

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)2289/10-11
(The minutes have been seen by
the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 9 May 2011, 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 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
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon Tanya CHAN
Hon WONG Yuk-man
- Members absent** : Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP
Hon Paul CHAN Mo-po, MH, JP
Dr Hon Samson TAM Wai-ho, JP

Public Officers attending : Agenda item IV

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Ms Esther LEUNG, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education (6)

Ms Nancy SO
Controller, Student Financial Assistance Agency

Ms Teresa CHEUNG
Deputy Controller, Student Financial Assistance Agency

Ms Carrie LEE
Deputy Controller, Student Financial Assistance Agency

Agenda items V and VI

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Ms Amy WONG
Principal Assistant Secretary (Higher Education),
Education Bureau

Clerk in attendance : Ms Amy YU
Chief Council Secretary (2) 6

Staff in attendance : Ms Catherina YU
Senior Council Secretary (2) 6

Ms Judy TING
Council Secretary (2) 6

Ms Carmen HO
Legislative Assistant (2) 6

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I. Confirmation of minutes

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1655/10-11]

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2011 were confirmed.

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

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1416/10-11(01), CB(2)1526/10-11(01), CB(2)1565/10-11(01), CB(2)1595/10-11(01), CB(2)1636/10-11(01), CB(2)1636/10-11 (02) and CB(2)1690/10-11(01)]

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

- (a) email dated 22 March 2011 from a member of the public concerning the regulations of the Hong Kong Schools Music and Speech Association and the Administration's response (LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1416/10-11(01) and CB(2)1526/10-11(01));
- (b) letter dated 12 April 2011 from the Council of Non-profit Making Organizations for Pre-primary Education concerning the review of the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme (LC Paper No. CB(2)1565/10-11(01));
- (c) email dated 19 April 2011 from a member of the public concerning class reduction in secondary schools and secondary school places allocation (LC Paper No. CB(2)1595/10-11(01));
- (d) the Administration's responses to the letter from Christian Zheng Sheng Association dated 4 April 2011 (LC Paper No. CB(2)1465/10-11(01)) on the reprovisioning of its drug treatment and rehabilitation centres (LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1636/10-11(01) and (02)); and
- (e) referral dated 4 May 2011 from the Complaints Division of the Legislative Council ("LegCo") Secretariat regarding provision of after-school learning support to economically-disadvantaged children (LC Paper No. CB(2)1690/10-11(01)).

3. Regarding (e) above, Ms Audrey EU said that she was one of the Members attending the case conference on the complaint concerning, inter alia, the provision of after-school learning support to economically-disadvantaged children. She considered it necessary for the Panel to discuss the matter and invite views from relevant organizations.

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4. The Chairman said that the Administration had proposed to discuss After-school Learning Support Partnership Scheme at the next regular meeting scheduled for 13 June 2011. She suggested and members agreed that the matter be discussed in the context and written views be invited from organizations concerned.

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[Appendices I and II to LC Paper No. CB(2)1657/10-11 and LC Paper No. CB(2)1688/10-11(01)]

5. Members agreed to discuss the following items proposed by the Administration at the next regular meeting scheduled for 13 June 2011 at 4:30 pm -

- (a) Review of the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme;
- (b) After-school Learning Support Partnership Scheme; and
- (c) progress report of the implementation of the new academic structure.

Consultation on moral and national education

6. The Chairman referred members to the letter dated 5 May 2011 from Ms Cyd HO (LC Paper No. CB(2)1688/10-11(01)) requesting the Panel to discuss the consultation on moral and national education and sought members' views in this regard.

7. Ms Audrey EU agreed that the Panel should discuss the consultation on moral and national education. She considered it necessary for the Administration to clarify whether the proposed subject of moral and national education ("the Subject") would replace civic education and whether civic education and civic rights would be covered under the Subject.

8. Ms Cyd HO expressed dissatisfaction that the Administration published the Curriculum Guide on Moral and National Education (for consultation) ("the Consultation Paper") on 5 May 2011 without any prior notice to members, notwithstanding the concerns expressed by members about the implementation of the Subject. Since the launch of the consultation, strong views had been expressed by the community on the proposed curriculum and assessment mechanism for the Subject. She considered it necessary to hold a special

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meeting to discuss the matter and invite views from relevant stakeholders and members of the public.

9. The Chairman informed members that according to her understanding, the Administration would arrange eight consultation sessions to gauge views from the stakeholders including school principals and teachers.

10. Ms Cyd HO held the view that while consultation sessions would be organized by the Administration, the Panel should make its own arrangements for receiving public views on the matter. She criticized the Administration for not providing members with the Consultation Paper notwithstanding that the consultation had already commenced.

11. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong shared the view that LegCo should collect public views on and discuss the matter during the consultation period. He said that the Chief Executive had announced in the 2010-2011 Policy Address the decision to develop the Subject without consultation with the stakeholders. He queried whether this had followed the established procedures. Mr CHEUNG further said that there were different views in the community on the Subject, including how it should be taught and the time to be allocated for its teaching. Since the consultation sessions conducted by the Administration were mainly for the education sector, he agreed that the Panel should arrange a meeting to listen to the views of the public.

12. Mrs Regina IP expressed concern about the approach adopted by the Administration in the implementation of the Subject. She was worried that if it was not well implemented, it would draw negative comments of brainwashing. As students were not required to sit for examination on the Subject, they might not be attentive in class and might lose interest in learning. She agreed that it was necessary for the Panel to discuss the matter.

13. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che also agreed that the Panel should hold a meeting to receive views from members of the public and relevant organizations on the consultation on moral and national education. In response to Mr CHEUNG's enquiry, the Clerk said that the Secretariat had enquired with the Education Bureau ("EDB") on the provision of the hardcopy of the Consultation Paper to members. According to EDB, an information paper on moral and national education incorporating the views collected at the consultation sessions would be submitted to the Panel in mid-June 2011. EDB had also advised that only the Chinese version of the Consultation Paper was available at this stage.

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14. Ms Cyd HO said that the Executive Authorities should be accountable to the Legislature. She considered it unacceptable for the Administration to submit an information paper to the Panel in as late as mid-June 2011 when the consultation had already commenced in early May 2011.

15. The Chairman said that the Administration would be requested to provide the Consultation Paper to members as soon as practicable.

16. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that as the consultation period would end in August 2011, he suggested that the special meeting be held in June 2011 as far as practicable so that members could further discuss the matter if necessary before the end of the consultation period.

17. Members agreed that a special meeting be held to receive views from relevant organizations and members of the public on the consultation on national and moral education. The Secretariat was requested to liaise with the Administration on the timing for the special meeting.

(Post meeting note : With the concurrence of the Chairman, the special meeting on the consultation on moral and national education was scheduled for 27 June 2011 at 4:30 pm.)

IV. Enhancement of assistance provided by the Student Financial Assistance Agency to needy students

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1657/10-11(01) and (02)]

18. Members noted the background brief entitled "Student Financial Assistance Agency" (LC Paper No. CB(2)1657/10-11(02)) prepared by the LegCo Secretariat.

19. The Chairman drew members' attention to Rule 83A of the Rules of Procedure concerning personal pecuniary interest to be disclosed which provided that, in the Council or in any committee or subcommittee, a Member should not move any motion or amendment relating to a matter in which he had a pecuniary interest, whether direct or indirect, or speak on any such matter, except where he disclosed the nature of that interest. She reminded members to declare interests in the matter under discussion, if any.

Briefing by the Administration

20. Under Secretary for Education ("US(Ed)") briefed members on the Administration's proposals to relax the means test mechanism for financial assistance schemes administered by the Student Financial Assistance Agency ("SFAA") and to enhance assistance provided to needy post-secondary students from the 2011-2012 academic year as detailed in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)1657/10-11(01)).

Financial assistance to children receiving pre-primary education

21. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that under the current Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme, parents applying for fee remission for their children attending whole-day kindergartens ("KGs") were subject not only to the income test, but also the social needs test. This was considered by many to be unfair. Indeed, the Working Group on Review of the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme ("PEVS") had recommended the removal of social needs assessment for application for fee remission for attending whole-day KGs. He urged the Administration to consider removing the social needs assessment not only for children aged three and above attending whole-day KGs, but also for those aged under three attending child care centres. Mr CHEUNG further said that currently the amount of KG fee remission was calculated before deducting the voucher subsidy. There was a suggestion that the fee remission should be calculated after deducting the voucher subsidy to enable needy families to benefit from both the voucher subsidy and fee remission. He enquired about the Administration's consideration of these suggestions concerning PEVS.

22. US(Ed) responded that the Administration would report to the Panel on its consideration of the recommendations made in the Report on Review of PEVS, including the removal of social needs assessment and the calculation of fee remission after deducting the voucher subsidy, at the next regular meeting in June 2011.

Eligibility for financial assistance

23. While expressing support in principle for the Administration's proposals, Mr WONG Yuk-man was concerned that the increase in household income of some families following the implementation of the statutory minimum wage ("SMW") would render them ineligible for financial assistance under the schemes administered by SFAA. He pointed out that for a 3-member family where both parents were getting SMW, its monthly family income would be around \$14,000 which had already exceeded the proposed income limit of

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\$12,000 for full level of assistance. He further pointed out that as the Administration had only proposed to relax the income ceiling for full level of assistance, the total number of students benefiting from the assistance schemes had not actually increased. He urged the Administration to consider relaxing the income ceiling for any assistance and the net asset value limits to enable the lower middle class to benefit from the assistance schemes.

24. US(Ed) responded that families with income at around or below the median monthly household income would be eligible to receive financial assistance. With the proposed relaxation of income thresholds for full level of assistance, the assistance level of around 98 000 students would be raised to the full level, and the percentage of students receiving full level of assistance would be substantially increased to around 60% of all beneficiaries in the 2011-2012 academic year. The Administration would closely monitor the changes in the median monthly household income levels following the implementation of the statutory minimum wage after relaxation of SFAA's means test had come into effect, and consider the need for any further changes having regard to the needs of the low-income families for the various types of student financial assistance as well as the financial implications on public resources.

25. On the impact of the implementation of SMW on eligibility for student financial assistance, US(Ed) said that as the Adjusted Family Income ("AFI") formula for assessing financial assistance was based on annual family income while SMW was an hourly rate, there was no absolute correlation between them. The income of persons paid at the SMW rate would depend on the total number of hours they had worked. The Administration considered it appropriate to use AFI to determine the level of financial assistance.

26. While welcoming the Administration's proposed relaxation of the income test of SFAA, Mr WONG Kwok-hing shared the concern about the impact of SMW on the eligibility for student financial assistance. He was also concerned as to whether the subsidies received by family members under the Work Incentive Transport Subsidy ("WITS") Scheme would be included in calculating an applicant's family income. He sought clarification on whether the Administration had taken into account the impact of SMW and WITS on the eligibility for student financial assistance.

27. US(Ed) responded that the Administration had taken into account a host of different factors when drawing up proposals on how to relax the income ceilings. As set out in paragraph 6 of the Administration's paper, the monthly income limit for full level of assistance had been notably increased for families of all sizes, in particular for 3-member and 4-member families. The proposed

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relaxation was a substantial financial commitment on the part of the Government.

28. Deputy Secretary for Education (6) ("DS(Ed)6") supplemented that the Administration had further relaxed the income limits for smaller size families having regard to their relative difficulty in deploying resources in times of need. After the proposed relaxation, the family income limits for full assistance for 3-member and 4-member families would be raised from around 40% at present to 67% and 58% of the relevant median monthly household income of the second quarter of 2010 respectively. Given the substantial extent of the proposed relaxation of the income thresholds for full level of assistance, it was envisaged that potential increase in household income arising from the implementation of SMW should have minimal impact on the eligibility for full financial assistance. DS(Ed)6 further said that the monthly income limit for WITS for 3-member and 4-member families were \$13,000 and \$14,000 respectively, which were comparable to the income limits for full level of student financial assistance for families of the same size.

29. Noting from paragraph 6 of the Administration's paper that the proposed income limit for full level of assistance for a 4-member family was \$13,800, Mr WONG Kwok-hing pointed out that a family with both parents getting SMW which earned \$14,000 per month would be eligible for WITS but not full assistance under the SFAA schemes. He reiterated his concern that the Administration had not taken into account the changes in household income brought about by the implementation of SMW and WITS when adjusting the income limits for student financial assistance. He called on the Administration to review the income limits having regard to SMW and WITS.

30. Ms Audrey EU welcomed the Administration's proposed relaxation of the income test as a move in a right direction given the substantial increase in income limits. However, she expressed doubt about the Administration's estimation of an increase in the percentage of beneficiaries receiving full level of assistance from around 30% to 60% in the 2011-2012 academic year after the proposed relaxation. She pointed out that the estimation was based on the median monthly household income in the second quarter of 2010, but with the implementation of SMW in May 2011, there would be changes in the median monthly household income. Given that the Census and Statistics Department would publish statistics on median monthly household income on a quarterly basis, she requested the Administration to revert to the Panel on the latest statistics on median monthly household income one quarter after the implementation of SMW. Ms EU also requested the Administration to provide information on the number and percentage of students of the total student population (with breakdown by study level) receiving any assistance and full

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assistance from SFAA under the existing mechanism with relevant information on overseas countries.

31. In response, US(Ed) reiterated that students whose household income were at around or below the median monthly household income would be eligible to receive financial assistance. The level of assistance would vary depending on their household income. It would take some time before the impact of SMW on the median household income would begin to emerge. Given the substantial increase in the proposed income limits as compared with the existing income limits and the reduction of the existing 17 tiers of assistance to five tiers for post-secondary students, it was estimated that a large number of families would receive a larger amount of financial assistance. Given that the primary objective of the proposed relaxation was to increase the number of students receiving full level of assistance, there would be a substantial increase in the number of students receiving full assistance while there might not be a notable increase in the total number of students receiving any assistance. US(ED) agreed to provide information on student financial assistance sought by Ms Audrey EU before the submission of the funding proposal to the Finance Committee ("FC") as far as practicable.

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32. In response to Ms Audrey EU's enquiry on whether there was any restriction on the usage of the academic expenses grant of \$1,000, US(Ed) explained that it was an additional grant on top of the original grant entitlement. The grant was non-accountable and students could flexibly deploy it to meet their needs.

33. The Chairman said that the median monthly household income should become higher with the implementation of SMW. She requested the Administration to review the income ceilings of the means test mechanism taking into account the number of beneficiaries and the level of median monthly household income say one year after the implementation of SMW and report to the Panel.

34. US(Ed) responded that it was the Administration's policy to ensure that adequate financial assistance was provided to needy students. The income limits of different levels of assistance would be adjusted annually according to the annual movement of the Consumer Price Index (A). The Administration would consider the appropriate timing for reviewing the income ceilings of the means test mechanism and revert to the Panel.

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35. Mr WONG Yuk-man and Mr WONG Kwok-hing supported the Chairman's request for conducting a review of the income ceilings of the means test mechanism following the implementation of SMW. To facilitate the review, Mr WONG Kwok-hing considered that the Administration should start keeping records on the number of students who were originally eligible but became ineligible for financial assistance owing to the implementation of SMW or the subsidies received under WITS.

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36. The Chairman reiterated her view that the Administration should conduct a review of the income ceilings of the means test mechanism of SFAA within a reasonable period after the implementation of SMW and the Panel would follow up on the outcome of the review. She suggested and members agreed that the subject matter be included in the Panel's list of outstanding items for discussion.

37. Concluding the discussions, the Chairman said that the Panel supported the submission of the funding proposal to FC for consideration on 27 May 2011.

V. Injection into HKSAR Government Scholarship Fund

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1657/10-11(03) and (04)]

38. Members noted the background brief entitled "Government scholarship schemes" (LC Paper No. CB(2) 1657/10-11(04)) prepared by the LegCo Secretariat.

39. The Chairman drew members' attention to Rule 83A of the Rules of Procedure concerning personal pecuniary interest to be disclosed which provided that, in the Council or in any committee or subcommittee, a Member should not move any motion or amendment relating to a matter in which he had a pecuniary interest, whether direct or indirect, or speak on any such matter, except where he disclosed the nature of that interest. She reminded members to declare interests in the matter under discussion, if any.

Briefing by the Administration

40. US(Ed) briefed members on the proposal to inject \$250 million into the HKSAR Government Scholarship Fund ("the Fund") to extend the scholarships to students of full-time publicly-funded sub-degree programmes as detailed in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)1657/10-11(03)). He said that subject to members' views, the Administration planned to submit the funding proposal to FC on 17 June 2011.

Scholarship amounts

41. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed support for the proposal to extend the scholarships under the Fund to students of full-time publicly-funded sub-degree programmes. He also welcomed the proposal that institutions would be given flexibility to adjust the scholarship amounts. Noting that the proposed \$3 million would only benefit around 100 sub-degree students if the scholarship amount was pitched at \$30,000 each, he suggested that institutions could consider setting the scholarship amount at \$10,000 or \$20,000 per student instead of \$30,000 with a view to increasing the number of scholarship recipients. He further opined that the Administration should consider increasing the amount to be set aside from the investment income for supporting the provision of scholarships to benefit more sub-degree students.

42. US(Ed) responded that the Administration would encourage institutions to determine the scholarship amount in a flexible manner having regard to specific circumstances. He however pointed out that having too many scholarship recipients might defeat the purpose of recognizing the achievements of outstanding students. Institutions should strike a proper balance between giving due recognition to outstanding students and the desirability of benefiting more students.

43. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung expressed concern about the huge difference in the scholarship amounts between local and non-local students in respect of the scholarships for students pursuing full-time publicly-funded degree or above level programmes. Noting the Administration's proposal that the same amount of scholarship be set for local and non-local students of publicly funded sub-degree programmes, he sought explanation on why the same approach for the scholarships for publicly-funded degree and above programmes was not adopted.

44. US(ED) said that having regard to the much higher tuition fees paid by non-local students pursuing publicly-funded degree programmes, which was more than double of that paid by local students, it was considered appropriate to award higher scholarship amounts to non-local students. At present, the annual tuition fees paid by non-local students attending publicly-funded degree programmes were in the range of \$80,000 to \$110,000, while the relevant tuition fees paid by local students was \$42,100.

45. While appreciating the higher tuition fees and living expenses paid by non-local students, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung was not convinced that it was a valid justification for the huge difference in the scholarship amounts between

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local and non-local students. He pointed out that non-local students should be prepared to pay for these expenses before applying to study in Hong Kong. He was concerned that awarding much higher scholarship amount to non-local students would arouse dissatisfaction from local students.

46. US(Ed) said that the higher scholarship amount for non-local students would provide an incentive for them to pursue degree and above programmes in Hong Kong. As regards the scholarships for publicly-funded sub-degree programmes, he said that among the some 25 000 students pursuing public-funded sub-degree programmes in the 2010/11 academic year, there were only 71 non-local students. As the sub-degree sector was currently at its early stage in attracting non-local students, the Administration considered that the need for setting a higher scholarship amount for non-local students had not yet arisen. Hence, the Administration proposed that the same scholarship amount be set for local and non-local students for the 2011/12 academic year.

47. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered that the Administration should have regard to the principle of fairness rather than the number of students in deciding the scholarship amounts. US(Ed) said that he would reflect Mr LEUNG's views to the Steering Committee for the Fund for consideration.

Ratio between local and non-local scholarship recipients

48. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che asked whether the Administration would stipulate a fixed percentage for local and non-local recipients of scholarships. Given the rapid increase in non-local students, he was concerned that a majority of the scholarship recipients would be non-local students. He further opined that the Administration should provide scholarships to the large number of students pursuing self-financing sub-degree programmes.

49. US(Ed) said that one of the objectives of the Fund was to attract outstanding non-local students to study in Hong Kong. Like local students, non-local students should be awarded for their outstanding academic performance. Under the Fund, participating institutions were allowed flexibility in awarding scholarships having regard to their specific circumstances and the merits of students. The Administration did not consider it appropriate to set a fixed ratio on the number of local and non-local scholarship recipients as it would restrict the freedom of institutions in awarding scholarships.

50. US(Ed) further said that Government scholarships were also available for students pursuing self-financing sub-degree programmes. The Administration had proposed the establishment of the Self-financing Post-secondary Education Fund to support self-financing post-secondary

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institutions to enhance the quality of teaching and learning and award scholarships to outstanding students pursuing full-time locally-accredited self-financing sub-degree or bachelor degree programmes through the Self-financing Post-secondary Scholarship Scheme. The Administration would submit the funding proposal to FC on 13 May 2011.

Distribution of money among participating institutions

51. Mr Andrew LEUNG declared that he was the Chairman of Vocational Training Council ("VTC"). While indicating support for the proposal to extend the scholarships under the Fund to students of full-time publicly-funded sub-degree programmes, he stressed the importance for the Administration to put in place a mechanism to ensure equitable distribution of money among participating institutions.

52. US(Ed) explained that a sum of money to be funded by the investment income would be allocated every year to the participating institutions offering full-time publicly-funded sub-degree programmes on a pro rata basis in accordance with the actual enrolment of such programmes in the previous academic year. The participating institutions would distribute scholarships to outstanding students having regard to the selection criteria. US(Ed) further said that as VTC had a large enrolment of students pursuing publicly-funded sub-degree programmes, it would be allocated a large share of the provision for the scholarships.

Management of the investment income

53. Noting that the award of scholarships was to be funded by investment income generated from the Fund, Prof Patrick LAU enquired about the amount of disbursements such as investment manager fees to be deducted from the investment income. He was concerned whether the 4% to 5% investment income was sufficient to meet these expenses and sustain the award of scholarships to publicly-funded sub-degree students on an ongoing basis.

54. US(Ed) said that the Administration would take reference from the administration of other Government funds such as the Quality Education Fund, and monitor the fees charged by investment managers to ensure cost-effectiveness of the investment. The Investment Committee under the Fund met regularly with the Treasury to discuss investment strategies and monitor the investment of the Fund. Investment managers were selected through tendering, and consideration would be given to their track records in the selection process. He added that the current fees charged by investment managers were in the range of 50 to 70 basis points per annum.

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55. Prof Patrick LAU sought clarification on whether students awarded with scholarships under the Fund were allowed to receive other scholarships. US(Ed) replied in the affirmative, adding that individual institutions would follow their established mechanism in awarding different scholarships.

Retaining talented non-local students in Hong Kong

56. Ms Audrey EU sought the following information concerning non-local scholarship recipients: a breakdown of their places of origin, the percentage of non-local recipients of scholarships settling down for employment in Hong Kong after graduation and measures to retain them in Hong Kong after their studies.

57. US(Ed) said that about 90% of non-local students pursuing higher education in Hong Kong were from the Mainland. In recent years, institutions had been striving to attract students from other places such as South East Asia. The Secretary for Education had recently visited Vietnam and Brunei to promote Hong Kong as a regional education hub and its new academic structure. US(Ed) agreed to provide the information sought by Ms Audrey EU. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide the requisite information before submitting the financial proposal to FC.

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58. The Chairman agreed that it was important to attract outstanding non-local students to study and work in Hong Kong to facilitate Hong Kong's development as a regional education hub. She requested the Administration to also provide information on award of scholarships to non-local students by the governments of Singapore and Australia.

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59. Noting the significant increase in the number of non-local recipients of scholarships under the Fund over the past few years, Miss Tanya CHAN shared the view on the importance of retaining these outstanding non-local students to work in Hong Kong after graduation. She enquired whether the Administration had conducted any tracking survey to ascertain the number of non-local students who had returned to Hong Kong to work after completing further studies in other places. She also expressed the view that the scholarships should be offered to students from different places and not only those from the Mainland.

60. US(Ed) said that the Administration had not carried out the tracking survey mentioned by Miss Tanya CHAN. He gathered from his exchanges with non-local students that they would consider different options after completing their studies in Hong Kong such as taking further studies in other

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countries or returning to the Mainland. He further said that as the majority of non-local students studying publicly-funded degree or above programmes in Hong Kong were from the Mainland, it was not surprising that most of the non-local scholarship recipients were Mainland students. Nomination of scholarship recipients was a matter for individual institutions. In his view, the increase in the number of non-local scholarship recipients could act as an impetus for local students to work harder.

61. Concluding the discussions, the Chairman said that the Panel supported the submission of the funding proposal to FC for consideration on 17 June 2011.

VI. Mainland Experience Scheme for Post-secondary Students
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1657/10-11(05) and FS20/10-11]

62. Members noted the fact sheet entitled "Mainland Experience Scheme for Post-secondary Students" prepared by the Research Division of the LegCo Secretariat (LC Paper No. FS20/10-11).

63. The Chairman drew members' attention to Rule 83A of the Rules of Procedure concerning personal pecuniary interest to be disclosed which provided that, in the Council or in any committee or subcommittee, a Member should not move any motion or amendment relating to a matter in which he had a pecuniary interest, whether direct or indirect, or speak on any such matter, except where he disclosed the nature of that interest. She reminded members to declare interests in the matter under discussion, if any.

Briefing by the Administration

64. US(Ed) briefed members on the proposal to launch a pilot Mainland Experience Scheme for Post-Secondary Students ("the Scheme") as detailed in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)1657/10-11(05)).

Funding mechanism and duration of the Scheme

65. Noting that the grants would be disbursed to eligible institutions on a dollar-for-dollar matching basis, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the Administration should consider providing the grants without the need for matching.

66. US(Ed) responded that the mechanism of providing grants to the University Grants Committee ("UGC")-funded institutions on a matching basis had been operating well. The purpose of providing matching grants was to encourage institutions to explore different sources of funding for their development.

67. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that matching grants would work to the advantage of the large and more prominent institutions which could raise more donations.

68. In response to Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che's enquiry on the duration of the Scheme, US(Ed) said that institutions could apply for the grants and raise matched funds during a five-year period, tentatively from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2016. The grants would be disbursed on a dollar-for-dollar matching basis in respect of private donations up to the grant ceiling of the respective institutions. Institutions might use the matched funds for operating programmes under the Scheme for a period of up to eight years, i.e. up to 30 June 2019.

69. Ms Audrey EU said that it was rather uncommon for schemes of similar nature to operate for eight years and enquired about the reasons for the long duration of the Scheme.

70. US(Ed) responded that smaller institutions had indicated that they would need more time to raise funds and the duration of the Scheme was set having regard to their views. He further explained that the grants would be disbursed on a 1:1 matching ratio during the first five years of the Scheme. If, by the end of the five-year period, there remained funding under the grant ceiling which had not yet been matched by the institutions, such funds would be opened up for applications by all institutions on a first-come-first-served basis and \$1 for \$2 matching basis (i.e. \$1 Government grant for every \$2 raised through donation). The Administration considered it reasonable to adjust the matching ratio when the funds raised by institutions had reached a certain level.

Target participants and coverage of the Scheme

71. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered it not necessary to include non-local students in the Scheme. He pointed out that non-local students comprised mainly Mainland students who were already very familiar with the social, economic and cultural landscape of the Mainland. Mainland students would not regard themselves being treated unfairly if they were excluded from the Scheme as they did not have such a need. He stressed that the Scheme,

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which was financed by public funds, should target at local students who lacked Mainland experience. He was of the view that the Scheme should be confined to local students.

72. US(Ed) responded that while both local and non-local students were eligible for the Scheme, the foremost objective was to provide opportunities for students to gain Mainland experience and institutions were encouraged to give priority to students with no or minimal Mainland experience. At present, around 13% to 14% of the total number of post-secondary students were non-local students. While the majority of non-local students were from the Mainland, some were from other places such as South East Asia. Some institutions had suggested that non-local students should also be included in the Scheme as it was common for non-local students to work in the Mainland upon completion of their studies and the experience they gained in the Mainland would be useful for their future development. Gaining experience outside the university setting was important for students' learning and non-local students should not be deprived of such an opportunity.

73. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che shared Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's view that the objective of the Scheme should be to enhance local students' understanding of the Mainland and its coverage should be restricted to local students. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che enquired whether there were any requirements on the programmes to be operated under the Scheme, such as duration and scope. He opined that in order for the Scheme to serve its objective, the duration of the programmes should not be too short. He considered it important for the Administration to provide guidelines to institutions on the programmes such as the grant limit per day to ensure public accountability on the use of the grants.

74. US(Ed) responded that as it was a pilot scheme, the Administration would discuss the scope and contents of the programmes with the institutions and set guidelines for them to ensure that the programmes would serve the objective of the Scheme.

75. Ms Audrey EU opined that there was a lack of details in the Administration's paper on the scope and contents of the programmes to be organized under the Scheme. She considered it necessary for the Administration to clarify the objective of the Scheme and provide specific details on the scope and contents of the programmes. Ms EU was of strong view that the coverage of the Scheme should not be restricted to programmes in the Mainland but should be extended to other places. Students should be given the option to attend learning programmes held in other places in accordance with the needs of their disciplines of studies.

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76. While agreeing that local students should know more about their country, Ms Cyd HO shared Ms Audrey EU's view that students should be given the choice to attend learning programmes held in other places. Pointing out that local students were always criticized for lacking international horizons, she opined that the Administration should consider increasing the grants to cover programmes conducted in other countries with a view to broadening the horizons of students.

77. Ms Cyd HO further said that she objected in principle to the funding proposal because students could not choose to attend learning programmes held in other places and non-local students were covered under the Scheme. As Mainland students already had adequate Mainland experience, she considered it unnecessary for the Administration to subsidize them in this regard. She queried the need for the Administration to extend the subsidy provided under the Scheme to non-local students.

78. US(Ed) said that as explained by the Financial Secretary in his Budget Speech, the objective of the Scheme was to enable students to learn more about the Mainland. Hence, the Scheme covered only programmes in the Mainland. The Administration would request the institutions to give priority to students who had no or minimal Mainland experience, and the institutions were expected to exercise their judgement to offer the programmes to suitable students.

79. Prof Patrick LAU said that the Administration could make reference to the short term learning programmes organized by the post-secondary institutions. He elaborated that the Faculty of Architecture of The University of Hong Kong ("HKU") organized many short-term programmes to enable students to gain experience in different places of the world. Many of these were exchange programmes with overseas universities and for some of the programmes, students were required to top up the expenses. In his view, programmes under the Scheme should be organized by the institutions to ensure that they were well structured and students could genuinely benefit from them, and students should not be allowed to make their own arrangements for the learning programmes. He shared the view that consideration could be given to extending the Scheme to cover learning programmes held in other countries in addition to the Mainland.

80. Dr Priscilla LEUNG said that the School of Law of the City University of Hong Kong ("CityU") also organized many exchange programmes. For those held in the Mainland, the participants included local students as well as students from the Mainland and other countries. While Mainland students might be familiar with some of the cities in the Mainland, the Government

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units they visited during the programmes were new experience for them. In her view, it was the design of the programmes rather than the target participants that mattered. She considered that the Scheme should be open to both local and non-local students.

81. Dr Priscilla LEUNG expressed support for the funding proposal and suggested that consideration should be given to making the Scheme an ongoing initiative so that more students could benefit from it. The Administration should also consider providing additional funding for setting up another scheme to subsidise post-secondary students' participation in learning programmes in other countries.

82. The Chairman echoed Dr Priscilla LEUNG's view and said that there was no conflict between the Scheme and launching another one for learning programmes in other places.

83. US(Ed) clarified that under the scheme, students could only participate in the programmes organized or arranged by the institutions. The institutions would draw up suitable programmes by making reference to their past experience and the guidelines provided by the Administration. He added that the Administration would consider whether the pilot scheme should be made an ongoing initiative in the light of its effectiveness.

84. Mr TAM Yiu-chung said that the Administration's paper did not contain sufficient information on the objective of the Scheme and the nature of the programmes covered under the Scheme. To facilitate members' consideration of the proposal, the Administration should provide information on the exchange and internship programmes currently organized by post-secondary institutions and elaborate on the reasons why the Scheme targeted at learning programmes in the Mainland. To his knowledge, the institutions had organized many short-term internship programmes for students in Mainland enterprises. Given the close connection between Hong Kong and the Mainland and the employment opportunities in the Mainland, gaining exposure to the management and operation of Mainland enterprises would be beneficial to the career development of post-secondary students. In his view, it would be a discrimination against Mainland students if they were not allowed to participate in the Scheme.

85. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan opined that the Scheme was a top-down initiative aimed at serving the political objective of enhancing integration with the Mainland rather than for educational purpose. In his view, if the Scheme was for educational purpose, the institutions should be given a freehand in deciding the places where the learning programmes were held to cater to the needs of students of different disciplines.

(At the request of the Chairman, Ms Cyd HO, the Deputy Chairman, took the chair at this juncture.)

86. US(Ed) said that the Financial Secretary had stated in his Budget Speech that the purpose of the Scheme was to encourage young people to see for themselves and learn more about the latest development of the Mainland which was a substantive educational objective. It was also the Administration's policy objective to strengthen integration between Hong Kong and the Mainland. As many post-secondary students intended to pursue a career in the Mainland in future, it would be beneficial to provide them with more opportunities to learn about the developments in the Mainland.

87. Ms Audrey EU clarified that when she said that students should be given the option, she did not mean that individual students were free to go anywhere they liked. What she meant was that as there were different requirements for different disciplines, institutions should be given the freedom to organize learning programmes in places relevant to the needs of students. She did not agree that the Scheme should be confined only to programmes held in the Mainland.

(The Chairman resumed the chairmanship as this juncture.)

88. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong opined that from the educational perspective, it was not justifiable to restrict the coverage of the Scheme to learning programmes in the Mainland. The Scheme should cover programmes organized by institutions held in any places so long as the programmes could provide students with the knowledge and experience pertaining to their studies.

The funding proposal

89. The Chairman invited members' views on the submission of the funding proposal to FC in June 2011.

90. Ms Cyd HO said that she objected to the funding proposal unless the Administration agreed to extend the Scheme to cover learning programmes held in other places.

91. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong objected to the submission of the funding proposal to FC. He said that he did not object to funding learning programmes in the Mainland. Rather, his view was that there should not be any restriction on places and institutions should be allowed to decide where the learning programmes should be conducted. Should there be no restriction on places, he agreed that the Scheme could be open to both local and non-local students.

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92. US(Ed) said that while he agreed with members that students could also benefit from learning programmes held in other places, it was not the objective of the Scheme, which was to encourage post-secondary students to learn more about our country. The Administration would give consideration to Dr Priscilla LEUNG's suggestion at a later stage.

93. The Chairman put to vote the submission of the funding proposal to FC. The result was: six members voted against and two members voted for the submission of the funding proposal to FC and no member abstained. The Chairman said that the Panel objected to the submission of the funding proposal to FC.

VII. Any other business

94. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:30 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
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