

立法會
Legislative Council

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Panel on Education

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

**Minutes of the ninth meeting
held on Tuesday, 23 June 2015, at 4:30 pm
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 CHEUNG Kwok-che
Hon IP Kwok-him, 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

Members absent : Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan, JP
Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP

**Public Officers : Item I, II and III
attending**

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)
Education Bureau

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

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

Ms Sandy HAU
Legislative Assistant (4) 4

Action

Admin

At the Chairman's request, the Education Bureau agreed to provide the executive summaries of the three consultancy reports submitted to the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education prior to the Subcommittee's meeting on 4 July 2015.

(Post meeting note: The executive summaries of the three consultancy reports were circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)1266/14-15(01)-(03) on 2 July 2015).

I. Research on early childhood education

(Appendix I to LC Paper No. CB(4) 1183/14-15(01) -- Paper provided by the Administration)

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

II. Issues related to parents' participation

(Appendix II to LC Paper No. CB(4) -- Paper provided by the
1183/14-15(01) Administration)

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

III. Tuition fees and miscellaneous fees charged by kindergartens, the Government's monitoring, the financial assistance available to children from needy families

(Appendix III to LC Paper No. CB(4) -- Paper provided by the
1183/14-15(01) Administration)

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

IV. Any other business

5. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:04 pm.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
25 August 2015

**Proceedings of the ninth meeting of the
Subcommittee to Study the Implementation of
Free Kindergarten Education
on Tuesday, 23 June 2015, at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room 2 of the Legislative Council Complex**

Time marker	Speaker(s)	Subject(s)	Action required
<i>Agenda Item I - Research on early childhood education</i>			
000432 - 000942	Chairman Education Bureau ("EDB")	Opening remarks EDB briefed members on the recommendations put forward by the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education ("the KG Committee") regarding research on early childhood education ("ECE"), issues related to parents' participation, monitoring of tuition fees and miscellaneous fees charged by kindergartens ("KGs") and financial assistance available to children from the needy families.	
000943 - 001526	Deputy Chairman EDB Chairman	The Deputy Chairman enquired how the Administration would encourage more local research studies on ECE and whether EDB would take the lead to initiate these research studies. He found it unsatisfactory that EDB had merely extracted relevant parts from the Report of the KG Committee without stating the Administration's stance. In response, EDB advised that – (a) overall, the Administration agreed with the KG Committee's views that there should be more local research studies on ECE and had in fact met with stakeholders including teacher education institutions; and (b) public consultation was underway and EDB would need to examine the recommendations put forward by the KG Committee before making firm decisions. At the Chairman's requests, EDB undertook to provide the executive summaries of the consultancy reports submitted to the KG Committee prior to the Subcommittee's meeting to receive public views on 4 July 2015.	EDB was requested to provide the information as stated in paragraph 1 of the minutes.
001527 - 002326	Dr Kenneth CHAN EDB	Dr CHAN considered that at present, the local academia had often focussed effort on conducting researches for publication in international journals, at the expense of researches which were relevant to local needs. Hence, it was necessary for the Administration to play a more active facilitating role, such as setting up a cross-institution research centre with government funding to conduct local researches on ECE.	

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		<p>EDB took note of members' views for consideration. It also highlighted the need to strike a balance between the Government's taking a more active role on one hand; and ensuring individual institutions' autonomy to conduct their academic activities on the other.</p>	
002327 - 002831	Mr WONG Kwok-hing EDB	<p>Mr WONG opined that –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) a quality teaching force was vital for quality KG education. Hence, a mandatory salary scale for KG teachers should be established so as to provide job security and an incentive for aspiring young people to develop their career in KG education; and (b) the Administration should also step up monitoring over the miscellaneous fees collected by KGs. <p>EDB advised that –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the KG Committee had proposed a KG teaching staff structure and a salary range for each of the teaching positions for reference of KGs. These measures would be conducive to attracting new blood and retaining talents for the KG sector; and (b) the Administration had issued guidelines to KGs regarding the collection of miscellaneous fees. 	
002832 - 003841	Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che Chairman EDB	<p>Noting that there were very few research studies on local KG education -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Mr CHEUNG sought further explanation from the Administration on how it would encourage more local research studies on ECE; and (b) the Chairman was of the view that the Administration should carry out longitudinal studies on KG students, such as comparing the developmental outcomes in children attending half-day and those attending whole-day KGs. <p>EDB explained that –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) where necessary, the Administration would commission research studies for new policies. Currently, longitudinal studies were conducted to track students' performance in the Territory-wide System Assessment as well as the Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework; 	

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		<p>(b) the Administration could make reference to the existing Collaborative Action Research conducted by tertiary institutions and KGs and the direction of the future research should help raise the quality of KG education; and</p> <p>(c) the Administration would consider strategic plans to encourage more local research studies on ECE, taking into account views from the public and stakeholders.</p>	
003842 - 004434	Deputy Chairman Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che EDB	<p>Echoing Dr Kenneth CHAN's views, the Deputy Chairman was concerned that some research studies were highly relevant to Hong Kong, such as teaching and learning of Chinese for children, but might not attract wide international attention. He opined that the Central Policy Unit should play a more active role in initiating policy researches on local ECE.</p> <p>Mr CHEUNG suggested that the Administration should conduct more basic researches on ECE in Hong Kong. EDB took note of members' views for consideration.</p>	
<i>Agenda Item II- Issues related to parents' participation</i>			
004435 - 004744	Chairman EDB Mr TAM Yiu-chung	<p>Mr TAM referred to the successful experience of a KG in promoting home-school cooperation, and opined that parents' active participation in school activities was conducive to the healthy development of children.</p> <p>The Administration advised that –</p> <p>(a) EDB provided Home-School Co-operation Grants to encourage KGs to set up Parent-Teacher Associations ("PTAs"). In the 2013-2014 school year, about 30% of KGs had set up PTAs. EDB would make efforts to raise this percentage; and</p> <p>(b) as KG schooling lasted for three years only, some KGs, in particular those of a small scale, might have difficulties in setting up PTAs.</p>	
004745 - 005726	Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che Chairman EDB	<p>Mr CHEUNG pointed out that parents' involvement should not be confined to participation in PTAs or school activities. It was equally important for KGs to also establish channels to maintain close communications with those parents who, for various reasons, did not take part in PTA or school activities.</p> <p>The Chairman concurred with Mr CHEUNG's views, and enquired about measures, if any, to facilitate parents' participation and whether EDB would provide any guidelines in this regard for KGs.</p>	

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		<p>EDB advised that –</p> <p>(a) apart from encouraging and facilitating parents' participation in PTAs and school activities, certain KGs had involved parents as resources, such as being story-tellers and volunteers. The Administration considered that such good practices could be promoted in the KG sector;</p> <p>(b) effective KG education required the support of parents. While KGs should nurture an inviting school atmosphere, the readiness of parents to devote time and effort for the healthy development and effective learning of their children was also essential; and</p> <p>(c) the Administration would examine the feasibility of making use of various means to disseminate key messages about child development and KG education to parents.</p>	
005727 - 005946	Mr TAM Yiu-chung EDB Chairman	<p>Mr TAM and the Chairman were concerned about dual working parents who were fully occupied with their work and could hardly find time to take part in PTAs or school activities. The Chairman suggested that KGs might consider providing parents with the contact telephone number of the teachers concerned to facilitate communication.</p> <p>The Administration took note of members' views for consideration.</p>	
<i>Agenda Item III- Tuition fees and miscellaneous fees charged by kindergartens, the Government's monitoring, the financial assistance available to children from needy families</i>			
005947 - 010425	Chairman EDB	<p>The Chairman enquired whether the Administration would set ceilings on the miscellaneous fees collected by KGs and strengthen its monitoring roles over tuition fees. She also enquired about the proportion of KG places which could be provided free under the future KG education policy.</p> <p>In response, EDB advised that –</p> <p>(a) KGs were required to apply for EDB's approval for the collection or revision of tuition fees, which should cover all necessary expenses in relation to teaching and learning. Miscellaneous fees might also be collected from parents for school items or services on a voluntary basis. EDB had not set a ceiling on the amount of miscellaneous fees but had issued relevant guidelines to KGs, including requesting KGs to disclose to the public the types and amounts of miscellaneous fees collected;</p>	

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		<p>(b) to enhance transparency, the Administration would consider strengthening its monitoring role to ensure KGs' compliance with the relevant guidelines; and</p> <p>(c) it was the wish of the KG Committee that about 60% of students attending local non-profit making KGs would not need to pay school fee in future, if all its recommendations were implemented.</p>	
010426 - 011608	Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che Dr Fernando CHEUNG EDB	<p>Noting that not all KG places would be fully subsidized in future, Mr CHEUNG enquired about the financial assistance available to needy families to cover the tuition fees and miscellaneous charges.</p> <p>Dr CHEUNG enquired whether the Administration would consider providing full subsidy to children to defray tuition fees and miscellaneous fees if their family income was below a specified level, such as below the median household income.</p> <p>EDB advised that –</p> <p>(a) the fee remission ceilings under the Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme was currently set as the 75th percentile of the school fees of KGs under the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme. Beneficiary families might have to bear the difference, if any, between the amount of fee assistance and the actual tuition fee;</p> <p>(b) for children from families receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA"), they could receive grants under CSSA, which covered school fees and meal charges. A flat-rate grant was also available under CSSA to cover school-related expenses (e.g. books, stationery and school uniforms) for KG students;</p> <p>(c) the KG Committee recommended that the Government should provide an additional grant for supporting needy families to pay for the school-related expenses. As for the grant level, reference might be made to similar grant available under CSSA; and</p> <p>(d) for the prudent use of public resources, whether full subsidy to children from low income families could be provided was subject to any ceiling to be set on the level of tuition fees in future;</p>	

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011609 - 012752	Deputy Chairman Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che EDB	<p>In anticipation that EDB would step up the regulation of KGs in future, the Deputy Chairman was concerned that some KGs, in particular those of a smaller operating scale, might not have sufficient supporting staff to handle various administrative work such as the preparation of returns etc. He also remarked that the objective of free KG education might be defeated if individual KGs charged exorbitant miscellaneous fees which had to be borne by parents.</p> <p>Mr CHEUNG considered that the Administration should explore ways to lower or minimize the level of miscellaneous fees charged by KGs, such as allowing students the option of not wearing school uniforms.</p> <p>EDB advised that –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) to provide necessary administrative support for smooth operation, the KG Committee recommended the provision of clerical staff for each KG; (b) to ensure prudent use of public funds, it was necessary to put in place a proper monitoring mechanism. The Administration would be mindful of the need to avoid generating a heavy administrative workload on KGs; and (c) it took note of members' concern that ways should be explored to avoid the collection of high miscellaneous fees while maintaining diversity and flexibility of KG sector. 	
012753 - 013341	Deputy Chairman EDB	<p>The Deputy Chairman opined that –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) to avoid over-regulation in future, the Administration should only regulate key operational areas such as the collection of fees; (b) the Administration should simplify various procedures with a view to minimizing the administrative work required to be carried out by KGs for compliance with relevant requirements; (c) KGs should be required to disclose all the miscellaneous charges so that parents could be properly apprised when they applied for admission of their children to the KGs concerned; and (d) the Operation Manual for Pre-primary Institutions ("the Manual") specified that the 	

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		<p>profit that could be received by KGs from their sale of school items and provision of paid services should not exceed 15% of the cost at which they were purchased from the suppliers. However, it appeared that compliance with the Manual was not mandatory on the part of KGs.</p> <p>EDB advised that –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) the Administration agreed that KGs should enhance the transparency of their fees and charges; and(b) all KGs were required to comply with the Manual. If there was any case of non-compliance, EDB would follow up the matter accordingly.	
<i>Agenda Item IV- Any other business</i>			
013342 - 013426	Deputy Chairman EDB	Arrangements for the next meeting.	

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25 August 2015