

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(4)1325/14-15
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB4/PS/1/13

Panel on Education

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

**Minutes of the seventh meeting
held on Thursday, 14 May 2015, at 8:30 am
in Conference Room 2 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-ye, 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
 - Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP
- Member absent** : Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che

**Public Officers : Item II
attending**

Education Bureau

Mr Kevin YEUNG, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Mrs Michelle WONG
Deputy Secretary for Education (3)

Ms Hera CHUM
Principal Assistant Secretary
(Special Education & Kindergarten Education)

Department of Health

Dr Karen TSO Ka-pik
Senior Medical and Health Officer
(Family Health Service)

Social Welfare Department

Mr FONG Kai-leung
Assistant Director
(Rehabilitation and Medical
Social Services)

Item III

Education Bureau

Mr Kevin YEUNG, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Mrs Michelle WONG
Deputy Secretary for Education (3)

Ms Hera CHUM
Principal Assistant Secretary
(Special Education & Kindergarten Education)

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

Staff in attendance : Mr KWONG Kam-fai
Senior Council Secretary (4)4

Ms Sandy HAU
Legislative Assistant (4)4

Action

I. Confirmation of minutes and matters arising

(LC Paper No. CB(4)960/14-15 -- Minutes of meeting on
16 March 2015)

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2015 were confirmed.

II. Support for non-Chinese speaking students and students with special educational needs

(LC Paper No. CB(4)977/14-15(01) -- Paper provided by the
Administration)

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

3. Members noted a joint submission from 32 organizations and a submission from Hong Kong Unison Limited, which were tabled at the meeting and subsequently issued vide LC Paper Nos. CB(4)996/14-15(01) and (02) respectively.

4. The Administration was requested to provide a written response to the issues raised in the submission from Hong Kong Unison Limited.

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5. Members also noted a joint letter dated 11 May 2015 addressed to the Chairman from seven members requesting for public hearings to receive views on the support for the needs of students with special educational needs ("SEN") in kindergartens ("KGs"), which was tabled at the meeting and subsequently issued vide LC Paper No. CB(4)999/14-15(01). The Chairman suggested and members agreed in principle that

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when the Subcommittee held a meeting to receive public views on the Report of the Free Kindergarten Education Committee, arrangements would be made, where appropriate, to reserve a segment of the meeting for deputations which would like to present views exclusively on support for SEN students in KGs.

III. Quality assurance mechanism, regulation and longer-term development of the kindergarten sector

(LC Paper No. CB(4)977/14-15(02) -- Paper provided by the Administration)

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

7. Members noted a submission from Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children, which was tabled at the meeting and subsequently issued vide LC Paper No. CB(4)996/14-15(03).

IV. Any other business

8. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:30 am.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
14 July 2015

**Proceedings of the seventh meeting of the
Subcommittee to Study the Implementation of
Free Kindergarten Education
on Thursday, 14 May 2015, at 8:30 am
in Conference Room 2 of the Legislative Council Complex**

Time marker	Speaker(s)	Subject(s)	Action required
<i>Agenda Item I - Confirmation of minutes and matters arising</i>			
000423 - 000539	Chairman	Confirmation of minutes	
000540 - 001226	Chairman Education Bureau ("EDB") Dr Fernando CHEUNG	<p>In response to the Chairman's enquiry, EDB advised that the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education ("the KG Committee") was expected to submit its report to the Administration in late May this year.</p> <p>The Subcommittee agreed that at the next meeting to be held on 9 June 2015, members would discuss the report of the KG Committee.</p> <p>Referring to the joint letter addressed to her by seven members and tabled at the meeting, the Chairman suggested that after the publication of the KG Committee's report, the Subcommittee would arrange a public hearing to receive views from the public. Deputations could submit views on supporting students with special educational needs ("SEN") in kindergartens ("KGs") in the context of the hearing to be convened.</p> <p>Dr CHEUNG opined that it would be advisable to designate a meeting to focus the discussion on issues related to SEN students attending KGs.</p> <p>The Chairman advised that depending on the number of deputations responding to the Subcommittee's invitation which indicated their intention to address members on issues related to SEN students only, appropriate arrangements would be made to group these deputations for the purpose of exchanging views and soliciting responses from the Administration. Members noted the proposed arrangements.</p>	
<i>Agenda Item II - Support for non-Chinese speaking students and students with special educational needs</i>			
001227 - 001709	Chairman EDB	EDB briefed members on the present situation and the initial views of the KG Committee relating to the support for non-Chinese speaking ("NCS") children and children with special needs studying in KGs, as set out in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)977/14-15(01)] which was issued to members by e-mail in the previous evening and tabled at the meeting.	

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001710 - 002215	Mr WONG Kwok-hing EDB Social Welfare Department ("SWD")	<p>Mr WONG considered it important for the Administration to provide support for NCS and SEN students at an early age so as to facilitate their integration into mainstream schools. He sought information on the number SEN students attending KGs.</p> <p>EDB advised that EDB had been providing professional support to KGs to help them cater for the diverse learning needs of the students, including NCS students and those with special needs.</p> <p>Regarding the number of SEN students, SWD advised that –</p> <p>(a) as at March 2015, there were about 7 000 pre-school children (from birth to six years of age) assessed to have special needs who were on the waiting list for the three types of rehabilitation services; and</p> <p>(b) there were 85 places of rehabilitation services for English-speaking pre-school children.</p>	
002216 - 002817	Dr Fernando CHEUNG EDB	<p>Dr CHEUNG referred to the submission from Hong Kong Unison Limited ("HK Unison") [LC Paper No. CB(4)996/14-15(02)], which was tabled at the meeting and expressed his concern about the difficulties encountered by NCS children applying for admission to KGs in Hong Kong.</p> <p>EDB advised that not admitting students because of their race might constitute discrimination under the Racial Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 602). EDB would continue communication with the KG sector to improve the admission and interview arrangements. Currently, 70% of the NCS children studying in local KGs were enrolled in KGs under the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme ("PEVS").</p> <p>In response to Dr CHEUNG's enquiry about the additional support, if any, for NCS children upon the implementation of free KG education, EDB said that according to the initial view of the KG Committee, an additional grant might be provided to KGs to enhance support for NCS students. The Administration would study the recommendations of the KG Committee on this matter.</p>	
002818 - 003351	Deputy Chairman EDB	<p>The Deputy Chairman stressed the importance of early exposure of NCS children to an immersed Chinese language environment and their early adaptation to the local education system. He expressed concern about the support available to teachers in catering for the learning needs of NCS</p>	

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		<p>students. Noting that about 7 000 NCS students were studying in local KGs, he enquired on the number of NCS students not attending KGs.</p> <p>EDB informed members that currently, about 5 000 NCS students were studying in non-local KGs. There were no official statistics on NCS children not attending KGs. In Hong Kong, the overall participation rate in KG education was over 100%. Hence, it was believed that most of the NCS students were attending KGs.</p>	
003352 - 003843	Mr Christopher CHUNG EDB	<p>Mr CHUNG pointed out that the parents of NCS children might not be familiar with the educational services available for their children. He opined that in addition to setting up support service centres for ethnic minorities ("EMs") and distributing information leaflets through the District Offices of Home Affairs Department ("HAD"), the Administration should take proactive steps to reach out to the local EM community.</p> <p>In response, EDB said that the Administration would disseminate information to EMs through various means, including visits to the local EM community and through non-governmental organizations ("NGOs").</p>	
003844 - 004337	Mr IP Kwok-him EDB	<p>Mr IP expressed concern about the difficulties faced by the parents of some NCS children who were proficient in neither English nor Chinese when seeking KG admission for their children.</p> <p>EDB said that currently, information materials, including leaflets on PEVS and admission arrangements to KG, would be disseminated to NCS parents through District Offices of HAD, Maternal and Child Health Centres ("MCHCs") and NGOs etc. They were also available on EDB's website.</p>	
004338 - 004931	Dr Kenneth CHAN Chairman EDB	<p>To enhance support for NCS and SEN students upon the implementation of free KG education, Dr CHAN opined that reference should be made to the experience and practice adopted by KGs under the English Schools Foundation.</p> <p>Dr CHAN was of the view that the Administration should enhance its support for NCS students with regard to the findings and recommendations set out in the submission from HK Unison.</p> <p>The Chairman requested the Administration to provide a written response to the issues raised in the submission from HK Unison after the meeting.</p>	The Administration was requested to provide a written response as stated in paragraph 4 of the minutes.

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004932 - 005757	Dr Helena WONG EDB	<p>Dr WONG referred to HK Unison's submission and expressed grave concern about the concentration of EM students in a few KGs and the screening of EM students by KGs conducting their admission interviews in Chinese.</p> <p>EDB remarked that the concentration of NCS students in some KGs might be the result of parental choice, which should be respected rather than interfered with through administrative measures.</p> <p>Dr WONG said that some KGs were reluctant to admit NCS students because they were not well-resourced in supporting these students. She was concerned whether professional training for teachers would be enhanced to better equip them to support NCS students. Noting that the "Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework" ("Learning Framework") was currently implemented in primary and secondary schools only, she enquired whether consideration would be given to extending the Learning Framework to cover KGs.</p> <p>EDB advised that –</p> <p>(a) KGs provided a language-rich environment for children to learn the Chinese language through play, exploration and interaction. They did not teach Chinese as an independent subject as in the case of primary and secondary schools. Hence, it was not intended that the Learning Framework should apply to KGs.</p> <p>(b) EDB had been organizing professional development programmes to enhance teachers' capability in catering for the learning needs of NCS students.</p>	
005758 - 010736	Chairman EDB	<p>The Chairman expressed her grave concern about the late submission of paper for this agenda item and the lack of substantive contents such as supporting figures and factual information.</p> <p>In response, EDB explained that currently, many of the support measures for NCS students were implemented at the primary and secondary levels. At the KG level, EDB had been providing professional support to enable KGs to cater for the learning needs of their NCS students, such as the University-School Support Programme. As recommended by the KG Committee, the existing support services should continue and be enhanced.</p>	
010737 - 011301	Dr Fernando CHEUNG Chairman EDB	Dr CHEUNG expressed concern about the difficulties encountered by NCS children in applying for admission to KGs. He noted that KGs	

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		<p>might not have sufficient resources to provide bilingual circulars to the parents of NCS students or recruit EM teaching assistants to help NCS students in class. It appeared that pending the publication of the KG Committee's recommendations, EDB was not prepared to introduce any further support measures.</p> <p>The Chairman urged EDB to examine how to address the needs of NCS and SEN students in KGs with regard to the recommendations of the KG Committee in due course.</p> <p>EDB said that it would carefully study the recommendations in the report of the KG Committee and consider the way forward.</p>	
011302 - 011839	Deputy Chairman	<p>The Deputy Chairman expressed the following views –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Due to the late submission of paper by the Administration, members might not have sufficient time to prepare for the discussion at this meeting. (b) The Administration's paper only stated the objectives of its policy and the prevailing practice in general, but did not set out the issues of concern or any measures to address the concerns. (c) The depth and breadth of the curriculum currently adopted by many KGs was not conducive to the early adaptation and integration of NCS students in learning the Chinese language. (d) Teacher training should also nurture teachers' positive attitude towards NCS students and their awareness of the cultural difference between local students and NCS students. 	
011840 - 012639	Dr Helena WONG EDB Chairman	<p>Dr WONG reiterated her concern about racial segregation as a result of the concentration of NCS students in only a few KGs. She also expressed concern about the transition of NCS students from these KGs to ordinary primary schools where there was a predominant presence of local students. In her opinion, the Administration should provide justifications for its education policy pertaining to NCS students.</p> <p>In this regard, EDB highlighted the need to respect the choice of parents for KGs suitable for their children. If administrative measures were introduced to disallow NCS students to gain</p>	

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		<p>admission to certain KGs to avoid concentration, some NCS students might be deprived of the opportunities to study in the KG of their choice. This arrangement might also constitute discrimination.</p> <p>EDB apologized and explained that the discussion paper for this agenda item could not be submitted at an earlier time as it was necessary to collate and coordinate the input from a number of bureaux/departments regarding the part on support for students with special needs.</p> <p>EDB also said that where necessary, the Administration would be prepared to provide further information at the meeting or after the meeting to supplement its discussion paper in order to address members' concerns.</p> <p><i>(The Chairman left the meeting at this juncture and the Deputy Chairman took over the chair.)</i></p>	
012640 - 012857	Deputy Chairman Dr Helena WONG	In response to Dr WONG's enquiry, the Deputy Chairman recapitulated the arrangements for subsequent meetings agreed earlier on.	
012858 - 013457	Deputy Chairman Mr Christopher CHUNG EDB	<p>Mr CHUNG opined that EDB should strengthen its communication with the EM community and acquire a better understanding of their expectation and needs. In addition, local KGs/schools should respect the tradition, culture and religious beliefs of the NCS students.</p> <p>EDB acknowledged the importance of strengthening communication with the EM community so as to better understand the needs of NCS students.</p>	
013458 - 013909	Mr MA Fung-kwok EDB	<p>Mr MA was disappointed at the late submission of discussion paper by the Administration and the lack of substantive information in the paper about promoting integration of EMs in Hong Kong.</p> <p>EDB clarified that the wider policy on promoting racial integration was not under the purview of EDB. Its paper for this meeting had focused on the support for NCS students in KGs. Regarding the belated submission of the paper, EDB said that with the benefit of hindsight, instead of consolidating the information into a single paper, it might be more expeditious to issue separate papers on NCS students and students with special needs.</p>	
013910 - 013936	Deputy Chairman Mr WONG Kwok-hing	In response to Mr WONG's enquiry, the Deputy Chairman said that the meeting would proceed to the next agenda item after two more members had asked their questions.	

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013937 - 014314	Dr Fernando CHEUNG EDB SWD	<p>Dr CHEUNG expressed his concern that the number of places for rehabilitation services and Integrated Programmes in KG-cum-child care centres was insufficient to meet the demand of students who had been assessed to have special needs. He also noted with concern that according to a study conducted by the Hong Kong Institute of Education ("HKIEd"), more than 10 000 children with suspected developmental problems had not been assessed.</p> <p>Dr CHEUNG sought further information on the pilot scheme to be launched through the Lotteries Fund for provision of on-site rehabilitation services to children with special needs and the enhanced support for parents of children with special needs, as announced in the 2015 Policy Address. He also enquired about the support measures for these students to be put in places after implementing free KG education.</p> <p>In this regard, EDB advised that the Administration would make reference to the outcome of the pilot scheme before formulating the way forward.</p> <p>SWD advised that a discussion session was conducted recently with relevant stakeholders on the design of the pilot scheme. Currently, there was no pre-determined target on the number of children to receive the services under the pilot scheme. The pilot scheme would be designed with regard to a number of factors including the quality, the cost-effectiveness and feasibility of the proposals to be submitted by interested service providers later this year. Meanwhile, the requirements to be met by the proposals were being drawn up.</p> <p>Dr CHEUNG opined that it would be helpful if the Administration would consult this Subcommittee again before finalizing the implementation details of the pilot scheme.</p>	
014315 - 014652	Dr Helena WONG EDB Deputy Chairman	<p>Dr WONG enquired about the public expenditure incurred as a result of implementing integrated education in KGs.</p> <p>EDB advised that at present, KGs were provided with resource kits to help them identify children with special needs for referral to MCHCs under Department of Health for initial assessment. Children below 6 years of age who were assessed to have special needs would be referred to receive appropriate training and rehabilitation services provided by SWD. EDB had been providing professional development programmes for KG teachers and school-based support services for KGs to enhance their capacity in catering for students'</p>	

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		<p>diverse learning needs. At present, the Government did not provide designated funding to KGs for supporting students with special needs.</p> <p>Dr WONG was of the view that upon the implementation of free KG education, the Administration should allocate sufficient funding for provision of support for SEN students in KGs.</p>	
<p><i>Agenda Item III - Quality assurance mechanism, regulation and longer-term development of the kindergarten sector</i></p>			
014653 - 015013	EDB Mr WONG Kwok-hing	<p>Mr WONG considered it not desirable that members could only discuss this agenda item in the remaining 15 minutes of the meeting.</p> <p>Mr WONG said that the Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers had recently proposed that each KG should set up a management committee comprising different stakeholders for the purpose of enhancing governance. He also expressed concern about the sale of school items such as textbooks, exercise books, schools uniforms, etc. at KGs. He was of the view that the Administration should strengthen the monitoring and regulation on the collection of miscellaneous fees by KGs.</p> <p>In this regard, EDB advised that it would study the issues of concerns with regard to the KG Committee's report.</p>	
015014 - 015325	Dr Fernando CHEUNG EDB	<p>Dr CHEUNG referred to a submission from Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children [LC Paper No. CB(4)996/14-15(03)], which was tabled at the meeting. He sought clarification on whether the proposal to set up a management committee in each KG would be modeled on the existing practice of setting up incorporated management committees ("IMCs") in primary and secondary schools.</p> <p>EDB said that as considerable public funding would be involved in the implementation of the future KG education policy, it was reasonable for the public to expect that the governance of KGs should be enhanced. One of the suggestions was that each KG should set up a management committee. The Administration would consider the way forward with regard to the recommendations of the KG Committee and the deliberation by the KG sector. The KG Committee had no intention to require the KG sector to set up IMCs as in the case of primary and secondary schools.</p>	
015326 - 015634	Dr Helena WONG	Dr WONG opined that there should be one single quality assurance framework for the whole KG sector. She considered that the following factors	

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		<p>were essential for the implementation of quality KG education in future –</p> <p>(a) Sufficient subsidy should be provided to half-day ("HD")/whole day("WD")/long whole-day("LWD") KGs to enable them to provide quality education and services for children.</p> <p>(b) A salary scale should be set up for KG teachers.</p> <p>(c) When HKIEd, which was the major teacher education institution in Hong Kong, successfully attained the status of university, the professional status of its graduates could be re-affirmed.</p>	
015635 - 015928	Mr MA Fung-kwok EDB	<p>Mr MA considered that the Government should strengthen the requirements and guidelines on the collection of fees or miscellaneous charges by KGs. In his view, the Administration should also consider extending the scope of the various assistance schemes currently applicable to primary and secondary students to cover KG students so as to relieve parents' financial burden.</p> <p>EDB advised that it would explore the possibility of providing additional financial assistance for needy parents to defray expenses on KG education, such as purchase of textbooks.</p> <p>Mr MA enquired whether the Administration had been able to ascertain the operating costs for WD and LWD KGs.</p> <p>In reply, EDB said that the KG Committee had examined the operating costs of different types of KGs, namely HD, WD and LWD KGs.</p>	
015929 - 020120	Deputy Chairman EDB	<p>The Deputy Chairman opined that when considering the quality assurance framework and ways to enhance governance in KGs, it was necessary to take into consideration various factors such as the scale of operation and establishment size of KGs. The models currently adopted by primary and secondary schools might not be applicable to KGs due to the differences in the scale of operation and staff establishment. The Deputy Chairman pointed out that the External School Review reports of primary and secondary schools were not required to be published on the Internet but the Quality Review reports of KGs were published on EDB's website.</p> <p>He said that this arrangement had brought about immense pressure on KGs.</p>	

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		EDB reiterated that it would study the way forward with regard to the KG Committee's report. The KG sector would also be consulted.	
020121 - 020152	Mr Abraham SHEK	Mr SHEK cautioned that while regulation on the KG sector should be enhanced, it must not compromise the quality of teaching and the discretion of KGs in their operations.	
<i>Agenda Item IV - Any Other Business</i>			
020153 - 020209	Deputy Chairman	Closing remarks	

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14 July 2015