

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1264/11-12
(The minutes have been seen by the
Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 9 January 2012, at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex

Members present : Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, JP (Chairman)
Hon Tanya CHAN (Deputy Chairman)
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 Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, GBS, JP
Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
Hon KAM Nai-wai, MH
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, JP
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
Dr Hon Samson TAM Wai-ho, JP
Hon WONG Yuk-man

Members absent : Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai, BBS, JP
Hon Paul CHAN Mo-po, MH, JP

Public Officers attending : Agenda item IV

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Ms Mable CHAN, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education (2), Education Bureau

Mrs Michelle WONG
Deputy Secretary for Education (4), Education Bureau

Ms Esther LEUNG Yuet-yin, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education (6), Education Bureau

Agenda item V

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Ms Esther LEUNG Yuet-yin, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education (6), Education Bureau

Mr K H FOK
Chief Systems Manager (Information Technology
Management), Education Bureau

Agenda item VI

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Ms Michelle LI, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education (1), Education Bureau

Mr Wallace LAU
Principal Assistant Secretary (Higher Education),
Education Bureau

Ms Sandra MAK
Chief Executive Officer (Higher Education), Education
Bureau

Dr Lawrence TSANG
Vice-Chairman, Project Yi Jin Programme Management
Committee

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

Miss Meisy KWOK
Legislative Assistant (2)6

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I. Confirmation of minutes

[LC Paper No. CB(2)702/11-12]

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

II. Information papers issued since the last meeting

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)622/11-12(01) to (02), CB(2)693/11-12(01) and CB(2)764/11-12(01)]

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

- (a) report on the survey on the new academic structure and its executive summary provided by the Joint Committee of the Hong Kong Secondary School Councils and Secondary School Principals' Associations of 18 Districts [LC Paper Nos. CB(2)622/11-12(01) to (02)];
- (b) submission concerning the contents of Sharp Daily [LC Paper No. CB(2)693/11-12(01)]; and
- (c) submission from a member of the public concerning Liberal Studies [LC Paper No. CB(2)764/11-12(01)].

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III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[Appendices I and II to LC Paper Nos. CB(2)704/11-12]

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting scheduled for 13 February 2012 at 4:30 pm –

(a) Provision of international school places, and

(b) Tseung Kwan O Joint Student Hostel.

4. Regarding (a) above, the Chairman said that members had agreed at the last Panel meeting that deputations should be invited to give views on the subject. She invited members' view on the proposed list of deputations comprising chambers of commerce and international schools which was tabled at the meeting.

5. Ms Audrey EU said that as some chambers of commerce had expressed concern about the impact of the tight supply of international school places on the business environment in Hong Kong, she suggested that members of the Panel on Economic Development should be invited to attend the meeting. She also suggested that a notice should be posted onto the website of the Legislative Council ("LegCo") to invite views from members of the public.

6. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that the Business Facilitation Advisory Committee, which included representatives of chambers of commerce, had discussed and expressed concern about the impact of the shortage of international school places on foreign investments in Hong Kong. Chambers of commerce such as the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, the British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong and the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce had also expressed similar concern.

7. Ms Cyd HO said that she was given to understand that some universities had encountered difficulties in employing teaching staff from overseas as they were worried that they might not be able to secure school places for their children. She suggested that the management of the University Grants Committee ("UGC")-funded institutions should also be invited to give views on the subject.

8. Given the large number of deputations to be invited, the Chairman suggested and members agreed that the next regular meeting be extended for one hour to end at 7:30 pm. Members also agreed that the organizations

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in the list tabled at the meeting and the management of the UGC-funded institutions be invited and that a general notice be posted on the LegCo website to invite public views on the subject.

Education on media literacy and free newspapers containing indecent content

9. The Chairman referred members to the letter from the Education Bureau ("EDB") dated 6 January 2012 tabled at the meeting concerning discussion of issues arising from the concern about the indecent content of Sharp Daily. The Administration was of the view that the subject should not be discussed solely from the perspective of education policy as it involved issues relating to the enforcement of the Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance (Cap. 390) ("COIAO") which was within the purview of the Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority. She sought members' view in this regard.

10. Dr Priscilla LEUNG said that some deputations had expressed dissatisfaction that a meeting had yet to be arranged for them to give views on the subject. She considered that the best approach was to hold a joint meeting with the Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting ("ITB Panel"), with representatives from the Education Bureau as well as the relevant bureau and law enforcement bodies responsible for monitoring obscene and indecent articles invited to attend the meeting to answer members' questions. She hoped that a joint meeting with the ITB Panel could be held as soon as possible. Ms Audrey EU, Mr TAM Yiu-chung, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Mr Tommy CHEUNG shared the view that it would be more appropriate to hold a joint Panel meeting to discuss the issues arising from the concern about the indecent content of Sharp Daily.

11. Dr Priscilla LEUNG enquired about the meeting arrangements should a joint meeting not be held. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Clerk said that the Panel on Education could invite members of the ITB Panel to attend its meeting to discuss the relevant issues.

12. The Chairman agreed that it would be more effective to discuss the subject at a joint meeting with the ITB Panel given that it involved the enforcement of COIAO which was under the policy purview of the ITB Panel. The Chairman further said that she would follow up the matter with the Chairman of the ITB Panel.

13. Prof Patrick LAU considered that when the subject was discussed, the Administration should provide information on circumstances under

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which an article was required to be sealed in a wrapper.

14. The Chairman suggested and members agreed that the list (tabled at the meeting) of 29 organizations covering mainly school councils, education professional organizations, parent-teacher associations and education concern groups be invited to attend the meeting to give views, and that other interested organizations were also welcome to do so.

(Post-meeting note: With the concurrence of the Panel Chairmen, a joint meeting of the Panel on Education and the ITB Panel to discuss the subject of "Education on media literacy and free newspapers containing indecent content" was scheduled for 9:00 am on 14 February 2012.)

Mechanism for rechecking of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination ("HKDSEE") results

15. Ms Cyd HO said that the HKDSEE practice paper for Liberal Studies ("LS") recently released by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority ("HKEAA") had raised concern about the lack of objective marking standards for the subject. In view of such concern and given that LS examination results would impact on university admission, it was expected that there would be many applications for rechecking of results of this subject. She was concerned whether HKEAA had sufficient manpower to handle a large number of rechecking applications within a short period of time after the release of the HKDSEE results on 20 July 2012 and whether needy students could afford the rechecking fees. She suggested that the Panel should discuss the mechanism for rechecking HKDSEE results, including the manpower arrangement for handling the applications, the rechecking fees and the relevant procedures. She considered that the subject should be discussed at the March 2012 Panel meeting given that HKDSEE would take place soon. Dr Priscilla LEUNG shared the concern and agreed that the Panel should discuss the matter as soon as possible. The Chairman requested the Secretariat to relay to the Administration members' request for early discussion of the subject.

Review on the subvention arrangements for the English Schools Foundation ("ESF")

16. The Chairman requested the Secretariat to enquire with the Administration on the timing for reporting to the Panel on the review of the subvention arrangements for ESF.

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Profits generated from self-financing programmes

17. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed concern about the huge profits made by institutions from their self-financing post-secondary programmes, which he considered unfair to students, in particular those who had to borrow loans in order to pay for the high tuition fees. According to the information provided by the Administration, the total surplus from the self-financed programmes offered by the UGC-funded institutions and their self-financed education arms in the 2010-2011 academic year amounted to some \$1 billion, representing a surplus margin of 20%. He suggested that the Panel should discuss issues relating to the huge surplus generated by the self-financing programmes, and representatives of the institutions and UGC should be invited to the meeting. He requested the Administration to provide a breakdown of the surplus generated from the self-financing programmes offered by each institution in each year over the past years to facilitate members' discussion. Mr Abraham SHEK considered that the Administration should also provide the full financial accounts of such programmes offered by each institution to facilitate members' examination of the costs for running such programmes. The Chairman said that the subject would be included in the Panel's list of outstanding items for discussion and the Administration would be requested to discuss the subject with members as early as practicable.

IV. Proposed creation of one supernumerary Principal Education Officer post in the Education Bureau

[LC Paper No. CB(2)704/11-12(01)]

Briefing by the Administration

18. Under Secretary for Education ("US(Ed)") briefed members on the Administration's proposal to create a supernumerary Principal Education Officer ("PEO") (D1) post in the School Administration and Support Branch ("PEO(SS)") under EDB for a period of 36 months from 1 May 2012 to 30 April 2015 to review and oversee the implementation of enhanced services for students with special educational needs ("SEN") and non-Chinese speaking ("NCS") students in local mainstream schools.

Discussions

19. While supporting in principle the objectives of the proposed creation of the PEO post to review and oversee the enhanced services for SEN and NCS students, Mrs Regina IP pointed out that EDB had already

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had as many as 12 Principal Assistant Secretary ("PAS") (D2) posts and was among the bureaux with the highest number of such posts. She said that EDB had created new directorate posts for new projects in the past, such as the PAS post to provide support to the Quality Education Fund ("QEF"). She enquired whether the post of PAS/QEF had been deleted and, if so, whether its duties had been absorbed by other PAS posts.

20. US(Ed) explained that the proposed post was a PEO (D1) post and there were at present nine PEO posts in EDB. Deputy Secretary for Education (4) ("DS(Ed)4") supplemented that implementation of new policies did not necessarily require creation of new posts. Duties arising from new policies such as pre-primary education were sometimes absorbed by existing staff through internal deployment. As regards the PAS post created for QEF, the incumbent had also taken up duties in other policy areas in addition to QEF.

21. In response to Mrs Regina IP's enquiry on the number of D1 and D2 posts in EDB and the main responsibilities of the proposed PEO post, Deputy Secretary for Education (6) ("DS(Ed)6") said that there were currently nine PEO (D1) posts and 12 PAS (D2) posts in EDB. The proposed supernumerary PEO post would be filled by internal deployment and would be tasked to steer and oversee the implementation of policies on SEN and NCS students, the relevant work of which were currently handled by different divisions and branches in EDB.

22. While agreeing on the need for the proposed PEO(SS) post, Mrs Regina IP was concerned whether there would be sufficient steer from the Secretary for Education ("SED") and US(Ed) for the policy portfolios overseen by the proposed PEO(SS) post, given the many pressing issues which had to be dealt with by EDB.

23. US(Ed) said that SED and himself were all along very concerned about the support for SEN and NCS students. The proposed PEO post which would last for a period of 36 months would be responsible for reviewing the policies pertaining to support for SEN and NCS students in local mainstream schools. He appealed to members for support of the proposed creation of the PEO post.

24. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that Members belonging to the Liberal Party supported the Administration's proposal. Given the public concern about the support for students with SEN, he enquired whether a dedicated team would be set up to oversee the relevant policies after the lapse of the three-year supernumerary PEO post.

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25. US(Ed) assured members that the Administration would strive to provide the required support to SEN and NCS students, despite the manpower constraints within the establishment of EDB. The proposed supernumerary PEO post was to coordinate the conduct of a policy study of school-based professional support for SEN and NCS students. It was too early to tell at this stage whether additional resources would be required for the implementation of the relevant recommendations arising from the policy study. Where necessary, the Administration would follow the established procedures to seek LegCo's approval for additional resources upon the completion of the policy study.

26. Ms Cyd HO supported the policy study to be conducted by the Administration but queried the need for a dedicated three-year post to carry out the study. In her view, it would be more efficient to have the Central Policy Unit or external consultants conducting the study. She pointed out that there was a host of problems with special education obviously requiring the Administration's prompt attention such as the sub-standard premises of some special schools and inadequate supply of teachers. Instead of waiting for the outcome of the policy study, the Administration should take immediate actions to tackle these problems. While she did not object to the creation of the proposed PEO post, she considered that the policy study would not be meaningful if EDB was unable to obtain the required funding for implementing the recommendations made in the study. She stressed that the Administration should not use the policy study as an excuse to defer taking actions on matters warranting immediate attention.

27. US(Ed) clarified that the duties of the proposed PEO post were not confined to the policy study. He also assured members that the Administration would not defer actions on matters requiring immediate attention until the completion of the policy study. Appropriate measures would be taken where justified and in fact, additional resources had been allocated to the provision of support for SEN and NCS students in the past few years. The injection into the Language Fund for the launch of the After-school Learning Support Partnership Scheme and the extension of year of study for students at special schools were cases in point. At present, the policy responsibilities relating to SEN and NCS students in ordinary schools were segregated amongst five divisions under three branches, and such an arrangement was not desirable. The proposed PEO post was to take on the overall planning and coordinating work on policy and support services for these students in the coming few years.

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28. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong supported the Administration's proposal. He said that there had been a lot of discussions in LegCo on education for SEN and NCS students and the public had expressed much grievances on the matters. It would therefore be good to have a dedicated person overseeing the matters. He expected that with the creation of the proposed PEO post, long standing issues relating to education for SEN and NCS students should be resolved and due attention should be given to these two groups of students whose needs had long been neglected.

29. Miss Tanya CHAN sought confirmation on whether the proposed PEO post would also oversee the support for NCS students with SEN. US(Ed) responded in the affirmative, adding that the Administration saw potential for synergy in integrating school-based professional support services targeted at NCS and SEN students, hence its proposal that the policy responsibilities for education support for these students be placed under the same PEO(SS) post.

30. Mr TAM Yiu-chung said that Members belonging to the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong had all along requested the Administration to step up the support for small children with SEN so that appropriate assistance would be provided to them at the stage of pre-primary education. Given the existing limited support for kindergarten ("KG") teachers to cater for students with SEN, he considered that the proposed PEO post should play a role in enhancing the professional support to KGs admitting students with SEN.

31. DS(Ed)4 responded that the Administration recognized that there was room for improvement in respect of the support to the professional development of KG teachers to cater for learner diversity and strategies to enhance support in this regard was one of the objectives of the policy study. It was the Administration's plan to engage professional bodies to collaborate with KGs to enhance the professional support to teachers in rendering support for SEN students.

32. Mr TAM Yiu-chung further said that NCS parents were very concerned about their children's education. Some NCS parents preferred sending their children to local mainstream schools while some others preferred designated schools. However, irrespective of their choice of school, it was necessary for the Administration to enhance the support to NCS students. He was given to understand that at present, EDB could to a certain extent track the academic attainments of NCS students. He asked whether there would be any changes in this regard with the creation of the proposed PEO post.

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33. DS(Ed)2 responded that given the increasing number of local mainstream schools admitting NCS students, it was necessary for the Administration to expand the school network for supporting NCS students and enhance the support measures to these schools. On collection of data concerning NCS students, DS(Ed)2 said that currently, EDB could track basic information concerning NCS students' academic attainments with the data obtained from the school places allocation system. With the proposed creation of the PEO post, a longitudinal study would be conducted to collect data on NCS students' academic performance in local mainstream schools so as to facilitate the formulation and evaluation of support measures for them.

34. Noting from paragraph 13 of the Administration's paper that, the policy responsibilities and duties relating to SEN and NCS students in ordinary schools were currently segregated amongst five divisions under three branches in EDB, Ms Audrey EU enquired about the five divisions involved and whether there would be any changes to the organization structure of EDB with the proposed creation of the PEO post to co-ordinate and oversee the work currently undertaken by these five divisions. She also requested the Administration to elaborate on the duties of the proposed PEO post and sought confirmation on whether one of the main duties of the post was to test out certain policies which had already been formulated by the Administration.

35. US(Ed) responded that the five divisions under three branches currently taking up policy responsibilities and duties relating to NCS and SEN students were school administration and support, special schools and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools under the policy portfolio of DS(Ed)4; curriculum development under DS(Ed)5; and school places allocation system under DS(Ed)2. He further said that the Administration had already formulated certain policies relating to education for SEN and NCS students. The Administration had however been receiving and collating many views from stakeholders. The proposed PEO post was to critically examine the views collected and map out the relevant strategies and implementation plan.

36. On education support for NCS students, DS(Ed)2 supplemented that having regard to the views of stakeholders, Panel members and the Equal Opportunity Commission, the Administration had set out four specific policy directions, namely (a) reviewing the number of schools for intensive support for NCS students and the related funding support in developing different modes of support; (b) re-structuring the platform for sharing of practices and experiences among schools in order to achieve

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more effective sharing within districts; (c) developing a more objective, scientific and systematic assessment of the cost-effectiveness of the support measures and evaluating the alignment of the support modes for schools; and (d) conducting a longitudinal study to track NCS students' academic performance in local mainstream schools. These four areas of work had already been included in the responsibilities of the proposed PEO post.

37. Regarding special education, DS(Ed)4 said that through the proposed creation of the PEO post, the Administration aimed to strengthen its existing work in three main areas, viz. training and professional support for KG teachers; better use of teaching resources by schools; and articulation support between KGs and primary schools and between primary and secondary schools.

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38. Ms Audrey EU requested the Administration to provide, before submitting the proposal to the Establishment Subcommittee ("ESC"), supplementary information on the deliverables of the proposed PEO post after the three-year period.

39. Prof Patrick LAU expressed support for the proposed creation of the PEO post. He pointed out that as the existing curriculum for NCS students was a barrier for their academic performance, review of the curriculum for NCS students should be one of the responsibilities of the proposed PEO post.

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40. In response, US(Ed) said that curriculum development and adaptation was indeed one of the key elements of education support for NCS and SEN students and would be related to the job duties of the proposed PEO post. At the request of Prof Patrick LAU, he agreed to include the relevant information in its submission to the ESC.

41. Given the wide scope of special education and education for NCS students, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung was concerned whether the proposed PEO post was tasked with too many responsibilities. He pointed out that for special education alone, there were a number of areas requiring support, such as after-school learning and curriculum design. He sought information on the specific duties of the proposed PEO post in relation to special education.

42. US(Ed) responded that the new PEO would be supported by other staff in carrying out his/her duties. DS(Ed)4 supplemented that as explained earlier, there was room for enhancement in the Administration's

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existing work on special education such as training and professional support for KG teachers and school based support services for KGs. One of the focuses of the proposed PEO post was to strengthen the support services in these areas.

Conclusion

43. Concluding the discussions, the Chairman said that the Panel supported the submission of the staffing proposal to ESC for consideration.

V. Infrastructure enhancement for Education Information System
[LC Paper No. CB(2)704/11-12(02)]

44. 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

45. US(Ed) briefed members on the Administration's proposal to enhance the infrastructure of the Education Information System ("EdIS") of EDB.

Security measures and risk assessment

46. Miss Tanya CHAN said that given the large amount of important data stored in EdIS, she was concerned about the measures to be adopted by the Administration to ensure the security and integrity of the data during its transfer from the existing EdIS to the new system. She enquired whether the Administration had conducted any risk assessment for the data migration.

47. The Chairman said that in view of the large amount of data to be transferred to the new system, the Administration should work out a plan to ensure smooth and efficient transfer. Ms Audrey EU also expressed concern about the handling of the data in the existing system after data migration.

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48. Chief Systems Manager (Information Technology Management) ("CSM/ITM") responded that it was estimated that the implementation of the entire project would take about 40 months and most of the time would be spent on user acceptance tests. Both conventional tests and simulations would be conducted to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the data and the proper functioning of the new system. Security assessment would be conducted before the launch of the new system in strict compliance with relevant Government information technology security regulations and requirements. As regards the data in the existing EdIS, it would be erased after data migration and the hard disks of the existing EdIS would be cleaned to ensure permanent removal of the data before disposal. At the request of members, the Administration undertook to provide information on the security measures to be adopted for transfer and storage of data in the paper to be submitted to the Finance Committee ("FC").

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49. Noting that the existing EdIS would be used for four more years until the implementation of the new EdIS and given its long service years, Miss Tanya CHAN asked whether the Administration had conducted any assessment on the capability of the existing EdIS.

50. CSM/ITM responded that EDB had commissioned an external consultant to conduct an assessment on the existing EdIS in 2010. According to the assessment result, the existing EdIS could provide the same service level in the next four years. The migration of the existing EdIS system to the new system would take place in 2016-2017.

Shared use of cloud computing infrastructure among Government departments

51. Dr Samson TAM opined that the project was important as it aimed to redevelop the existing EdIS into an integrated computer system with new functions. It was his understanding that Government departments would consider using cloud computing when revamping their information systems with a view to saving maintenance cost. Noting that the new EdIS would use cloud computing, he enquired whether the new EdIS and the information systems in other Government departments would share the use of a common cloud computing infrastructure.

52. CSM/ITM responded that the Administration would keep in view the development of a common cloud computing infrastructure by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer and would consider using it for EdIS if suitable. Dr Samson TAM said that the actual costs of

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the project could be lower than the estimated costs should other technologies be used for the project when tenders were invited in 2013-2014. CSM/ITM confirmed Dr TAM's understanding.

Programming for the new EdIS

53. Ms Cyd HO said that she was given to understand that the efforts of some policy bureaux in introducing policy changes had been hindered by difficulties in making changes to their existing computer systems to complement the new policies. Given that the funding proposal covered non-recurrent expenditure for a period of five years from 2012-2013 to 2016-2017 and policy changes would be inevitable during the period, she considered it important that adequate flexibility should be built into the upgraded EdIS to cater for future policy changes. It was therefore necessary for the Administration to include in its project proposal the estimated expenditure and time required for making changes to the computer programmes so as to obviate the need for additional funding request during the five-year project period and to ensure the availability of technical personnel to make the required programme changes. She enquired whether the estimated expenditure for the project included that required for making changes to the computer programmes to complement any policy changes during the project period, and if so, under which item(s) would such expenditure be disbursed and which type of staff would be responsible for such work.

54. Referring to paragraph 15 of the Administration's paper, CSM/ITM responded that the estimated expenditure of \$89.839 million for the item of "Implementation Services" had already included the costs for engaging a system contractor to upgrade the existing EdIS, including system analysis and design, programming and system setup, etc. The estimated \$14.615 million for the item of "Contract staff" was for hiring staff to provide support in the overall project management.

55. Regarding the flexibility of EdIS, CSM/ITM said that the Administration had been able to make use of existing resources to add new functions to the current EdIS to cater for new policies and measures introduced in the past 15 years. The cross-departmental system interface between the existing EdIS and the Student Financial Assistance Agency for the purpose of disbursing the School Textbook Assistance Scheme was a case in point.

56. Ms Cyd HO queried whether the cost for project management (at around \$15 million) was disproportionately high, considering that it

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represented about 16% of the estimated expenditure for implementation services (at around \$90 million). She reiterated that the Administration should include in its project requirements for the system contractor the need to build in flexibility in the system to cater for new business requirements arising from policy changes. The Administration should also request the system contractor to indicate the time required for making changes to the programmes to accommodate policy changes. She requested the Administration to provide supplementary information in this regard in its paper to be submitted to FC.

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57. US(Ed) responded that EDB would make its best efforts to build in flexibility into the new system in specifying the user requirements to meet future needs and changes as far as practicable. It would however be difficult for the system contractor to commit to accommodating all changes. He added that the contract staff to be hired for the project would provide support in not only software implementation but also hardware implementation and overall project management.

Staffing and financial implications

58. Ms Audrey EU enquired whether existing staff would be deployed or creation of new posts would be required for the implementation of the project. She said that in most cases, less manpower would be required after the introduction of new information systems and asked whether it would be the case in the implementation of the new EdIS. She also asked whether the new system would reduce the administrative work of schools and teachers.

59. US(Ed) responded that one of the main objectives of EdIS was to reduce the administrative work of schools and teachers by streamlining EDB's business process. DS(Ed)6 supplemented that as the design of the existing EdIS could not support a holistic interface of related data amongst the different computer systems, data matching and sharing had to be done through manual efforts at present. The enhanced EdIS would enable the matching and sharing of data amongst the computer systems and would hence substantially reduce the staff efforts of EDB and schools to manually process and verify data. DS(Ed)6 added that eight time-limited posts were estimated to be required for overseeing, co-ordinating and supporting the development of EdIS. These additional manpower resources would no longer be required after the enhanced EdIS was put in place.

60. Noting that the infrastructure enhancement for EdIS would generate annual savings, Prof Patrick LAU enquired whether the Administration

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had taken into account the expenditures required for the maintenance of the new EdIS in the estimation of the recurrent cost savings. He added that as training for staff on the new EdIS was essential for smooth system migration, the provision of the required training should be included in the tender of the project. He also enquired where the new system would be hosted.

61. US(Ed) responded that given the high maintenance cost of the existing systems, the annual savings arising from the proposed infrastructure enhancement could fully cover the maintenance cost of the new system.

62. CSM/ITM supplemented that the new EdIS would be hosted by data centre service provider as in the case of the existing EdIS. The Administration would decide on the centre to host the new system when tender was invited. He added that staff training had been included in the estimated expenditures for implementation services and contract staff. The system contractor would provide training to EDB staff.

63. The Chairman said that Members belonging to the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong supported the Administration's proposal. She considered it important that the new system should be forward looking and able to provide the required information to different stakeholders including schools, parents and Members in a timely manner, such as data on non-Chinese speaking students' academic performance. Given that different stakeholders would have different requirements for the new system, she urged the Administration to seriously consider setting up a working group comprising relevant stakeholders to ensure that the new system would meet their needs. She said that the project would involve a large amount of liaison work with the system contractor, and enquired who would lead the project.

64. DS(Ed)6 responded that the new EdIS aimed not only to address the constraints of the existing system, but also to enhance the flexibility of EDB's business process and allow better interface of the data of schools, parents and students. With the application of the latest technologies such as cloud computing and web technology, the Administration would explore new means to improve service quality, including the introduction of new online electronic services to students and parents.

65. As regards the steer for the project, DS(Ed)6 said that the Information Technology Management ("ITM") Division headed by a

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Deputy Secretary for Education was responsible for the coordination of matters relating to information technology within the bureau including the EdIS. Individual divisions within EDB, which were responsible for the management of data on policies under their respective purview, had regular contacts with stakeholders to solicit their views.

66. The Chairman sought information on the number of staff in the ITM Division designated for the liaison work with the system contractor and the testing of the new system. DS(Ed)6 responded that there were around 60 staff in the ITM Division and eight time-limited posts were estimated to be required to provide dedicated support at the early stage of the infrastructure enhancement.

67. The Chairman was concerned whether eight project staff was adequate given the large amount of liaison work with the system contractor and the complexity of the project. According to her experience in information system enhancement projects, the manpower and efforts required would be much greater than expected.

68. Concluding the discussions, the Chairman said that the Panel supported the submission of the funding proposal to FC for consideration in the second quarter of 2012.

VI. A new Project Yi Jin under the new academic structure
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)704/11-12(03) and (04)]

69. Members noted the updated background brief entitled "Project Yi Jin" [LC Paper No. CB(2)704/11-12(04)] prepared by the Legislative Council ("LegCo") Secretariat.

Briefing by the Administration

70. US(Ed) briefed members on the Administration's plan for the development of the Yi Jin Diploma under the New Academic Structure ("NAS").

Discussions

71. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that when Project Yi Jin ("PYJ") was launched in 2000, a simple tuition fee reimbursement mechanism was put in place to encourage students to enrol in and complete the programme. The funding support took the form of a 30% reimbursement of the tuition

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fee for each module that was satisfactorily completed by the students. With the development of a new PYJ under NAS, he considered that improvements should be made to the tuition fee reimbursement mechanism. Given that most of the PYJ students were from grass root families, the Administration should consider setting different scales of reimbursement, say 30%, 50%, 75% and 100%, according to the financial situation of students. Alternatively, the Administration could consider raising the reimbursement rate from the existing 30% to 50% of the tuition fees across the board.

72. US(Ed) responded that the current eligibility for student financial assistance was more relaxed than the time when PYJ was launched. Following the recent relaxation of the eligibility for assistance provided to needy students, the number of students eligible for 100% financial assistance had substantially increased. The Administration had yet to finalize the details for implementation of the new PYJ and would carefully consider Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's suggestion having regard to the financial implication and priority in allocation of financial resources.

73. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that the reimbursement rate of tuition fees to students enrolled in evening adult education courses had recently been adjusted upwards to 30%, 50% or 100%. As the nature of students attending evening adult education courses and students of PYJ were similar, the Administration should seriously consider adopting the same reimbursement rates of evening adult education courses for the new PYJ to encourage secondary school leavers to continue their studies.

74. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che expressed support for Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's suggestion, pointing out that unlike students of evening adult education courses who usually had a job, most PYJ students relied solely on their family to support their tuition fees. He enquired about the level of tuition fees of the new PYJ and whether there was any age limit for enrolment. Noting from paragraph 6 of the Administration's paper that EDB was working with the Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions ("FCE") to review PYJ, he further sought information on the merits and downside of PYJ.

75. US(Ed) responded that the level of tuition fees had yet to be fixed. The Administration would discuss with the institutions concerned on the details of the new PYJ programme and the level of tuition fees. As regards the age limit of students for enrolling in the new PYJ, US(Ed) said that while the project was targeted primarily at secondary school leavers under NAS, it also sought to provide an alternative pathway for adult learners to

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acquire a formal qualification for the purposes of employment and further study. Both secondary school leavers under NAS or adult learners at the age of 21 and above could join the new PYJ.

76. On the merits of PYJ, Deputy Secretary for Education (1) ("DS(Ed)1") said that in the first stage of the review, the Administration had reaffirmed the benefits of the existing PYJ and considered that there were merits for introducing a new programme based on the PYJ model. For secondary school leavers who did not obtain satisfactory results in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination ("HKDSEE") and adult learners, a new programme based on the existing PYJ would provide them with an alternative pathway to acquire a formal qualification. DS(Ed)1 added that as greater emphasis had been placed on applied learning under NAS, the Administration would keep under review the ongoing need for the new PYJ programme under NAS.

77. Miss Tanya CHAN noted from media reports that the Putonghua module would be removed from the programme and the Liberal Studies ("LS") module would be added. As the Administration planned to launch the new PYJ in the 2012-2013 academic year, she enquired when the new programme would be finalized and how many students were expected to enrol in it. Given the reduction in the number of modules under the new programme from 10 to eight and noting that the tuition fees of PYJ had not been adjusted for a long period of time, she asked whether there was any plan to adjust the tuition fees of the new PYJ.

78. US(Ed) responded that the enrolment for PYJ had progressively increased since its implementation and the enrolment in 2010 was 16 000. While it was not easy to estimate the enrolment for the new PYJ, the Administration was optimistic that it would be welcome and supported by secondary school leavers. DS(Ed)1 supplemented that there was no cap on the number of enrolment for the new PYJ and members of FCE were encouraged to accommodate all applications for enrolment as far as practical. On tuition fees, DS(Ed)1 said that the tuition fees of the PYJ programme had been adjusted downwards and had not been increased in recent years. The Administration would take into account relevant considerations including the design of the new programme and the inflation rate since the last fee adjustment in considering FCE's tuition fee proposals.

79. DS(Ed)1 further said that the new PYJ programme would be reorganized to align with the new senior secondary curriculum and meet students' needs for further studies and employment. She elaborated that the

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new programme sought to strengthen students' language and communication skills and broaden their horizons. The Putonghua module which was currently an independent subject would be merged into the Chinese Language module and the LS module would be added to the new programme to provide students with a broader knowledge base on Hong Kong, the nation and the world. The Information Technology module would be subsumed in various different modules to enhance students' knowledge on its applications in different areas. While the modules of the new PYJ would be restructured to keep abreast of the time, the total number of contact hours would remain unchanged.

80. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan pointed out that while the existing PYJ certificate was comparable to five passes in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination ("HKCEE"), they did not include a pass in the subject of Mathematics. As a result, PYJ certificate holders did not meet the entry requirements of some of the civil service grades which required five passes in HKCEE including Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. He noted that to address such a concern, the Administration was examining the possibility of including an additional subject of Mathematics elective course under the new programme. For students who had satisfactorily completed the said Mathematics elective course, the qualification was deemed comparable to the attainment of Level 2 standard in five subjects in HKDSEE including Chinese, English and Mathematics. Given that Mathematics was already a core module in the PYJ programme, he enquired whether the new programme could be designed in such a way that the Yi Jin Diploma was deemed comparable to the attainment of Level 2 standard in five subjects in HKDSEE including Chinese, English and Mathematics without the need for introducing an additional Mathematics elective course.

81. US(Ed) said that in response to the views of Mr LEE Cheuk-yan and members of the public including students, the Administration was exploring the feasibility of including an additional subject of Mathematics elective module under the new programme. The current PYJ certificate was accepted by the Government as meeting the entry requirements of more than 30 civil service grades which required five passes in HKCEE, including Chinese Language and English Language. Only five civil service grades required five passes in HKCEE including Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. These five grades were Assistant Clerical Officer, Assistant Taxation Officer, Land Inspector II, Assistant Trade Controls Officer and Supplies Supervisor II. As these grades were required to handle figures, a pass in Mathematics was necessary. Given that the aptitude for Mathematics varied among students,

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requiring the attainment of the equivalent of Level 2 standard in Mathematics across the board for the award of Yi Jin Diploma might be too high a threshold for many students. The additional Mathematics elective course therefore provided an option to cater for the different needs and abilities of students.

82. DS(Ed)1 pointed out that only a small number of civil service grades required a pass in Chinese, English and Mathematics. Many of the civil service grades popular among PYJ students such as the disciplined services grades did not require a pass in Mathematics. She added that the core Mathematics module was at basic proficiency level and the passing rate was not as high as other modules. The proposed additional Mathematics elective course would provide a pathway for students who had the interest and ability to pursue a higher attainment in Mathematics for career and study purpose.

83. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that the Administration should make it clear to students that the Yi Jin Diploma did not include the attainment of Level 2 standard in Mathematics, and the availability of the Mathematics elective course for those who wished to obtain Level 2 standard in the subject. The Administration should enhance promotion in this regard. DS(Ed)1 responded that the Administration would follow up on Mr LEE's view. She added that the Yi Jin Diploma would be deemed comparable to the attainment of Level 2 standard in five subjects in HKDSEE including Chinese and English and this qualification would meet the entry requirements of Associate Degree programmes and many civil service grades. The Administration was currently seeking the assistance of the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications on a comparability study.

84. Ms Audrey EU noted that in the past three years, around 50% of the PYJ graduates were engaged in work and almost 40% were furthering their studies. She enquired about the positioning of the new PYJ and whether it aimed to have more graduates furthering their studies. She pointed out that the level of tuition fees and the availability of places would affect PYJ graduates' decision on whether to further their studies.

85. US(Ed) responded that the new PYJ aimed primarily to provide another opportunity for secondary school leavers under NAS to obtain a qualification equivalent to Level 2 standard in five subjects in the HKDSEE for the purposes of employment and further studies. The Administration did not consider it necessary to set a target for the percentages of PYJ graduates furthering their studies or taking up

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employment. He pointed out that some PYJ graduates might have a stronger impetus to acquire higher academic or professional qualifications after gaining some working experience and having a clearer idea about their career interests.

86. Ms Cyd HO pointed out that the academic achievements of PYJ students varied and low achievers would need more time to make improvements. In her view, the total 600 contact hours of the PYJ programme was inadequate for the low achievers. She suggested that on top of the 600 contact hours, additional contact hours should be assigned to core subjects such as Mathematics, English and Chinese according to the needs of students to help them to better prepare themselves for meeting the entry requirements for admission to Higher Diploma or Associate Degree programmes.

87. US(Ed) responded that the Administration would consider members' suggestions in designing the programme for the new PYJ. He added that further study was only one of the options of PYJ graduates. He reiterated that some PYJ graduates might prefer gaining some working experience first before deciding their future career paths.

88. Vice-Chairman of Project Yi Jin Programme Management Committee said that programme design was an important element in PYJ. The programme should be able to rekindle students' interests in learning and help them develop a proactive attitude towards lifelong learning. Apart from core modules, the programme should offer a wide range of electives to cater for students' diverse interests and learning aspiration. Many PYJ graduates had made satisfactory academic progress and some had gone on to pursue higher degrees.

89. Ms Cyd HO reiterated her view that the number of contact hours for the modules should be based on students' needs and abilities. For students with low academic attainment or those who wished to continue their studies upon completion of PYJ, they might need additional contact hours. For those who had obtained satisfactory results in certain subjects in HKDSEE, consideration should be given to exempting them from the relevant modules.

VII. Any other business

90. There being no other business, the meeting closed at 6:40 pm.

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Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
2 March 2012