

立法會

Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)2268/10-11

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Report of the Panel on Education for submission to the Legislative Council

Purpose

This report gives an account of the work of the Panel on Education during the 2010-2011 Legislative Council ("LegCo") session. It will be tabled at the Council meeting of 13 July 2011 in accordance with Rule 77(14) of the Rules of Procedure of the Council.

The Panel

2. The Panel was formed by a resolution passed by the Council on 8 July 1998 and as amended on 20 December 2000, 9 October 2002, 11 July 2007 and 2 July 2008 for the purpose of monitoring and examining Government policies and issues of public concern relating to education matters. The terms of reference of the Panel are in **Appendix I**.

3. The Panel comprises 22 members, with Hon Starry LEE Wai-king and Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan elected as its Chairman and Deputy Chairman respectively. The membership list of the Panel is in **Appendix II**.

Major work

Higher Education Review

4. Together with Sir Colin Lucas, Convenor of the Higher Education Review Group, the Chairman of the University Grants Committee ("UGC") briefed members on the Report on the Higher Education Review entitled "Aspirations for the Higher Education System in Hong Kong" ("the Report") published in December 2010. Subsequent to the briefing, the Panel held another meeting to receive views from representatives of the management,

staff associations and students' unions of post-secondary institutions on the Report.

5. Members exchanged views with the UGC Chairman and Sir Colin Lucas on the major recommendations in the Report, including the establishment of a unified quality assurance body for the entire post-secondary sector, development of a Credit Accumulation and Transfer System and enhancing competition for research funding. Members expressed concern about the Administration's plan for a further expansion of the self-financing degree sector. Members cautioned against the same mistakes being made as in the case of the expansion of the self-financing sub-degree sector including over-supply of and inadequate quality control over sub-degree programmes. Members requested the Administration and UGC to take proactive steps to regulate the supply of self-financing degree programmes such as by imposing academic standards for entry and exit.

6. Members also raised concern about the proposed allocation of research funding for the UGC-funded institutions. To enhance competition for research funding, UGC proposed to transfer half of the 25% research portion of the Block Grant to the Research Grants Council over a period of nine years. Members noted the concern expressed by the staff associations that the proposal would drive institutions even further to chase after research funding and to place less focus on teaching. There was also concern that the proposal would result in reduction in research funding for individual institutions, particularly for those the curricula of which were principally in humanities and social sciences subjects which generally attracted less research funding. There was a suggestion that the Administration should provide an appeal channel for matters relating to research funding for the UGC-funded institutions.

7. The recommendation in the Report for separation of community college operations of UGC-funded institutions from parent institutions within three years of the acceptance of the recommendation was of concern to members. They were worried that the proposed separation would create great difficulties for those institutions which had applied for loans under the Start-up Loan Scheme for the construction of new buildings for the operation of their sub-degree programmes, and urged the Administration to resolve the difficulties faced by institutions.

8. Having regard to the significant implications of the recommendations in the Report on the development of the higher education sector, the Panel stressed the need for the Administration to fully consult all stakeholders, including staff unions, different levels of staff members and students before

coming to a decision on the matter. The Panel requested the Administration to provide a detailed response to the views and concerns expressed by deputations and report to the Panel on its consideration of the Report by the end of 2011.

9. The Panel will further discuss issues relating to the Report, in particular the proposed allocation of research funding, in July 2011.

Self-financing Post-secondary Education Fund

10. Following the announcement by the Chief Executive in his 2010-2011 Policy Address of the establishment of a \$2.5 billion Self-financing Post-secondary Education Fund to support the long term development of the self-financing post-secondary education sector, the Panel examined the content of the proposal. Members noted that three schemes would be launched under the Fund, namely, the Self-financing Post-secondary Scholarship Scheme ("SPSS"), the Quality Enhancement Support Scheme and the Quality Assurance Support Scheme.

11. Members generally supported the policy objective of enhancing the quality of the self-financing education sector, but considered the Fund inadequate to meet the objective. They pointed out that compared with the UGC-funded institutions, self-financing post-secondary institutions received little subsidies from the Government other than land grants and the provision of loans. Instead of proposing piecemeal initiatives, members considered that the Administration should conduct a holistic review of the self-financing post-secondary education sector with a view to providing a wider choice to students and enhancing the education quality.

12. Noting that the estimated investment income of \$125 million generated from the Fund would be shared out by three schemes, members expressed concern about the inadequate amount allocated to SPSS which aimed at awarding outstanding students enrolled in full-time self-financing sub-degree or bachelor degree programmes. Members noted that in the double cohort year in 2012, some 16 000 students who had attained the minimum qualification for university education could not get publicly-funded university places. The limited number of scholarships to be awarded under SPSS could not address the grievances of these large number of students. Some members were of the view that as various scholarships offered by private organizations or affluent individuals were already available, the Administration should use the SPSS to assist students who were not admitted to publicly-funded universities but could not pursue self-financing programmes due to a lack of means.

Scholarships for students pursuing publicly-funded sub-degree programmes

13. The Panel considered the Administration's proposal to inject \$250 million into the HKSAR Government Scholarship Fund to extend scholarships to students of full-time publicly-funded sub-degree programmes. Members were supportive of the proposal. They also welcomed the proposal that institutions would be given flexibility to adjust the scholarship amounts. In order to benefit more sub-degree students, members suggested that institutions could set the scholarship amount at \$10,000 or \$20,000 per student instead of \$30,000.

14. Members noted that one of the objectives of the HKSAR Government Scholarship Fund was to attract outstanding non-local students to study in Hong Kong and scholarships under the Fund were open to both local and non-local students. Members considered it important to retain outstanding non-local talents to work in Hong Kong after graduation. At members' request, the Administration had provided information on the places of origin of non-local scholarship recipients, measures to retain them in Hong Kong after their studies and award of scholarships to non-local students by government of overseas countries including Singapore and Australia.

Loan scheme for post-secondary education providers

15. Members supported the Administration's proposal to provide loans totalling \$625 million under the Start-up Loan Scheme to the Open University of Hong Kong and the Hang Seng School of Commerce for constructing purpose-built campuses for the operation of full-time locally accredited degree programmes. Members were concerned that the two campuses were too small to provide a quality teaching environment and considered it necessary for the Administration to reserve potential sites in the vicinity of the two campuses for future expansion of the two institutions. Members were also concerned about the impact of the loans on tuition fees and urged the Administration to allow an extension of the loan repayment period for the two institutions from 10 years to 20 years to alleviate their financial burden, thereby reducing the need to increase tuition fees. According to the Administration, the borrowing institutions with proven financial difficulties could apply for an extension of the repayment period up to 20 years after making the first five repayment installments, with interest payment at the no-gain-no-loss interest rate after the first 10 years.

Mainland Experience Scheme for Post-secondary Students

16. The Panel examined the Administration's proposal to create a new commitment of \$100 million to launch a five-year pilot Mainland Experience Scheme for Post-secondary Students ("the Pilot Scheme") from the 2011-2012 academic year to subsidize post-secondary students participating in short-term internship or learning programmes in the Mainland on a matching basis.

17. Members had expressed different views on the Pilot Scheme. Some members expressed support for the Pilot Scheme as it would help post-secondary students learn more about the social, economic and cultural landscape of the Mainland. Some other members objected to the Scheme as they considered that its coverage should be widened to include short-term learning programmes in other places in addition to the Mainland to cater to the needs of students pursuing different disciplines of studies. There was also a suggestion that the Administration should consider providing additional funding for setting up another scheme to subsidise post-secondary students' participation in learning programmes in other places. Some members did not support the inclusion in the Pilot Scheme of non-local students, particularly those who came from the Mainland as they were already very familiar with the Mainland. At the suggestion of members, the Administration agreed to set out clear guidelines on what programmes would be covered by the Pilot Scheme for institutions' reference.

Assistance to needy students

Enhancement of financial assistance schemes

18. Members examined the various initiatives announced in the 2010-2011 Budget for providing greater financial support for needy students with effect from the 2011-2012 academic year, which included relaxing the income ceiling for full assistance under the existing means test mechanism of the Students Financial Assistance Agency ("SFAA"); adjusting the tiered structure of the financial assistance schemes for post-secondary students for other levels of assistance; and providing an additional amount of academic expenses grant of up to \$1,000 to all post-secondary students eligible for such grant.

19. While supporting the proposed measures for enhanced student financial assistance, members expressed concern about the impact of the implementation of the statutory minimum wage ("SMW") and the Work

Incentive Transport Subsidy ("WITS") Scheme on the eligibility for financial assistance. Members were concerned that the increase in household income of some families following the implementation of SMW and WITS Scheme would render them ineligible for assistance under the schemes administered by SFAA. Members were informed that for the purpose of conducting the income test, SFAA would exclude the subsidies received by family member(s) under the WITS Scheme. To follow up on the impact of SMW on eligibility for financial assistance, the Panel requested the Administration to conduct a review on the income ceiling of the means-tested financial assistance schemes within a reasonable period after the implementation of SMW and report on the outcome of the review to the Panel. To facilitate members' further consideration of the issue, the Administration agreed to provide for members' reference information on the number and percentage of students receiving means-tested financial assistance in overseas jurisdictions including Singapore, the United Kingdom ("UK") and Australia.

20. The Panel also considered the Administration's proposal to extend the existing one-off relief arrangement relating to deferment of student loan for one year until 31 July 2012. With this extension, student loan borrowers with proven repayment difficulty would be able to defer repayment of their loan without interest being charged during the approved deferment period. While generally supporting the proposal, members considered that loan interest for full-time students under the non-means tested loan schemes should be accrued only upon their graduation so as to alleviate the financial burden of student loan borrowers. Members noted that SFAA had commenced a review on the operation of the non-means-tested loan schemes and would consult the Panel on specific proposals to improve their operation, including those relating to loan repayment arrangements and deferment arrangements.

Examination Fee Remission Scheme

21. Members welcomed the Administration's proposed improvements to the Examination Fee Remission Scheme ("EFRS") administered by SFAA from the 2011-2012 school year to enable more needy students to benefit from the Scheme. Members noted that with the proposed improvements, EFRS would be extended to cover needy students eligible for half level of assistance, needy students sitting for the same examination for the second time and needy non-Chinese speaking ("NCS") students sitting for the General Certificate of Secondary Education (Chinese) Examination.

22. While supporting the proposed improvements, members expressed concern about the high examination fees and fees for rechecking of examination results of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education ("HKDSE"). Members considered it necessary for the Administration to monitor the level of fees charged by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority ("HKEAA"). Members also considered that the Administration should put in place a mechanism for providing remission to needy students in respect of the fee for rechecking examination results to ensure that needy students would not be deprived of such an opportunity owing to a lack of means. Members were advised that EFRS did not cover fees for non-essential supplementary services such as applications for rechecking/remarking. Nevertheless, HKEAA might consider waiving all or part of the supplementary fees for candidates with grave financial difficulties on a case-by-case basis. Fees for rechecking/remarking would also be refunded to candidates who got an upgrade in the examination result after the review.

After-school Learning Support Partnership Pilot Scheme

23. The Panel examined the Administration's proposal to launch the After-school Learning Support Partnership Pilot Scheme for needy primary school students in the 2011-2012 school year. Members noted that under the Scheme, tertiary students, especially those interested in joining the teaching profession, would be enlisted to provide after-school homework guidance for primary students with financial and academic needs. Members generally supported the objective of the scheme to provide homework guidance to economically disadvantaged primary students and had made various suggestions to improve the Scheme with a view to benefiting more needy students. Members suggested that the coverage of the scheme should not be limited to 50 schools as proposed by the Administration. After-school homework guidance service should also be provided on a district basis to benefit needy students not attending the 50 schools. Regarding the source of tutors, members suggested that apart from students from teacher education institutions, consideration should also be given to enlisting retired teachers to serve as tutors in the scheme. Members also urged the Administration to conduct a review on the pilot scheme as early as practicable with a view to making it an on-going initiative.

Debundling of textbooks from teaching/learning resources for pricing

24. Prices of school textbooks had been a long standing concern of the Panel. To address members' concern, the Administration had adopted the

recommendation of the Working Group on Textbooks and e-Learning Resources Development to implement the policy of debundling of textbooks from teaching/learning resources for pricing ("debundling policy") with a view to achieving reduction of textbook prices in the long run.

25. Members held two meetings in April and June 2011 to follow up with the Administration on the progress of the implementation of the debundling policy. Noting that with the implementation of the debundling policy, schools would no longer be provided with teaching materials by publishers free of charge, members were concerned about the provision of adequate funds for schools to purchase teaching materials. In response to members' request, the Administration undertook to provide schools with additional resources for the purchase of teaching materials if necessary.

26. While generally welcoming the implementation of the debundling policy, members considered that the debundling policy was only a short-term measure which could at best help stabilize, and could not lower substantially, textbook prices. The long-term solution lay in introducing fundamental changes to the textbook market. Members had put forward various suggestions to the Administration to tackle the problem of increasing textbook prices, which included simplifying the vetting and approval procedure for inclusion of textbooks in its Recommended Textbook List with a view to bringing in more competition to the market, including textbook price as one of the criteria in the vetting and approval of textbooks, and imposing a cap on textbook prices.

27. The debundling policy was originally scheduled for implementation in the 2010-2011 school year and was subsequently deferred for one year to the 2011-2012 school year at the request of textbook publishers on the ground that more time was needed to resolve the copyright issues. When the Panel was briefed on the progress of the implementation of the debundling policy in June 2011, members noted the textbook publishers' request for three more years for its implementation. Textbook publishers had indicated that primary and junior secondary textbooks in Chinese, English and Mathematics would be debundled first from the 2012-2013 school year and details of the debundling timetable would be worked out in August 2011. The Administration's position was that if the publishers refused to debundle their teaching materials after the next school year, the Education Bureau ("EDB") would tender out the development of textbooks and teaching materials to introduce more competition to the market.

28. Some members expressed reservations about the Administration's proposal of tendering out the development of textbooks and teaching materials. There was concern that the tendering practice of awarding the contract to the lowest bidder would affect the quality of textbooks. Concern was also raised about the lack of diversity in the textbook market if the contract was awarded to only one or a small number of bidders. There was also concern about control of content of textbooks by the Administration should tendering be adopted. For the purposes of environmental protection and lowering textbook prices, members expressed strong support for promoting initiatives on textbook recycling such as provision of textbooks by schools for loan to students and called on the Administration to collaborate with the Committee on Home-School Cooperation to promote the benefits of textbook recycling. Members urged the Administration and textbook publishers to continue their discussion with a view to resolving their differences expeditiously for the early implementation of the debundling policy. The Administration was requested to report to the Panel on its review of issues arising from the debundling policy by the end of 2011.

Implementation of the New Academic Structure

29. The Panel received a progress report from the Administration on the implementation of the New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education ("NAS") including curriculum, learning and assessment, HKDSE, interface with post-secondary and university education and pathways and support for schools.

30. Members remained concerned about the international recognition of HKDSE. Noting that many overseas universities which had indicated their recognition of the HKDSE qualification for admission purpose had a low ranking, members were gravely concerned that the HKDSE qualification was not recognized by many of the renowned overseas universities. Members also noted that two renowned universities in UK did not recognize the Combined Science and Integrated Science subjects under the NSS curriculum for admission purpose and were concerned about the adverse impact on the articulation to overseas universities of students who had chosen these subjects.

31. According to the Administration, there was no doubt about the recognition of the HKDSE qualification. The HKDSE standard had been included in the Tariff System of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service of UK and could be compared with points awarded to different types of accredited qualifications in UK and other international systems for

university admission purpose. The introduction of Combined Science and Integrated Science subjects had become a trend in the education sector and many overseas universities had a positive attitude to the recognition of these subjects. The NSS curriculum was well-received by the universities and governments in Europe, the United States, Canada and Australia which the Administration had approached and some of the UK universities had regarded all the 24 HKDSE subjects as elective subjects for admission.

32. Liberal Studies ("LS"), one of the four core subjects under the new senior secondary curriculum, was of paramount concern to members, in particular the assessment of the subject and the support given to LS teachers. According to a survey conducted by the Hong Kong Professional Teachers Union, LS teachers had extremely heavy workload and were under immense pressure, and many schools were short of manpower for teaching LS and supervising Independent Enquiry Studies undertaken by individual students. Some schools also lacked sufficient classrooms for teaching LS in small groups. Members urged the Administration to provide more financial resources to schools to address the shortage in manpower for teaching LS and strengthen support to LS teachers in relation to assessment of students' performance in LS.

33. Members were concerned about the fairness and reliability of the public examination of LS and stressed the need to put in place a fair mechanism for review of examination results. Members were informed that to ensure reliability of assessment results, double marking would be adopted for LS and there would be a third marker in case of a request for review of the results. Members noted that many students including top performers did not have confidence in their performance in LS and were worried that their results in LS would adversely affect their chance of being admitted to local universities. To address such concern, some members suggested that students' results in LS should only be reported as "Pass" or "Failed". Members also considered that as the objective of LS was to develop students' critical thinking, examiners should give credits to innovative answers. The Administration explained that while LS was a core subject, the university entrance requirement for the subject was only Level 2. At the request of members, the Administration agreed to provide information on the standard required to be attained for Level 2.

Measures to address declining secondary student population

34. Members were briefed on the Administration's latest measures to alleviate the impact of the sharp decline in secondary students, including the

introduction of the Voluntary Optimization of Class Structure Scheme ("the Scheme") to encourage schools to reduce their Secondary ("S") 1 classes voluntarily. Members noted that according to the latest projection, the annual S1 students would drop from 69 000 in the 2010-2011 school year to 53 900 in the 2016-2017 school year, representing a decrease of more than 20%.

35. Members were concerned about excessive class reduction of S1 places arising from the implementation of the Scheme and sought information on the estimated number of students who had to study in schools in other districts in the 2011-2012 school year as a result of class reduction. Members also expressed concern that the reduction of classes in popular secondary schools would diminish the admission chance of students and requested the Administration to consider exempting these schools from class reduction.

36. In members' view, while the Scheme might be able to stabilize the overall situation of schools in the upcoming one to two years, it could not resolve the problem of declining student population in the long run. Members were advised that the implementation of the Scheme could address the imminent problem of declining secondary student population and give the Administration more time to explore long-term solutions. Members were also advised that one of the significant factors determining the secondary student population was the number of children born to Mainland women in Hong Kong who would return to Hong Kong to study. The Administration would collect more information in this regard in the next two years to facilitate its assessment of the secondary student population.

37. Members considered that the decline of the secondary student population provided a good opportunity for the implementation of small class teaching ("SCT") in secondary schools to enhance teaching quality and resolve the problem in the long run. Members suggested that SCT could be launched at secondary schools with lesser intake of students for selected subjects such as language and arts subjects which required more interactions between teachers and students. They called on the Administration to seriously consider implementing SCT after the situation in schools had been stabilised. The Administration maintained its position that the implementation of SCT in secondary schools was not a policy at the present stage. The Administration would explore other measures, including the feasibility of implementing SCT, to enhance the education quality at a later stage.

38. Arising from the incident concerning class reduction in the King's College, members sought clarification on whether Government schools had the autonomy to decide whether to participate in the Scheme. Members were concerned that while the Scheme was "voluntary" in name, it was not the case for Government schools in fact. Members were informed by the Administration that School Management Committees ("SMCs") in Government Schools did not have the remit to decide on class reduction. According to their constitution, SMCs of Government schools should adopt the Government's education aims and play a proactive role in implementing policies advocated by EDB. Members requested the Administration to provide written information on the powers and remit of SMCs of Government Schools. As of the date of this report, the information is still outstanding.

Support measures for non-Chinese speaking students

39. The Panel followed up with the Administration on the progress of its support measures for NCS students. Members generally welcomed the proposed pilot scheme on Workplace Chinese Language to help NCS students meet workplace or trade-specific requirements in terms of Chinese proficiency to enhance their employability. Members urged the Administration to demonstrate its commitment to offering employment opportunities to ethnic minorities to set a good example to other employers. The Administration was requested to provide information on the civil service posts for which ethnic minority students on completion of the Workplace Chinese Language programmes could apply when it further report to the Panel on the pilot scheme.

40. Members noted that to further support NCS students to learn the Chinese language, the Administration had piloted a three-year project of After-school Extended Chinese Learning for NCS students. Members considered that students might lose interest in attending these classes if they were conducted in their own schools and suggested that the Administration should explore the feasibility of engaging different organizations to offer after-school remedial classes to provide more options and flexibility for NCS students in choosing a venue which best suited them with a view to enhancing their interest and motivation in attending the classes. The Administration undertook to critically examine the need for more venues as suggested by members.

41. To strengthen the support to NCS students with different educational needs, members expressed support for increasing the number of designated schools and considered it important for the Administration to ensure the

provision of adequate school places in special schools for NCS students with special educational needs ("SEN"). Members noted that in the review of subvention arrangements for the English Schools Foundation ("ESF"), the Administration would discuss with ESF the mode of subvention for provision of support to NCS students with SEN in the ESF system.

Provision of school places and school net arrangements in the Islands District

42. The Panel discussed the provision of school places and school net arrangements in the Islands District at two of its meetings. Members expressed concern that public sector school places in the Islands District were inadequate and students could take as long as two to three hours to go to schools in other districts, such as the Central and Western ("C&W") District. To facilitate students to go to schools in the vicinity, members considered it important to implement a school policy unique to the Islands District. They suggested that public sector schools in remote areas should be exempted from meeting the requirement of operating at least three classes at each level.

43. The supply of public sector school places in South Lantau was of particular concern of members. Members noted that there was no secondary school in the vicinity and South Lantau residents had been requesting for the allocation of the former New Territories Heung Yee Kuk Southern District Secondary School ("ex-SDSS") site for the operation of a secondary school. Members also noted the steady increase of NCS students in South Lantau and considered it important to address the educational needs of these students. Members took the view that while the preferred solution was to operate a secondary school in the vicinity, the interim relief measure was to change the school net of South Lantau from the Islands District to the C&W District so that students, such as those living in Peng Chau, could go directly to school in the C&W District. Members were advised that the school net arrangements for the Islands District was being considered by the Working Group on Review of School Nets which would widely consult the stakeholders on the proposals arrived in the school net review in due course.

44. Members noted that the Christian Zheng Sheng Association had been discussing with the Administration on relocation of its drug treatment and rehabilitation centres ("DTRCs") in Ha Keng to the ex-SDSS. Members held the view that the relocation of DTRCs and the need of South Lantau children for a local secondary school should not be mutually exclusive and the Administration should address both issues expeditiously. At the Panel meeting on 14 February 2011, the Panel passed a motion urging the Administration to solve in the near future the problem concerning the

relocation of the DTRCs and to reopen the ex-SDSS for the purpose of providing a secondary school to students in the vicinity.

Review of the pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme

45. Following up its work in the previous sessions, the Panel continued to monitor the implementation of the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme ("PEVS"). After the submission by the working group under the Education Commission of its report on review of PEVS to the Administration in December 2010, the Panel had held a meeting to listen to the views of the stakeholders on the findings and recommendations in the report. In June 2011, the Administration reported to the Panel on its consideration of the recommendations in the report.

46. While pleased to note that the Administration had taken on board the requests of stakeholders for calculation of fee remission after deducting the voucher subsidy and the removal of the social needs assessment for applying for fee remission for attending whole-day Kindergartens ("KGs"), members were disappointed that the Administration had not addressed the concerns raised by the Panel and the stakeholders in four main areas, namely, ceiling on school fees, subsidy for whole-day KGs, salary scale for KG teachers and 15-year free education.

47. Noting the rising operational costs of KGs as a result of high inflation in recent years and following the implementation of SMW, members expressed concern about the difficulties faced by those KGs (totalling 58) which had already reached the ceiling of school fees permitted under PEVS in coping with the rising operational costs. Members suggested that the Administration should, as an exceptional arrangement, allow flexibility for these 58 KGs to adjust their school fees above the prescribed ceiling or advance the implementation of the recommendation of adjusting the fee thresholds annually with reference to the Composite Consumer Price Index from 2012-2013 school year to the 2011-2012 school year.

48. Members also shared the concern of many deputations about the inequitable treatment to whole-day KGs under PEVS and urged the Administration to increase the subsidies for whole-day KGs. Members noted that with longer working hours but lesser subsidies, the turnover rate of teachers in whole-day KGs was high. Members also urged the Administration to consider the stakeholders' request for introducing a salary scale for KG teachers to maintain a stable and quality pre-primary education workforce. At members' request, the Administration agreed to provide on a

regular basis information on the salaries and turnover rate of teachers in half-day and whole-day KGs and the number of half-day and whole-day KGs to facilitate the Panel's follow-up. Members also requested the Administration to give serious consideration to their call for the conduct of a comprehensive review on pre-primary education as soon as practicable with a view to implementing 15-year free education to resolve the issues of the formulation of a salary scale for teachers and increasing subsidies for whole-day KGs.

Moral and national education

49. Members exchanged views with the Administration on its plan to develop an independent subject on moral and national education ("the Subject") as announced in the Chief Executive's 2010-2011 Policy Address in the context of the policy briefing by the Administration on education initiatives in October 2010.

50. Some members expressed concern about the Administration's plan to develop the Subject in place of the existing curriculum framework for moral and civic education without consulting the stakeholders and sought an explanation from the Administration for its decision. Some members were of the view that civic education and civic rights were very different from national education, and national education did not cover civic education. There was also a view that civic education covered national identity, rights and responsibilities, relationship between an individual and his/her residing place, global view and universal values.

51. Some members expressed grave concern that national education might be used as a tool for brainwashing and dissemination of political ideology. Worries had been expressed that only the positive sides of the Mainland such as the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing and the World Expo in Shanghai would be covered in the new subject whereas sensitive and controversial issues such as the imprisonment of LIU Xiaobo and the June Fourth Incident would not be touched upon. Members considered that a liberal approach should be adopted for teaching national education to help students develop independent thinking skills. They considered it important that students would not be tested on their relevant knowledge, and teachers should be given freehand to teach the subject.

52. The Curriculum Development Council and EDB have jointly launched a four-month consultation on the proposed moral and national education in May 2011. The Panel held a meeting on 27 June 2011 to receive public

views on the Administration's proposals. Another meeting will be held for the same purpose in July 2011.

Capital works projects

53. During the current legislative session, the Panel had examined two capital works projects, namely, the development of a research and academic building by Hong Kong University of Science and Technology ("HKUST") and the redevelopment project of Kowloon Junior School of ESF.

Development of a research and academic building by HKUST

54. Members supported the construction of a new research and academic building within the campus of HKUST to provide additional teaching space and research facilities to facilitate research-based teaching and enhance its pursuit of new research and educational initiatives.

55. Members sought information on the construction cost which was around \$484.9 million and the funding arrangement for the project. Members were informed that the unit cost of the project at some \$15,000 per square metre was inclusive of the costs of facilities needed for conducting research projects and was in line with that of similar capital works projects of other UGC-funded institutions. Members also noted that 75% and 25% of the construction cost of the project would be borne by the Administration and HKUST respectively, and the funding ratio was calculated in accordance with the established formula based on the space shortfall of an institution.

56. Members welcomed the adoption of a number of energy conservation measures in lighting, ventilation and escalators. In response to the request of the Panel, the Administration had provided for members' reference supplementary information on the criteria for determining the provision of laboratories in local universities.

Redevelopment project of Kowloon Junior School of ESF

57. The Kowloon Junior School of ESF is currently accommodated in two premises at Perth Street and Rose Street, Kowloon. The redevelopment project involved the demolition of the existing school premises at Perth Street and the construction of new school premises at an estimated Government subvention of \$169.3 million. While expressing support for the redevelopment project on the grounds that students would benefit from the new school premises and the site at Rose Street would be returned to the

Government, members expressed concern about the subvention for capital and recurrent expenditures of ESF.

58. Members noted that under the prevailing policy, ESF was entitled to a capital grant equalled to 100% of the cost for constructing a standard-design public sector primary school. Members expressed concern about the financial implications of such subvention arrangements which did not apply to international schools. Members called on the Administration to review expeditiously the role and positioning of ESF and the subvention arrangements for ESF in the light of the educational needs of NCS children. Members stressed the need for the subvention arrangements for ESF to be transparent and accountable to the public. Members were informed by the Administration that the review would cover a number of areas including ESF's role and positioning, service targets, financial management, governance and fee-related arrangements of ESF. In response to members' request, the Administration will report to the Panel on the progress of the review in July 2011.

Grant to HKEAA

59. The Panel had examined the funding proposal for a non-recurrent grant to support HKEAA for continual rental of a temporary onscreen marking centre ("OSM") on Hong Kong Island 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.

60. While supporting the funding proposal, members expressed concern about the need to use public money to continue renting the temporary OSM centre for five years at a high cost and queried why HKEAA had not formulated a long term accommodation plan earlier. Members also sought information on the vacant school premises and government premises that had been considered for use as HKEAA's headquarters and OSM centres and the reasons for not selecting such premises. Regarding the \$90.65 million grant for conducting the 2011 HKCEE and 2013 HKALE, members were assured that the income from the rechecking of scripts of the 2012 HKALE would be taken into account in determining the actual level of grant to cover the 2013 HKALE and any deficit to be incurred from conducting the two examinations would not be passed onto candidates.

Meetings held

61. During the period between October 2010 and end of June 2011, the Panel held a total of 14 meetings, including one joint Panel meeting with the Panel on Home Affairs on promotion of arts, culture and sports education in schools, and conducted a visit to the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Another two meetings have been scheduled for July 2011.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
4 July 2011

Panel on Education

Terms of Reference

1. To monitor and examine Government policies and issues of public concern relating to education.
2. To provide a forum for the exchange and dissemination of views on the above policy matters.
3. To receive briefings and to formulate views on any major legislative or financial proposals in respect of the above policy area prior to their formal introduction to the Council or Finance Committee.
4. To monitor and examine, to the extent it considers necessary, the above policy matters referred to it by a member of the Panel or by the House Committee.
5. To make reports to the Council or to the House Committee as required by the Rules of Procedure.

Panel on Education

Membership list for 2010-2011 session

Chairman Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, JP

Deputy Chairman Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan

Members

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
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, JP
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yea, GBS, JP
Dr Hon Samson TAM Wai-ho, JP
Hon Tanya CHAN
Hon WONG Yuk-man

(Total : 22 Members)

Clerk Ms Amy YU

Legal Adviser Mr Kelvin LEE