

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(4)830/14-15
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by the Administration)

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Panel on Education

**Subcommittee to Study the Implementation of
Free Kindergarten Education**

**Minutes of the fourth meeting
held on Tuesday, 10 February 2015, at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex**

- Members present** : Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, JP (Chairman)
Hon IP Kin-yuen (Deputy Chairman)
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, BBS, MH
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan, JP
Hon IP Kwok-him, GBS, JP
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee, GBS, JP
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin
Hon MA Fung-kwok, SBS, JP
Hon Charles Peter MOK, JP
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, JP
Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP
- Member absent** : Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che

**Public Officers : Item II
attending**

Mr Kevin YEUNG, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Mrs Michelle WONG
Deputy Secretary for Education (3)

Miss Hera CHUM
Principal Assistant Secretary
(Special Education & Kindergarten Education)
Education Bureau

Item III

Mr Kevin YEUNG, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Mrs Michelle WONG
Deputy Secretary for Education (3)

Miss Hera CHUM
Principal Assistant Secretary
(Special Education & Kindergarten Education)
Education Bureau

**Clerk in : Miss Polly YEUNG
attendance Chief Council Secretary (4) 4**

**Staff in : Mr Ian CHOW
attendance Council Secretary (4) 4**

Ms Sandy HAU
Legislative Assistant (4) 4

Action

I. Confirmation of minutes

(LC Paper No. CB(4)471/14-15 -- Minutes of meeting on
16 December 2014)

Action

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2014 were confirmed.

II. The policy and proposed scope of free kindergarten education

(LC Paper No. CB(4)473/14-15(01) -- Paper provided by the Administration)

III. Support for half-day, whole-day and long whole-day kindergartens

(LC Paper No. CB(4)473/14-15(02) -- Paper provided by the Administration)

Meeting with the Administration for agenda items II & III

2. The Subcommittee deliberated (index of proceedings attached at **Annex**).

EDB

3. The Education Bureau ("EDB") was requested to provide a comprehensive paper(s) to explain –

- (a) the prevailing practices adopted by different jurisdictions in the provision of kindergarten ("KG") services;
- (b) detailed justifications on why half-day ("HD") KG service was considered adequate in meeting the objectives of KG education; and
- (c) the respective roles and functions performed by HD, whole-day and long whole-day KGs with a detailed analysis.

IV. Any other business

4. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:36 pm.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
21 April 2015

**Proceedings of the fourth meeting of the
Subcommittee to Study the Implementation of
Free Kindergarten Education
on Tuesday, 10 February 2015, at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex**

Time marker	Speaker(s)	Subject(s)	Action required
<i>Agenda Item I - Confirmation of minutes</i>			
000743 - 000805	Chairman	Confirmation of minutes	
<i>Agenda Item II - The policy and proposed scope of free kindergarten education</i>			
000806 - 001059	Chairman Education Bureau ("EDB")	Opening remarks EDB briefed members on the present situation of kindergarten ("KG") education and the initial views of the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education ("the KG Committee") on the scope of free KG education as set out in LC Paper No. CB(4)473/14-15(01).	
001100 - 001532	Chairman Dr Helena WONG EDB	Regarding quality KG education, Dr WONG asked whether integrated education ("IE") would be included under the implementation of free KG education. EDB said that the KG Committee's Sub-committee on Catering for Student Diversity ("SC on CSD") was examining issues related to supporting KG students with special needs. Dr WONG urged for close co-ordination between EDB, the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") and the Department of Health ("DH") in providing early identification and early intervention services for KG students with special needs. EDB took note of Dr WONG's suggestion.	
001533 - 002003	Chairman Mr MA Fung-kwok EDB	Mr MA concurred with the need for early identification and early intervention, and enquired about the view of SC on CSD, as well as the policy steer for the provision of relevant services for KG students with special needs. EDB advised that EDB, SWD and DH had their respective roles in the provision of services for students with special needs. SC on CSD would study the matter and formulate recommendations for consideration by the Administration. In response to Mr MA, EDB said that the membership of SC on CSD included representatives from EDB, SWD, DH, non-government organisations providing related services and the KG sector.	

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002004 - 002430	Chairman Deputy Chairman EDB	<p>The Deputy Chairman enquired about the facets of KG education that should be subsidized in order to provide quality KG education.</p> <p>EDB explained that preserving the existing diversity in KG education was vital in assuring and enhancing the quality of KG education. The KG Committee considered that the government subsidy should fund KG education at a level which enabled KGs to provide quality education. To this end, it had discussed and agreed on the essential elements for quality KG education such as improving the teacher-to-student ratio, a career ladder for teachers etc. The Administration should consider providing subsidy that might allow KGs in general to provide quality education without charging tuition fees for half-day ("HD") KG service, while above-standard services offered by KGs and welcomed by parents should be self-financed.</p>	
002431 - 002804	Chairman Mr WONG Kwok-hing EDB	<p>Mr WONG sought the Administration's views on the following –</p> <p>(a) the establishment of a mandatory KG teacher salary scale for compliance by KGs as widely supported by deputations; and</p> <p>(b) the disbursement of lump sum grant ("LSG") to KGs as the funding mode for the provision of free KG education, which many deputations opposed.</p> <p>EDB said that deputations' views expressed at the meeting on 17 January 2015 had been well-noted. A consultancy study had been commissioned to study and make recommendations on the remuneration for teaching and non-teaching staff in KGs. The KG Committee had studied different funding modes that might be relevant for consideration, including the aided school subvention mode and LSG adopted in the welfare sector etc., and would explore further options.</p> <p>The Chairman said that issues related to teacher professionalism, including the development of a qualification and salary framework for KG teachers, would be discussed in the next Subcommittee meeting.</p>	
002805 - 003326	Chairman Mrs Regina IP EDB	<p>Mrs IP sought explanation on the following –</p> <p>(a) from a "family-friendly" point of view and to unleash the employment potential of women, whether consideration would be given to providing subsidized whole-day ("WD") or long whole-day ("LWD") KG places;</p>	

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		<p>(b) the measures, if any, to assist non-Chinese speaking ("NCS") children to learn Chinese in KGs; and</p> <p>(c) the reasons for the abolition of the Recommended Normative Salary Scale for KG teachers upon implementation of the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme ("PEVS").</p> <p>EDB advised that –</p> <p>(a) while the KG Committee had an emerging consensus that free KG education should cover HD services as basic provision for all eligible children, it acknowledged that some families might need WD or LWD services. The KG Committee would study ways to encourage KGs to provide more full-day services and consider providing needy families with subsidized WD and LWD services;</p> <p>(b) SC on CSD would further deliberate on the issues related to assisting NCS children to learn Chinese in KGs; and</p> <p>(c) there had been criticisms that the Recommended Normative Salary Scale for KG teachers was too rigid. Upon implementation of PEVS, the Scale was abolished so that individual KGs had the discretion to provide their teachers with remuneration which was commensurate with their qualifications, performance and experience. The KG Committee would further deliberate on the issues after receiving the recommendations from the consultant.</p>	
003327 - 003733	Chairman EDB	<p>The Chairman asked how the Administration would ensure the provision of quality free KG education, if some KGs charged parents for certain above-standard services which were useful in improving the quality of KG education.</p> <p>EDB advised that the KG Committee was of the view that the governance of individual KGs should be enhanced and EDB should professionally process individual KGs' proposals for charging/revising fees.</p>	
003734 - 004248	Chairman Mr Tommy CHEUNG EDB	<p>Mr CHEUNG expressed the following views –</p> <p>(a) he would only support the provision of free KG education for all eligible children attending HD KGs, as WD/LWD KGs involved the provision of child care services, which should be distinguished from education services;</p>	

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		<p>(b) instead of establishing a mandatory KG teacher salary scale, individual KGs should have discretion to determine the salaries for their teachers having regard to relevant factors such as qualifications, experience and performance; and</p> <p>(c) PEVS should be enhanced to enable parents to enrol their children to the KGs of their choice.</p> <p>EDB reiterated that diversity was one of the principles underpinning the implementation of free KG education to cater for the needs of different families.</p>	
004249 - 004849	Chairman Dr Kenneth CHAN EDB	<p>Dr CHAN opined that the implementation of free KG education would not necessarily result in a homogeneous KG sector, and that the provision of free HD KG services only fell short of the provision of quality KG education. He enquired about the "more innovative funding mode" as mentioned in the Administration's paper.</p> <p>EDB advised that the KG Committee had studied the implications of different funding modes. Bearing in mind that the flexibility, vibrancy and uniqueness of the KG sector should not be compromised and the provision of diversified services for parents should be maintained, the initial view of the KG Committee was that a more innovative funding mode should be adopted so as to cater for the different modes of KG operation. It would explore further funding options in the light of the recommendations of the consultant.</p>	
004850 - 005601	Chairman Mrs Regina IP Deputy Chairman	<p>The Deputy Chairman said that the funding mode for free KG education should be fair and conducive to raising the quality of KG education. He enquired whether there would be a direct linkage between teachers' salaries and the number and size of classes under the future funding mode.</p> <p>EDB reiterated that the KG Committee would explore further options on the funding mode for KGs, taking into consideration the recommendations of the consultant on human resources requirement and remuneration.</p> <p>Mrs IP and the Deputy Chairman remarked that the Administration's papers had provided very limited information. EDB said that the KG Committee had yet to finalize its recommendations and the relevant deliberations had already been included in the papers.</p>	
005602 - 010241	Chairman EDB	Noting the KG Committee's emerging consensus that free KG education should cover HD services as basic provision for all eligible children, the Chairman urged the Administration to consider the needs of parents	

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		<p>and the views of the KG sector that quality and diversified KG education should include WD/LWD KG services.</p> <p>EDB responded that the Administration/KG Committee had made reference to international practices when considering the scope of free KG education. It should be noted that HD service was the basic provision of free KG education in countries including Australia, Korea, Singapore and the United Kingdom.</p> <p>The Chairman enquired on the following matters upon the implementation of free KG education –</p> <p>(a) whether consideration would be given to introducing a centralized school place allocation system;</p> <p>(b) the assistance, if any, to be rendered by EDB to parents who could not find a KG place for their children; and</p> <p>(c) whether the principle of vicinity would be observed so that children could attend KGs in their resident or neighbouring districts.</p> <p>EDB said that given its flexibility, the KG sector was often able to respond to the demand for HD, WD or LWD KG places. If a centralized school place allocation system was adopted in the KG sector, it would inevitably affect the sector's overall operating flexibility. Parental choice, rather than the principle of vicinity, might be a more important factor in enrolment, as evidenced in some districts such as Kowloon City and Wan Chai where the supply of KG places outnumbered the demand in the districts. Due to various reasons, there was a shortfall in KG places in a few districts such as the North District. The KG Committee would further deliberate on the admission arrangements of the KG sector.</p>	
010242 - 010636	Chairman Deputy Chairman EDB	<p>The Deputy Chairman did not subscribe to the KG Committee's view that the planning of KG places in a holistic manner was neither practicable nor feasible. While some prestigious KGs might be much sought after by parents from different districts, many parents would prefer to enrol their children in KGs in their resident or nearby districts. Hence, planning on the provision of adequate KG places in different districts was necessary.</p> <p>EDB explained that the difficulty in planning for KG places was relative to the planning for aided school places. As there were only a few years between the birth of a child and when he reached the age for KG</p>	

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		<p>education and given the high mobility of the population between districts, it was difficult to project with accuracy the demand for KG places in individual districts and plan for the provision of places accordingly. Nevertheless, overall planning for KG places would be carried out according to the population projection.</p> <p>The Chairman urged the Administration to seriously consider planning ahead for the provision of KG places. EDB advised that it would consider ways to provide more KG premises in both public and private housing developments.</p>	
<i>Agenda Item III - Support for half-day, whole-day and long whole-day kindergartens</i>			
010637 - 010838	Chairman EDB	<p>Opening remarks</p> <p>EDB briefed members on the present situation and the initial views of the KG Committee relating to the support for different modes of KG services as set out in LC Paper No. CB(4)473/14-15(02).</p>	
010839 - 011342	Chairman Deputy Chairman EDB	<p>Noting the contributions of HD, WD and LWD KGs in providing education and care services for KG students, the Deputy Chairman considered that free KG education should cover all three types of KGs.</p> <p>EDB explained that in the view of the KG Committee, the implementation of free KG education should initially cover HD services as basic provision for all eligible children. The Committee was considering how to encourage KGs to offer more WD/LWD services.</p>	
011343 - 011958	Chairman Mr MA Fung-kwok EDB	<p>Noting that WD/LWD KGs had been an integral part of the KG sector providing valuable services to many families and working parents, Mr MA asked how the Administration would provide support for these families and parents in future.</p> <p>EDB responded that while free KG education should cover HD service as basic provision, the KG Committee would study ways to encourage KGs to provide more WD/LWD services to support working parents and would further deliberate on how additional subsidy should be provided for children in need of WD/LWD services. While KG education was important for the development of children, family care and attention were also vital.</p>	
011959 - 012459	Chairman Dr Fernando CHEUNG Chairman	<p>Dr CHEUNG said that under PEVS, as the voucher subsidy for WD/LWD KGs was the same as that for HD KGs, the former type of KGs had encountered considerable operating difficulties due to inadequate support and high wastage of staff. He asked how the</p>	

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		<p>Administration would support the operation of WD/LWD KGs in the context of free KG education.</p> <p>EDB reiterated that the KG Committee would study ways to encourage KGs to provide more WD/LWD services to support working parents and would further consider to what extent WD and LWD KGs should be supported under free KG education.</p>	
012500 - 013119	Chairman Dr Kenneth CHAN EDB	<p>Dr CHAN asked whether the KG Committee/Administration would examine the provision of education and care (i.e. "Educare") and consider including WD/LWD KG services in the implementation of free KG education, instead of confining the provision of free KG education to HD KG services from merely an educational point of view.</p> <p>EDB explained that a distinction should be made between the genuine need of a family for WD or LWD KG service, and the preference or choice of the parents to enrol their children in WD/LWD KGs out of other considerations. Hence the KG Committee/Administration would need to consider carefully under what circumstances WD and LWD KG services should be subsidized, without giving rise to the unintended consequence of encouraging parents, who were not in genuine need for WD/LWD services, to send their children to WD/LWD KGs.</p>	
013120 - 013704	Chairman Mr CHAN Chi-chuen EDB	<p>Mr CHAN remarked that if free KG education would only cover HD KGs, this would be inconsistent with the Administration's policy objective to unleash the potential of the local labour force through enhancing child care services to provide better support for women who wished to join the labour market.</p> <p>EDB stressed that the KG Committee was aware that some families had genuine needs for WD/LWD KG services, and would study ways to support these families. In response to Mr CHAN's enquiry, EDB said that WD/LWD KGs were under its purview.</p>	
013705 - 014108	Chairman EDB	<p>The Chairman said that to her knowledge, the supply of WD and LWD KG services could not meet the great demand for such services. Hence many children had no choice but to enrol in HD KGs. She urged EDB to give due consideration to the eligibility criteria for needy families in the provision of free/subsidized WD and LWD KG places.</p> <p>EDB explained that from the educational point of view and having regard to overseas practices, HD KG service would suffice in fulfilling the objectives of KG education. The need of some families for extra child care services was noted. However, a distinction</p>	

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		<p>should be made between the genuine need of a family for WD or LWD KG service, and the preference or choice of the parents to enrol their children in WD/LWD KGs out of other considerations. It was also important to distinguish between availability of services (provision of school places) and subsidy (use of taxpayers' money). It was not the intention of the Administration that parents would indiscriminately enrol their children in WD/LWD KGs merely because such services were available and subsidized.</p>	
014109 - 014823	Chairman Deputy Chairman EDB	<p>The Deputy Chairman said that the percentage of children attending WD KGs in the United States had risen from about 20% in the 1970s to over 60% in 2000. He considered that the Administration/KG Committee should provide a comprehensive paper(s) to explain –</p> <p>(a) the prevailing practices adopted by different jurisdictions in the provision of KG services; and</p> <p>(b) detailed justifications on why HD KG service was considered adequate in meeting the objectives of KG education.</p> <p>EDB reiterated the KG Committee's initial views on the scope of free KG education and its consideration of providing support for WD and LWD KGs. EDB highlighted that children might not necessarily benefit more from attending WD/LWD KGs than spending part of the day with their families. There was yet any conclusive research on whether KG education should be provided on a HD or WD/LWD basis to cater for the whole-person development of children.</p>	EDB was requested to provide the information as stated in paragraphs 3(a) and (b) of the minutes.
014824 - 015228	Chairman Dr Fernando CHEUNG EDB	<p>Dr CHEUNG said that WD and LWD KG services were vital for many grassroot families and working parents, and the Administration should provide these families with free or subsidized WD/LWD KG places.</p> <p>EDB highlighted the distinction to be made between the genuine need of a family for WD or LWD KG service, and the preference or choice of the parents to enrol their children in WD/LWD KGs out of other considerations. The KG Committee would study ways to encourage KGs to provide more WD/LWD services.</p>	
015229 - 015913	Chairman Dr Kenneth CHAN EDB	<p>Dr CHAN said that besides grassroot families, many middle-class families also needed WD and LWD KG services. He asked how the Administration would gauge the genuine demand for HD, WD and LWD KG places.</p>	

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		<p>EDB pointed out that KGs would be encouraged to provide more WD/LWD services to meet the demand. However, it was important to distinguish between availability of services (provision of school places) and subsidy (use of taxpayers' money). For instance, families with sufficient financial means might be in need of WD/LWD KG services for their children, but it was questionable whether such places should be provided to these families on a free or subsidized basis, as opposed to families which could not afford the expenses.</p>	
015914 - 020141	<p>Chairman Dr Fernando CHEUNG EDB</p>	<p>Members noted that relevant issues related to students with special needs and NCS students under the implementation of free KG education would be discussed in subsequent meetings of the Subcommittee.</p> <p>EDB advised that pre-school rehabilitation services had been provided by SWD through Early Education and Training Centres and Special Child Care Centres etc. As stated in paragraph 127(ii) of the 2015 Policy Address, some 1 400 additional places for subvented pre-school rehabilitation services would be provided within the current Government's term.</p>	
020142 - 020557	<p>Chairman Deputy Chairman EDB</p>	<p>The Deputy Chairman noted from a recent survey conducted by the Council of Non-profit Making Organizations for Pre-primary Education that about 90% of the respondents said that it was unacceptable if free KG education covered only HD service.</p> <p>To facilitate reference by the Subcommittee, the Deputy Chairman requested the Administration/KG Committee to provide a detailed analysis on the respective roles and functions performed by HD, WD and LWD KGs.</p>	<p>EDB was requested to provide the information as stated in paragraph 3(c) of the minutes.</p>
<i>Agenda Item IV - Any other business</i>			
020558 - 020755	<p>Chairman</p>	<p>Arrangements for the next meeting.</p>	