

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1108/99-00
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

LegCo Panel on Education

Minutes of Meeting
held on Monday, 15 November 1999 at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

- Members Present** : Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung (Chairman)
Professor Hon NG Ching-fai (Deputy 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
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, JP
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon CHOY So-yuk
Hon SZETO Wah
- Members Absent** : Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
- Public Officers Attending** : Item IV
Mr Raymond YOUNG, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower
Mrs Avia LAI
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower
- Education Commission

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Professor CHENG Kai-ming, SBS, JP
Member

Mr TAI Hay-lap, BBS, JP
Member

Item V

Ms Michelle LI
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower

Mr H F LEE
Senior Assistant Director of Education (Support)

Mr M Y CHENG
Assistant Director of Education (Schools)

Mr WONG Shui-wai
Assistant Student Affairs Officer,
Hong Kong Institute of Education

Item VI

Mr Joseph Y T LAI
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower

Mr Patrick LI
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower

Mr H F LEE
Senior Assistant Director of Education (Support)

Mr Andrew C S POON
Assistant Director of Education (Planning and Research)

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 and confirmation of minutes

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)369/99-00 and CB(2)370/99-00]

The minutes of the meetings held on 7 October 1999 and 9 October 1999 were confirmed.

II. Information paper issued since last meeting

[LC Paper No. CB(2)337/99-00]

2. Members noted that the Education and Manpower Bureau had provided a further report on Year 2000 compliance exercise in Government departments responsible for education matters and non-government organizations (NGOs) in the education field. The report confirmed that as at 15 September 1999, all mission-critical computer and embedded systems in the relevant departments and NGOs were Y2K compliant and contingency plans were in place.

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[Appendix I and II to LC Paper No. CB(2)342/99-00]

3. Members agreed to discuss the following three items at the next meeting scheduled for 20 December 1999 -

- (a) Employment of retired officers of Education Department (ED) in aided schools;
- (b) School Management Committee of primary and secondary schools; and
- (c) Provision of libraries in primary schools.

(Post-meeting note : The Chairman subsequently directed that the next meeting be postponed to 21 December 1999.)

4. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong suggested and the Chairman agreed that members of the LegCo Panel on Public Service should be invited to attend the next meeting for discussion of item 3(a) above.

5. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong proposed and members agreed to include the following in the list of future discussion items:

- (a) policy on subsidy to kindergartens; and
- (b) provision of financial support to capital works projects of the Open University of Hong Kong.

IV. Consultation document on Review of Education System - Framework for Education Reform

[Paper No. CB(2)342/99-00(01)]

- 6. The Chairman welcomed representatives of the Education Commission (EC) to the meeting.
- 7. The Chairman and Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong declared interest as members of the EC.

Briefing by the Education Commission

- 8. At Chairman's invitation, Professor CHENG Kai-ming, member of the EC, conducted a presentation on the background and objectives of the Review of Education System undertaken by the EC, highlighting the following points -
 - (a) in view of the fast-changing society in the modern age, there had been increasing need for changes in the functions of education to meet the new demands ;
 - (b) given the continuous changes in knowledge and technology and the rising expectations of society and of employers, "learning for life" would be the key to successful adaptation since the formal education received during the early part of life might no longer support the career requirements at a later stage;
 - (c) different values and expectations had been imposed on children by parents and the society; while parents usually placed the emphasis on academic performance, obedience and self-discipline, the modern world now demanded children to be innovative, active and capable of communicating and working with others;
 - (d) successful education reform would require the collaborative efforts of the whole community; and
 - (e) education reform should aim at developing students' different abilities and potentials, and quality education should include developing qualities such as self-motivation, an attitude for self-

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learning, perseverance and determination, in addition to intellectual capability

9. Professor CHENG said that the blueprint for education reform should include the following -

- (a) a new culture for quality early childhood education to discourage drilling and to promote the balanced development of young children;
- (b) provision of a "through road" for nine-year or 11-year education by abolishing the public assessment and student banding system for allocating Secondary One places;
- (c) the adoption of a more flexible curriculum for senior secondary education to enable the students to acquire exposure to both the Humanities, and Science and Technology domains;
- (d) reform of the university admission to give due consideration to the students' performance in all aspects; and
- (e) mobilizing the community support for enhancing non-formal education, remedial education and promoting life-long learning.

10. Professor CHENG stressed that learning experiences inside and outside classrooms were equally important. Traditional distinction between formal and informal (and non-formal) curricula should become more blurred. The Curriculum Development Council had put forward proposals to re-structure the curriculum in order to provide more space to enhance the balanced development of students' intellectual abilities, character, social skills and other qualities relevant to daily life.

11. Professor CHENG Kai-ming said that he welcomed views and suggestions from LegCo Members on what EC should do to improve our education for the next generation.

Discussion

12. Dr YEUNG Sum said that some parents in his constituency had reflected to him that they were in favour of the "through train" model which would reduce high-stake public examinations during primary and secondary education, and would also save parents' efforts in finding schools for their children. However, these parents were also concerned that the proposal would mean advancing the pressure point to pre-primary education as there would be keener competition for

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places in "elite" kindergartens which were linked up with prestigious primary and secondary schools.

13. Mr TAI Hay-lap, member of the EC, responded that EC was considering various models to minimize the adverse effects of public examinations and that the "through train" model was only one of the options. He said that the current Primary One Admission Scheme (POAS) did not allow the use of written tests or interviews for admission purpose. To reduce the pressure on students in kindergartens, EC was considering increasing the random element in the POAS and would consult the community on the detailed proposal later.

14. Mrs Selina CHOW expressed serious concern about ways to adequately equip our next generation to meet the challenges in life and in work. She said that most parents were concerned about the English standard of their children. There were also concerns about instilling a positive attitude towards competition and difficulties in life. She asked whether the EC had any concrete plans to address these concerns.

15. Professor CHENG Kai-ming responded that the EC had examined the causes for the current problems in our education system. He pointed out that the crux of the problem was that the community had placed too much emphasis on examinations; as a result, most teaching and learning activities in schools were examination-oriented. To address this problem, EC was considering how to change the education system to provide teachers and students with more room and flexibility for promoting the students' all-round development.

16. Mrs Selina CHOW opined that the EC should not neglect the importance of some basic, practical knowledge and skills that must remain in the curriculum. She was worried that there would be a disproportionate emphasis on high technology and "value-adding" in education.

17. Mr TAI Hay-lap responded that EC was proposing to introduce an assessment mechanism which could help the teachers identify the strengths and weaknesses of students for taking early remedial or enhancement measures. The assessment could help to assess the students' three core competencies in English, Chinese and Mathematics in Primary One to Secondary Three. The primary school curriculum would also be reformed to develop the students' interests for reading and self-learning, and basic abilities, knowledge and skills for life-long learning. On personal and social development, the curriculum would include students' participation in extra-curricular activities, social services, sports and arts. Professor CHENG Kai-ming stressed that the overall objective was to achieve all-round development through the learning process.

18. Miss Emily LAU commented there was a marked difference in the power of expression and critical thinking between students in local and international

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schools. She opined that students in local schools were generally more passive, while those in international schools adopted a more lively and participative approach in learning. She asked whether there were any concrete proposals to bring about cultural changes in local education.

19. Professor CHENG Kai-ming said that the key to develop independent thinking was to have an education system which focused on students. He said that education in Hong Kong had not placed sufficient emphasis on independent and critical thinking when compared to Mainland China, Taiwan and other overseas countries. It would be necessary to develop "student-based" teaching skills. As employers nowadays also expected employees to be more proactive and independent, EC would recommend an education system which was to be based on the needs and development of students. The traditional "set menu" approach could be replaced by the credit unit system for higher education, so that students could have more flexibility in choosing what to study. Mr TAI Hay-lap opined that education should focus on the students rather than the teachers or the examinations, and that education was the responsibility of the whole community.

20. Miss CHOY So-yuk expressed concern that too many new subjects would be added to the current curriculum beyond the capabilities of students.

21. Professor CHENG Kai-ming said that the idea was to allow students to select their interested subjects and to learn at a pace appropriate to their needs and abilities. He considered that the primary aims of education were to help students construct knowledge, develop their abilities and the right attitudes and values which could facilitate their future development. He pointed out that, apart from the curriculum reform, teachers played a crucial role in education. A change in teaching method and approaches would be necessary to enhance the effectiveness of teaching.

22. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung commented that given the current large class size, teachers simply could not have sufficient time to interact with individual students and to follow up their learning progress. He pointed out that for schools with a higher intake of Band Five students, teachers had to devote most of their time to class discipline and behavioral problems of the students. He said that a lower teacher to student ratio would enhance effective teaching.

23. Professor CHENG Kai-ming responded that according to the data collected by the Education Department, the teacher to students ratio in Hong Kong was not high when compared to other countries. He said that despite the enormous resources put into education and the many initiatives introduced in recent years to improve the quality of education, teachers still remained pre-occupied with other duties not related to effective teaching. However, in view of the resource implications, the suggestion of further reducing the class size would need careful examination. He cited the successful example of the Medical

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Faculty of the University of Hong Kong in adopting a new teaching method to illustrate that increasing teaching resources was not the only option to enhance the effectiveness of teaching.

24. Mr SZETO Wah expressed support for promoting "learning for life" but he emphasized that the crucial factor was how to cultivate the drive for life-long learning. He also asked about the channels and evaluation methods for non-formal education. He considered it impossible to provide sufficient institutions to meet the enormous demand for life-long learning. He therefore suggested providing community facilities such as self-learning centres to enable people to make use of information technology such as the Internet to continue self-learning.

25. Professor CHENG Kai-ming agreed with Mr SZETO Wah that it was important to promote the people's motivation for life-long learning. He said that we should have confidence in students' self-learning abilities, and that the EC was exploring the options for promoting life-long learning and establishment of a comprehensive qualifications recognition framework for life-long learning.

26. Mr TSANG Yok-sing expressed concern that while the problems and objectives of education had been discussed for more than twenty years, it seemed that workable solutions had yet to emerge. Given that Hong Kong was not lagging behind other countries in the resources put into education in terms of quantity and quality, he wondered whether the current review had already identified the fundamental causes of the existing problems in education.

27. Professor CHENG Kai-ming responded that the problems in education were intricately related. After detailed analyses, the EC was now able to put forward a blueprint for the reform and the nine working groups/sub-groups under EC were actively considering the concrete plans to implement the education framework if these were generally agreed by the community.

28. Mr SIN Chung-kai opined that the education system should provide diversity and choices. He considered that new resources should be directed to the provision of Internet facilities rather than establishing more centres or institutions. He also suggested that the school curriculum should focus on basic knowledge and abilities in Chinese, English, Mathematics and logical reasoning, so that more space could be made available for the development of other abilities and interests. On improving the quality of school management, he recommended decentralization of power and increasing communication between parents and the school management. In this connection, he suggested a pilot scheme for selected schools modelling on the American system of School Boards to encourage parents to participate in school management.

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29. Mr SZETO Wah remarked that the education reform should only focus on the most important and fundamental aspects as it would be a waste of resources to introduce too many changes at one time. Mrs Selina CHOW also reiterated her concern about the concrete proposals for implementation. In response, Professor CHENG Kai-ming said that EC would put forward concrete reform proposals for public consultation in around April 2000. He hoped that LegCo Members would support the education reform. He also thanked members for their valuable comments.

V. Employment situation of graduates of the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIE)

[Paper No. CB(2)342/99-00(02)]

30. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed concern about the number of HKIE graduates not employed in the teaching Profession. He pointed out that according to the statistics, there were 252, 533 and 657 HKIE graduates not employed in permanent teaching posts in primary and secondary schools at the end of their graduation year in 1996, 1997 and 1998 respectively. The figure represented about one-third of the number of graduates in each year. While some graduates might choose to pursue further studies or work as temporary teachers or in other fields, he considered the high percentage of graduates not employed as permanent teachers a waste of resources. He inquired whether this was caused by a mis-judgement in manpower planning or unforeseeable changes in the demand.

31. In response, Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower said that a high percentage of the HKIE graduates who were in full-time employment at the end of their graduation year in 1996-1998 did obtain permanent teaching posts in primary and secondary schools. The percentages were 80.5%, 75.5% and 78.3% respectively for the years of 1996, 1997 and 1998. She said that some HKIE graduates preferred to pursue further studies by enrolling in degree-conferring courses and 11% of the 1996 graduates had done so. She added that when compared to graduates of other tertiary education institutions, the employment situation of HKIE graduates was satisfactory.

32. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong opined that some of the HKIE graduates were forced to pursue further studies because they could not find a teaching post at the end of their graduation year. Some of them had to accept non-teaching jobs and this was a waste of professional training. He therefore asked whether the Administration would consider increasing the number of teaching assistant posts in schools, for example, to meet the special education needs of the newly arrived children (NAC).

33. Senior Assistant Director of Education (Support) (SADE(S)) said that the provision of teacher education programmes was carefully planned and closely

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monitored to match the demand. In recent years, the demand for new non-graduate teachers was more or less in line with the number of new graduates of HKIE. He pointed out that some of the non-graduate teaching posts had been taken up by university graduates in recent years due to the economic downturn.

34. The Chairman asked whether non-graduate permanent teaching posts in primary and secondary schools should be filled by graduate teachers. SADE(S) replied that given the keen competition in recent years, a number of graduate teachers had applied for non-graduate vacancies and they were considered for appointment on individual merits.

35. Mr SZETO Wah commented that many serving teachers were now overburdened and some of them also engaged in part-time teaching of the NAC. He suggested that these schools should be given flexibility to employ full-time teachers for the special programmes for NAC. In this connection, he asked about the annual provision for such special programme.

36. SADE(S) replied that under the school-based support programme for NAC, ED would provide primary and secondary schools with an additional grant of \$2 000 and \$3 330 respectively for each newly arrived child in his first year of study in Hong Kong. The current annual provision was about \$40 million and it was up to the schools concerned to determine how to use the provision to organize the support programme for NAC. He added that serving teachers would require the approval of the school supervisors concerned for teaching these courses. Mr SZETO Wah remarked that an annual provision of \$40 million could provide about 200 additional full-time non-graduate teaching posts.

37. The Chairman asked about the assistance to HKIE graduates in job-finding. Assistant Student Affairs Officer (ASAO) of the HKIE responded that while the employment situation of HKIE graduates compared favourably with graduates of other tertiary education institutions, there had been feedback from HKIE graduates that job-searching had become more difficult when compared to previous years. Graduates seemed to have perceived that there had been keener competition due to reduced supply of new teaching posts. The unemployment rate of graduates at the end of the graduation year also increased from 0.6% in 1996 to 4.2% in 1998, and about 8 % of HKIE graduates had taken up temporary teaching posts in schools. He added that unlike graduates of other tertiary education institutions, HKIE graduates were less willing to take up non-teaching posts.

38. The Chairman asked about the measures to enhance the employment service for HKIE graduates. ASAO said that in addition to the existing employment service, HKIE had been coordinating information from schools on the temporary teaching posts arising from the release of existing teachers to attend the 16-week in-service programme at HKIE. With the consent of

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graduates, HKIE would send their particulars to these primary and secondary schools with vacancies for consideration. SADE(S) added that ED also provided a Teacher Recruitment Information Service for qualified teachers, including HKIE graduates, to find teaching posts. A database was maintained by the ED and the details of suitable candidates would be sent to individual schools with vacancies.

Admin 39. Mr CHUENG Man-kwong reiterated his concern about measures to improve the employment situation of graduates. At his request, the Administration undertook to provide employment statistics of HKIE graduates in 1999 when available.

VI. Consequential changes arising from the review of private school policy

[Paper No. CB(2)342/99-00(03)]

40. The Chairman declared interest as the principal of a private school.

41. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed serious concern about the new approach of the Government in allocating sites to new Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools and private independent schools (PIS). He was particularly concerned about the statement in the Administration's paper that "if other things being equal, preference would be given to DSS applicants in the coming round of school allocation exercise". He said that the original proposal of the Government was to launch a pilot scheme for four new DSS schools and two PIS in the coming year. However, based on the new criterion, the total number of DSS and PI schools could be increased up to 29 by the 2002-2003 school year. Mr CHEUNG pointed out that this was a significant deviation from the existing policy as some parents might then be compelled to send their children to private schools which charged school fees. He was concerned that the public had not been consulted on the change and parents might not find this acceptable.

42. Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (DS(EM)) responded that the approach outlined in the paper on allocation of schools was based on a number of considerations. In the last round of allocation exercise, there had been encouraging response and many high quality applications were received. This demonstrated a strong demand for high quality private schools and availability of interested sponsoring bodies. In view of the positive response from the education community and the public, the Administration decided to continue the programme to provide land and capital grants for development of quality PISs and to allocate government-built school premises to DSS schools. This was in line with the community's expectation that our education system should offer more variety and choices to parents and that competition among public sector and private schools would improve the quality of education in the long run. He

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pointed out that the ultimate number of DSS schools and PISs would depend on the number of quality applications. He said that there should not be any assumption that there would be 29 new private schools. He added that the existing number of DSS schools and PISs only represented a small proportion of a total of some 1000 schools in the public sector.

43. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that there were only 32 applications for the four school sites in the pilot scheme while a much longer queue existed for aided schools. He stressed that the Government should not make a hasty decision of extending the pilot scheme before making an evaluation of its benefits and its impact, and before consulting the community. He pointed out that under the proposed allocation policy, there was a possibility that all new school sites would be allocated to DSS schools or PISs. As a result, parents would be forced to send their children to private schools which charged school fees, when all existing public sector school places within the same school district were taken up.

44. The Chairman then asked the Administration whether it could ensure sufficient supply of public sector school places for children in each district. DS(EM) explained that the School Allocation Committee (SAC) would make sure that there would be adequate public sector school places to meet Government's established policy of providing nine year free education and a highly subsidized senior secondary education. He added that in vetting DSS school applications, SAC would check that the proposed levels of school fees were reasonable and that sufficient financial assistance and appropriate school fee reduction and scholar schemes would be available to needy students in the school.

45. DS(EM) responded that Government had consulted the LegCo and the community before formulating the policy on providing quality DSS schools and PISs. The community was generally in support of the principle of injecting more diversity into the education system through the provision of quality private schools. He added that the proposed arrangement for the coming round of allocation was in line with the policy direction and the spirit of the pilot scheme. He assured members that the Administration would keep the situation under review.

46. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong stressed that he did not question the benefits of providing diversity and choices in education, but he was concerned about the baseline for the provision of new DSS schools and PISs. He considered that Government should specify the number of new school sites to be allocated to aided schools and DSS/PIS applicants.

47. Mr SZETO Wah commented that Government should review the performance of the DSS schools and PISs of the pilot scheme before allocating more school sites to these schools. To enable Panel members to have a full

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picture of the existing number of DSS/PISs, he requested the Administration to provide a list of existing DSS schools and PISs and their sponsoring bodies.

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48. DS(EM) responded that it would take three to five years to review the performance of a new school, and there was no reason to hold up the processing of other deserving applications to meet community expectation. He reassured members that the provision of public sector school places would not be affected. As regards the ultimate number of private schools to be approved, it would depend on various factors and the long-term need of the community. He undertook to provide some background information on the existing DSS schools and PISs.

49. Miss Emily LAU said that she supported providing more diversity in education but expressed reservation about the substantial increase of DSS schools and PISs at the preliminary stage. She inquired how the Administration could ensure that the provision of public school places would not be affected given the limited supply of school sites.

50. DS(EM) responded that the Administration would closely monitor the provision of public sector and private school places in each district. SADE(S) briefed members on the location of the sites for 10 primary and seven secondary schools to be allocated in the coming round. He said that the majority of new primary school sites were in Yuen Long and other new towns and that it was unlikely that there would be more than one DSS school or PIS in each district. In other words, his current estimate was that it was rather unlikely that more than three primary and four secondary schools would be allocated to DSS school applicants in the coming round of allocation.

51. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong opined that the allocation of school sites to DSS applicants would directly affect the supply of public sector school places in a district. He pointed out that LegCo Members approved proposals for construction of new government or aided schools based on the projected population of the districts concerned. If the approved school site was subsequently allocated to a DSS school instead of a public school, there would be a corresponding decrease in public sector school places in that district. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong therefore requested the Administration to withdraw or amend its statement in paragraph 5 of the Administration's paper that "other things being equal, preference will be given to DSS applicants".

52. DS(EM) noted Mr CHEUNG's comments and responded that members should not assume that all new sites would be allocated to private schools. He reiterated that when planning the provision of school places in each district, the Administration would ensure that there would be sufficient public sector school places to meet the demand. He pointed out, however, that some parents would prefer

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sending their children to quality private schools, and new DSS schools and PISs would have to be provided to meet such demand.

53. Noting that DSS schools had discretion in selecting its medium of teaching, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed concern how Education Department (ED) could monitor that the use of English language as the medium of instruction in these schools was to the benefit of the students. He was worried that more kindergartens would conduct classes in English to help their students gain admission to these private schools. Given the age of primary one students, he expressed doubt about the effectiveness of teaching and learning in English. He enquired about the actions to be taken by ED if the DSS school insisted on teaching in English despite the students' low achievement.

54. SADE(S) responded that the ED definitely did not encourage setting entrance examinations for Primary One students. Professionally speaking, the principals and teachers of DSS schools should be in a better position to determine the most suitable medium of instruction for their students. All DSS schools were subject to ED's monitoring and Quality Assurance Inspections.

55. DS(EM) supplemented that staff of ED would conduct regular inspection on the private schools to assess the quality of their teaching and management standards, and would take appropriate actions if they were not up to standards. Under the service agreement signed between the school and Government, ED would conduct a comprehensive review of the performance of a DSS school five years after its operation. If the review indicated that the school had failed to achieve its performance standards and targets, the Government could terminate the service agreement.

56. Miss Emily LAU opined that all schools, private or aided, should be given the flexibility to choose their medium of teaching for different subjects. However, these schools should not be labelled as English or Chinese schools.

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Admin 57. In concluding the discussion, the Chairman requested the Administration to note members' comments and to provide the information requested in paragraph 48.

VII. Any other business

58. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 7:05 pm.

Legislative Council Secretariat
12 February 2000