

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(4)1358/14-15  
(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 eighth meeting  
held on Tuesday, 9 June 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 CHEUNG Kwok-che  
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

**Members attending** : Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP  
Hon TANG Ka-piu, JP

**Members absent** : Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan  
Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP

**Public Officers attending** : Item I

**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)

**Committee on Free Kindergarten Education**

Dr Moses CHENG  
Chairman

Mrs Betty IP  
Vice-Chairman

Dr Maggie KOONG  
Convenor  
(Objectives, Teacher Professionalism and  
Research)  
Sub-committee

Mr Walter CHAN  
Convenor (Operation and Governance)  
Sub-committee

Mr Tim LUI  
Convenor (Funding Modes)  
Sub-committee

Ms Chitty CHEUNG  
Convenor (Communication Strategy)  
Sub-committee

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

**Staff in attendance** : Miss Mandy NG  
Council Secretary (4) 4

Ms Sandy HAU  
Legislative Assistant (4) 4

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**I. Report of the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education**

(LC Paper No. CB(4)1080/14-15(01) -- Letter dated 28 May 2015 from the Education Bureau

LC Paper No. CB(4)1080/14-15(02) -- The executive summary of the Report of the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education

LC Paper No. CB(4)1102/14-15(01) -- Report of the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education)

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

Briefing by the Administration and the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education ("the KG Committee")

2. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Under Secretary for Education ("US(Ed)") remarked that members of the public were invited to submit their views on the Report of the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education ("the Report") by 31 July 2015. After studying

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the recommendations of the Report and taking into account the views of stakeholders and the public, the Education Bureau ("EDB") would formulate policies and specific measures as appropriate and seek the requisite resources.

3. At the invitation of the Chairman, Dr Moses CHENG, Chairman of the KG Committee briefly explained the work of the KG Committee in the past two years. He highlighted that the KG Committee was tasked to examine various related issues and make recommendations on how to implement free kindergarten ("KG") education in a practicable and sustainable manner. He stressed that in formulating its recommendations, the KG Committee was mindful of the need to strike a balance between what was ideal in the longer run and what was achievable in the short- and medium-term.

Major views and concerns

*Policy objective and scope of free KG education*

4. The KG Committee was of the view that, upon the introduction of the future KG education policy, government subsidy should cover half-day ("HD") services as the basic provision. Dr Kenneth CHAN and Mr WONG Kwok-hing considered that if whole-day ("WD")/long whole-day ("LWD") KG services would not be fully subsidized, 15 years of free education could hardly be achieved. Mrs Regina IP said that while HD schooling might suffice at KG level from the educational perspective, the Administration should not overlook the important services rendered by WD/LWD KGs from the perspective of the population policy. As the matter straddled the work of different policy bureaux, she opined that the Administration should adopt a holistic approach. Hence, EDB should work in conjunction with the relevant policy bureau(x) to seek the requisite resources to provide free WD/LWD KG services. Mr TANG Ka-piu opined that if only HD KG services would be fully subsidized, then KGs would lack the incentives to operate WD/LWD KG services, thereby aggravating the unmet demand for such services in the community.

5. Dr Moses CHENG reiterated that the KG Committee's mandate was to put forward practicable and sustainable recommendations on the future policy on KG education. Premised on this, the KG Committee was of the view that initially, HD KG services should be fully subsidized as the basic provision so that free KG education could be taken forward to benefit a majority of KG students in the near future, while other

improvement measures could be explored in tandem.

6. Some members including the Deputy Chairman and Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che did not fully subscribe to the view that WD programmes did not necessarily benefit young children more than HD programmes did and that the scope of quality KG education that directly impacted upon the learning and development of children could be provided by HD programmes. Some other members including the Chairman and Mr Michael TIEN considered that although it was not conclusive whether WD/LWD services would lead to more positive developmental outcomes in children, the Administration should give serious consideration to ways to support WD/LWD KGs which had been an integral part of the KG sector for many years.

7. Dr Maggie KOONG, Convenor of Sub-committee on Objectives, Teacher Professionalism and Research advised that Hong Kong was unique in having a KG participation rate in excess of 100%. A number of research studies had been carried out to investigate the impact of school hours on three- to six-year-old children but existing evidence precluded drawing conclusions that WD programmes were more favourable to young children than HD programmes. The KG Committee had come to the view that it was the quality of the KG programmes, rather than the duration, that determined whether children could benefit from them or not.

*Long-term provision of KG premises*

8. It was noted that from the planning angle, the KG Committee recommended that the existing planning standards for provision of KGs (i.e. 730 HD and 250 WD places for every 1 000 children in the age group of three to under six) should be revised progressively to 500 HD and 500 WD places for every 1 000 children in the aforesaid age group. Mr Michael TIEN enquired whether the Administration had set a timetable on increasing the supply of government-owned KG premises in its town planning process to facilitate the provision of more WD KG places. Dr Kenneth CHAN and Mr CHAN Chi-chuen considered that if there was a recognized need for more WD places, consideration should also be given to fully subsidizing WD/LWD KG services.

9. In response, Dr Moses CHENG explained that the revised planning standards to increase the provision of WD places sought to tie in with the population policy to release more women back into the local labour force. The revised planning standards were a long-term goal for the

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Government's consideration and could unlikely be implemented in the short- and medium-term. The KG Committee considered that the Administration should initially aim to increase the indoor floor space for each KG student by about 20% so as to improve the environment for children's learning and development. With a view to increasing the provision of KGs premises, US(Ed) said that the Administration would examine the KG Committee's recommendations including the feasibility of co-location of KGs and primary schools.

*Additional resources for WD/LWD KGs*

10. Quite a number of members including the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman, Mr WONG Kwok-hing, Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che, Mr CHAN Chi-chuen, Dr Kenneth CHAN, Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Mr TANG Ka-piu expressed grave concern or disappointment that according to the KG Committee's recommendation, WD/LWD KG services would only receive additional resources instead of being fully subsidized. Members opined that WD/LWD KGs had been providing valuable services to families with dual working parents and the demand for such services had always exceeded the supply. Mr Michael TIEN also enquired whether the Administration would consider setting up a fee remission scheme specifically for the middle class families with dual working parents.

11. Dr Moses CHENG remarked that the KG Committee recognized KG education as a foundation stage of learning and whole person development for children. Having regard to overseas practices and from the educational perspective, it was considered that HD KG services (i.e. about 15 hours per week) would suffice in fulfilling the objectives of KG education. Notwithstanding, the KG Committee was fully aware of the vital services provided by WD/LWD KGs to working parents. Hence, it had recommended that the Administration should provide additional resources, such as in the form of an additional grant, to encourage KGs to provide more WD/LWD KG services, which would enable those parents in need of such services to have more access to them and at a more affordable cost. The KG Committee also recommended that the existing Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme be maintained to provide additional financial assistance for children from needy families.

12. Mr WONG Kwok-hing enquired whether the KG Committee had estimated the extra financial resources incurred if WD/LWD KG services were fully subsidized. Mr Michael TIEN said that according to his own preliminary estimate, an additional \$800 million would be required per

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annum if WD/LWD KG services were to be fully subsidized. Mr TANG Ka-piu and Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che were concerned whether the Administration had indicated to the KG Committee that the future free KG education policy had to be implemented within a specified budget.

13. In response, Dr Moses CHENG confirmed that the Administration had not made any such indication. Regarding the extra financial resources incurred if WD/LWD KG services would be fully subsidized, he cautioned that as it was difficult to predict the future growth or otherwise of WD/LWD KG services, the KG Committee did not attempt to make an estimate on the additional resources required, as doing so without valid data would not bring about meaningful results.

14. The Chairman sought explanation on how the KG Committee had set 25% to 30% of the basic funding for HD KG services as the additional subsidy for WD KG services. Mr Tim LUI, Convenor, Sub-committee on Funding advised that the KG Committee had made reference to the level of tuition fees of WD KG services and HD KG services, and found that the former was 50% to 60% higher than the latter. The KG Committee was of the view that the extra financial burden should be borne by both the Government and the parents. For eligible LWD KGs, in view of their extra hours of services, additional resources on top of the WD subsidy would be necessary in order to enable them to employ one to three headcounts, depending on the size of the KGs.

*Additional support for KG students with special needs*

15. Dr Fernando CHEUNG noted the KG Committee's recommendations to strengthen support for KG students with special needs. However, he considered that the policy on integrated education should be extended to KG education so that the five basic principles of integrated education (namely, early identification, early intervention, whole school approach, home-school cooperation and cross-sector collaboration) could be properly implemented. He was concerned about the division of responsibilities between EDB, the Labour and Welfare Bureau/Social Welfare Department, the Hospital Authority and the Department of Health in providing assessment and rehabilitation services for pre-primary children with special needs.

16. In response, Dr Moses CHENG highlighted that one of the KG Committee's recommendations in the short- and medium-term was to allocate due resources to Parents/Relatives Resources Centres to further support those disabled children on the waiting list of subvented pre-

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school rehabilitation services and their parents/carers. He also informed members that the membership of the Sub-committee on Catering for Student Diversity set up under the KG Committee included representatives from the Department of Health and the Social Welfare Department. Hence, the needs of these students for early assessment and rehabilitation services had been taken into consideration in the deliberation process. Mrs Betty IP, Vice Chairman of the KG Committee supplemented that to better cater for children with special needs, the KG Committee had proposed to improve the teacher-to-pupil ratio from the existing 1:15 to no worse than 1:12.

*Salary for KG staff and the funding mode*

17. Some members including the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman and Mr WONG Kwok-hing referred to strong calls from the KG sector and expressed grave concerns that the KG Committee had not recommended the establishment of a mandatory salary scale for KG teachers and had only proposed salary ranges for KG staff. The Deputy Chairman stressed that in order to recognize the years of service or seniority of KG teachers, it was necessary to put in place a salary scale with incremental points accordingly to which KG teachers would be remunerated. Mr WONG said that a mandatory salary scale would provide certainty as well as an incentive for aspiring young people to develop their career in KG education.

18. Dr Moses CHENG advised that a consultancy study had been commissioned to examine specifically the human resources requirements and remuneration in KG sector. The consultant examined the current pay levels of staff in KGs and conducted a thorough analysis and comparison with the pay levels of similar roles/positions in the job market. Having considered the findings and proposals of the consultancy study as well as the views of stakeholders, the KG Committee recommended that the Government should set a salary range for each of the teaching positions and core supporting staff positions for reference of KGs. This arrangement could allow flexibility for KGs to appoint suitable staff to meet their school-based operational needs. He added that the KG Committee had also recommended the development of a continuous professional development policy with appropriate targets based on a Teacher Competencies Framework and a Principal Competencies Framework. A clear career ladder would also be conducive to attracting new blood and retaining talents for the KG sector.



19. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che remarked that as the lump sum grant implemented in the social welfare sector was capped at the mid-point salaries of the respective ranks of staff, this funding arrangement had resulted in adverse consequences on manpower, notably the displacement of experienced and longer-serving staff. He was keen to ensure that the funding mode to be applied to the KG sector should be free from such drawbacks.

20. On staff salary, Dr Moses CHENG said that consideration should be given to designating a proportion of the government funding for teaching staff salary expenses in order to make sure that KGs utilized their resources properly in teacher remuneration. The KG Committee had also suggested that the Government should consider providing a safety net under which KGs could apply for additional funds on a case-by-case basis to meet the expenditure on salaries of long-serving staff.

*Miscellaneous fees charged by KGs*

21. Mr MA Fung-kwok enquired whether the Administration would provide travel subsidy and school textbook assistance to KG students and whether the Administration would monitor the miscellaneous fees charged by KGs. Dr Moses CHENG said that the KG Committee agreed with the need for the Government to step up monitoring over the fees collected by KGs, as well as to provide additional assistance to children from needy families. US(Ed) said that the Administration had taken note of the KG Committee's recommendations for consideration.

*The way forward*

22. Dr Kenneth CHAN opined that in the longer run, the Administration should increase public expenditure on KG education to 1% of Hong Kong's Gross Domestic Product, comparable to the level of expenditure in some member states of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development ("OECD"), and conduct more local researches on early childhood education. He also requested the Administration to provide all the consultancy reports submitted to the KG Committee so as to facilitate members' consideration. US(Ed) said that there was certain sensitive information and data in the consultancy reports. However, the Administration could provide the executive summaries of the reports for members' reference.

consultancy reports prior to the Subcommittee's meeting to receive public views on 4 July 2015. The executive summarise were circulated to member vide LC paper No. CB(4)1266/14-15(01)-(03) on 2 July 2015.)

23. To oversee the implementation of the future KG education policy, Dr Moses CHENG recapitulated that the KG Committee had recommended the appointment by the Government of a steering committee consisting of representatives of relevant stakeholder groups, relevant government departments, as well as professionals. In the long run, the Government might consider setting up an independent commission to co-ordinate services for pre-school children.

24. In response to the Deputy Chairman's enquiry about the way forward, US(Ed) advised that, upon the end of the public consultation in late July 2015, the Administration would examine the views of the public and stakeholders and formulate policies and specific measures as appropriate. It would announce the implementation details in 2016 so that parents could be well aware of the relevant arrangements when they applied for admission of their children to KGs for the 2017-2018 school year.

## **II. Any other business**

25. The Chairman informed members that the next meeting would be held on 23 June 2015 at 16:30 pm to discuss items (i), (j) and (k) listed in LC Paper No. CB(4)87/14-15(01). Members considered that a meeting should be arranged for the Subcommittee to receive public views on the Report. For this purpose, they noted the Chairman's suggestion to convene the meeting on Saturday, 4 July 2015. The actual duration of the meeting would depend on the number of attending deputations. As agreed by the Subcommittee earlier on, the Secretariat would make arrangement to reserve a segment of the meeting for deputations who wished to present views exclusively on support for students with special needs. The Chairman also requested the Administration to co-ordinate the attendance of representatives from relevant bureau(x)/department(s) to attend the meeting.

26. Members noted that the KG Committee had completed its work and submitted its Report to the Government. While the Subcommittee would also extend its invitation to the KG Committee, it would be for the KG Committee to decide whether it would attend the meeting on 4 July 2015 having regard to factors such as the availability of its members.

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27. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:30 pm.

Council Business Division 4  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
22 July 2015

**Proceedings of the eighth meeting of the  
Subcommittee to Study the Implementation of  
Free Kindergarten Education  
on Tuesday, 9 June 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 - Report of the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education</i>			
000527 - 001406	Chairman Education Bureau ("EDB") Committee on Free Kindergarten Education ("the KG Committee")	Opening remarks  EDB advised that members of the public were invited to submit their views on the report of the KG Committee by 31 July 2015.  Briefing by the KG Committee on its recommendations of the future kindergarten ("KG") education policy.	
001407 - 002042	Mr WONG Kwok-hing The KG Committee	Mr WONG's enquiry about the estimated additional financial resources incurred if whole-day ("WD")/long whole-day ("LWD") KG services were fully subsidized in the future KG education policy.	
002043 - 002818	Dr Kenneth CHAN The KG Committee	Dr CHAN's views that if there was a recognized need for more WD places, consideration should be given to fully subsidizing WD/LWD KG services.	
002819 - 004151	Dr Fernando CHEUNG Mr TANG Ka-piu The KG Committee	The members' concern about the adverse implications arising from the recommendation that WD/LWD KG services would only receive additional resources instead of being fully subsidized, such as the lack of initiative for KGs to provide WD/LWD services and aggravation of the unmet demand for such services.	
004152 - 004910	Deputy Chairman The KG Committee	The Deputy Chairman's views that a mandatory salary scale for KG teachers should be established in order that teachers' years of service could be duly recognized.	
004911 - 005556	Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che The KG Committee	Mr CHEUNG's concerns about the drawbacks of the lump sum grant implemented in the social welfare sector and the future mode of funding for teaching staff salary expenses of the KG sector.	
005557 - 010150	Mr Michael TIEN The KG Committee	Mr TIEN's enquiry about the preliminary estimate on the extra financial resources incurred if WD/LWD KG services were fully subsidized in the future KG education policy.	
010151 - 010710	Mr CHAN Chi-chuen EDB	Mr CHAN's views that if there was a recognized need for more WD places, consideration should be given to fully subsidizing WD/LWD KG services.	

<b>Time marker</b>	<b>Speaker(s)</b>	<b>Subject(s)</b>	<b>Action required</b>
010711 - 011120	Mrs Regina IP The KG Committee	Mrs IP's views that the Administration should adopt a holistic approach, not just from the educational perspective, to provide free WD/LWD KG services so as to tie in with the population policy to unleash the employment potential of women.	
011121 - 011536	Mr MA Fung-kwok EDB The KG Committee	Mr MA's enquiries about the Administration's stance on providing travel subsidy and school textbook assistance to KG students, and monitoring of the miscellaneous fees charged by KGs.	
011537 - 012244	Chairman The KG Committee	The Chairman's enquiry about the KG Committee's rationale of setting 25% to 30% of basic funding for HD KG services as the additional subsidy for WD KG services.	
012245 - 012742	Mr WONG Kwok-hing The KG Committee	Mr WONG's views that a mandatory salary scale for KG teachers should be established in order that teachers' years of service could be duly recognized.	
012743 - 013314	Dr Kenneth CHAN EDB The KG Committee	Dr CHAN's views that in the longer run, the Administration should increase public expenditure on KG education and conduct more local researches on early childhood education.  The Administration agreed to provide the executive summaries of the consultancy reports to members.	EDB was requested to provide the information as stated in paragraph 22 of the minutes.
013315 - 013626	Mr TANG Ka-piu The KG Committee	Mr TANG's concern that KGs would lack incentives to operate WD/LWD KG services if only HD KG services would be fully subsidized.	
013627 - 014304	Dr Fernando CHEUNG The KG Committee	Dr CHEUNG's views that the policy on integrated education should be extended to KG education so that targeted support measures could be provided for KG students with special needs.	
014305 - 015041	Deputy Chairman The KG Committee	Deputy Chairman's enquiry about the Administration's action and plans to follow up the various recommendations of the KG Committee.	
015042 - 015547	Mr Michael TIEN EDB	Mr TIEN's enquiries about the feasibility of setting up a fee remission scheme for middle class families with dual working parents, as well as the timetable, if any, on increasing the supply of government-owned KG premises in the town planning process.	
<i>Agenda Item II- Any Other Business</i>			
015548 - 020123	Chairman EDB	Arrangements for the forthcoming meetings.	

Council Business Division 4  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
22 July 2015