

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1235/10-11
(The minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of special meeting
held on Friday, 17 December 2010, at 5:00 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 LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, GBS, JP
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
- Members absent** : Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Yuk-man

Public Officers attending : Education Bureau

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education

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

Mr Tony TANG
Principal Assistant Secretary (Quality Assurance)

Education Commission

Professor Edmond KO, JP
Chairman of the Working Group on Review of
Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme

Attendance by invitation : Hong Kong Baptist Kindergarten Education Convention Ltd

Ms CHAN Tsui-yuk
Secretary

Hong Kong Kindergarten Association

Ms Mary TONG Siu-fun
Chairperson

Ms LIU Fung-heung
Vice-Chairperson

The Salvation Army

Ms NG Yin-kam
Coordinator for Pre-School Education

Ms CHEUNG Suk-lin
Assistant Coordinator for Pre-School Education

Hong Kong Christian Service

Mrs Adelina CHAN KONG Siu-wai
Principal Coordinator, Early Childhood Education
Service

Mrs Wendy LEUNG LEUNG Lai-fun
Coordinator, Early Childhood Education Service

Tai Po Early Childhood Education Principal Association

Ms KWOK Chor-kiu
Chairman

Ms LEUNG Wai-fun
Connection

Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers

Mr WU Siu-wai
Vice Chairman

Mr WONG Wai-shing
Committee Member

Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union

Ms YUNG Hau-heung
Secretary

Ms CHEONG Un-i
Deputy Director, Education Research Department

ELCHK, Social Service Head Office

Ms LAU Yin-king
Service Coordinator

The Hong Kong Institute of Education Past Student's
Association of Early Childhood Teacher Education Ltd

Mrs Ada MAK TSE How-ling
Chairman

Five Districts Business Welfare Association Cheung
Chuk Shan Nursery Kindergarten Parents-Teacher
Association

Mr YUEN Kai-hung
Chairman

Mr CHENG Siu-wai
General Services

Hong Kong, Kowloon and New Territories
Kindergarten Education Advancement Association

Ms TAM Siu-hing
President

Ms KWAN Pick-kuen
Chairman

Hong Kong Early Childhood Education Administrative
Professional Association Ltd

Ms Helen LAM King-mei
Chairman

Ms Nancy HO Lan-sang
Secretary

關注學券制幼兒家長聯盟

Mr YIP Chi-yuen
Chairman

Ms TSE Sau-fong
Secretary

Hong Kong Teachers' Association

Ms CHOW Yun-ling
Secretary of Kindergarten Section

Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Welfare Council

Ms Louisa LEE
Service Director

Ms LAU Yau-lin
Service Supervisor (Child Care Service)

Hong Kong Early Childhood Educators Association

Ms LAI Suk-ching
Vice-Chairman

Ms POON Sau-king
Member

Council of Non-profit Making Organizations for
Pre-primary Education

Dr TSANG KAM Shau-wan
Chairperson

Ms Mary WONG
Member

St. James' Settlement

Mr KWOK Wai-sang
School Director

Ms CHAN Yin-lei
School Headmistress

S.K.H. Kindergarten and Nursery Council

Ms LUI Shuk-har
Chairman

Ms SAN Man-ching
Vice-Chairman

Department of Early Childhood Education - The Hong
Kong Institute of Education

Dr Sam LEUNG Cheung-shing
Associate Professor and Head of Department of Early
Childhood Education

Education Convergence

Ms LAU Seung-man
Vice-Chairman

Ms LAM Sau-lin
Kindergarten Section Member

World Organization for Early Childhood Education –
Hong Kong

Ms Amelia LEE Nam-yuk
Hon Treasurer

Mrs CHU TANG Lai-kuen
ExCom Member

Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children

Mr Jackey LO
Deputy Director (Services)

Education Policy Forum - The Hong Kong Institute of
Education

Dr YUEN Wai-kwan
Assistant Professor

Dr YU Wai-bing
Senior Teaching Fellow

Pre-school Education and Child Care Service, Caritas –
Hong Kong

Ms LAW Kim-ling
Nursery School Principal

Tuen Mun District Kindergarten Heads Association

Ms Louisa CHOW Wai-king
Chairman

Tsuen Wan, Kwai Chung & Tsing Yi District
Kindergarten Heads Association

Ms Nancy LAM Chui-ling
Chairwoman

Civic Party

Ms Annie KI
Executive Committee

Committee on Education Policies of The Democratic
Party

Mr LI Yiu-kee
Deputy Spokesman of Education Policies

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

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

Ms Judy TING
Council Secretary (2)6

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

I. Review of Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)554/10-11(01) and (02)]

The Chairman informed members that she had received enquiries about the criteria for inviting deputations to attend the special meeting. She wished to explain to members of the public the criteria as agreed by the Panel. She said that the Panel had held a number of meetings to discuss issues relating to the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme ("PEVS"). The Panel last received views from 31 deputations on the subject at its meeting on 20 March 2009. At the meeting on 8 November 2010, members agreed that these 31 deputations should be invited again to give further views at the special meeting. The Panel also agreed that members could propose any other deputations to be invited to the meeting. According to this principle, the Legislative Council ("LegCo") Secretariat had issued 31 invitation letters to the deputations concerned, and 27 of them had accepted the invitation. In addition, one other deputation was proposed by a member and two deputations had approached the Secretariat requesting to attend the special meeting. The total number of deputations attending the special meeting was therefore 30. The Chairman stressed that the Panel had not turned down any requests from deputations or members of the public for attending the special meeting to present views.

2. The Chairman further said that the Working Group on Review of Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme ("the Working Group") had submitted its report to the Secretary for Education on 15 December 2010, and the Report had been forwarded to members on 16 December 2010 vide LC Paper No. CB(2)554/10-11(02).

3. Members noted the background brief entitled "Review of the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat.

Oral presentation by deputations

Hong Kong Baptist Kindergarten Education Convention Ltd

4. Ms CHAN Tsui-yuk requested the removal of the "social need" test for attending whole-day kindergartens ("KG") under the Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme so that more families could be eligible.

Action

Hong Kong Kindergarten Association
[LC Paper No. CB(2)554/10-11(03)]

5. Ms LIU Fung-heung presented the views of Hong Kong Kindergarten Association as detailed in its submission.

The Salvation Army
[LC Paper No. CB(2)649/10-11(01)]

6. Ms NG Yin-kam presented the views of The Salvation Army as detailed in its submission.

Hong Kong Christian Service
[LC Paper No. CB(2)649/10-11(02)]

7. Mrs Adelina CHAN Kong Siu-wai presented the views of Hong Kong Christian Service as detailed in its submission.

Tai Po Early Childhood Education Principal Association
[LC Paper No. CB(2)649/10-11(03)]

8. Ms KWOK Chor-kiu presented the views of Tai Po Early Childhood Education Principal Association as detailed in its submission.

Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers
[LC Paper No. CB(2)613/10-11(01)]

9. Mr WU Siu-wai presented the views of Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers as detailed in its submission.

Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union
[LC Paper No. CB(2)613/10-11(02)]

10. Ms YUNG Hau-heung presented the views of Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union as detailed in its submission.

ELCHK, Social Service Head Office
[LC Paper No. CB(2)649/10-11(05)]

11. Ms LAU Yin-king presented the views of ELCHK, Social Service Head Office as detailed in its submission.

Action

The Hong Kong Institute of Education Past Student's Association of Early Childhood Teacher Education Ltd
[LC Paper No. CB(2)649/10-11(04)]

12. Mrs Ada MAK TSE How-ling presented the views of The Hong Kong Institute of Education Past Student's Association of Early Childhood Teacher Education Ltd as detailed in its submission.

Five Districts Business Welfare Association Cheung Chuk Shan Nursery Kindergarten Parents-Teacher Association
[LC Paper No. CB(2)613/10-11(03)]

13. Mr YUEN Kai-hung and Mr CHENG Siu-wai presented the views of Five Districts Business Welfare Association Cheung Chuk Shan Nursery Kindergarten Parents-Teacher Association as detailed in its submission.

Hong Kong, Kowloon and New Territories Kindergarten Education Advancement Association
[LC Paper No. CB(2)554/10-11(04)]

14. Ms TAM Siu-hing presented the views of Hong Kong, Kowloon and New Territories Kindergarten Education Advancement Association as detailed in its submission.

Hong Kong Early Childhood Education Administrative Professional Association Ltd
[LC Paper No. CB(2)658/10-11(01)]

15. Ms Helen LAM King-mei presented the views of Hong Kong Early Childhood Education Administrative Professional Association Ltd as detailed in its submission.

關注學券制幼兒家長聯盟
[LC Paper No. CB(2)613/10-11(04)]

16. Mr YIP Chi-yuen presented the views of 關注學券制幼兒家長聯盟 as detailed in its submission.

Hong Kong Teachers' Association
[LC Paper No. CB(2)955/10-11(01)]

17. Ms CHOW Yun-ling of Hong Kong Teachers' Association referred members to the views of the Association as set out in its submission.

Action

Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Welfare Council
[LC Paper No. CB(2)649/10-11(06)]

18. Ms Louisa LEE presented the views of Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Welfare Council as detailed in its submission.

Hong Kong Early Childhood Educators Association
[LC Paper No. CB(2)613/10-11(05)]

19. Ms LAI Suk-ching presented the views of Hong Kong Early Childhood Educators Association as detailed in its submission.

Council of Non-profit Making Organizations for Pre-primary Education
[LC Paper No. CB(2)649/10-11(07)]

20. Dr TSANG KAM Shau-wan presented the views of Council of Non-profit Making Organizations for Pre-primary Education as detailed in its submission.

St. James' Settlement
[LC Paper No. CB(2)554/10-11(05)]

21. Ms CHAN Yin-lei presented the views of St. James' Settlement as detailed in its submission.

S.K.H. Kindergarten and Nursery Council
[LC Paper No. CB(2)554/10-11(06)]

22. Ms SAN Man-ching presented the views of S.K.H. Kindergarten and Nursery Council as detailed in its submission.

Department of Early Childhood Education - The Hong Kong Institute of Education
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1012/10-11(01)]

23. Dr Sam LEUNG presented the views of Department of Early Childhood Education - The Hong Kong Institute of Education as detailed in its submission.

Action

Education Convergence
[LC Paper No. CB(2)649/10-11(08)]

24. Ms LAU Seung-man presented the views of Education Convergence as detailed in its submission.

World Organization for Early Childhood Education – Hong Kong
[LC Paper No. CB(2)554/10-11(07)]

25. Ms Amelia LEE Nam-yuk presented the views of World Organization for Early Childhood Education – Hong Kong as detailed in its submission.

Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children
[LC Paper No. CB(2)649/10-11(09)]

26. Mr Jackey LO presented the views of Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children as detailed in its submission.

Education Policy Forum of The Hong Kong Institute of Education
[LC Paper No. CB(2)554/10-11(08)]

27. Dr YUEN Wai-kwan presented the views of Education Policy Forum of The Hong Kong Institute of Education as detailed in its submission.

Pre-school Education & Child Care Service, Caritas, Hong Kong
[LC Paper No. CB(2)649/10-11(010)]

28. Ms LAW Kim-ling presented the views of Pre-school Education & Child Care Service, Caritas, Hong Kong as detailed in its submission.

Tuen Mun District Kindergarten Heads Association
[LC Paper No. CB(2)554/10-11(09)]

29. Ms Louisa CHOW Wai-king presented the views of Tuen Mun District Kindergarten Heads Association as detailed in its submission.

Tsuen Wan, Kwai Ching & Tsing Yi District Kindergarten Heads Association
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1012/10-11(02)]

30. Ms Nancy LAM Chui-ling presented the views of Tsuen Wan, Kwai Ching & Tsing Yi District Kindergarten Heads Association as detailed in its submission.

Action

Civic Party

[LC Paper No. CB(2)649/10-11(11)]

31. Ms Annie KI presented the views of Civic Party as detailed in its submission.

Committee on Education Policies of The Democratic Party

[LC Paper No. CB(2)927/10-11(01)]

32. Mr LI Yiu-kee presented the views of Committee on Education Policies of The Democratic Party as detailed in its submission.

The Review

33. At the invitation of the Chairman, Prof Edmond KO said that the terms of reference of the Working Group were to gauge the views of stakeholders on the implementation of the PEVS and to make recommendations to the Government on improvement to it. The Education Commission had submitted the Report to the Education Bureau for consideration. Prof KO was glad that most of the deputations' views expressed at the meeting had already been incorporated into the Report. He noted that the deputations generally supported the Working Group's guiding principles and its recommendations but were concerned about the implementation timetable. Some deputations expressed disappointment that the Working Group had not made recommendations in three areas, namely, 15-year free education, the operations of whole-day KGs and the salary scale for KG teachers.

34. Prof Edmond KO explained that the Working Group was tasked to review the PEVS and not pre-primary education as a whole. As such, the issue of 15-year free education was beyond its terms of reference. Notwithstanding, the Working Group had taken into account overseas experience in early childhood education and the local context as well as the views of the education sector in the course of the review. The Working Group concluded that the PEVS was an appropriate mechanism for funding pre-primary education. The Working Group had recommended a holistic review on early childhood education in the light of the development in the macro environment.

35. Prof Edmond KO further said that the Working Group had not overlooked the matters concerning subsidies for whole-day KGs and the salaries of KG teachers. Indeed, the Working Group had substantial discussions on the subjects, although the deputations might not agree to its views in this regard.

Action

36. Prof Edmond KO pointed out that many families had to send their children to attend whole-day KGs because of the financial need to work. To this end, the Working Group had recommended that the support to these families should be enhanced. Many deputations had expressed support to the Working Group's recommendations on the computation of KG fee remission and the removal of social need assessment. The Working Group hoped that through annual review of the value of the voucher, the fee thresholds, the fee remission ceilings, etc., whole-day KGs could be better off. He fully understood the concerns of principals, teachers and staff in whole-day KGs and believed that the Working Group's recommendations could help allay their concerns to a certain extent.

37. Regarding the salary scale for whole-day KG teachers, Prof Edmond KO elaborated that since the Working Group had concluded that the PEVS was an appropriate mechanism for funding pre-primary education, it should respect the policy intent of the PEVS and avoid over-regulation of the sector. The Working Group hoped that by enhancing the professionalism of the sector, the problems would be dealt with effectively. The Working Group had recommended that an advisory body be set up to look into the long-term development of pre-primary education. On behalf of the Working Group, Prof KO thanked the stakeholders for their valuable inputs.

38. Under Secretary for Education ("US(Ed)") thanked Prof Edmond KO and the Working Group for their work. He noted that the deputations had recognized the Working Group's work and supported its recommendations in particular concerning the calculation of fee remission after deducting the voucher subsidy and the removal of social need assessment for applying for fee remission for attending whole-day KGs. The sector and the Working Group shared the same vision of providing assistance through various means to needy families.

39. US(Ed) concurred with Prof Edmond KO that the Report was comprehensive in exploring different areas of concerns. While the sector might not fully agree with the conclusions of the Working Group, he hoped that the sector would appreciate its enthusiasm, the commitment of both the Working Group and the Administration towards pre-primary education.

40. US(Ed) further said that the education sector welcomed the PEVS when it was launched in 2007 as an indication of the Government's commitment to enhance the quality of pre-primary education. Since the PEVS was a new scheme, there was room for improvement. When some families expressed concern about the fee remission ceilings for whole-day KGs, the Administration had reacted swiftly by reinstating the annual adjustment

Action

mechanism for the fee remission ceilings on the basis of the respective weighted average fees of the non-profit making half-day and whole-day KGs eligible for the PEVS. Having regard to the feedbacks of the families receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance about the complicated application procedures for fee remission, the Administration had simplified the procedures. Most importantly, in view of the concerns expressed by the stakeholders, the Administration had advanced the review of the PEVS which was originally scheduled to commence in the 2011-2012 school year.

41. US(Ed) added that the Administration had taken note of the deputations' views and concerns. It would study the Report in detail and take forward the Working Group's recommendations subject to their practicality and the availability of resources.

42. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong echoed Prof Edmond KO's remarks on the three areas where the Working Group and the deputations had divergent views. These were 15-year free education, the salary scale for KG teachers and the increase in subsidy for whole-day KGs. He said that the education sector was disappointed that the Report did not address these issues. In his view, these issues could be resolved with the implementation of 15-year free education. In the 2009-2010 school year, the average half-day KG fee was \$18,000 and whole-day KG fee \$29,300. According to his calculation, the total additional expenditure required for the provision of 15 years of free education would be around \$660 million. Mr CHEUNG opined that this additional sum was worth spending as it could provide free KG education, enhance the quality of KGs, set up a salary scale for KG teachers and increase the subsidies to whole-day KGs.

43. Referring to Recommendation 1 of the Report which stated that a further review of early childhood education in response to developments in the macro environment should be conducted at an opportune time, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong opined that the macro environment had already existed. The Government had estimated a surplus of \$70 billion for the 2010-2011 fiscal year which would be adequate for the expenditures of KGs for 100 years. Such a level of surplus had been achieved for more than one year and was in effect recurrent in nature. There was consensus in LegCo on the need for 15-year free education. He enquired whether the Administration would take forward 15-year free education to resolve the issues of the formulation of a salary scale for KG teachers and increasing subsidies for whole-day KGs.

44. US(Ed) replied that financial capability should not be the only consideration for the provision of 15-year free education. Thorough planning of the administration of the entire KG system and the provision of the required

Action

support facilities was necessary. The Administration would study the Report in detail and revert to the Panel its consideration of the recommendations.

45. Mr Albert HO said that people were the most important asset of a community. The provision of adequate education opportunities was important to enable upward mobility in the community, and this should start with pre-primary education. There was a consensus in the community that pre-primary education was integral to basic education and should not be segregated from the free education framework. Some well-developed places including Macao had already implemented 15-year free education and Hong Kong should not lag behind in this regard. He strongly urged the Administration to conduct a review on pre-primary education as soon as possible with a view to providing 15-year free education.

46. Mr Albert HO shared the views of many deputations that interim measures should be adopted to improve the PEVS. He pointed out that Hong Kong had structural surplus in recent years and the Government should use the surplus wisely by implementing 15-year free education in the 2011-2012 school year. The Administration should in parallel review the salary scale for KG teachers with a view to retaining quality teachers and provide them with professional development opportunities. The Administration should also render the necessary support to KGs.

47. Ms Cyd HO was of the view that an increase in the value of the voucher alone could not solve the problems of the PEVS. The issue at stake was the enhancement of the quality of KG teachers. She opined that pre-primary education was crucial for children under the age of six in nurturing interests in learning, developing social behaviour, identifying learning difficulties and special educational needs for timely intervention. To equip KG teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills, there should be adequate support in training and development of KG teachers. KG teachers should not be expected to use their own time and resources in attending training courses. KGs teachers should be remunerated according to the qualifications obtained so as to retain quality teachers. She called on the Administration to start expeditiously a comprehensive review of pre-primary education.

48. Ms Cyd HO noted that according to the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines, the current planning standard was 760 half-day and 210 whole-day KG places for every 1,000 children in the age group of three to under six. Given the changes in demography and the increasing number of working parents, she enquired about the basis of the planning standard and whether the number of whole-day KG places could meet the demand.

Action

49. Principal Assistant Secretary (Quality Assurance) responded that the planning standard was worked out with reference to previous enrolment ratio between half-day KGs and whole-day KGs and the enrolment in international KGs. Ms Cyd HO said that the planning standard did not reflect the actual situation as the parents might be forced to enroll in half-day KGs if they could not get a place in whole-day KGs. She noted that the Working Group did not make a conclusion at the present stage about whether whole-day or half-day KGs were better for children. She considered it necessary to take into account parents' needs and the impact on children's development in considering the merits of whole-day KGs vis-à-vis half-day KGs.

50. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that the education sector and LegCo Members had called for 15-year free education long time ago but no action had been taken by the Administration so far. He criticized the Administration for the inaction. He shared Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's views that the macro environment for 15-year free education had already existed and the Administration should start the review without delay.

51. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan opined that in the absence of a salary scale, it would be difficult to retain quality teachers. He expressed disappointment at the absence of a conclusion in the Report on the need for formulating a salary scale for KG teachers.

52. Prof Edmond KO responded that the Working Group had concluded after a comprehensive review of the PEVS that the PEVS was an appropriate mechanism for funding pre-primary education. The Working Group, after careful consideration, decided not to recommend the introduction of a salary scale for KG teachers. Nevertheless, the Working Group had agreed that there should be a comprehensive review of pre-primary education.

53. US(Ed) responded that since KGs had all along been running by the private sector, the Administration had to study carefully the recommendations in the Report including the experience of other countries in early childhood education before arriving at its views.

54. The Chairman opined that the formulation of a salary scale for KG teachers and increasing subsidies to whole-day KGs could be effected before the implementation of 15-year free education. While the Report considered that KGs should be allowed the autonomy in deciding the salary scale for KG teachers under the PEVS, as all the stakeholders had explicitly called for a salary scale for KG teachers, she did not see any problem with such provision under the PEVS. Likewise, many depositions suggested the provision of school-based subsidies for whole-day KGs to mitigate their hardships, and she

Action

did not see any problem with such provision under the PEVS. In her view, the formulation of a salary scale and the provision of subsidies for whole-day KGs could co-exist with the PEVS. She called on the Administration to consult the stakeholders in this regard before reporting to the Panel on its response to the Report.

55. US(Ed) responded that the premise of the PEVS was that KGs should be operated by the private sector and the vouchers would be issued to parents and not KGs. Both the Working Group and the Administration considered the existing mode of operation effective and that it should be maintained to allow flexibility. Since the implementation of the PEVS, the overall salary level of KG teachers had increased. US(Ed) further said that the fee of whole-day KGs included education and child care elements.

56. Concluding the discussions, the Chairman thanked Prof Edmond KO and the deputations for attending the meeting. She requested the Administration to report to the Panel on its consideration of the recommendations in the Report as soon as possible.

II. Any other business

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

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
9 March 2011