

## **Panel on Education**

### **Subcommittee on Integrated Education**

**Difficulties in implementing integrated education with respect to students with :**

- (a) hearing impairment;**
- (b) visual impairment; and**
- (c) physical disabilities.**

### **Summary of views/concerns raised at the meetings on 18 June and 8 July 2013**

#### **Identification and assessment mechanisms**

1. The hearing assessment services provided by the Hospital Authority ("HA") and the Department of Health ("DH") include a territory-wide neonatal hearing screening programme launched by HA in 2007, the developmental surveillance for children aged five or below under the Integrated Child Health and Development Programme ("the Integrated Programme") offered by the Maternal and Child Health Centres ("MCHCs") of DH, as well as hearing screening for primary one ("P1") and secondary two ("S2") students conducted under the Student Health Service. Hearing assessment services are also offered by the Ear, Nose & Throat clinics of HA, the Child Assessment Service ("CAS") of DH and the Student Health Service for early identification and referral of children suspected to have hearing impairment ("HI") to relevant specialists for follow-up.

2. The health and developmental surveillance component of the Integrated Programme includes physical examination of newborn children, periodic monitoring of growth parameters with a view to facilitating early identification of developmental disabilities. Furthermore, under the Comprehensive Child Development Service ("CCDS") jointly launched by DH, HA, Education Bureau ("EDB") and the Social Welfare Department ("SWD"), a mechanism has been put in place to enable teachers of pre-primary institutions to refer at-risk children with physical, developmental or behavioural issues to MCHC of their respective districts for assessment, appropriate treatment and support.

- (a) In general, deputations stressed the importance of early diagnosis in order that the students concerned would not miss the golden opportunity for treatment.

### **Support services**

3. Subject to the consent of parents, the Child Assessment Centre ("CAC") will refer the children suffering from HI, physical disabilities ("PD") and visual impairment ("VI") to waitlist for pre-school rehabilitation services subvented by SWD. For confirmed cases of HI, CAC of DH will deliver the assessment report to the EDB for follow-up services such as hearing aid fitting. As for school-age children with PD and VI, CAC will deliver the assessment report, via EDB, to the special schools or mainstream schools to which the children are admitted so that the schools can provide the necessary educational support. An assessment summary will also be provided to the parents for onward submission to schools.

4. According to the Administration, there are currently a total of 6 230 pre-school rehabilitation places (including 179 places for children with HI). SWD anticipates that about 607 additional places will come on stream in 2013-2014. The Community Care Fund launched an assistance programme on "Training Subsidy for Children who are on the Waiting List of Subvented Pre-school Rehabilitation Services", the purpose of which is to provide training subsidy at a maximum of \$2,615 (as at 1 May 2013) a month for pre-school children from low-income families to procure services from non-governmental organizations.

- (a) The deputations stressed the need for early assistance prior to the age of three in order that children with HI would not miss the golden opportunity for learning. The Subcommittee has noted the successful experience shared by some non-government organizations ("NGOs") of rendering timely support to pre-school children preparing for their successful progression to P1.

### **Provision of assistive devices for HI students**

5. Cochlear implant surgery is usually performed on children suffering from profound HI. The cochlear implant is made up of an implant and an external speech processor. The current supplier of cochlear implants of HA provides a 10-year warranty. External speech

processors are treated as medical items and are not covered by the standard fees and charges of HA. The current supplier of HA provides a three-year warranty beyond which patients are responsible for the costs of repair and maintenance. Starting from April 2013, HA has added the replacement of external speech processors of cochlear implants to the non-drug subvented items of the Samaritan Fund to provide financial assistance to eligible patients.

- (a) Many deputations expressed difficulty in paying for the high cost (ranging from \$2,400 to \$4,800 a year) for extending the warranty of the implant, and opined that HA should continue to pay for the maintenance and replacement of the implant for HI children after the 10-year warranty period as long as they were still attending school.
- (b) According to the deputations, the cost for replacement of the external speech processor could be as high as \$60,000. Most of them held the view that as the external speech processor was an integral part of the cochlear implant necessary for improving the hearing ability of HI students, it should not be treated as a self-paying medical item.
- (c) Notwithstanding that assistance was available under the Samaritan Fund, the current arrangement was considered unfair and inappropriate as HI students were entitled to equal opportunities in education through the use of assistive tools. Their entitlement should not be subject to any means test as currently required under the Samaritan Fund.
- (d) At present, the provision of external speech processors (as part of the cochlear implant) and hearing aids is administered by HA and EDB respectively. As both were assistive tools for supporting HI students, the deputations considered that the Administration should adopt a uniform approach in handling the provision of both types of devices.

6. HA and DH will refer students with persistent HI to EDB for hearing aid fitting and follow-up services. EDB will arrange regular audiological reviews and will provide free hearing aids to these children through the outsourced service providers of EDB. Two free hearing aids with regular replacements are provided to those bilateral HI children for binaural listening. Measures have been put in place to enable EDB to monitor the audiological services provided by service providers.

According to EDB, it will continue to review the specifications of hearing aids and the demand for related audiological services, taking into account the needs of students and the advance in technology.

- (a) According to many deputations, the hearing aids provided by EDB were of older models and lower functionality. They strongly suggested that EDB should provide state-of-the-art hearing aids to enable HI students to fully utilize their residual hearing ability.
- (b) The provision of sub-optimal hearing aids could be attributed to the existing tendering system under which EDB would award the tender to the lowest bid. The quality of products and service had hardly improved in the absence of competition.
- (c) The Administration was asked to consider outsourcing the supply of hearing aids to multiple suppliers so as to create healthy competition and provide greater choice to HI students. To better cater for the needs of HI students and provide greater flexibility, there was a suggestion that EDB should consider issuing vouchers so that HI students would have the option to purchase suitable hearing aids from a list of approved suppliers.
- (d) It was said that EDB's provision of free hearing aids to HI students would cease upon the latter's completion of S6. EDB was asked to continue the provision of free hearing aids to HI students pursuing university or post-secondary education.

### **Implementation of integrated education ("IE") at the school level**

7. Ordinary schools have been encouraged to adopt a whole-school approach ("WSA") and a three-tier Intervention Model to support students with special educational needs ("SEN students"). The Disability Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 487) ("DDO") came into force in 1996. The Code of Practice on Education ("the Code") issued by the Equal Opportunities Commission ("EOC") took effect in 2001. According to the Code, educational establishments should not discriminate against students with disabilities and have the obligation to provide reasonable accommodations for SEN students, including adaptations to teaching,

communication and assessment methods. Against this background, a number of issues requiring attention have been identified :

#### General level of acceptance and support

8. According to the findings of the Report of the Study on Equal Learning Opportunities for Students with Disabilities under the Integrated Education System published by EOC in November 2012, about 80% of the surveyed school principals, teachers and professionals showed greater agreement about the academic performance of students with HI, VI or PD. It was also reported that it was easier for schools to accept students with HI, VI and PD than students with other types of special needs.

- (a) While the aforesaid findings were encouraging, some deputations pointed out that as students with HI posed no serious disruption to teaching activities and classroom discipline, their needs and difficulties could easily be overlooked by teachers who were inclined to focus their attention on other SEN students.
- (b) According to some deputations, there was a misconception among teachers and the public that the use of hearing aids or cochlear implant would put HI students on par with able-bodied students, and that there was no need to provide them with additional assistance or guidance.
- (c) A few deputations had submitted the view that due to the few number of HI students in individual mainstream schools, they could easily be neglected and become victims of bullying and discrimination in schools. It was suggested that EDB might consider placing HI students in a few mainstream schools only. This would enable the pooling of resources to provide support to HI students in a targeted and effective manner at the school level.

#### The use of sign language for students with HI

9. Pursuant to Article 24(2b) and (3c) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ("UNCRPD"), all deaf and hard-of-hearing children should have the right to "access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others". They should receive education that is

"delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual".

- (a) The role of sign language in educating deaf children should be clearly stated in Hong Kong's education policies, and appropriate services and programmes for teacher training should be developed to support education for deaf children.
- (b) It was submitted that the provision of sign language as part of early intervention does not mean that the role of spoken language should be downplayed. In fact, speech training should be encouraged as far and early as possible to secure bilingualism in sign language and spoken language.
- (c) Some deputations strongly requested that sign language should be used as an additional medium of instruction, alongside with spoken language, for deaf children in both pre-school and school-aged settings.
- (d) The Government has been giving additional resources to support Braille service to children with VI. By the same token, additional resources such as sign language support should be provided for students with HI.

#### Barrier-free access and facilities for students with VI and PD

10. All new schools built in May 1997 or thereafter are required to comply with the Design Manual on Barrier Free Access promulgated by the Buildings Department for the provision of barrier-free access facilities for persons with PD, including lifts, ramps, bridges, toilets for persons with disabilities, handrails and signage etc. For schools built before May 1997, where circumstances allow, additional facilities will be installed through conversion or improvement works to provide a barrier-free learning environment for students with PD.

- (a) One of the main concerns raised by many deputations for VI and PD students was that not all mainstream schools had provided the necessary barrier-free access and facilities to cater for the needs of these students. The Administration was asked to take stock of the existing facilities at schools and to ensure that the necessary rectification works were carried out where feasible.

### Equal learning opportunities in school

11. It is noted that the Code issued by EOC provides schools and educators with practical guidelines and assists educational establishments in developing policies that prevent and eliminate disability discrimination. It also stipulates that educational establishments should not discriminate against students with disabilities.

- (a) According to some depositions, quite a number of students with VI or PD had been advised or asked by their schools not to take certain subjects such as Science, Visual Arts, Physical Education, Domestic Science out of safety or other considerations. Some of these students were even refused participation in visits and outdoor activities such as walkathons. EDB was asked to formulate proper guidelines and take measures to eliminate such practices which might amount to discrimination.

### **Allocation of resources**

12. EDB has been providing schools with additional resources on top of the recurrent subvention for mainstream schools, including the Learning Support Grant ("LSG") the ceiling of which will be raised to \$1.5 million per school per year starting from the 2013-2014 school year, the Enhanced Speech Therapy Grant, the Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme in Primary Schools and the provision of additional teachers for schools with Territory Band 3 and bottom 10% junior secondary students, the Top-up Fund for purchasing special furniture and equipment and carrying out minor conversion works for students with disabilities.

- (a) Some depositions questioned whether individual mainstream schools had spent LSG for the direct benefit of SEN students; and urged for better regulation by EDB over schools' use of additional resources.
- (b) It was considered that small class teaching would enhance teaching and learning effectiveness for SEN students.
- (c) There was a common view that teaching support should be strengthened. It was suggested that a dedicated resource teacher post should be created on the regular establishment of the school to coordinate and oversee the provision of

support services and the implementation of IE. The holder of this post should have received relevant IE training. To optimize manpower resources, there was a view that consideration should be given to upgrading certain "teaching assistant" posts in primary and secondary schools to dedicated teaching posts on the regular teaching establishment with the responsibility of supporting SEN students.

- (d) It was considered that an individual education plan ("IEP") should be drawn up for every SEN student, including those with HI. The existing situation that only 5% of SEN students had IEPs was highly unsatisfactory. There was a view that a case management approach should be adopted in preparing IEPs for individual SEN students.
- (e) There was a suggestion from members that EDB should compile information on the support services provided by various NGOs, and where appropriate, make available such information to schools for consideration of procuring the necessary services.
- (f) According to some deputations for VI students, some three months were required for applicant-schools to procure the necessary assistive tools for VI students under the Top-up Fund. There was a suggestion that applications to the Top-up Fund should be allowed during the summer vacation instead of after commencement of the school term in September to enable the timely procurement of the items for VI students.

## **Professional support**

### Enhanced Support Service for HI Students Attending Ordinary Schools

13. The Enhanced Support Service for HI Students Attending Ordinary Schools ("ESS") was provided by a school for deaf children commissioned by EDB under which experienced resource teachers will provide after-school support to HI students studying in mainstream schools. The resource teachers will also pay school visits to share teaching strategies through case conferences, workshops and class observation.



- (a) There was a view that EDB had not provided adequate resources support to the school providing ESS. For example, there was only one speech therapist serving five district support centres run by the school. There were also insufficient resource teachers to provide support and assistance to individual schools through school visits.

#### Resource Support Programme for Students with VI

14. Under the Resource Support Programme for Students with VI ("RSP") launched since 1979, EDB provides resources for the school for children with VI ("VI school") to employ resource teachers and braillists who would provide necessary services to students with moderate to severe low vision or total blindness in ordinary schools. The resource teachers pay regular visits to schools to follow up the learning of students with VI and offer advice on teaching strategies and special examination arrangements for these students.

- (a) There was a view that more exchange opportunities should be provided between teachers of the VI school and those of mainstream schools. Attachment of mainstream school teachers to the VI school should also be arranged.

#### Centralized Braille Production Centre

15. Since 1986, EDB has been providing subvention to the Hong Kong Society for the Blind for the operation of the Centralized Braille Production Centre ("CBPC") which produces braille reading materials for students with VI. At present, braille textbooks and reference books used by students with VI attending public-sector ordinary primary and secondary schools are produced by CBPC under the coordination of the VI school. As informed by EDB, as a result of concerted efforts by all parties concerned to expedite the production process, CBPC can basically provide braille books for students with VI according to their schools' teaching progress in the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years.

- (a) As reflected by many deputations, there was grave concern that VI students often received braille textbooks at a belated stage, such as shortly before examination. This was an impediment to learning, placing these students in a disadvantaged position.

- (b) To improve access by VI students to printed works (notably textbooks and related publications) published locally and overseas, the Administration was urged to introduce amendments to the existing copyright legislation in order to give effect to the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons who are Blind, Visually Impaired, or otherwise Print Disabled adopted by the World Intellectual Property Organization on 28 June 2013. Pursuant to the Treaty, contracting parties are required to adopt national law provisions that permit the reproduction, distribution and making available of published works in accessible formats through limitations and exceptions to the rights of copyright owners. EDB was asked to look into the matter in conjunction with the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau.
  
- (c) To enhance the learning opportunities of VI students, the Administration was urged to allocate more resources, and/or to collaborate with NGOs, in the production of textbooks and learning materials in the electronic format.

### **Professional development and training for teachers**

16. Starting from the 2007-2008 school year, EDB has been providing serving teachers with structured training courses pitched at Basic, Advanced and Thematic levels ("BAT Courses") on supporting SEN students. Apart from having at least 10% of teachers attending the Basic Course, schools are required to arrange for at least three teachers to attend the Advanced Course. At least one Chinese Language and one English Language teacher should attend the Thematic Course on Specific Learning Difficulties. By the end of the 2011-2012 school year, about 40% and 16% of the teachers in public-sector primary and secondary schools respectively have received special education training on catering for SEN students. Starting from the 2012-2013 school year, EDB has offered a new round of professional development courses for teachers. According to EDB, enhancing teachers' professional capacity in catering for SEN students is its policy target.

#### Teacher training with respect to students with HI

17. The core and elective modules of the Advanced Courses cover all SEN types (including elective modules focusing on the learning and

teaching of students with HI). Schools having admitted students with HI are required to arrange teachers to attend the Thematic Courses on "Educating students with HI" or "Educating students with HI and Speech and Language Impairment" launched in the 2010-2011 school year. The Thematic Courses on Sensory Communication and Physical Needs cover the content of educating students with HI. Since the 2011-2012 school year, EDB has also arranged 11 seminars and workshops on support for students with HI.

- (a) Some deputations referred to Article 24 of UNCRPD which also provided that all teachers for the deaf should be proficient in sign language. It was suggested that a sign language qualification requirement should be set for teachers or professionals involved in educating deaf students. A system of educational interpreters conversant in sign language should be developed for in-class support.
- (b) According to some deputations, all teachers in Taiwan were required to undergo basic sign language training. It was submitted that deaf adults should be provided with equal opportunities for training to become teachers for deaf students.

#### Teacher training with respect to students with VI and PD

18. For schools which have admitted students with VI and/or PD, at least one teacher should attend the Thematic Courses on VI and/or PD. In addition, EDB and the Hong Kong Society for the Blind have been co-organizing thematic seminars on supporting students with VI annually since the 2008-2009 school year.

- (a) There was a general view that the existing training framework could hardly provide in-depth training on supporting VI students. Greater emphasis should be placed on pre-service training for teachers.
- (b) As VI students had difficulties in coming to grasp with subjects like Mathematics and science subjects, it was suggested that teachers of Mathematics and science subjects should also be required to attend thematic courses on the learning needs of VI students, similar to the requirement on English Language and Chinese Language teachers.

- (c) There was a general suggestion that the proportion of teachers in each mainstream school having received training on supporting SEN students should be raised to 50%.

### **The school curriculum, including the New Senior Secondary curriculum ("NSS")**

19. According to the Administration, the school curriculum aims at enhancing students' psychological health and promoting healthy living through the acquisition of "knowledge", "skills" and "values and attitudes". The NSS curriculum is made up of three components, namely, (i) four core subjects of Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics and Liberal Studies ("LS"); (ii) a choice of two or three subjects from 20 elective subjects, a range of Applied Learning courses and other languages; and (iii) other learning experiences ("OLE").

- (a) Some deputations pointed out that considerable difficulties were encountered by SEN students under the NSS curriculum. For example, according to a study conducted by one of the concern groups for the blind, students with VI had not been given equal opportunities by their schools in OLE and school-based assessment ("SBA"). It was considered that schools should provide individualized OLE for their VI students instead of refusing their participation. Schools should also provide these students with the necessary adaptations in conducting SBA so that they would not be disadvantaged.

### **Special examination arrangements**

#### Internal assessment

20. EDB has published the information leaflet on "WSA - Assessment Principles and Strategies" in 2004 and the "Guidelines on Special Examination Arrangements for Students with SEN in Internal Assessment" in 2009, which set out detailed special assessment arrangements for SEN students. EDB also organizes talks and workshops on a regular basis to assist schools to continue fine-tuning the policies and measures of their school-based special examination arrangements.

- (a) There was a suggestion that EDB should consider requiring schools to exempt students with severe HI from the listening assessments for English Language and Chinese Language and the examination on Music. This exemption should not affect the ranking of the HI students.

### Public examinations

21. The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority ("HKEAA") makes special examination arrangements for candidates with SEN after considering the recommendations of qualified professionals such as ophthalmologists, occupational therapists etc. These include arranging special examination centres for the candidates, exempting listening assessment, oral assessment of language subjects and school-based assessment of English Language for HI students, provision of extra time, using braille/enlarged/special font size and word- and line-spacing question papers for candidates with VI and allowing them to use ancillary aids such as braille/magnifier/CCTV/screen reader, arranging candidates with PD to sit for examinations at special examination centres with barrier-free access and facilities. HKEAA has set up a Committee on Special Needs Candidates, which comprises representatives from EDB, DH, special schools, secondary schools and tertiary institutions, Committee on Home-School Co-operation, the Division of Educational Psychology under the Hong Kong Psychological Society and the Hong Kong Occupational Therapy Association. EDB has been maintaining close communication with HKEAA to keep the special arrangements, such as the formats, target groups and criteria, under constant review and enhancement.

- (a) Concern was raised about the LS subject which required considerable listening and presentation skills. Some deputations called on HKEAA to enhance its adaptation arrangements for HI students in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination.
- (b) Some deputations for VI students considered that HKEAA should improve the quality of the question papers, in particular the use of braille diagrams.

## **Higher education**

22. According to the depositions, there has been a steady increase in the number of students with HI, VI and PD receiving post-secondary and vocational education. An inclusive campus environment with the necessary support for SEN students was therefore crucial for effective teaching and learning.

23. As advised by EDB, resources requirements for providing support to SEN students have been taken into account in the allocation of triennial funding to UGC-funded institutions. Recent initiatives to support SEN students include the setting up of scholarships to give recognition to meritorious SEN students pursuing full-time post-secondary education. It has also been proposed in the 2013-14 Budget to allocate \$12 million to the Vocational Training Council ("VTC") each year to purchase equipment and learning aids for SEN students, providing them with counseling services, and enhancing the support for teaching and learning.

- (a) Depositions shared serious concern that there was no prevailing policy on the implementation of IE and fostering of an inclusive environment in the post-secondary education sector, even for the publicly-funded UGC institutions and VTC. As many support measures for SEN students would cease upon their completion of secondary education, SEN students progressing to higher studies were often confronted with formidable challenges.
- (b) It was noted that EDB was currently collecting information from UGC-funded institutions regarding their support measures for SEN students. The Administration was urged to formulate a comprehensive policy on the implementation of IE in the post-secondary sector, and to consider requiring each institution to establish a dedicated office staffed by qualified personnel to oversee the provision of support to SEN students and the development of an inclusive campus environment. Where necessary, the Administration should consider providing additional resources to the institutions concerned.

### Difficulties faced by students with HI

- (c) It was submitted that once HI students progressed to post-secondary studies, all forms of support from EDB would

cease, including the provision of free hearing aids, counseling and adaptations of examination arrangements. EDB was asked to continue its assistance for HI students pursuing higher education.

- (d) According to some individual persons with HI, they had encountered considerable difficulties when seeking admission/pursuing studies in post-secondary institutions and institutes of vocational education under VTC, mainly because these institutions could not provide sign language interpreters or note-takers. HI students might not be able to afford the costs of acquiring such services.
- (e) A deputation referred to her university education in the United States and informed the Subcommittee that services of note-takers and sign language interpreters were available for HI students, the costs of which were borne by the Government.

#### Difficulties faced by students with VI and PD

- (f) According to some deputations, there was inadequate provision of assistive tools at some institutions to cater for the learning needs of VI students.
- (g) As reflected by some deputations, there was a lack of barrier-free access and facilities at some institutions for students with VI and PD. One of the examples cited was the lack of barrier-free access for electrical wheelchair users at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. This had deterred a student with PD from enrolling with the Academy after a three-week trial.
- (h) There was a suggestion that where necessary, post-secondary institutions should allow students with PD to bring along an accompanying person when attending classes so as to cater for their special needs.

#### **Home-school co-operation and public education**

24. To enhance parents' understanding of their roles, EDB issued and uploaded onto its website the Parent Guide on WSA to IE in the 2008-

2009 school year. EDB also conducts workshops each year on a regular basis for parents of HI students who will be admitted to P1 and S1 for the purpose of briefing them on the availability of school-based support services for the students. On their visits to schools, specialists from EDB will meet parents of individual students to help them understand their children's hearing, communication and learning problems.

- (a) There was a view that currently, there was very limited information on the admission of HI and VI students by individual mainstream schools. It was suggested that EDB should provide more information on those mainstream schools which had admitted these students/specialized in providing IE for these students, such as the proportion of HI and VI students in the student body, the support measures available etc. for parents' reference.
- (b) There was a suggestion that the Administration should prepare information leaflets on support services available for HI students (e.g. the clinics, hospitals and Audiology Centre) for dissemination at places providing support services.
- (c) EDB was urged to provide sign language interpretation for all its audio-visual teaching materials. Sign language interpretation should also be provided for Educational Television programmes.

25. Over the years, EDB has, in collaboration with the school sector, professional bodies, parents and other organizations, organized various public education and promotional activities to enhance public awareness of IE and promote the concept of inclusion. For example, in the 2008-2009 school year, "An Inclusive School - It All Begins with Our Hearts" IE publicity drive was jointly organized by EDB, DH and the Subsidized Primary Schools Council. It has also joined hands with Radio Television Hong Kong in producing a number of programmes to deepen public understanding on SEN students.

- (a) According to some deputations, the public education initiatives of the Administration had not been effective in promoting IE. A concern group for the blind suggested that the Administration should consider setting up a dedicated fund for application by individual schools to organize relevant activities to promote education for students with VI.



- (b) There was a common view that EDB should step up publicity efforts to promote better understanding on the needs of students with VI and PD and to build up a more caring and inclusive school environment.

### **Support for families**

26. Some parents highlighted the difficulties faced by them in supporting their children suffering from HI, VI and PD. The Administration was asked to strengthen support such as family counselling services, assisting parents to understand the characteristics and needs of their children, and providing information on the support services available.

### **Cross-sectoral collaboration**

27. According to EDB, it has been working closely with HA, DH and SWD to arrange necessary referrals, coordination and provision of related information regarding the necessary support provided by various departments for children with HI, such as providing audiological assessment reports for SWD for the approval of disability allowance.

- (a) In response to concerns that there should be parity in the provision of hearing aids and cochlear implant for students with HI, EDB would discuss with HA on the feasibility of subsidizing the maintenance and replacement of the external speech processor after expiry of the warranty period.

### **Legislative approach**

28. On the question of whether the Administration would consider introducing legislation on IE, EDB advised that for the time being, it had no plan to do so. According to EDB, the rights of SEN students have been protected under the existing law in Hong Kong, notably DDO and the Code issued by EOC.

### **Other views and suggestions**

29. Some members and deputations also raised the following views and suggestions for the consideration of the Administration.

- (a) to consider the feasibility of setting up a formal mechanism comprising representatives from relevant stakeholders to handle complaints related to the implementation of IE;
- (b) to consider whether a special fund should be set up for application by SEN students, instead of by schools, to acquire the necessary support services/items; and
- (c) with a view to improving the institutional arrangement and coordination, to set up within EDB a special section to oversee the support measures provided to VI students, similar to the existing section tasked to oversee support measures for HI students.

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