

立法會 *Legislative Council*

LC Paper No. CB(2)968/11-12(04)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 13 February 2012

Provision of international school places

Purpose

This paper sets out the issues of concern raised by Members about the provision of international school places.

International schools

2. Under the current policy, international schools, local private schools and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools ("DSS") are allowed to admit non-local students. International schools generally refer to those schools offering full non-local curricula designed primarily for non-Chinese speaking students and foreign nationals. Non-profit-making international schools applying for government assistance in the form of land grant or vacant school premises are required to serve mainly the target group(s) of students that they have publicly stated they would serve and that this level should be set at 50%. Financial assistance in the form of interest-free loan for school building may be offered to non-profit-making international school operators on an application basis. The loan, repayable in 10 years, is capped at 100% of the cost for constructing a standard-design public sector school accommodating the same number of students.

3. According to the student enrolment survey conducted by the Administration in September 2010, there are 47 international schools in Hong Kong providing a total of about 36 000 primary and secondary school places. These schools offer different non-local curricula, including American, Australian, British, Canadian, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Singaporean

and International Baccalaureate Programme. Breakdown on the number of school places provided by individual international schools are set out in **Appendix I**.

Members' concerns

4. The Panel on Education ("the Panel") discussed the supply of international school places and provision of boarding facilities for non-local students at its meeting on 16 April 2009. Members had also raised questions about the provision of international school places at a number of Council meetings. The major issues of concern raised by Members are summarized below.

Adequacy of international school places

5. Members had received many complaints from the business sector about the insufficient supply of international school places for the children of expatriate staff. Many employees of international companies and overseas professionals were reluctant to be transferred to work in Hong Kong because of the difficulties to secure suitable local international school places for their children. Members were concerned about the adverse impact on the incentive of multinational companies in investing in Hong Kong and the Government's plan to develop Hong Kong into a regional education hub.

6. According to the Administration, it had been taking a three-pronged approach to promote the development of the international school sector. These measures included allocating vacant school premises and greenfield sites for development of international schools, as well as facilitating in-situ expansion of existing international schools. According to the information provided by the Administration in February 2012, the Administration has allocated four vacant school premises and four greenfield sites between 2007 and 2009 for the expansion or development of international schools. Over the past two years, the Administration has approved applications from seven international schools for using vacant school premises as temporary campuses. Recently, it has given in-principle support for the in-situ redevelopment of two existing international schools. These measures will provide a total of over 4 500 international school places progressively in the coming few years.

7. Members noted with concern the criticism about the complicated procedure for expanding international schools in Hong Kong. It was claimed that as many as 14 Government departments were involved in dealing with applications for expanding international schools.

8. In its written reply to the relevant written question raised at the Council meeting of 17 October 2007, the Administration advised that it had been liaising with international schools and rendering assistance on school development matters through assigned officers. School expansion plans often involved changes in land use which might require approval by the Town Planning Board and consultation with the District Councils concerned. In this regard, the Development Bureau would continue its liaison with the relevant departments including the Education Bureau ("EDB") with a view to expediting the necessary procedures and resolving matters at an early stage.

9. As far as school registration and school extension were concerned, the Administration pointed out that it had published comprehensive guidelines which were applicable to both public sector schools and private schools including international schools. These guidelines covered all the necessary application procedures and requirements of the relevant departments. Since the expansion of international schools might take different forms and the involvement of different Government departments might vary depending on the circumstances of each case, the Development Bureau would consider further enhancing the transparency of the relevant application procedures by working with other Government departments to run joint briefing sessions at which practical examples would be made reference to.

Mismatch between supply and demand of international school places

10. In reply to an oral question raised on international school places at the Council meeting of 25 May 2011, the Administration advised that as at September 2010, there were about 4 100 vacancies in international schools, including about 1 900 at primary level and 2 200 at secondary level. Members considered that the existence of vacant international school places on the one hand and the lodging of complaints by expatriates about insufficient supply of international school places on the other might point to the problem of mismatch between supply and demand of international school places. Members were given to understand that expatriate staff of multinational companies always looked for junior primary international school places on the Hong Kong Island.

11. The Administration had noted an opinion survey conducted by the British Chamber of Commerce which found that more than 90% of the expatriate parents preferred primary schools on the Hong Kong Island and

many of them would not consider sending their children to schools in Kowloon or the New Territories. In the Administration's view, it was difficult to resolve the geographical mismatch of international school places due to a shortage of land on the Hong Kong Island. Members put forward some suggestions for the Administration's consideration. These included increasing as far as practicable the number of places in popular international schools and exploring the feasibility of relocating the secondary section of popular international schools on the Hong Kong Island to the New Territories for the purpose of expanding their primary section in-situ.

Proportion of local and non-local students

12. Members were concerned about the existing policy under which local students could make up as high as 50% of the total student number in an international school. Members considered such a percentage of local students too high. They noted that a large number of children of families of means and civil servants were studying in international schools. According to the information provided by Civil Service Bureau, out of the 20 622 civil servants (civil servants on overseas terms included) who applied for local education allowances for their children in the 2008-2009 school year, approximately 10.8% (i.e. 2 223) of them arranged their children to study in international schools including English Schools Foundation schools. Members stressed that international schools should target at non-local students and urged the Administration to review and reduce the maximum percentage of local students in international schools in the light of the demand from non-local students. Some members expressed the view that a large number of families of means preferring international schools reflected the failure of the local education system.

13. According to the Administration, as at September 2010, about 13% of the students in international schools were local students (the breakdown by individual schools is at **Appendix II**), notwithstanding the ceiling of 50%. The Administration considered it appropriate to maintain the current requirement on percentages of local and non-local students. In the Administration's view, local students should not be deprived of the right to pursue non-local curriculum if they so wished and choices of parents should be respected. Taking into account the development of Hong Kong and the international outlook of the city, it was understandable that some local students might wish to pursue non-local curriculum. Furthermore, to facilitate the sustainability of those international schools which were operating on a self-financing mode, some flexibility in terms of students mix should be allowed.

14. Some members suggested that the Administration should give priority to schools admitting a higher percentage of non-local students in the allocation of greenfield sites for international school development. The Administration advised members that in the 2009 School Allocation Exercise, the successful bidders for the sites in Kowloon Bay, Lai Chi Kok and Sai Kung Town were granted to the school sponsoring bodies of existing international schools to meet their expansion needs. They had agreed that priority would be given to non-local students as far as practicable. In addition, each of them had undertaken to recruit a higher percentage (at least 70%) of "target students" than that required under the prevailing policy. As for the overseas organization which had been allocated with the Tuen Mun site for the development of a new international boarding school on a pilot basis, it had undertaken that no less than 50% of its school places would be reserved for non-local students and that no less than 50% of its boarding places would be reserved for non-local students holding student visas for entry into Hong Kong for studies.

15. In the context of the discussion on the review of the subvention arrangements for English School Foundation ("ESF") at the Panel meeting on 11 July 2011, some members expressed the view that given the need for Hong Kong to attract foreign investment, high priority should be accorded to the admission of non-local students in ESF schools and requested the Administration to discuss the admission policy of these students with ESF. The Administration advised members that the admission policy of ESF was one of the key issues covered in the review. ESF had indicated that it was prepared to review its admission policy to meet the needs of expatriate families with children requiring education in English to complement the overall development of Hong Kong.

Accountability of international schools in use of public resources

16. Another concern of members was the proper use of public resources allocated to international schools. Some members objected to the use of public resources including the provision of land at nominal premium and interest-free loans for international schools which indirectly subsidized local students.

17. The Administration advised members that the main purpose of granting land at nominal premium to support the development of a vibrant international school sector was to attract overseas families to come to work or invest in Hong Kong. With a view to enhancing the accountability in delivering quality education of those non-profit-making international schools which had received Government assistance in the form of vacant school premises or greenfield sites, the schools concerned were required to enter into a Service Agreement with the Government and abide by the conditions of the Tenancy Agreement or Private Treaty Grant as appropriate, both renewable subject to the schools' satisfactory

performance. The Service Agreement set out the standard of operation and performance targets of the school as agreed with the Administration. It also required the schools concerned to formulate a School Development Plan which laid down clear student learning and teaching objectives, with performance indicators and targets. Furthermore, to enhance financial transparency and accountability of those international schools which had received government assistance, the schools concerned were required to submit their audited accounts to EDB for examination on a regular basis.

18. Given the large amount of debentures purchased by parents whose children attended international schools, some members suggested that the Administration should consider extending the repayment period of the interest-free loans to international schools so that they might reduce the value of the debentures. According to the Administration, in order to raise funds to finance school operation, some international schools issued debentures for purchase by parents as a requisite condition for registration and admission of their children. The debentures issued would normally be redeemable in full to parents when their children left a school. The debenture arrangement varied among international schools. In line with the operational autonomous principle of international schools, the Administration did not micro-manage the debenture arrangement of individual international schools.

Boarding facilities for non-local students

19. Members noted that primary and secondary schools with enrolment of non-local students were not provided with publicly-funded boarding facilities. Different views had been expressed by members on whether subsidies should be provided for the provision of boarding facilities for non-local students. There was a view that apart from a relaxation of land use for hostel development within the site boundaries of schools, the Administration should provide subsidies and make land grants as appropriate for school sponsors to provide boarding facilities for non-local students. However, there was another view that given the resources constraints and the competing priorities in education, public funds should not be used to subsidise the provision of boarding facilities for non-local students in schools at the present stage.

20. The Chief Executive announced in the 2007-2008 Policy Address that the Administration would study the feasibility of allowing the international school sector to develop hostel facilities on a trial basis, with a view to attracting students from different parts of the world. Following this policy initiative, an overseas organization had been allocated with the greenfield site in Tuen Mun for the development of a new international school with boarding facilities on a pilot basis. To complement the Administration's efforts on this new international boarding school, the Administration had also decided to provide flexibility, on an application and case-by-case basis, for non-profit-making

international schools, local private schools and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools already in operation to develop boarding facilities in-situ, subject to certain prescribed conditions, such as the proposal would not require the granting of additional land by the Government, and at least 50% of the boarding places should be reserved for non-local students (could either be non-local children of families coming to Hong Kong for work or investment or non-local students holding student visas for entry into Hong Kong for studies) in that school.

Latest developments

21. To facilitate monitoring of the provision of public resources to international schools, the Administration had conducted a comprehensive survey in the international school sector to keep track of the supply and demand of international school places. At the meeting on 13 February 2012, the Administration will report to the Panel on the progress of the study on the provision of international school places and the way forward, and seek Members' view on applications for interest-free loan from three international schools.

Relevant papers

22. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in **Appendix III**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
9 February 2012

Provision of Places in International Schools*
(Based on the Student Enrolment Survey
conducted in September 2010)

Name of International School	Number of Places Provided
Primary-cum-Secondary	
American International School	594
Australian International School Hong Kong	1 239
Canadian International School	1 872
Carmel School	251
Chinese International School	1 403
Christian Alliance PC Lau Memorial International School	617
Delia School of Canada	1 315
Discovery Bay International School	710
German Swiss International School (English)	857
German Swiss International School (German)	620
Hong Kong International School	2 652
Hong Kong Academy	396
Hong Kong Japanese School	1035
Kellett School	552
Kiangsu & Chekiang Primary School and Kiangsu-Chekiang College	748
Korean International School (English)	480
Korean International School (Korean)	525
Lyc'ee Francis International School (English)	564
Lyc'ee Francis International School (French)	1 604
Sear Rogers International School – Peninsula	475
Singapore International School	1 080

Name of International School	Number of Places Provided
Primary	
Beacon Hill School	540
Bradbury School	720
Clearwater Bay School	720
Glenealy School	360
Hong Lok Yuen International School	324
Japanese International School (English)	170
Japanese International School (Japanese)	810
Kennedy School	900
Kingston International School	290
Kowloon Junior School	900
Lantau International School	246
Norwegian School	95
Peak School	360
Quarry Bay School	720
Shatin Junior School	900
International Montessori School	100
Think International School	175
Umah International Primary School	180
Yew Chung International School	642
Secondary	
Concordia International School	90
Island School	1 278
King George V School	1 780
Shatin College	1 224
South Island School	1 470
West Island School	1 272
International College Hong Kong (New Territories)	160
Total	36 015

* The above figures do not include special school

Source: Education Bureau, May 2011

**Numbers and percentages of
local and non-local students in international schools
(based on the student enrolment survey conducted in September 2010)**

Name of international school	Total number of students	Number of local students (Percentage)	Number of non-local students (Percentage)
Primary-cum-Secondary			
American International School	609	79 (12.9%)	530 (87.0%)
Australian International School Hong Kong*	1 074	103 (9.6%)	971 (90.4%)
Canadian International School*	1 655	264 (16.0%)	1 391 (84.0%)
Carmel School	181	0 (0.0%)	181 (100.0%)
Chinese International School	1 348	0 (0.0%)	1 348 (100.0%)
Christian Alliance PC Lau Memorial International School*	503	164 (32.6%)	339 (67.4%)
Delia School of Canada	1 036	29 (2.8%)	1 007 (97.2%)
Discovery Bay International School	690	20 (2.9%)	670 (97.0%)
German Swiss International School (English)*	780	152 (19.5%)	628 (80.5%)
German Swiss International School (German)*	388	2 (0.5%)	386 (99.5%)
Hong Kong International School	2 648	176 (6.6%)	2 472 (93.4%)
Hong Kong Academy *	349	15 (4.3%)	334 (95.7%)
Hong Kong Japanese School	730	1 (0.1%)	729 (99.9%)
Kellett School*	516	6 (1.2%)	510 (98.8%)
Kiangsu & Chekiang Primary School and Kiangsu-Chekiang College	648	259 (40.0%)	389 (60.0%)
Korean International School (English)	219	65 (29.7%)	154 (70.3%)
Korean International School (Korean)	137	2 (1.5%)	135 (98.5%)
Lyc'ee Francis International School (English)*	527	12 (2.3%)	515 (97.7%)
Lyc'ee Francis International School (French)*	1 387	1 (0.1%)	1 386 (99.9%)
Sear Rogers International School – Peninsula	236	72 (30.5%)	164 (69.5%)
Singapore International School	947	300 (31.7%)	647 (68.3%)

Name of international school	Total number of students	Number of local students (Percentage)	Number of non-local students (Percentage)
Primary			
Beacon Hill School	539	175 (32.5%)	364 (67.5%)
Bradbury School	715	9 (1.3%)	706 (98.7%)
Clearwater Bay School	719	33 (4.6%)	686 (95.4%)
Glenealy School	358	18 (5.0%)	340 (95.0%)
Hong Lok Yuen International School	282	76 (27.0%)	206 (73.0%)
Japanese International School (English)*	155	31 (20.0%)	124 (80.0%)
Japanese International School (Japanese)*	479	0 (0.0%)	479 (100.0%)
Kennedy School	901	31 (3.4%)	870 (96.6%)
Kingston International School	215	140 (65.1%)	75 (34.9%)
Kowloon Junior School	886	189 (21.3%)	697 (78.7%)
Lantau International School	211	0 (0.0%)	211 (100.0%)
Norwegian School	72	0 (0.0%)	72 (100.0%)
Peak School	354	10 (2.8%)	344 (97.2%)
Quarry Bay School	717	55 (7.7%)	662 (92.3%)
Shatin Junior School	898	192 (21.4%)	706 (78.6%)
International Montessori School	76	12 (15.8%)	64 (84.2%)
Think International School	81	66 (81.5%)	15 (18.5%)
Umah International Primary School	69	7 (10.1%)	62 (89.9%)
Yew Chung International School	598	314 (52.5%)	284 (47.5%)
Secondary			
Concordia International School	85	41 (48.2%)	44 (51.8%)
Island School	1 218	88 (7.2%)	1 130 (92.8%)
King George V School	1 710	92 (5.4%)	1 618 (94.6%)
Shatin College	1 193	168 (14.1%)	1 025 (85.9%)
South Island School	1 395	103 (7.4%)	1 292 (92.6%)
West Island School	1 210	139 (11.5%)	1 071 (88.5%)
International College Hong Kong (New Territories)*	116	36 (31.0%)	80 (69.0%)
Total	31 860	4 133	27 727

Note:

- (1) Local students include students who are Hong Kong permanent residents (with the right of abode in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region) and do not have any foreign passport (except British National (Overseas) Passport).
- (2) (*) refers to non-profit-making international schools which have been provided with government assistance in the form of allocation of school sites or vacant school premises.
- (3) The above figures do not include special school.

Source: Education Bureau, March 2011

**Relevant papers on
Provision of international school places**

Meeting	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Education	13.10.2005	Minutes Administration's paper on the provision of places in international schools
Panel on Education	11.12.2006 (Item V)	Minutes Agenda CB(2)543/06-07(03) CB(2)543/06-07(04) EMB(I)P/EHUB/1/1
Legislative Council	17.10.2007	[Question 19] Asked by : Hon TSANG Yok-sing Provision of international school places Reply Hansard (English) (page 92-93)
Panel on Education	18.10.2007 (Policy Briefing)	Minutes Agenda CB(2)44/07-08(01)
Panel on Education	23.10.2008 (Policy Briefing)	Minutes CB(2)68/08-09(01)
Panel on Education	16.4.2009	Minutes Agenda EDB(I)IS/1/08
Panel on Education	15.10.2009	Minutes CB(2)429/09-10(01)
Legislative Council	16.3.2011	[Question 4] Asked by : Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing The problem of insufficient international school places Reply Hansard (English) (page 69 - 82)

Meeting	Date of meeting	Paper
Legislative Council	25.5.2011	[Question 6] Asked by : Hon Audrey EU Places in international schools Reply Hansard (English) (page 56 - 69)
Panel on Education	11.7.2011 (Item IV)	Minutes Agenda
Legislative Council	7.12.2011	[Question 10] Asked by : Hon Tanya CHAN Education support for children of native-speaking English teachers Reply Hansard (English) (page 159 - 162)
Legislative Council	8.2.2012	[Question 14] Asked by : Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him Shortage of international school places for non-Chinese speaking students Reply

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
9 February 2012