

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)659/10-11
(The minutes have been seen by
the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 8 November 2010, at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room A 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 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 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-ye, GBS, JP
Dr Hon Samson TAM Wai-ho, JP
Hon Tanya CHAN
- Members absent** : Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, GBS, JP
Hon WONG Yuk-man

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Public Officers attending : Agenda item IV

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

Mrs Alice CHEUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary (Education Infrastructure),
Education Bureau

Dr Francis CHEUNG
Secretary General, Hong Kong Examinations and
Assessment Authority

Mr Victor CHENG
Director - Corporate Services, Hong Kong
Examinations and Assessment Authority

Agenda item V

Mr Michael SUEN, GBS, JP
Secretary for Education

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Mrs Betty IP, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education (3)

Ms Mable CHAN
Deputy Secretary for Education (2)

Mr Jeremy YOUNG
Political Assistant to Secretary for Education

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

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

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Ms Judy TING
Council Secretary (2)6

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

I. Confirmation of minutes

[LC Paper No. CB(2)145/10-11]

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2010 were confirmed.

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

2. Members noted the following papers issued since the last meeting –

- (a) a letter dated 20 October 2010 from Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers to the Secretary for Education concerning sex crime committed by teachers (LC Paper No. CB(2)106/10-11(01));
- (b) a letter dated 20 October 2010 from Choi Hung Estate Catholic Secondary School to the Secretary for Education requesting expeditious relocation of the school (LC Paper No. CB(2)139/10-11(01)) and the Administration's response dated 3 November 2010 (LC Paper No. CB(2)215/10-11(01));
- (c) a letter dated 1 November 2010 from Secretary for Education concerning the funding proposal for the redevelopment project of St. Francis' Canossian College at Kennedy Road (LC Paper No. CB(2)196/10-11(01)); and
- (d) an information paper provided by the Education Bureau concerning the School-based Professional Support Programmes financed by the Education Development Fund (LC Paper No. CB(2)204/10-11(01)).

3. Regarding (b), Ms Audrey EU was concerned about the safety and learning environment of the students as there was serious water leakage problem at Choi Hung Estate Catholic Secondary School. She proposed that the Administration be requested to provide a paper to inform members when reprovisioning of the school to new premises would be ready. Members agreed to the proposal.

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III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[Appendices I and II to LC Paper No. CB(2)182/10-11]

4. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting scheduled for 13 December 2010 at 4:30 pm –

- (a) Review on the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme ("PEVS"); and
- (b) School Net Arrangements in Islands District under the Secondary School Places Allocation System.

The Chairman sought members' view on whether the Panel should invite deputations to give views on review on PEVS. She informed members that a list of the organizations which had attended the special meeting of the Panel on 20 March 2009 to give views on the matter was tabled at the meeting for member's reference. Subject to members' consent, the Panel would invite the organizations on the list to the next regular meeting. Members could contact the Clerk if they would like to invite other organisations as well. Members agreed to the list of organizations to be invited.

Redevelopment of Kowloon Junior School of the English Schools Foundations ("ESF")

5. Ms Audrey EU said that according to her understanding, the Administration would submit a funding proposal for the redevelopment of Kowloon Junior School of ESF to the Public Works Subcommittee ("PWSC") on 19 January 2011. Given the substantial amount involved in the project, she considered it necessary to discuss the matter before the proposal was submitted to PWSC.

6. The Chairman said that the Administration had yet to inform the Panel the timetable for the submission of the funding proposal for the redevelopment of Kowloon Junior School. Upon receipt of the relevant paper, the Clerk would circulate it to members and include the item in the agenda of a Panel meeting upon the request of members.

7. Mr Abraham SHEK said that the Panel could discuss the matter without awaiting the Administration's paper on the funding proposal. The Panel could consider inviting representatives from ESF to its meeting to explain the redevelopment project if necessary.

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8. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the Panel needed to follow up on the timetable for the submission of the funding proposal. The Administration should provide the paper to the Panel for discussion in December 2010 if it intended to submit the funding proposal to PWSC in January 2011.

(Post meeting note: the funding proposal for the redevelopment project of Kowloon Junior School of ESF would be discussed at the next regular meeting to be held on 13 December 2010.)

Selection of the service provider for Internet access services to needy students

9. Ms Cyd HO raised concern about the selection of the non-profit making organization for providing affordable Internet access services to needy students. It had been reported that instead of awarding the contract to the bidder with the highest score in the tender exercise, the Administration had invited two bidders to submit a joint proposal for its consideration. She considered it an unusual arrangement and had proposed at the meeting of the Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting ("ITB Panel") held just before this meeting that the Administration should be requested to provide a written explanation. She suggested that a joint meeting of the Panel on Education and the ITB Panel be held to discuss the matter.

10. The Chairman said that she would follow up the matter with the Clerk.

Sex crime committed by teachers

11. Referring to the letter from Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers concerning sex crime committed by teachers, Mr WONG Kwok-hing suggested including the subject in the list of outstanding items for discussion and requesting the Administration to provide a paper for the Panel's discussion. Members agreed.

Visit to The Hong Kong Polytechnic University ("PolyU")

12. The Chairman informed members that PolyU had invited the Panel to visit the university on 17 January 2011 with a view to updating members on its latest development and enhancing its understanding of the Panel's vision on education. The letter from PolyU concerning the visit was tabled at the meeting for members' reference. Members accepted PolyU's invitation.

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IV. Grant to support the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority for continual rental of onscreen marking centre on Hong Kong Island, and for running the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination and the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination for private candidates in 2011 and 2013 respectively [LC Paper Nos. CB(2)182/10-11(01) and (02)]

13. Members noted the background brief entitled "Onscreen marking of examination papers implemented by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority" prepared by the Legislative Council ("LegCo") Secretariat.

Briefing by the Administration

14. Deputy Secretary for Education (5) ("DS(Ed)5") briefed members on the funding proposal to continue renting a temporary accommodation for the onscreen marking ("OSM") centre on Hong Kong Island of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority ("HKEAA") for a further period of five years, and to meet the expenses in conducting the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination ("HKCEE") and the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination ("HKALE") for private candidates in 2011 and 2013 respectively, as detailed in the Administration's paper.

Continual rental for temporary Island onscreen marking centre

15. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong noted the abolition of the original long-term accommodation plan of HKEAA to re-develop the ex-North Kowloon Magistracy Building ("ex-NKMB") as its headquarters because ex-NKMB had been included in the "Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme" in 2008, thus affecting the planned conversion of the existing offices of HKEAA in Southorn Centre into a permanent Island OSM centre. Such change had necessitated the submission of a funding proposal to increase the commitment of the non-recurrent grant of \$16 million approved by the Finance Committee in June 2006 by \$41.15 million to \$57.15 million to meet the rental of the temporary Island OSM Centre for a further period of about five years from December 2010. Mr CHEUNG queried why HKEAA had not formulated an alternative accommodation plan earlier as it had been widely known since 2008 that the ex-NKMB might be allocated to other organizations and not HKEAA.

16. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong also pointed out that, according to the Administration's paper submitted for the Finance Committee meeting on 23 June 2006, the estimated yearly rental including management fee of the

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temporary Island OSM Centre for the period from 2006-2007 to 2010-2011 was some \$4 million. This estimated yearly rental had increased to \$8.23 million under the funding proposal. He was concerned that the oversight on the part of HKEAA in formulating its long-term accommodation plan had resulted in the need to use public money to continue to rent the temporary Island OSM Centre for the next five years at a high cost.

17. Principal Assistant Secretary (Education Infrastructure) ("PAS(EI)) replied that there was a long-term accommodation plan in 2006 for HKEAA to re-develop the ex-NKMB as its headquarters. However, the accommodation plan could not be further pursued after consultation with the district council concerned in 2007 and the inclusion of the ex-NKMB into the "Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme" in 2008. The Government and the HKEAA therefore explored other alternatives. With the assistance of other relevant Government departments, several sites and surplus Government premises had been identified but found unsuitable for use as HKEAA permanent headquarters or permanent OSM centres. A revised long-term accommodation plan had therefore been developed, which was to re-develop HKEAA's existing premises at San Po Kong as its permanent headquarters. PAS(EI) further said that the relevant technical feasibility studies and traffic impact assessment had been completed. HKEAA would proceed to prepare the detailed design, and to consult the district council concerned, etc. Taking into account the lead time required for the preparation works, it was expected that the temporary Island OSM Centre would need to continue to operate for about five more years.

18. Mr Tommy CHEUNG was concerned whether the proposed funding of \$41.15 million would be sufficient to meet the five-year rental of the temporary Island OSM Centre. He noted from experience a significant increase in rental in the past few years. In his view, the location of the existing temporary Island OSM Centre was convenient, and the continued renting of the premises would save removal costs. He enquired about the progress of negotiation of tenancy renewal with the landlord concerned and whether the anticipated increase in rental had been taken into account in the proposal for increasing the commitment for renting the temporary Island OSM Centre.

19. Director – Corporate Services/HKEAA replied that in projecting the rental for the tenancy renewal, HKEAA had made reference to the average market rent for Grade B offices as well as the average rate of annual increase in rent based on the Property Market Statistics of the Rating and Valuation Department.

20. Mr Tommy CHEUNG indicated that Members belonging to the Liberal Party supported the funding proposal.

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21. Professor Patrick LAU enquired whether HKEAA had considered making use of vacant school premises as its headquarters and OSM centres.

22. In reply, Secretary General, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority ("SG(HKEAA)") advised that HKEAA had been identifying suitable premises, including vacant school premises and government premises for use as its headquarters and OSM centres since 2005. As the locations needed to be convenient and able to cope with a heavy human and traffic flow, no suitable premises had been found so far.

23. PAS(EI) supplemented that it had always been the practice to use vacant school premises if found suitable. She pointed out that the existing OSM centres in Tsuen Wan and Lai King were vacated school premises.

24. The Chairman requested HKEAA to provide written information on the vacant school premises and government premises that had been considered for use as its headquarters and OSM centres and the reasons for not selecting such premises.

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Income from rechecking of scripts

25. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that the income from rechecking of examination scripts in HKCEE and HKALE in the 2008-2009 academic year amounted to some \$20 million. The relevant income in 2011 HKCEE and 2013 HKALE was expected to be insignificant as only private candidates would be sitting for the two examinations. However, such income would be substantial in 2012 since there would be two cohorts of students, i.e. Secondary 6 graduates under the new senior secondary academic structure sitting for Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education ("HKDSE") and Secondary 7 graduates under the old academic structure sitting for HKALE, who might apply for rechecking of examination scripts. Mr CHEUNG enquired whether HKEAA had taken into account the estimated income from rechecking in seeking support from the Administration for a non-recurrent grant to meet the expenses in conducting HKCEE and HKALE. In his view, it would be unreasonable for HKEAA not to do so.

26. SG(HKEAA) said that the ceiling for the non-recurrent grant under the funding proposal to meet the expenses in conducting the two examinations had been set at \$90.65 million. It had been a standing arrangement for HKEAA to prepare an independent account for examinations, and the income from rechecking would be included therein. However, it was not feasible to accurately estimate the amount of income from rechecking for the 2011 HKCEE and 2013 HKALE at the present stage.

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27. In response to Mr Tommy CHEUNG's concern about rechecking income, PAS(EI) said that the income, including rechecking income, for 2011 HKCEE and 2013 HKALE was an estimate at the present stage. She explained however that the proposed non-recurrent grant of \$90.65 million, if approved, would not be distributed to HKEAA in one go, but would only be a ceiling. She further explained that the grant was not for the expenditure incurred for conducting the 2011 HKCEE and the 2013 HKALE but for meeting the deficits (i.e. cost deducting the income).

28. Mr Tommy CHEUNG enquired whether the Administration would propose further funding support for HKEAA in case the non-recurrent grant of \$90.65 million was inadequate to meet the deficits. PAS(EI) replied that the Administration would assess the justification and the financial position of HKEAA. Should it be considered necessary to seek further funding support from the Finance Committee, the Administration would follow the established procedure.

29. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong reiterated his concern about the need to include rechecking income from 2012 HKALE. In his view, rechecking fees should be part of the overall income of HKEAA, and such income, irrespective of whether it was small or substantial, should be included in the examination account and taken into consideration in deciding the need for funding support from the Administration.

30. SG(HKEAA) said that there would be separate accounts for the 2011 HKCEE and 2013 HKALE. The estimated income for the 2011 HKCEE and 2013 HKALE had taken into account the projected rechecking income for the two examinations. The surplus, if any, for HKALE in 2012, taking into account the income from rechecking in 2012, would eventually be included in deciding the actual amount of the non-recurrent grant in meeting the deficit of the 2013 HKALE.

31. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong criticized HKEAA for excluding the rechecking income of the 2012 HKALE in its assessment of the deficit for conducting the 2013 HKALE. He requested HKEAA to provide detailed information on its annual rechecking incomes in recent years. He reiterated that the 2012 HKALE rechecking fees formed part of the overall income of HKEAA and hence should be taken into account when deciding the amount of grant to cover the 2013 HKALE.

32. SG(HKEAA) clarified that he had no objection to take into account the rechecking income of the 2012 HKALE. In other words, the surplus of running the 2012 HKALE, if any, would be used to offset the deficit from the

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2013 HKALE when determining the actual level of grant to cover the 2013 HKALE.

33. The Chairman requested HKEAA to provide the requisite information to the Panel before submitting the funding proposal to the Finance Committee for consideration. SG(HKEAA) undertook to provide the requisite information.

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Examination fees

34. Noting that there had been concern about the adequacy of the proposed funding of \$90.65 million, Mr TAM Yiu-chung asked whether HKEAA could undertake not to increase the relevant examination fees under whatever circumstances. SG(HKEAA) responded that the examination fees for the 2011 HKCEE had been set. While he could not make any undertaking at the present stage not to increase examination fee because of inflation, he assured members that the increase of examination fees, if any, would be kept to the minimum and be affordable to students, and any deficit to be incurred from conducting the 2011 HKCEE and 2013 HKALE would not be passed onto candidates. He added that the rate of 2% increase in examination fees for the current year was lower than the prevailing inflation rate.

35. Professor Patrick LAU asked whether the costs for conducting examinations would be reduced as the HKDSE examination would be only one later.

36. In reply, SG(HKEAA) said that the administration of the 2011 HKCEE and the 2013 HKALE for private candidates was considered by HKEAA and the Administration as a social responsibility and the financial burden for its administration would not be passed onto the candidates by raising the examination fees drastically. As HKDSE examination would be operated on a long-term basis and according to the established practice, HKEAA did not require recurrent grants for conducting HKDSE examination. HKEAA had been studying the cost structure for conducting HKDSE examination and would try to keep the HKDSE examination fee within the fee limit of HKALE notwithstanding that the HKDSE examination would have more subjects and would be more complex. The fee structure for HKDSE examination was expected to be formulated in the next two to three weeks.

37. Mr Abraham SHEK considered it inappropriate to require students to shoulder higher examination fees because of the change in academic structure initiated by the Government.

38. SG(HKEAA) clarified that with considerable reduction in the

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candidature and the subsequent reduction in income, HKEAA anticipated a deficit in conducting the 2011 HKCEE and 2013 HKALE. Nevertheless, HKEAA would not impose unduly financial burden on private candidates by raising the examination fees.

Security of scripts

39. Mr WONG Kwok-hing was concerned about the security of scripts. He enquired about the safeguards to prevent the recurrence of missing and leakage of scripts upon the implementation of centralized OSM.

40. SG(HKEAA) explained that upon the adoption of digital scanning facilities and the implementation of centralized OSM in 2007, the need for physical handling of original scripts had been reduced greatly. Examination blunders such as missing scripts had been under control and errors in addition of marks had been eliminated. Furthermore, the security features of OSM prevented the intrusion by Internet hacker into its computer system. He stressed that since the implementation of centralized OSM in 2007, the security arrangements for scripts had been satisfactory.

41. Having invited views from members, the Chairman concluded that the Panel supported the submission of the funding proposal to the Finance Committee for consideration.

V. Measures including the implementation of small class teaching to address the declining secondary student population
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)182/10-11(03)-(06), CB(2)212/10-11(01) and (02)]

42. Members noted the background brief entitled "Measures to address the declining secondary student population" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat.

Briefing by the Administration

43. Under Secretary for Education ("US(Ed)") introduced the Administration's paper with the aid of powerpoint presentation. The presentation material was tabled at the meeting and circulated to members after the meeting vide LC Paper No. CB(2)212/10-11(01) on 9 November 2010.

Small class teaching in secondary schools

44. Ms Audrey EU resented US(Ed)'s remarks that the Administration needed more time and did not have adequate resources for the implementation

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of small class teaching ("SCT") in secondary schools. She said that the Panel and the education sector had urged the Administration to plan for the implementation of SCT in secondary schools many years ago when a decline in the intake of secondary school students was envisaged. She pointed out that the additional funding required for the implementation of SCT in public primary schools for two years was only \$190 million as opposed to the Administration's previous estimate of \$3.1 billion. She opined that the implementation of SCT but not reduction in the number of classes was the way to enhance the quality of secondary education, hence the call of the education sector for gradual implementation of SCT with a class of 25 students starting from Secondary ("S") 1. She was disappointed with the Secretary for Education ("SED") for not providing a response to her letter on the subject six weeks after receiving it. The reply she had received eventually was not responding to her questions. Ms EU considered that the estimated cost quoted by SED for implementing SCT was unfounded. She requested SED to withdraw his statement that \$40 billion would be required for implementing SCT.

45. SED said that he would not withdraw his estimate which was to illustrate the possible impact of the projected decline in student population on public sector secondary schools in response to the view expressed by the education sector at the time that no school should be closed and that the figure did not form any part of cost estimation for SCT implementation in secondary schools. He pointed out that in an executive-led political structure, the Administration formulated policies according to the established procedures including consulting members. It was inevitable that on some occasions, members and the Administration might have different views on the allocation of resources and the priority of the implementation of policies.

46. SED further said that the implementation of SCT in primary schools had not been a Government policy until after it was included as a policy initiative in the 2007-08 Policy Address announced by the current Chief Executive. He appreciated that members had all along urged the Administration to implement SCT in secondary schools and considered it appropriate for members to continue to pursue their cause. However, the Administration had to consider not only educational needs but also the needs of the community in other policy areas as a whole. The Administration had its own priority in allocation of resources, and the implementation of SCT in secondary schools was not a policy at the present stage.

47. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that while Hong Kong had an executive-led political structure, the Government should not be autocratic and neglect the views of the public. It was important for the Government to have an open mind and listen to different views. This was particularly essential for a

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non-elected Government. Indeed, the theme of the 2010-2011 Policy Address was "Sharing Prosperity for a Caring Society".

48. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong noted that the Administration had slightly changed its stance towards SCT in secondary schools as it had no longer stressed in its paper the expensive cost for implementing SCT or doubted its effectiveness. It only stated that SCT in secondary schools could not be implemented overnight and support measures including teacher development and school hardware were required. The Administration had proposed to reduce the number of S1 classes from five to four in a secondary school and when the overall situation in schools was stabilized, the Administration would explore with stakeholders other means to enhance the quality of teaching. He gathered that the Administration had included SCT in its plan although it was not at the top of its agenda.

49. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that the intake of S1 students would drop by 11 000 students i.e. about 326 classes by 2011 and by 2016, the number of secondary school students would fall by about 30%. Even with the full implementation of the reduction of the number of S1 classes from five to four, it could only cut 250 classes. Thus the problem could not be resolved. Under such circumstances, the education sector considered it necessary to resort to other means including the implementation of SCT to resolve the problem in the long term.

50. While acknowledging the need for schools' hardware and teachers to undergo the relevant training for the implementation of SCT, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong opined that the Administration had to act now in these two aspects. As regards training for teachers for SCT, he pointed out that as the Hong Kong Institute of Education had adopted SCT in its training programmes, the teachers had already acquired certain skills in SCT. Hence, the training of teachers and the implementation of SCT could be carried out in parallel. Besides, with the reduction in classes, schools would have surplus classrooms to operate SCT. He called on the Administration to seriously consider implementing SCT after the situation had been stabilized and to give members and the stakeholders a clear message of its intention so that they could discuss how the Voluntary Optimization of Class Structure Scheme ("the Scheme") and SCT could be carried out at the same time.

51. SED reiterated that the Administration had to prioritize the tasks according to their urgency. He had discussed with all the stakeholders many times in the past two months and most of them had supported the measures proposed by the Administration to minimize the impact of declining student population on secondary schools through optimization of class structure. The education sector was concerned about the implications on students and

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teachers resulting from the closure of under-enrolled schools which would mainly be those admitting a large number of low-academic achievers. As such, the most important thing for the time being was to stabilize the overall situation in schools and to maintain a diverse school system to suit the needs of the students. There was a consensus in the education sector that the measures proposed by the Administration were effective in tackling the problem. SED shared Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's view that the measures could not solve the problem entirely. The Administration would continue to communicate with the stakeholders with a view to effectively reducing the impact of the declining secondary student population.

52. SED admitted that the Administration had changed to some extent its stance towards the implementation of SCT in secondary schools. Nevertheless, the Administration had to be prudent in handling the matter as there would be recurrent financial implications. There had to be thorough discussions about resources allocation and cost effectiveness among policy bureaux before the implementation of major policies. SED appealed to members to give the Administration some time to implement the measures step by step. He added that all other administrative measures, including the feasibility of implementing SCT, would be explored in the process.

53. Ms Cyd HO said that the Administration had taken some measures to alleviate the worry of the education sector such as allowing schools to operate three classes with a minimum of 61 students, giving rise to an average class size of about 21 which was close to the class size of 18 in the United States. According to the Final Report of the Study on SCT, while it might not be effective to adopt SCT for all subjects in secondary schools, SCT was effective for language and arts subjects which required more interactions between teachers and students. The effect was particular prominent on S1 students. Since some secondary schools had lesser intake of students, the opportunity should be taken to launch SCT for selected subjects at these schools.

54. Ms Cyd HO further said that the schools which had participated in the pilot scheme of SCT had indicated that training for teachers and experience sharing was inadequate because of the teachers' heavy workload. In her view, adequate training and experience sharing for teachers were important for SCT to be successful. She enquired about the Administration's plan for teacher development and whether flexibility would be given to schools to implement SCT for selected subjects.

55. SED responded that it was not an opportune time to discuss the operational details of SCT in secondary schools as it was not a Government policy at the present stage. Currently, the most important task was to minimise the impact brought about by the decline in the secondary student population

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and to contain the problem. The Administration would explore other measures, including SCT, to enhance the education quality at a later stage.

56. Ms Cyd HO said that not only the education sector but also the low achieving secondary students were facing a crisis. Since the Administration had agreed to provide subvention on a class basis and some secondary schools were under-enrolled, objective conditions existed to implement SCT in these schools. She opined that the Administration should take one step further and make the best use of this opportunity to start SCT in these schools. She urged the Administration to provide a timetable with regard to teacher development for SCT. SED replied that the Administration had been providing additional resources to those schools admitting low academic achievers to help cater for the needs of these students.

57. Mr KAM Nai-wai said that as he gathered, SED seemed to imply that only a change of the Chief Executive could make SCT in secondary schools a policy. He pointed out that according to the Basic Law, the Executive Authority should be accountable to the Legislature, albeit in an executive-led political structure. He said that while the Government was willing to spend some \$50 billion for hosting the Asian Games in 2023, it was reluctant to put additional resources in the enhancement of education quality. He was concerned about the impact of the declining secondary student population on parents and students. In his view, SCT should be implemented unless the Administration considered that SCT had no merits. He enquired whether the Administration had considered image building more important than education quality. He requested the Administration to provide a paper to explain the cost of \$40 billion for implementing SCT. He also requested the Administration to provide a projection of the secondary student population up to 2030 and the expenditures incurred if a class size was kept at 25 students.

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58. SED said that while the Administration had its stance on SCT which might not be the same as that of members, students' interests had all along been the Administration's prime concern. He added that the powerpoint material was an abridged version of the projection and the Administration had previously explained the projection in more detail to some members. If Mr KAM Nai-wai so wished, Political Assistant to SED could arrange a briefing and provide the requisite information to him. Mr KAM Nai-wai considered it more appropriate for the Administration to provide the requisite information to other members of the Panel as well. SED agreed to arrange a briefing for him and other interested members.

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59. Noting that 23 secondary schools had reduced the number of S1 classes voluntarily under the Scheme, Mr WONG Kwok-hing enquired about the provision of further measures or incentives to encourage more schools to

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participate in the Scheme, the estimated number of surplus teachers arising from the reduction in classes and the assistance to be provided to them.

60. SED said that as outlined in the powerpoint presentation, reducing classes could stabilize the overall situation in the upcoming one or two years and maintain the diversity of the school system to meet the needs of the students. It could also maintain the stability of the teaching force to ensure the teaching quality. Under the new senior secondary ("NSS") curriculum framework, a broad and balanced curriculum was offered and students were provided with the accessibility to combinations of elective subjects of their preference. As such, more classrooms were required for split-class teaching and for providing students with more choices of elective subjects. Owing to the space constraint, many schools had to implement floating classes which were undesirable. The downsizing of class structures could optimize learning in groups under the NSS structure.

61. As regards surplus teachers, SED pointed out that the matter had been dealt with in the beginning of this year. The problem did not lie with the reduction in classes entirely but partly with the mismatch in subject expertise and the departed teachers. On some occasions of rectification of teacher redundancy through nature wastage, some teachers might be required to teach subjects which were not within their expertise because the schools did not have a vacancy to recruit a suitable replacement. For some new schools, the rate of teacher turnover was very low because most of the teachers were very young and hence teacher redundancy could not be resolved through natural wastage. The enhancement measures could provide flexibility to deal with these situations.

62. Ms Tanya CHAN asked about the estimated savings brought about by the reduction of classes and how the Administration would use these savings to the benefit of students. Noting that the secondary student population would start to rise in 2017, she enquired how the Administration would prepare for the situation.

63. SED responded that public expenditures comprised recurrent expenditures which were on-going and non-recurrent expenditures which were one-off. Given the nature of non-recurrent expenditures such as the hosting of the 2023 Asian Games, the approving criteria would be relatively less stringent. However, the subvention for schools was recurrent expenditure. As the subvention for schools was provided on a per class basis, the subvention would be the same regardless of the class size and the per capita cost would increase if the class size had become smaller. Once SCT in secondary schools was implemented as a policy, the class size would need to remain small even when the student population increased. There would be no choice but to increase the

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number of classes, hence the subvention.

64. Ms Tanya CHAN enquired about the feasibility of breaking down the items on subvention for schools to assess any room for better allocation of resources. SED responded that it would not be feasible to do so as it would entail radical changes to the basis of the subvention mode.

65. Mr TAM Yiu-chung opined that the measures taken by the Administration lately could only defer but not resolve the problem. Owing to the decline in the secondary student population in the coming six years, some schools would have to be closed and some teachers would need to leave the teaching force if the various measures were not implemented to reduce the impact. However, when the secondary school student population started to rise in 2017, the demand for teachers would increase. It was therefore necessary for the Administration to have a comprehensive and holistic plan to avoid disruptive changes to the education sector. While acknowledging diverse views of parents on SCT, Mr TAM indicated that the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong supported SCT in secondary schools as students could get more attention from teachers in a small class setting. He urged the Administration to continue to communicate with schools and parents with a view to striking a balance between the stakeholders' requirements and the resources allocation.

66. SED reiterated that SCT in secondary schools was not a Government policy. The enhancement measures aimed at tackling the crisis brought about by the decline in the secondary school student population and were effective in stabilizing the situation in schools. The Administration would keep in view the situation and would revisit the issue of SCT when considering measures to enhance education quality in future. He commented that SCT was not the only option. Other options such as providing more teachers to improve the teacher-to-student ratio for more group learning could be explored.

67. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that although SCT was not a policy for the time being, the Administration no longer queried its effectiveness. He shared the view of the education sector that SCT would enhance education quality, and urged the Administration to let the stakeholders know how it would speed up the formulation of SCT as a policy. He added that some members doubted about the accuracy of the figures in the powerpoint material. He requested the Administration to provide its calculations and the projected costs for implementing SCT in detail.

68. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung further said that schools with less than three S1 classes could only operate junior secondary classes and might eventually need to be closed. As many of these schools were admitting Band 3 students or

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students with special educational needs, the provision of extra resources might not help the students improve their academic results as these schools would likely use the resources in tackling students' behavioral problems. If these schools were closed, it would be difficult for the students to continue with their senior secondary education in other schools. There was a genuine need for such schools to continue operation to cater for the needs of the above-said students. He enquired how the Administration would assist these schools to sustain operation.

69. SED responded that the Administration had special policy consideration and had provided different development options for these schools. As proposed by some members, the conversion into schools with featured programmes was one of the options but it should not be a mainstream option as the number of such schools would be limited and they would need to operate under prescribed conditions.

70. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung pointed out that some schools had already undergone transformation and had begun to admit ethnic minority students in order to survive. However it would not be viable for each and every school to turn into such kind of schools. Furthermore, some parents might not want to send their children to schools admitted a large number of students with behavioral problems. The principals of these schools were under great pressure and were worried that the schools might have to be closed. He stressed the need for the Administration to assist these schools to continue operation and allow them to provide senior secondary education for their students.

71. Professor Patrick LAU said that he felt confused about the theme of discussions at the meeting. The Administration repeatedly stressed the problem of the declining secondary school student population and that SCT in secondary schools was not a policy at the present stage. However, the development options as outlined in paragraph 4 of the Administration's paper provided a lot of flexibility to schools which were fundamental but positive changes to the existing education system. He sought clarification from the Administration.

72. SED responded that a basket of measures had been proposed with a view to reducing the impact of the declining secondary school student population on the sector. Some of the measures had already been implemented and some were in the pipeline. Among these measures, the Administration and the stakeholders generally agreed that reducing the number of classes in an orderly manner was the most effective measure at the present moment. Given the sharp decline in the secondary school student population, these measures could not resolve the problems entirely but would stabilize the sector and allow

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the Administration some time to explore the medium or long-term solutions.

73. Professor Patrick LAU considered it acceptable to reduce the number of classes as long as the teaching quality could be maintained. He pointed out that many students attended private tutorial lessons, which, in his view, was an unhealthy policy. He suggested that schools could make use of the space made available by reducing classes and arrange tutorial classes for students. The Chairman said that some schools had arranged after-class tutorial lessons for students in need of additional coaching. SED clarified that attending private tutorial lessons was not a Government policy but a choice of parents.

74. Mr HO Chun-yan said that he was surprised by SED's remarks about the Administration's way of doing things under the executive-led political structure. He opined that it was important for the Administration and members to maintain a dialogue and sort things out.

75. Mr HO Chun-yan further said that as resources had to be allocated according to the priority of policies, it was necessary for the Administration to provide its calculation of the cost of \$40 billion for implementing SCT. Such information would help members understand the Administration's reasons for not implementing SCT and provide a useful basis for further discussion. He pointed out that according to the Administration, the annual cost per student would double if the class size was to reduce by 50%. In his view, the assumption was wrong as the number of students would drop gradually over a few years and the education sector only requested gradual implementation of SCT in secondary schools

76. Mr HO Chun-yan agreed that the relief and enhancement measures had temporarily allayed the worry of the stakeholders. He considered that the stakeholders had accepted these measures because they were not offered the choice of SCT and wanted to avoid school closure. As the Administration had not ruled out SCT completely, he hoped that SED would proactively pursue the matter within his remaining tenure instead of deferring it to his successor.

77. SED said that the assumption that the class size would be reduced by 50% was in response to the view expressed by the education sector at the time that no school should be closed.

78. Mr Abraham SHEK said that the implementation of SCT and the various enhancement measures were separate issues. The former aimed at enhancing the quality of education and the latter were only interim measures. He considered that people were the most important asset of the community and there must be a quality education system in order for the Hong Kong people to stay competitive.

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79. Mr Abraham SHEK further said that there would be profound effects on the quality of the teaching force if the problems were not handled properly. Young people, especially those high performers, would be reluctant to join the teaching force and the teachers might lose their passion in the profession if the trend of teachers losing their job because of school closure was not reversed. Without quality teachers, the quality of education would deteriorate, adversely affecting the development of Hong Kong as a whole. He opined that the education sector had requested the implementation SCT in the interest of students and the well-being of the community rather than trying to keep the teachers' job. He appealed to the Administration to send a clear message to the education sector that it would consider implementing SCT and was committed to implementing quality education.

80. SED responded that the problem lay with the declining secondary school student population which was beyond the Administration's control. The Administration was capitalizing on this opportunity to enhance the quality of education through the introduction of the various measures.

81. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan suspected that the refusal of the Administration to implement SCT at the present stage was to give credits to the next Chief Executive so that he could include it in his election platform. He commented that SCT was effective in improving teaching and learning and the next generation would surely benefit from it. He appealed to the Administration to launch SCT in secondary schools within the term of the present Chief Executive.

82. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan further said that he was concerned about the disparity in education received by the rich and the poor. SCT had become the privilege of the well-off families including senior government officials who had the means to send their children to international schools which practised SCT. He opined that it was unfair to the grassroots as they were deprived of the chance of receiving better education through SCT in public and aided schools.

83. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan further commented that tightening the recurrent expenditure would hinder the development of the economy in the long run. In his view, education service was an investment and not a burden. He urged the Administration to implement SCT in secondary schools as soon as possible for the well-being of the next generation.

84. SED responded that the Government had all along been striving for the well-being of the community. Many things in different policy areas should be done but the Administration had to take a holistic approach and set priority

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with a view to allocating resources equitably. SED pointed out that notwithstanding the tight financial budget a few years ago, the funding allocated to education had accounted for the largest part of the public expenditure.

85. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that under the principle of "big market small government", the Government had unnecessarily capped the public expenditure to 20% of the GDP. If the public expenditure could be increased to 23% or 24% of the GDP, the Government could fulfill the requirements of all sectors including the education sector. He stressed that education should be given top priority as it could assist the next generation in improving their quality of life and increasing the mobility of the society.

86. Dr Priscilla LEUNG commented that private tutorial lessons were the by-product of the existing education system. As teachers could not give adequate attention to each and every student because of the large class size, the students had to seek the help of private tutors. She pointed out that most of the private tutorial institutions only aimed at assisting students to obtain good grades in examinations, departing from the principle of providing quality education.

87. Dr Priscilla LEUNG further said that some schools arranged SCT specifically for high performers and low achievers which in her view was good. However, students in the middle range were often overlooked. While considering the implementation of SCT in secondary school necessary, she was concerned about the provision of qualified teachers for SCT. She pointed out that some good teachers might have to leave the teaching force arising from the reduction in classes and when the secondary school student population started to increase in 2017, there might be a shortfall of quality teachers. She urged the Administration to devise appropriate strategies to retain quality teachers in order to ensure the teaching quality when SCT was implemented in future.

88. Noting from the Administration's paper that the number of students allocated to each S1 class would be reduced year by year to 34 and the criteria for approving classes were further relaxed from 35 to 30 students, the Chairman sought clarification on whether these were policies. SED responded in the affirmative.

89. The Chairman said that the education sector was concerned about the large class size of senior secondary education. Under the old academic structure, the size of S6 classes was smaller as some of the S5 students could not proceed to S6 after taking the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination. However, under the NSS structure, the size of S6 classes would

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be relatively larger. She enquired about the introduction of any measures to reduce the class size at the senior secondary levels.

90. SED responded that as students were taught in small groups according to the subjects selected under the NSS structure, some schools which did not have sufficient classrooms had to use other areas in their school premises as classrooms which was undesirable for teaching and learning. The schools could make use of the classrooms freed up by the reduction in classes and improve the teaching and learning environment. He reiterated that the Administration would explore other measures when the overall situation in schools had been stabilized.

91. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the Administration should aim at stabilizing schools and enhancing the quality of education in resolving the problems brought about by the sharp decline in secondary school student population. He remarked that schools located in districts with less secondary student population might not be able to meet the requirement of operating at least three S1 classes. They might only be able to operate two S1 classes and would hence face the threat of closure. The closure of these schools would have great impact on the education sector. He called on the Administration to take steps to help these schools to retain sufficient teachers to operate NSS classes.

92. As regards SCT in secondary schools, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the Administration, members and the stakeholders needed to face the issue together. Although the Administration had yet to give green light to implement SCT in secondary schools, it had taken some steps forward. As SCT could not be implemented overnight, the Administration should start the preparatory work and formulate an implementation plan immediately. This could address the call of the education sector and the general public to some extent, with the ultimate goal to implement SCT in secondary schools after the situation in schools had been stabilized.

VI. Any other business

93. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:43 pm.