop into the requirements for teaching LS, HKEAA would continue to provide on-going and active support to them.

43. Dr Priscilla LEUNG observed that many students found LS the most difficult subject and disliked it. It was due to the way the subject was taught and assessed. Dr LEUNG said that for some units in LS such as Physical Education and Visual Arts, students were required to recite the materials and take written examinations and thus lost their interests in these subjects. She had known of a school which had only two teachers teaching Visual Arts and because of insufficient resources, the same set of examination questions was used for all classes. The students were asked to fill in the blanks instead of

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giving their views and most of them had failed the examination. Dr LEUNG commented that assessing students' performance by way of examinations would suppress students' creativity and defeat the purpose of inspiring students and broadening their knowledge base. She opined that the way students' performance was assessed would affect the students' interests in the subject. She suggested that students' performance be assessed according to their participation in classes and the Administration should review the LS assessment framework.

44. DS(Ed)5 responded that the Administration noted that some teachers were using the instructional approach in teaching LS and were unable to encourage students to apply knowledge from different disciplines. The objective of developing students' critical thinking and analytical skills had yet to be achieved. DS(Ed)5 said that the Administration would strengthen the support to LS teachers in the coming school year and believed that by providing appropriate support and teaching resources, the teachers would better equip themselves in teaching LS.

45. DS(Ed)5 shared Dr Priscilla LEUNG's view that the LS assessment methods should allow students to provide innovative answers. The Administration considered that the assessment of Visual Arts should include the aspects of appreciation and criticism.

46. DSG(HKEAA) supplemented that LS was designed for students to draw on knowledge from a whole range of subjects, apply it to the information presented to them and construct their own views and attitudes on social issues. It was disappointing to learn that some students did not find these issues of great interests and relevance to them. Learning LS by rote was not effective. LS should be taught in an open manner to induce discussion and students should be able to explain the reasons for their views. LS should be about broadly-based critical thinking on developing views on very complex and demanding issues to which there were no evident correct answers. There should not be uniform answers to questions as students could have different views on the subject.

47. As for Visual Arts, DSG(HKEAA) commented that it should be about teaching students to develop their own style in creating a piece of art and explaining why certain kinds of art appealed to them. It should not be about filling in blanks although in some stages in teaching, this could be a useful way to start the discussion or to set students' minds at work. Filling in blanks should not be a principle in the assessment. The assessment should focus on the quality and the meaning of the art and the reasons for producing it. DSG(HKEAA) pointed out that there was an element of personal contribution in both LS and Visual Arts. Students might find the subjects difficult as the teaching and learning approach was less straight forward and very different from their conventional way of learning.

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48. Dr Priscilla LEUNG reiterated that the LS assessment methods should be modified at least for S1 to S3 so as to arouse students' interests in learning and let them enjoy the learning. Merits should be given to students' application of knowledge and personal contributions. Sufficient LS teachers should be provided to cope with the workload. To avoid inequitable allocation of resources, Dr LEUNG suggested that the Administration should provide guidelines to schools on how to allocate resources appropriately.

49. The Chairman said that before the implementation of NAS, there was no written examination for non-academic subjects such as Visual Arts and Physical Education and students used to enjoy these courses. She fully agreed with Dr Priscilla LEUNG's view that S1 to S3 students should not be required to take written examination for these subjects.

50. DS(Ed)5 said that Physical Education and Visual Arts were non-examination subjects under Other Learning Experiences of the NSS curriculum which aimed at whole-person development of students. Notwithstanding the divergent views on LS, the study conducted by CUHK demonstrated that about 80% of the students agreed that LS could help broaden their views. The Administration would put more efforts in resolving the problems related to LS in the coming school year with a view to improving the learning and teaching of LS.

51. The Chairman said that the media report on a columnist failing a mock LS examination had caused public concern about the criteria for marking LS examination papers. Some LS teachers might have reservations about encouraging students' to be creative in answering LS questions as they were uncertain whether such answers would be acceptable. She sought information on how the LS markers would deal with unconventional answers.

52. DSG(HKEAA) responded that when markers were uncertain about the responses to examination questions, they should seek guidance from more senior markers. He said that examiners were required to respect individual responses and give credits to creativity and individual contributions which were very important elements in LS.

53. DSG(HKEAA) further said that HKEAA did not have encounters with the assessment methodologies for LS in S1 to S3. However, he agreed that teachers should be given support in developing alternative assessment strategies. He hoped that teachers could be provided with more information in this regard.

54. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that it would be difficult to make changes to the NSS curriculum at this stage as the NAS had been implemented for one year. Parents, teachers and students had no confidence in LS. Many

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students including the top performers were dubious of their performance in LS and were uncertain how they could meet the required standards. Many of them were planning to study abroad to avoid taking HKDSE Examination because they had no confidence in meeting the admission requirements of local universities. Mr LEUNG further said that he had given talks to some secondary school students at LS classes recently. The students were enthusiastic in expressing their views when the topics fell outside the scope of examination. However, if the topics were relevant to examinations, the students lost their interests. Mr LEUNG remarked that local students were inquisitive and were becoming more concerned about current affairs. They generally considered that LS could broaden their horizons. However, it would be a different matter if their knowledge and interest were to be assessed by examinations. He doubted the effectiveness of measuring the attainment of the objective of LS by requiring students to take the examination. In his view, the Administration should not conclude that LS had achieved its intended purposes on the basis of the students' positive responses in the relevant survey.

55. US(Ed) responded that the Administration had promoted the NSS curriculum to renowned universities and governments in Europe, the United States, Canada and Australia. The NSS curriculum was well-received by all of these universities and governments as it aimed at whole-person development. Many of the university professors and government officials wished that the secondary schools in their countries could adopt the same concept as the NSS curriculum so that their high school students could be exposed to both science and arts subjects before receiving tertiary education.

56. US(Ed) said that he understood students' worries about HKDSE. As the first HKDSE examination would take place in 2012, students had sufficient time to adapt themselves to the NSS curriculum. He trusted that both the students studying in local and overseas universities would benefit from the NSS curriculum.

57. US(Ed) pointed out that examination was one of the ways to measure students' extent of learning of a subject. LS required students to analyze and interpret information from different perspectives and then form their arguments. Open-ended questions would be asked to encourage students to explore an issue in a wide range of contexts. Many other subjects had applied open-ended assessment methods in order to develop students' analytical skills.

58. As regards the media report on a columnist who had failed in a mock LS examination, US(Ed) said that the relevant examination paper was not assessed using the prescribed assessment criteria and the report had not depicted a full picture. US(Ed) stressed that established mechanisms had been in place in handling diverse views of markers on the assessment of examination papers on different subjects. As far as LS was concerned, the markers would discuss among themselves before marking in order to reach a consensus on the

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ways for marking examination papers. The Administration would strengthen the publicity on LS assessment in the coming school year to enhance students' confidence.

59. DSG(HKEAA) supplemented that a more broad-minded approach to LS should be developed and attaching certain topics to examinations was out of line with developing students' generic skills. Students should regard the process of discussing issues, evaluating arguments and analyzing situations as preparatory work for examinations. The emphasis of assessment would be put on the skills the students applied in analyzing a situation, integrating the information and explaining their views in developing an answer.

60. DSG(HKEAA) further said that since there would be a disparity in responses to LS questions, double marking would be adopted. The examination scripts would be marked by two markers and when there were significant differences in the markers' opinions, a third marker would be called in to resolve the discrepancies. In case of a request for review of the results, the responses would be assessed by another two markers for a broader range of input. Hence, the final grade given to a candidate would be a synthesis of opinions of different markers. With the established guidelines, candidates would receive fair grades for the way they conducted and presented their answers to examination questions.

61. The Chairman was concerned whether the assessment methods might require one standard mode of analytical skills. She pointed out that students had different ways in approaching a subject. Some students might provide good answers to examination questions but could not systematically present how they come to their answers. She asked how these responses would be evaluated.

62. DS(Ed)5 responded that students were taught to analyse the situations from different angles. They should be able to explain the application of the information made available to them and the rationale of their responses. It was the analytic skills and the judgment of the students as opposed to the factual information provided that mattered. The Administration would provide LS teachers with more information on the appropriate assessment of LS.

63. DS(Ed)5 further said that in the past decade, the Administration had been improving the assessment culture in basic education to encourage schools to reduce the number of tests and examinations, promote different thinking approaches and ask more open-ended questions. In the Programme for International Student Assessment and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study which targeted at children of 15 years old and 10 years old respectively, the high level thinking ability of local candidates ranked the first two places among tens of countries and regions. These two assessments had

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demonstrated that local students had made good progress in developing their ability in construing knowledge and analysing problems.

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64. The Chairman said that since there was no model answer for LS, the assessment could be very subjective and some students might have doubt about the results. She opined that there should be a more user-friendly and convenient mechanism for checking and reviewing the examination results. She requested the Administration and HKEAA to provide written information on how LS examination papers would be marked and some sample LS examination papers with good or bad grades for members' reference.

65. Dr Priscilla LEUNG opined that LS teachers were bound by the assessment methods and inclined to underplay students' creativity in the assessment. She considered it necessary for LS teachers to change their mentality and be more opened-minded in the LS assessment in order not to damper students' innovation.

66. DS(Ed)5 said that to attain Level 5 in LS in HKDSE examination, students had to demonstrate their creativity and innovation. The Administration would strengthen its efforts in conveying this message across to teachers and students.

67. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that although additional resources had been provided to school for arranging small group teaching for LS, many schools had used the resources in language subjects and did not implement small group teaching for LS. He called on the Administration to take measures to ensure that all schools would allocate sufficient resources for teaching LS in small groups and be provided with an additional permanent teaching post for LS.

68. US(Ed) responded that in accordance with the principle of school-based management, schools should be given the autonomy and flexibility in managing their resources. As the situations in schools varied, it would be inappropriate for the Administration to mandate the use of their resources in specific areas/subjects. He reiterated that the Administration would actively consider providing special allowance on a non-recurrent basis for LS. Resources apart, the Administration would also strengthen the support to LS teachers on assessment, preparation for Independent Enquiry Studies, learning and teaching. Support measures would also be provided through the university-school partnership projects and School-based Support Services.

69. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that he could not accept the Administration shirking its responsibility under the excuse of school autonomy and school-based management. He cautioned that the LS teachers were under immense pressure and if the Administration was not going to take steps to ensure the teaching of LS in small groups and the use of resources in LS, there

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would be serious consequences. Mr CHEUNG recalled that when LS was discussed a few years ago, the Administration had agreed that additional resources would be allocated to LS so that schools could adopt small group teaching. Manpower resources for LS had also been estimated on the basis of small group teaching at that time. He called on the Administration to keep its commitment and provide a formal response to HKLSTA's requests.

Mathematics as a mandatory subject for university admission

70. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that Mathematics was currently not a mandatory subject for university admission. With the implementation of NAS, students had to attain Level 2 in Mathematics in HKDSE in order to apply for university admission. Such a requirement would deprive the chance of the students who excelled in subjects other than Mathematics for local university education. Noting that local universities had agreed to exercise flexibility in considering the applications for admission on a case-by-case basis, Mr CHEUNG asked how the Administration would ensure that the universities would honor their promise and admit these students.

71. Dr Priscilla LEUNG shared Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's view. She said that if the Administration had endorsed Mathematics to be a mandatory subject for university admission, the universities would tend to impose such a requirement. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Dr Priscilla LEUNG requested the Administration to consider excluding Mathematics as a mandatory subject for university admission.

72. US(Ed) said that studying Mathematics could help students develop their analytical skills and logical thinking which were essential for all students regardless of their study programmes. On this premise, local universities supported that Mathematics should be one of the core subjects. Taking into account the requirements of different subjects, the curriculum of Mathematics had been designed to cater for different needs. It was the manifold curriculum of NSS that had earned the wide recognition from overseas universities.

Pathways for the last cohort of S5 in 2010

73. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that most of the S5 students preferred studying S6/S7 to pursuing other education pathways and would consider switching to the NSS curriculum at S5 and sit for the first HKDSE in 2012. According to the Administration, the admission to NSS S5 classes was subject to the availability of places. Should this be the case, it would not be an alternate pathway for the last cohort of S5. He sought information on the arrangements to secure such places for the last S5 cohort.

74. US(Ed) responded that special arrangements had been made to allow schools to flexibly make use of the approved 5% repeater quota on a whole

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school basis for the last cohort of S5 graduates in 2010. The Administration had also encouraged schools to be flexible in planning the number of S5 repeating places. US(Ed) said that in addition to repeating S5, there were other pathways available. Students should select a pathway that suited their own circumstances. In fact, more and more students had chosen sub-degree programmes and Project Yi Jin and were admitted to local universities through these pathways.

75. DS(Ed)5 supplemented that in response to the Administration's appeal, about 190 schools had agreed to provide repeating places for S5 students in 2010 up to that moment. She believed that more schools would be responsive to the Administration's appeal. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan sought information on the number of S5 repeating places in each of these schools. The Chairman said that at the Panel meeting held on 14 June 2010, members had requested the Administration to provide written information on the names of schools including evening schools which provided S5 repeating places for the 2010 S5 graduates and the number of places to be provided. She requested the Administration to provide the required information as soon as possible.

Recognition of HKDSE

76. Ms Starry LEE said that many local students would like to receive tertiary education in the Mainland to pave way for their career development. Under NAS, local students who wished to apply for undergraduate programmes in the Mainland had to take part in the Joint Entrance Examination for Universities in the People's Republic of China. There had been requests for the Administration to liaise with its counterparts in the Mainland and explore the possibility of exempting local students from the joint entrance examination and accepting the HKDSE examination results for university admission. Ms LEE enquired about the progress in this regard.

77. US(Ed) responded that there were currently three ways for local students to gain admission to Mainland universities. Some universities only recognized the results of the joint admission examination in the Mainland; some universities required applicants to take the examination conducted by the universities; and some Mainland universities recognized the public examinations in Hong Kong and exempted the students with good results from taking their admission examinations. As this admission system applied to Mainland candidates alike, giving preferential treatments to local students might be seen as unfair to other candidates. It was therefore difficult to accede to such a request. US(Ed) said that the Administration had been discussing with the Ministry of Education on the recognition of HKDSE qualifications but no material progress could be reported at this stage. The Administration would follow up the issue at the end of 2010.

78. While appreciating the difficulties encountered by the Administration,

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Ms Starry LEE suggested that the Administration should convince Mainland universities to grant the exemption to local students by phases. The goal would be to accept HKDSE examination results for university admission. Ms LEE said that she had asked a similar question at the Panel meeting held on 30 April 2010 and the Administration had yet to provide a substantial answer. She requested the Administration to provide detailed information in writing in this regard. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide written information on the mechanism adopted by Mainland universities for admitting Hong Kong students.

79. Ms Starry LEE said that the Oxford University had recently announced that it would not consider LS for its admission. Noting from the Administration's paper that HKDSE compared favorably with the General Certificate of Education A Level, she sought clarification on whether LS was recognized by universities in the United Kingdom ("UK").

80. DS(Ed)5 responded that the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service in UK had conducted a study on the benchmarking of HKDSE qualifications and had included 24 HKDSE subjects in its tariff system. It would be up to individual institutions to decide their own admission requirements. As the Oxford University did not have LS subject, it would not include the subject in its admission requirements. DS(Ed)5 added that the Administration was receiving replies from different UK universities regarding their admission requirements. Some had regarded all the 24 subjects as elective subjects for admission. The HKEAA had requested all UK universities through the British Council to provide detailed information on the requirements of their study programmes and faculties. The Administration would announce the admission requirements of UK universities later.

V. Any other business

81. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:40 pm.