

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)389/10-11

(The minutes have been seen by the
Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

**Minutes of special meeting
held on Thursday, 21 October 2010, at 4:30 pm
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present	: Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, JP (Chairman) Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan (Deputy Chairman) Hon Albert HO Chun-yan Hon LEE Cheuk-yan Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP Hon KAM Nai-wai, MH Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai, BBS, JP Hon Paul CHAN Mo-po, MH, JP Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee, GBS, JP Dr Hon Samson TAM Wai-ho, JP Hon Tanya CHAN Hon WONG Yuk-man
Member attending	: Hon IP Wai-ming, MH
Members absent	: Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, GBS, JP

Public Officers attending	: Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP Acting Secretary for Education
	Mr Raymond H C WONG, JP Permanent Secretary for Education
	Ms Michelle LI, JP Deputy Secretary for Education (1)
	Ms Mable CHAN Deputy Secretary for Education (2)
	Mrs Betty IP, JP Deputy Secretary for Education (3)
	Mrs Michelle WONG Deputy Secretary for Education (4)
	Dr CHAN Ka-ki Deputy Secretary for Education (5)
	Ms Esther LEUNG, JP Deputy Secretary for Education (6)
Clerk in attendance	: Miss Odelia LEUNG Chief Council Secretary (2)6
Staff in attendance	: Ms Judy TING Senior Council Secretary (2)7 (Acting) Miss Jenny LEE Legislative Assistant (2)6 (Acting)

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I. **Briefing by the Secretary for Education on the Chief Executive's Policy Address 2010-2011**
[LC Paper No. CB(2)56/10-11(01)]

The Chairman said that the Secretary for Education ("SED") could not attend the meeting due to indisposition. Mr Kenneth CHEN, Acting

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Secretary for Education ("Atg SED") would brief members on the major new education initiatives on the 2010-2011 Policy Agenda.

Briefing by the Administration

2. Atg SED briefed members on the new education initiatives on the 2010-2011 Policy Agenda as detailed in the Administration's paper. The speaking note of Atg SED was tabled at the meeting and issued to members after the meeting vide LC Paper No. CB(2)119/10-11 on 22 October 2010.

School Textbook Assistance Scheme

3. Mr WONG Kwok-hing enquired whether the Administration would consider relaxing the income limit under the Adjusted Family Income ("AFI") mechanism for assessing the eligibility for the School Textbook Assistance Scheme ("STAS"), in order to alleviate the financial burden of the under-privileged families.

4. In response, Atg SED advised that about 276 000 students were expected to be benefited from the increase of the Flat Rate Grant under STAS in the 2011-2012 school year, of which 80 000 would receive full grant. The AFI mechanism had been used as the means test to assess the eligibility and assistance level of families for the entire series of financial assistance schemes for primary and secondary school students, including STAS, the Student Travel Subsidy Scheme and the Subsidy Scheme for Internet Access Charges. He stressed that any relaxation of the means test would have financial implications, hence requiring careful consideration.

5. Atg SED further explained that STAS comprised a Textbook Grant for purchasing essential textbooks and a Flat Rate Grant for meeting miscellaneous school-related expenses. For the Textbook Grant, its rates were adjusted according to the results of the survey on the average costs of textbooks for students at various levels of studies at the sampled schools conducted by the Consumer Council before the commencement of each school year. On average, the full-grant rates ranged from \$2,000 to \$3,000. As for the Flat Rate Grant, the revision of which was in accordance with the movement of the Composite Consumer Price Index. He reiterated that the Flat Rate Grant would be increased to \$1,000 per full-grant student.

6. Mr IP Wai-ming said that given the high inflation, the Administration should adjust the income limit for eligibility for STAS and review the rates of grant in accordance with inflation so as to provide more financial assistance to the under-privileged families.

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7. Deputy Secretary for Education (6) clarified that under the AFI mechanism, the grant rates were adjusted yearly in accordance with the movement of the Composite Consumer Price Index. In the 2010-2011 school year, under the existing means test, a four-member family with monthly income not exceeding \$23,329 would be eligible for STAS.

8. Atg SED pointed out that the provision of Internet Access Charges for needy students from the 2010-2011 school year onwards involved additional recurrent expenditure. It was necessary for the Administration to adopt a holistic approach in considering whether to relax the means test.

e-Learning resources

9. Mr WONG Kwok-hing said that to resolve the high cost of textbooks in the long term, electronic textbooks should be used extensively. He enquired about the implementation plan of electronic textbooks.

10. Atg SED advised that the Administration had been actively promoting various measures to promote e-Learning, one of which was the Pilot Scheme on e-Learning in schools. About 20 to 30 schools would participate in the Pilot Scheme. The aim of e-Learning was to encourage self-directed learning among students. He emphasized the need of shifting the paradigm in school education from a teacher-centred and textbook-based mode to a more interactive learner-centred mode. To this end, the Administration would progressively implement e-Learning. Atg SED added that many schools had become less reliant on textbooks, and he hoped that this trend would continue.

11. To follow up, Mr WONG Kwok-hing requested the Administration to provide detailed information on the implementation of electronic textbooks. The Chairman added that the Administration should include information on implementation milestones and timetable, etc.

12. Atg SED proposed that the Administration would revert to the Panel when more concrete information on the Pilot Scheme was available. Members agreed to include the subject in the list of outstanding items for discussion.

National education

13. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong was gravely concerned about the Administration's plan to develop an independent subject on moral and

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national education ("the Subject") in place of the existing curriculum framework for moral and civic education and to test students' understanding of the Basic Law, as outlined in the 2010-2011 Policy Address. He pointed out that strong views had been expressed by the community as well as the education sector on the development of the Subject. The education sector was concerned that national education might become a tool for political propaganda by the Government. Worries had been expressed that only the positive sides of the Mainland like the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing and the World Expo in Shanghai would be covered whereas sensitive issues such as the imprisonment of Liu Xiaobo and the June Fourth Incident would not be touched upon in the Subject. There was concern about the narrow scope of the Subject as compared with the subject on Liberal Studies ("LS").

14. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong further said that the Chief Executive ("CE") decided to develop the Subject without consultation with the stakeholders. He questioned whether the making of the decision had followed the established procedures, and whether a consensus had been reached among the stakeholders on such a decision. He queried whether it was a political decision made by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government or the Central Government. Mr CHEUNG was also concerned whether the Subject would be an elective or a core subject; whether it would be taken at the junior or senior secondary levels and whether there would be examinations on the Subject.

15. Atg SED explained that the 2002 Basic Education Curriculum Guide had set out the curriculum framework for moral and civic education, which included the cultivation of values such as sense of responsibility and respect for others. After the reunification with China for 13 years, the Government considered it necessary to enhance students' knowledge of the motherland and its latest developments. Indeed, many stakeholders and parents agreed to the direction taken by the Government to strengthen its focus and escalate its efforts in national education.

16. Atg SED added that while the Mainland exchange programmes focused on the important landmark events of the country, classroom discussions on current issues encouraged students to make analyzes from different angles. He stressed that the Subject would aim to foster students' moral integrity and enhance their critical thinking instead of one-way dissemination of ideology. Atg SED added that the Administration would collaborate with the Curriculum Development Council to conduct consultation with the stakeholders with a view to implementing the Subject in the 2013-2014 school year.

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17. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong reiterated his dissatisfaction with CE for not having consulted the stakeholders before making the decision to develop the Subject. He requested the Administration to provide details of the decision-making process.

18. Atg SED supplemented that a special committee, to be set up under the Curriculum Development Council, would be tasked to draft the relevant consultation papers for consultation with the stakeholders. It was an established practice for the Administration to consult stakeholders before developing a new subject. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong remarked that it was inappropriate on the part of the Administration to only consult stakeholders on the content of the Subject but not its plan to develop the Subject.

19. Ms Cyd HO did not share the Administration's view that the teaching of the Subject would enhance students' critical thinking skills because, in her view, its teaching approach would not encourage the development of such values as self-determination, self-reflection and honesty. Noting that a question bank on the Basic Law would be developed by the Education Bureau ("EDB"), Ms HO was concerned that model answers which were politically correct would be developed. She opined that students would not dare to give honest answers as there was a practical need to get at least passing marks on the Subject for further study purpose. She quoted various examples of politically correct model answers such as the interpretation by the Court of Final Appeal regarding the meaning of permanent residents of Hong Kong having the right of abode, "gradual and orderly progress" equivalent to "13 years of delay", "democratization" equivalent to "screening and nomination of candidates", and "broad representation" equivalent to "small-circle election" in respect of the selection of the CE and the election of the Legislative Council ("LegCo"). She pointed out that instead of developing independent and critical thinking skills at school age, students would be taught to give up their own principles for survival, contrary to the principles of education.

20. While agreeing that students should be encouraged to learn the Basic Law, Ms Cyd HO considered that they should learn the international human rights treaties as well. She stressed that students should not be required to sit for examinations on the Basic Law, irrespective of whether they were internal or external, as examination results would have bearing on their pursuit of further study and career. In order to safeguard the principles of education, Ms HO urged teachers to express their opposition as soon as possible.

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21. While welcoming the Government's decision not to enact laws regarding Article 23 of the Basic Law, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan was concerned whether the Subject would be used for the purpose of brainwashing students and dissemination of political ideology. He considered that the development of the Subject went against the objective of the subject on LS to develop students' independent and critical thinking skills. Mr LEE also shared the worries that students would only be presented with the positive side of the Mainland but not the sensitive issues such as the imprisonment of Liu Xiaobo and the June Fourth Incident. He was concerned that if controversial issues would be excluded deliberately from the modern history of the country, the teaching approach would not be balanced. Mr LEE asked for explanation from the Administration for taking a retrogressive step to develop the Subject when even the Mainland taught only civic education and not national education.

22. Atg SED reiterated that a proposed set of values had been incorporated into the Basic Education Curriculum Guide, which included the values of self and social responsibilities, etc. These qualities were essential for whole-person development to cope with challenges of the 21st century. The Government was committed to enhancing students' understanding of the country. He stressed that in addition to arranging students for participating in exchange programmes to join major events in the Mainland, classroom discussions on current issues were frequently conducted to develop students' multi-dimension thinking skills.

23. To follow up, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan enquired about the reason for the development of the Subject in place of the existing curriculum framework for moral and civic education. Atg SED clarified that the existing curriculum of moral and civic education included national education, and the objective of national education was to enable students to gain a better knowledge of the developments of the country.

24. Miss Tanya CHAN enquired about the reasons for EDB taking over the responsibility of the Home Affairs Bureau in overseeing policies in respect of national education, and for arranging student exchange programmes to the Mainland only but not to other places. Referring members to a circular issued by EDB to the heads of schools on an exchange programme to visit the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai, she pointed out that students were required to submit an essay of 600 to 800 words on the topic of "A significant invention exhibited in the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai that would change the world". She considered the imposition of such a requirement by EDB before the implementation of the

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Subject unreasonable and tantamount to brainwashing.

25. Miss Tanya CHAN doubted whether students could mention in their essays issues concerning LIU Xiaobo and petitions to the high officials by the ordinary Chinese people. In her view, students would readily succumb to the pressure of parents, schools and the Administration to submit an essay with information which they did not believe in. She further said that the purpose of developing students' critical thinking skills could be achieved by their learning of other subjects in the existing curriculum.

26. Atg SED clarified that national education in school had all along been the responsibility of EDB. EDB had not required students to submit essays after the aforesaid exchange programme. EDB had only provided a worksheet to help teachers develop teaching materials and facilitate students reflect on what they had learnt from the exchange programme. Atg SED stressed that there was no model answer for the worksheet. He added that he had participated in some exchange programmes and sharing sessions with students, and students were free to talk about any topics.

27. Ms Audrey EU expressed support for students to participate in exchange programmes to the Mainland for the purpose of enhancing their knowledge of the Chinese culture and understanding of the latest developments of the country. She emphasized that civic education and civic rights were very different from national education, and national education did not cover civic education. She requested the Administration to explain the rationale for replacing the existing curriculum framework for moral and civic education with the Subject, and the person for making such a decision. As the Leader of the Civic Party, Ms EU stressed that she and the Party attached great importance to civic education.

28. Atg SED stressed that civic education would remain as an important component in the curriculum of the Subject as it helped students cultivate the values of civic rights and responsibilities as well as national qualities. In addition to civic education, new contents on national education would be added to the curriculum, and study hours would be increased to enhance students' understanding of the country.

29. Deputy Secretary for Education (5) supplemented that the existing curriculum framework for civic education included many major elements, such as personal development, school life, life at work, life in the community and life in the country. In other words, the existing framework had already included national education. In order to strengthen the sense

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of national identity among students, an independent subject on moral and national education would be developed. The elements of civic education would remain in the Subject with a view to developing moral integrity and civic qualities among students. She stressed that the values involved in moral and national education were inter-related.

30. Mr WONG Yuk-man said that he was not worried that the Subject would be turned into a tool for brainwashing, as the free circulation of information enabled students to access to different types of information. Nevertheless, he doubted the ability of EDB to develop the Subject as he considered that some government officials had poor knowledge of national education. In his view, civic education covered national, ethnic, and patriotic education.

31. Mr WONG Yuk-man considered that Hong Kong people should develop a sense of self-consciousness of dignity with respect to the history and culture of China. Education was not the only means to acquire this self-consciousness. He opined that patriotism included moral and rational elements. Moral motives were emotional. When one's country was under attack, her citizens would be impelled by moral motives to defend the country. Defending China's rights to Diaoyutai Island was one of such behaviours driven by moral motives. Patriotism was inborn and did not require promotion.

32. Mr WONG Yuk-man further pointed out that cultural literacy was driven by rational motives. He considered it important to nurture the next generation with the knowledge of the history and culture of the country. He regretted that the subject on Chinese History was no longer a core subject in secondary education whereas it had been so when Hong Kong was under the British rule.

33. Mrs Regina IP said that the Administration had only itself to be blamed for causing the dispute concerning civic education and national education. She pointed out that the Savantas Liberal Arts Academy, of which she was the principal, offered courses on Chinese history and traditional classics, and had not drawn any negative comments of brainwashing or flattery.

34. Mrs Regina IP considered that the best form of national education was to teach students Chinese history and traditional classics to enable them to understand the Chinese culture. She strongly criticized the Administration for having used various excuses to refuse the inclusion of Chinese History as a core subject in secondary education because the

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officials of EDB had not accorded importance to the history of the country and had focused only on modern history. She disapproved the Administration for subsuming Chinese history in social studies on the pretext of adopting an integrated approach. While noting the views of some students about the long duration and the difficult content of the course of Chinese History, Mrs IP considered that the Administration should identify new teaching approaches, and should not deliver piecemeal teaching on Chinese history in LS. She stressed that "one could not know the present without knowing the past", and the existing administrative structure in the Mainland was influenced by the structure of the 36-county implemented in the Qin Dynasty. She pointed out that history was a core subject in the United States and Japan.

35. Sharing the view of Mrs Regina IP that the Administration had not attached importance to Chinese history and culture, Mr Albert HO said that he had no confidence in the Administration in developing national education as a subject with a liberal framework. He elaborated that the concept of civic education included national identity, rights and responsibilities, relationship between an individual and his/her residing place, global view and universal values. He was concerned about the possible narrow scope of the Subject taken by the Administration for the purpose of cultivation of only patriotism and nationalism in students.

36. Mr Albert HO further said that the best way forward was to conduct extensive consultation on the content and teaching material of the Subject. It was also important that students would not be tested on their knowledge of the Subject, and teachers would be given freehand to teach the Subject. Unless a liberal approach in teaching the Subject was adopted, students could not be expected to develop independent thinking skills.

37. Atg SED clarified that Chinese History had all along been a core subject in both primary and junior secondary education and an elective subject in senior secondary education. Under the new senior secondary academic structure, a large number of schools had offered the subject of Chinese History. The Administration was as concerned as members about the need to improve the teaching of the subject.

38. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide information on the details of the Subject including its content, assessment methods and timetable for implementation.

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Small class teaching in secondary schools

39. Ms Audrey EU said that SED had mentioned to the media on 13 September 2010 the cost of \$40 billion for implementing small class teaching in secondary schools. She had written to SED over a month requesting a breakdown on the cost but regrettably, SED's reply was still outstanding. She requested the Administration to provide the requisite information the day after the meeting. Atg SED undertook to look into the matter.

Comprehensive Student Guidance Service

40. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che said that he shared the concern about the development of the Subject. He pointed out that under the existing manning ratio for the Comprehensive Student Guidance Service ("CSGS") in primary schools, one student guidance personnel hired with one unit Student Guidance Service ("SGS") Grant was provided for each primary school with 18 classes or more, and 0.5 student guidance personnel hired with half unit of the SGS Grant for each primary school with five to 17 classes. Currently, one unit of the SGS Grant amounted to \$416,700. Mr CHEUNG considered the existing two-tier arrangements inflexible and called on the Administration to allow schools to deploy resources flexibly to employ student guidance personnel according to their specific needs. He was disappointed that the 2010-2011 Policy Address had not mentioned any review of the manning ratio of CSGS.

41. Atg SED pointed out that the manning ratio of CSGS in primary schools had been improved in the 2006-2007 school year from one student guidance personnel for each primary school with 24 classes to one student guidance personnel for each primary school with 18 classes. In addition, schools were allowed to exercise flexibility in arranging teachers to assume counselling duties or hiring student guidance service if and when necessary. He assured members that the Administration would continue to collaborate with the stakeholders to improve the relevant manning ratio.

Assistance to autistic children

42. Noting the launching of a three-year pilot scheme on enhancement of support for students with autism spectrum disorders ("ASD"), Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che requested the Administration to provide information including the number of autistic students in schools and the assistance to be provided to these students.

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43. Atg SED explained that under the pilot scheme, the Administration would organize structured on-top group training for students with ASD at about 50 primary and 30 secondary schools on a voluntary basis. It was anticipated that about 40% of the students with ASD studying in public sector primary and secondary schools would benefit from the pilot scheme. The Administration would also pilot a school-based support model in about 30 selected primary schools each with six students with ASD with a view to consolidating effective support strategies in students' learning and developing resource materials for dissemination to other schools.

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44. Deputy Secretary for Education (4) supplemented that in the 2009-2010 school year, there were about 2 000 students with ASD at ordinary primary and secondary schools. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide the requisite information in writing.

45. While welcoming the enhancement of support for students with ASD, Mr IP Wai-ming asked whether similar support would be provided for students with other special educational needs ("SEN"), such as students with hearing impairment. He pointed out that many parents were concerned that under the policy of integration education, SEN students in mainstream schools received lesser support than in special schools. He requested the Administration to explain the differential treatment for students with ASD and other SEN.

46. Atg SED replied that the provision of support for students with different types of SEN was reviewed regularly. The recent enhanced support services included, among others, the enhanced provision of speech therapy service and the project of "READ & WRITE: A Jockey Club Learning Support Network", initiated by EDB and with funding from the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, for students with dyslexia. The Administration had also increased the subsidies of learning support for students with SEN from the 2008-2009 school year, and enhanced the provision of hearing aids for students with hearing impairment.

Publicly-funded first-year-first-degree places

47. Noting that the publicly-funded first-year-first-degree places would be doubled in the 2012-2013 academic year to accommodate the two cohorts of Secondary ("S") 6 and S7 students, Mr Paul CHAN asked whether there would be enough student hostels, teaching facilities, and teachers, etc to complement with the increase of degree places. He was

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also concerned whether the degree places would be reduced thereafter; and the measures to be taken to ease the problem of reduced degree places.

48. Atg SED clarified that in 2012, S6 graduates under the new senior secondary academic structure would apply for four-year undergraduate programmes, whereas S7 graduates under the old academic structure would apply for three-year undergraduate programmes. The three-year programmes would not be offered from 2013 onwards, and the number of four-year first-year-first degree places would be the same.

49. Atg SED said that the University Grants Committee ("UGC")-funded institutions were well-equipped with teaching facilities to meet the demand of increased students as a total funding of some \$6 billion for the capital works projects of the UGC-funded institutions for the implementation of the four-year undergraduate programmes had been approved by the Legislative Council in the past two years. The Administration was well aware that the provision of student hostels had yet to meet the demand because of the scarcity of land as well as the need to gain the support of local residents for building student hostels in their vicinity.

School drug testing

50. Mr Paul CHAN considered drug testing in schools important. Noting that the trial scheme on school drug testing in Tai Po would be extended for one year in order to gain further practical experience and hair specimen would be adopted for drug testing, he considered that the administration of hair specimen drug testing would be easier. He enquired whether any improvement measures would be contemplated to encourage wider participation among students in drug testing, for example by adopting an opt-out scheme.

51. Atg SED responded that the Administration had considered the pros and cons of testing hair and urine specimen, and urine specimen drug testing results could be available in a shorter time. He undertook to reflect the views of Mr CHAN to the Commission for Narcotics and the Action Committee Against Narcotics.

Assistance for under-privileged students to attend extra-curricular activities

52. Mr Paul CHAN was concerned that under-privileged students could not afford to attend extra-curricular activities, and asked whether any

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assistance was in place for such students to attend extra-curricular activities so as to enhance their competitiveness.

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53. Atg SED said that various forms of assistance had been in place to help under-privileged students to participate in extra-curricular activities, such as those offered by the Hong Kong Jockey Club. The Chairman requested and Atg SED agreed to provide written information in this regard.

II. Any other business

54. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 5:38 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
25 November 2010