

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)744/99-00

(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

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LegCo Panel on Education

Minutes of Meeting
held on Monday, 21 June 1999 at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

- Members Present** : Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung (Chairman)
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, JP
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon SIN Chung-kai
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
- Members Absent** : Prof Hon NG Ching-fai (Deputy Chairman)
Hon CHOY So-yuk
Hon SZETO Wah
- Public Officers Attending** : Item III
Mr Raymond YOUNG
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (2)
Mr Joseph LAI
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (3)
Ms Olivia NIP
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower

Mr C K TAM
Assistant Director (Chief Inspector of Schools)
Education Department

Item IV

Mr Joseph LAI
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (3)

Mrs Margaret CHAN
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower (9)

Mr M S LAU
Assistant Director of Education (Services)

Miss Eugenie WOO
Senior Specialist (Educational Psychology/Special Education)

Item VII

Mr Philip CHOK
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (1)

Ms Michelle LI
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower (1)

Mr Nigel FRENCH
Secretary-General of University Grants Committee

Clerk in Attendance : Mrs Constance LI
Chief Assistant Secretary (2) 2

Staff in Attendance : Mr Stanley MA
Senior Assistant Secretary (2) 6

I. Matters arising

[Paper Nos. CB(2)2314/98-99(01) and (02)]

Members agreed that a further meeting should be held before the end of the 1998-99 session, preferably on 8 July 1999, to follow up the following issues -

- (a) supervision of the administration of the University Grants Committee-funded tertiary education institutions; and
- (b) consultation paper on Leadership Training Programme for Principals.

(Post-meeting note : Due to clashes with the Legislative Council meetings on 7 and 14 July 1999 which were extended to 8 July and 16 July 1999 respectively, the next meeting of the Education Panel was postponed to 27 September 1999.)

II. Information papers issued since the last meeting

[Paper Nos. CB(2)2147/98-99(01) and CB(2)2321/98-99]

2. Members noted that the deadline for comments on the Education Department's Consultation Paper on Leadership Training Programme for Principals was 17 July 1999.

III. Benchmark qualification for English language teachers

[Paper No. CB(2)2314/98-99(03)]

3. Miss Emily LAU noted that the timetable for requiring all serving teachers to meet the language benchmarks was year 2005. In view of the declining English standard of students in recent years, she expressed concern what measures would be taken by the Administration between now and year 2005 to improve the language standard of existing English teachers to ensure the quality of teaching of English in schools.

4. Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (2) (DS/EM2) said that there had been allegedly reports that the standard of some English language teachers in secondary schools adopting English as their medium of instruction (MOI) was less than satisfactory. He clarified that the purpose of Education Department (ED)'s inspections was not to evaluate the language proficiency of teachers but to check whether they were indeed teaching in genuine English instead of a mixture of Chinese and English.

5. Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (3) (DS/EM3) supplemented that the quality of serving English language teachers would vary from individual to individual and there was currently no commonly recognized standard for assessing their language proficiency. The Government therefore did not have any estimate about the number of English language teachers whose English proficiency might be below standard. When the English benchmarks were established, the existing 14 000 English language teachers could choose either to take the benchmark examination or undertake a part-time training course of some 100 hours to 200 hours to acquire the benchmark qualification. It was envisaged that most teachers would prefer the part-time training course to the one-off benchmark examination, and in this connection, it would take about five years to complete training for all serving English language teachers.

6. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong enquired whether all new teachers would be required to possess the benchmark qualifications. He said that undergraduates undergoing the pre-service teacher education programme in Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIE) and those in local universities could be assessed internally by these professional institutions. Mr CHEUNG also asked whether there would be different benchmarks for language and non-language teachers.

7. DS/EM3 replied that tertiary education institutes providing professional teacher training would have to establish internal assessment criteria for their under-graduates. However, serving teachers and new teachers without the recognized language qualification would have to acquire the benchmark qualification. Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications (ACTEQ) was currently developing three language benchmarks, for teachers teaching English, Chinese and Putonghua, and the need for higher benchmarks for language teachers (vis-_-vis teachers using English or Chinese as the medium of instruction) was also under consideration.

8. Mrs Selina CHOW stressed that most parents' concern was to ensure a high level of language proficiency among English language teachers. She considered that English language teachers should have a higher language standard than teachers teaching other subjects. In this connection, she enquired whether there would be different benchmarks for English language teachers and teachers adopting English as the MOI to teach other subjects.

9. DS/EM3 informed members that the ACTEQ language consultants have come up with tentative benchmarks for the English language and these were now under evaluation as described in paragraphs 8 to 14 of the Administration's paper. It was expected that a report would be available around June 1999 on the English benchmarks for English language teachers. The objective was to adopt the same benchmark for all English language teachers irrespective of whether English or Chinese was the MOI of the school. The language consultants would also examine whether a different set of English benchmark for non-language teachers

was necessary.

10. In response to the Chairman, the Assistant Director (Chief Inspector of Schools) informed members that the language consultants had issued some 13 000 questionnaires to teachers and schools. Out of the 75% schools which had responded, 83.8 % had expressed support for the need to set benchmarks for English language teachers.

11. Miss Emily LAU expressed concern about the costs for providing training to some 14 000 serving English language teachers if the majority would opt to attend the training course instead of the examination to acquire the benchmark qualification. Miss LAU also urged the Administration to take early action to ensure that all English teachers in schools met the English benchmark. In this connection, she asked about the arrangements for those teachers who did not meet the benchmark standards by 2005.

12. DS/EM3 responded that the benchmark for English language teachers was being developed and that he was confident that the final product would be reasonable and acceptable to serving teachers. Since the training course would take more than 100 hours of the teachers' time, there was a possibility that some serving English language teachers might eventually opt to take the benchmark examination instead. He stressed that it was necessary to provide the training course as an alternative to examination for serving teachers.

13. Mr Andrew WONG commented that the English benchmarks should have been set well before the implementation of the mother-tongue teaching policy. He said that the Administration should have assessed whether there were sufficient qualified English teachers before approving some schools to adopt English as the MOI.

14. DS/EM2 and DS/EM3 responded that the mother tongue policy was implemented after thorough consultation within the education sector. When the policy was implemented in 1998, the objective was that it would be up to the school principals to determine whether their teachers were capable of using English or Chinese as the MOI. DS/EM2 agreed that it would be ideal if a set of language benchmarks could be available at that time for objective assessment of the teachers' language standards. He envisaged that following the adoption of the English benchmarks in the near future, the overall proficiency level of English teachers could be maintained at a satisfactory level.

15. Noting that the English benchmarks would be available in a few months, Miss Emily LAU suggested and members agreed to follow up the progress on the development and application of the language benchmarks at a future meeting.

IV. Policies on integrated education and the outcome of the 2-year pilot scheme

[Paper Nos. CB(2)2207/98-99(01), CB(2)2314/98-99(04) and (05)]

16. Referring to Appendix I of the Administration's paper, Mr CHEUNG Man-
kwong asked why there were different levels of support services for different categories of disabled children integrated in ordinary schools. For example, the visually-impaired pupils in ordinary schools were supported by visiting resource teachers at a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:8, while the hearing-impaired pupils in ordinary schools were visited by inspectors at a ratio of 1:100. He said that the Ebenezer school and the Hong Kong Special Schools Council had also pointed out that integrated education for pupils with visual impairment generally was more satisfactory than that for pupils with other disabilities. The more favourable additional support to visually-impaired pupils could be a contributing factor. Mr CHEUNG therefore asked why similar support was not provided to pupils with other disabilities in ordinary schools.

17. Senior Specialist (Educational Psychology/Special Education) agreed that the regular professional support services rendered by teachers of special schools could provide expert assistance to ordinary schools in teaching pupils with disabilities. She added that special support services for pupils with visual impairment was essential especially for the preparation of teaching materials, examination papers and notes in Braille. ED had also arranged regular meetings for teachers and parents in ordinary schools to exchange information and share experience with resource teachers. In response to Mr CHEUNG's enquiry as to whether there was any comparison study on the best approach for teaching pupils with disabilities, Senior Specialist advised that ED had planned to commission local tertiary education institutions to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the various education models for pupils with disabilities.

18. Mr CHEUNG reiterated that pupils with disabilities who were integrated in ordinary schools should not receive less support or assistance than those in special schools. In this connection, he also urged the Administration to provide similar level of support services to pupils with different disabilities who were receiving education in ordinary schools. The Administration noted the comments.

19. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered that integrated education should be extended to other schools in addition to those participating in the pilot scheme. On the adequacy of school facilities for students with a disability, he said that some schools did not provide boarding facilities for those students who had to travel a long distance to school. Senior Specialist responded that the design for new schools had catered for the needs of integrated education, while necessary improvement works were being carried out in existing schools by phases. DS/EM3 supplemented that according to the existing schedule, all schools would have the necessary facilities for integrated education by year 2004.

20. Dr YEUNG Sum expressed support in principle for the integrated education policy. He remarked that acceptance by teachers, peer students and their parents was vital to the success of integrated education. Noting that ED appeared to have adopted a low-key approach in implementing integrated education, Dr YEUNG urged the Government to ensure that integrated students were not discriminated or alienated in ordinary schools. With regard to the additional resources of \$50,000 for each school providing integrated education, Dr YEUNG considered that the level of extra resources might have to be adjusted according to the special needs of the different categories of disabilities of the students.

21. On the level of acceptance of the integrated students by other students and parents, Senior Specialist said that the teachers and parents were generally in support of the policy. Although some school principals preferred a low-key approach in the initial months of implementation, there had been increasing acceptance and support by teachers who gradually gained more confidence in teaching integrated students. Parents generally had no resistance to having integrated students in the schools. On the publicity for integrated education, Assistant Director of Education (Services) (ADE(S)) said that in addition to the promotional efforts within the participating schools, ED had organized exhibitions and programmes to promote the integrated education policy. In this regard, the Chairman drew members' attention to a television programme which described successful cases of integrated students in ordinary schools.

22. On the effectiveness of the two year pilot scheme, ADE(S) said that the Sub-committee on Special Education under the Board of Education was considering the report of the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIE) on the two-year pilot project in seven primary and two secondary schools. ADE(S) said that HKIE's report was encouraging. Most integrated students had demonstrated improvements in academic and social abilities during the two year pilot scheme, and their parents were also satisfied with their progress. ED had plans to increase the number of participating schools to 20 and 40 respectively in the coming two years. Apart from the non-recurrent grant, each school providing integrated education was provided with one resource teacher at the rank of Certified Master with special education training for every five pupils and one teacher assistant for every eight pupils.

23. Mrs Selina CHOW said she did not query the merits of integrated education. She was however concerned whether the approach would provide the best benefits to children with special educational needs.

24. Senior Specialist explained that the objective of integrated education was to help students with disabilities to adjust to and benefit from the mainstream education system as far as possible. Currently, classes attended by integrated students were put under the supervision of an ordinary teacher and a special

teacher to enhance the effectiveness of integrated education. Generally speaking, students with hearing-impairment and physically handicapped students had little difficulty in adjusting to ordinary classes, while mentally handicapped students might have some problems. To monitor the progress of individual integrated students, participating schools had established learning committees, chaired by their heads or their representatives, to assess the learning progress and make necessary adjustments in the curriculum.

V. Report of the Subcommittee on facilities in special schools for physically handicapped children
[Paper No. CB(2)2314/98-99(06)]

25. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong briefed members on the Subcommittee's report, highlighting the following improvements which were identified by the Subcommittee in consultation with the Hong Kong Special Schools Council (HKSSC) and parents' representatives -

- (a) provision of air-conditioning to the boarding section of special schools for physically handicapped (PH) children;
- (b) increase of classroom size from 45m² to 55m² (or 60m²);
- (c) provision of special meals to PH students through the Food Chill Service of the Hospital Authority;
- (d) granting of restricted zone permits to school bus for PH children;
- (e) provision of a smaller pool for hydrotherapy in the new design of special schools; and
- (f) provision of special furniture and facilities in toilets, and classrooms in special schools for PH students.

26. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong informed members that the Administration had agreed to carry out a number of improvements. In view of the limited time available, the Subcommittee did not have the opportunity to discuss the manpower requirements of Physiotherapists (PT) and Occupational Therapist (OT) in special schools and other improvements required for the boarding section of special schools. He therefore suggested these issues be followed up by the Panel at future meetings. He also expressed appreciation of the efforts made by representatives of the Education and Manpower Bureau, Education Department, HKSSC and Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation Community Rehabilitation Network (HKSR) in bringing about the improvements to the special schools in the past months.

27. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung supplemented that he would suggest the Panel to follow up other areas of concerns as raised by parents' representatives. A list of issues was tabled at the meeting (which was also circulated to absent members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)2361/98-99 on 24 June 1999).

28. Dr YEUNG Sum also expressed appreciation of the contributions made by the Government, parents' representatives and HKSSC to the work of the Subcommittee. He agreed that the Panel should follow up on some policy issues and the manpower requirements of special schools. Mr Andrew WONG expressed similar view.

29. Mrs Selina CHOW and Miss Emily LAU thanked the Subcommittee for its accomplishments. They were pleased to note that the Subcommittee had consulted affected parties in making the improvements and that Government had also accepted the Subcommittee recommendations. They agreed that the Panel could follow up outstanding issues and other issues as suggested by Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung. Members also requested that the Administration should provide a progress report on the improvements recommended by the Subcommittee.

(Post-meeting note : The Administration's progress report was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)2602/98-99 in July 1999.)

VI. Draft report of the Panel to the Legislative Council on 30 June 1999
[Paper No. CB(2)2314/98-99(07)]

30. Members noted the draft report of the Panel to be submitted to the Legislative Council on 30 June 1999. The Chairman informed members that any comments to the draft report could be forwarded to the Panel Clerk by 24 June 1999.

VII. Any other business

31. The Chairman informed the meeting that the Administration had requested to brief members on the Lingnan University Bill which would be introduced into the Legislative Council shortly.

Lingnan University Bill

32. At the invitation of the Chairman, DS/EM1 briefed members on the main proposals in the Bill. He said that the Bill sought to grant university status to the Lingnan College (LC) and to empower it to adopt a new internal governance structure in line with other local universities. The proposed new structure would

consist of three bodies, namely, a council, a court and a senate, and their composition and functions were given in relevant provisions in the Bill.

33. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that unlike the governing bodies of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) and the Hong Kong Chinese University (CUHK), the proposed composition of the court of the future Lingnan University (LU) did not provide for elected representatives from Members of the Legislative Council. Since there would only be two elected staff representatives on the council of the future LU, Mr CHEUNG asked whether Staff Association of Lingnan College had been consulted on the proposed composition of the governing body.

34. DS/EM1 responded that the proposals in the Bill were made after thorough consultation with representatives of the existing LC and its Board of Governors. He pointed out that while the Court of HKU and the Council of CUHK provided by statute five and three seats respectively for LegCo members elected from among themselves, other governing councils of local universities had none. In selecting members of these governing councils, the Chief Executive would consider persons with the appropriate background and knowledge beneficial to the future development of the universities concerned. LegCo members with these qualities would be considered for appointment in their personal capacity.

35. Miss Emily LAU shared the view that there should be more elected representatives of staff associations in the governing councils of universities. She opined that qualified persons who could not afford the time to attend council meetings should not be appointed.

36. Miss LAU inquired whether Hong Kong would need to have new universities and whether there were any financial implications of the Bill. DS/EM1 responded that the Bill had no financial or staff implications for the Government as LC was already a degree-conferring institution funded fully on par with other UGC-funded universities. It was currently the Government's policy to finance a total of 14 500 first-year first-degree places, and the number would remain constant if LC was renamed a "university". There was no prescribed number of UGC-funded universities. He added that each UGC-funded university had its own unique history and served a particular role in the higher education sector.

37. Noting that the founding bodies of LC and the Hong Kong Baptist University were of the Christian religion, Mr Andrew WONG asked whether preference was given to certain religious bodies in granting university status to education institutions in Hong Kong. Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower explained that the Administration would take into account the education objectives, historical developments and academic achievements of an institute in granting the university status. The religious affiliation of the founding body of the institute was not one of the considerations.

38. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:20 pm.

Legislative Council Secretariat

29 December 1999