

**Panel on Education
Subcommittee on Integrated Education**

**Summary of major views in past meetings of the Subcommittee on
Integrated Education on –**

- I. Issues related to the articulation of students with special educational needs from special schools to mainstream schools and vice versa**

- II. The role of former skills opportunity schools**

Members' views and concerns

Some members considered that the articulation arrangements of students with special educational needs ("SEN") from special schools to mainstream schools were problematic and should be reviewed. The use of "education vouchers" for SEN students to take supplementary classes in special schools for the purpose of adjusting to studying in mainstream schools could also be studied.

2. There was concern about the lack of midway options for SEN students as their choice appeared to be limited to either special schools or mainstream schools. There was a view that the former skills opportunity/practical schools provided the right environment for SEN students and should be reinstated instead of being mainstreamed.

3. Regarding integrated education ("IE") in respect of students with intellectual disability ("ID"), members noted that at present, parents of students with mild ID [i.e. intelligence quotient ("IQ") slightly below 70] could choose to enrol their children in ordinary schools. If these children could not cope with the ordinary curriculum, they could request to transfer to special schools. However, parents of students with limited intelligence, i.e. IQ 70 to 79, could not choose to transfer their children to a special school even if their children could not adapt to the ordinary curriculum.

4. Some members considered that the existing arrangements were unfair and that parents of students with limited intelligence should have the right to choose whether to enrol their children in ordinary schools or special schools.

5. A member referred to a marginal case in which a student with an IQ slightly over 70 was refused entry to a special school despite the recommendations of the ordinary school and educational psychologist that the student would benefit from education in a special school.

Responses of the Administration

6. Regarding the selection of schools by students with ID, the Administration explained that –

- (a) in general, students with limited intellectual ability, i.e. IQ 70 to 79 were able to benefit from an adapted ordinary curriculum and therefore they normally attended ordinary schools;
- (b) school-aged children with mild, moderate, severe ID or multiple disabilities-cum-ID were usually referred to special schools where intensive support services were available; and
- (c) for students with limited intelligence who also suffered from other types of SENs such as Autism Spectrum Disorders ("ASD") and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder ("AD/HD"), subject to the recommendation of specialists and with the consent of parents, the Education Bureau might refer them to special schools as exceptional cases. Prior to making the placement recommendation, the specialists would have in-depth discussion with the parents on where the needs of their children would best be met.

7. On the choice of schools for students with limited intelligence, the Administration further advised that –

- (a) generally speaking, ordinary schools with non-disabled peers would provide a rich and stimulating environment, facilitating students with SEN to develop their language, social and problem-solving skills;
- (b) it was doubtful whether it would be in the best interest of students with limited intelligence to study in the relatively segregated special school environment;

- (c) if students with an IQ over 70 but below 100 would also be placed into special schools as a general practice, this would have implications on special schools;
- (d) the placement of children with limited intelligence and SEN such as ASD or AD/HD would be considered in exceptional circumstances after consultation with the parents, school personnel and professionals concerned; and
- (e) while parental choice should be respected, the well-being of the students concerned was of paramount importance in deciding on the most appropriate type of schooling for the students concerned.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
17 February 2014