

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2) 1414/99-00
(These minutes have been seen by
the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

LegCo Panel on Education

Minutes of Meeting
held on Monday, 21 February 2000 at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

- Members Present** : Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung (Chairman)
Prof 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 Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon CHOY So-yuk
Hon SZETO Wah
- Members Absent** : Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
- Public Officers Attending** : Mr Joseph LAI
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower
- Mrs Fanny LAW, JP
Director of Education
- Mr Peter P Y LEUNG
Assistant Director of Education (Special Duties)
- Mrs LAM FAN Kit-fong
Principal Education Officer (Planning and Research)
- Clerk in Attendance** : Mr LAW Wing-lok
Chief Assistant Secretary (2) 5

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

Action

I. Confirmation of minutes

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1107, 1108 and 1109/99-00]

The minutes of the meetings held on 5 and 15 November 1999, and 17 January 2000 were confirmed.

II. Information paper issued since last meeting

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1075/99-00(01)]

2. The Chairman said that the Administration's paper providing supplementary information on the implementation of the Home Financing Scheme for eligible staff in University Grants Committee-funded tertiary education institutions was forwarded to members on 12 February 2000.

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[Appendices I and II to LC Paper No. CB(2)1127/99-00]

3. The Chairman referred to the list of items suggested for discussion (Appendix I) and proposed to discuss the following at the next meeting -

- (a) Benchmark qualifications for English teachers;
- (b) Legislative control on commercial tutorial centres and educational organizations; and
- (c) Follow-up discussion on supervision of the administration of University Grants Committee-funded tertiary education institutions.

4. Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (DS/EM) said that the Administration would be ready to discuss the item in paragraph 3(a) above in April 2000.

5. Mrs Selina CHOW expressed concern about the high turnover rate of teachers recruited under the Enhanced Native-speaking English Teachers Scheme (NETS) and suggested that the matter be discussed at the next meeting.

6. Director of Education (D of E) responded that 74 NETS teachers would leave for personal reasons and 30 had not had their contracts renewed. The total number of NETS teachers leaving at the end of their contracts was more or less in line with what was anticipated by the Education Department (ED). She said that the Hong Kong Institute of

Action

Education would complete the review of NETS by the end of March 2000 and the Administration would be ready to discuss the issue at the meeting in May 2000.

7. Mrs Selina CHOW suggested that the Administration's initiatives and strategies in language teaching in schools be discussed at the next meeting. Miss Emily LAU further suggested that the discussion should include the proposed implementation of NETS in selected primary schools funded by the Quality Education Fund. D of E agreed to the suggestions.

8. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung suggested that the Administration's policy on provision of resources and administrative support to Government evening schools be discussed at the next meeting, in view of the recent newspaper reports on their operational difficulties.

9. The Chairman asked whether legislative control on commercial tutorial centres and education organizations could be discussed at the next meeting. D of E responded that the consultancy study on review of registration procedures for kindergartens and tutorial schools would be ready for discussion in February 2000. She hoped that a paper could be produced in time for discussion at the next meeting.

10. The Chairman suggested and members agreed that the following items be discussed at the next meeting scheduled for 4:30 pm on 20 March 2000 -

- (a) Language teaching in schools;
- (b) Government evening schools; and
- (c) Consultancy study on review of registration procedures for kindergartens and tutorial schools.

11. Miss Emily LAU expressed concern about the under-provision of space for students and teachers in schools. She suggested and members agreed to discuss the physical space and learning environment in primary and secondary schools at the meeting in April. She requested the Administration to provide a discussion paper which would include information on the physical space and learning environment in international schools in Hong Kong, as well as schools in the Mainland and neighbouring countries.

IV. School Sponsoring Bodies

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2) 1127/99-00(01) and CB(2)1152/99-00(01)]

12. The Chairman said that in response to Miss Emily LAU's request, the Administration had provided an additional information paper [CB(2)1152/99-00(01)] which was tabled at the meeting. Miss Emily LAU expressed appreciation of the Administration's quick response to her request despite the short notice given.

Action

13. Miss Emily LAU said that a few school sponsoring bodies (SSBs) appeared to have monopolized the operation of aided primary and secondary schools. She pointed out that according to the information set out in the two papers provided by the Administration, the vast majority (around 500) of SSBs ran 10 schools/kindergartens or less, whereas the six largest SSBs operated a total of 514 schools which represented around one-third of the total 1 800 aided primary, aided secondary and Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools, and kindergartens.

14. Miss LAU enquired about the criteria and procedures for allocation of schools. She was of the view that school operation should be opened to more SSBs, particularly those who were enthusiastic and dedicated to providing quality education.

15. D of E said that prior to 1999, applications for school allocation were considered by the School Allocation Committee (SAC) chaired by the Deputy Director of Education with senior staff members from ED as members. The SAC would evaluate the applications in accordance with a set of assessment criteria drawn up by the SAC. Existing SSBs would be rated in the light of their past track records in providing quality education and implementing education policies. New SSBs would be assessed by their potential to manage a school and their involvement in providing social services.

16. D of E further said that to improve transparency and credibility of the allocation system, ED had reorganized the membership of SAC in 1999 to include representatives from the Education and Manpower Bureau, the Board of Education, as well as well-respected community figures, with herself taking over as the SAC's Chairman. Improvements to the allocation process and procedures were also made. SSBs were required to submit their applications each year. In selecting SSBs for allocation of schools, the SAC would base primarily on their proposed school plans but would also take into account of existing SSBs' school operation track records and new SSBs' background and education experience. The proposed school plan should set out, inter alia, the vision and mission, performance targets of the school, as well as target attainment indicators for self evaluation. The SAC would evaluate the school plan in accordance with a set of assessment criteria which were set out in the application forms for school allocation. Shortlisted SSBs would be invited to appear before the SAC to present their plans and to respond to SAC enquiries. The successful SSBs would be required to enter into a service agreement with ED.

17. D of E added that in the 1999 school allocation exercise, seven of the 35 schools were allocated to new SSBs. She anticipated that with improved transparency of the allocation mechanism and SSBs' better understanding of the aims of education, more new and innovative SSBs would be allocated with schools providing greater varieties in school education. She added that SSBs which had been allocated with a large number of schools generally had a track record of providing quality school education.

18. Referring to the table in LC Paper No. CB(2) 1152/99-00(01) showing the

Action

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number of applications received and the number of schools allocated to SSBs over the past three years, Miss Emily LAU enquired about the number of new SSBs which were allocated a school for the first time, as well as the number of new SSBs which were unsuccessful in their applications, in each of the three years concerned. D of E undertook to provide a written reply on the results of applications made by new SSBs in the past three years.

19. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the larger SSBs were predominant in running the 1 800 schools/kindergartens. He was of the view that new SSBs should be given more opportunities to run schools and suggested that the Administration should consider setting a fixed proportion of new schools for allocation to new SSBs. He further suggested that the Administration should encourage more new SSBs to apply for allocation of schools. He added that while the contribution made by large SSBs should be given due recognition, new SSBs with relevant education experience and existing SSBs operating one to two schools should be given priority in school allocation.

20. D of E stressed that the SAC would consider the quality of the school proposal, as well as the vision and commitment of the SSB. The SAC would not give priority to prospective SSBs simply because they were new. She said that she did not consider it appropriate to fix a certain proportion of schools for allocation to new SSBs. However, she agreed that if all things were equal, priority should be given to new SSBs and existing SSBs which operated one to two schools. She pointed out that in the 1999 school allocation exercise, the percentage of schools allocated to new SSBs was higher than that allocated to existing SSBs, taking into account that some of the 35 schools were allocated to schools earmarked for relocation and primary schools switching from bi-sessional to whole-day operation.

21. Mr SZETO Wah said that it might not be appropriate to allocate a higher percentage of schools to new SSBs, given that new SSBs would need time to develop the experience and expertise to run a school. He pointed out that the existing SSBs which operated one or two schools should possess the necessary experience.

22. Miss Emily LAU agreed that prescribing a fixed percentage of schools for allocation to new SSBs might not be appropriate. D of E shared Miss LAU's view and said that some of the 35 SSBs which were allocated a school in 1999 were operating one or two schools, and they were not counted as new SSBs.

23. Mrs Selina CHOW was of the view that to ensure effective operation of School Management Committees (SMCs), the chairman or managers of an SMC should not serve on other SMCs. D of E said that the composition of SMCs was under review by the Advisory Committee on School-based Management (ACSBM). As SMCs would take on an increasingly important role in overseeing school operation and practising school-based management with flexibility for the deployment of resources, the initial proposal of ACSBM was that the chairmen and managers of SMCs should not serve on more than five SMCs at the same time.

Action

24. Prof NG Ching-fai referred to paragraph 8 of LC Paper No. CB(2)1127/98-99(01) and enquired about the arrangements for entering into service agreements with SSBs to facilitate the development of performance-based school management.

25. In response, D of E said that ED expected to sign service agreements with SSBs of new aided schools and DSS schools which would commence operation from the 2000/01 school year. However, the provisions to be incorporated in the service agreements for assessment of the performance targets and indicators were still under discussion with the SSBs concerned. SMCs of these schools would be allowed to review their original school plans and submit revised school plans for ED's consideration after they had recruited the principal and teaching staff. The finalized version of the school plans would be attached to the service agreement. The ED would monitor the performance of the school against the indicators stated in the service agreement. She added that the quality assurance inspection mechanism had been in operation for two years and the results were encouraging. ED would continue to play the role of a partner to SMCs to improve the quality of school education.

26. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung inquired about the mechanism and measures for monitoring the performance of existing schools operated by SSBs.

27. D of E said that the implementation of school-based management would require schools to submit annual plans setting out the school's vision and mission, performance targets and indicators for self-evaluation, etc. Once the public consultation exercise on the "School-based Management Consultation Document" was completed and if consensus on some of the recommendations contained in the consultation document was reached by the ACSBM, there would be a need to introduce legislative amendments to reflect such recommendations in the Education Ordinance. She added that the legislative amendments were expected to be introduced into the LegCo in the 2000/01 legislative session.

28. D of E further said that the question of whether existing schools should also be required to sign a service agreement with ED would be dealt with at a later stage. She pointed out that under the current legislation, ED had no authority to take over the management of existing schools. The ED would consider whether amendment should be made to the Education Ordinance to provide ED with last-resort powers to deal with ineffective schools (e.g. the obligation to take over a school or appoint an acting principal).

29. Miss Emily LAU agreed that amendments should be made to the Education Ordinance to require existing schools to enter into service agreements with ED. She opined that the requirement for schools to enter into service agreements with ED should apply to both new and existing schools.

Action

30. Mr SZETO Wah asked whether the termination of service agreement would result in the SSB having to refund to the Government all grants and subsidies received previously. He pointed out that the Administration had exercised its authority to reorganize the SMCs of some schools in the past. The Chairman also asked whether the Administration would stop providing funding support to schools which had repeatedly refused or failed to follow the advice of ED to make improvements.

31. D of E responded that a reorganization of SMC was a better choice than withdrawing subsidy. The Administration could allocate the school to a new SSB or temporarily take over the management of the school pending the selection of a new SSB. She added that under the existing legislation, ED had the power to appoint managers to individual SMCs to give advice on school management. She stressed that ED would ensure that normal school activities would not be affected by any measures taken against improperly managed schools.

32. Mr SZETO Wah pointed out that the quality of principals was most important in school management. He was of the view that ED should play a role in monitoring the appointment of principals in aided schools. D of E responded that under school-based management, SSBs had the authority to select their school principals. However, the ACSBM would consider whether other parties should also take part in the selection of school principals.

33. Mr SIN Chung-kai suggested that the Administration should consider adopting the "upward appraisal" system in the assessment of the performance of principals. He held the view that SMCs should listen to the views and comments of teachers in respect of the performance and leadership quality of their principals.

34. D of E said that SMCs had not adopted such an appraisal system. However, in designing the leadership development programme for new and serving school principals, a needs assessment exercise was included. This required the principals to obtain feedback on their performance from the supervisor, peers and teachers, i.e. a 360 degree appraisal.

35. Miss Emily LAU enquired about the implementation schedule for the new proposals on school-based management, in particular the proposals relating to the role of SMCs and their mode of operation.

36. D of E responded that the consultation exercise would end by the end of April and the views and suggestions received would be considered by the ACSBM. She further said that ED had already included some of the proposals as new requirements for school allocation in 1999, such as the requirements that SMC members should not serve on more than five SMCs and that SMCs should include representatives of teachers and parents. She added that the necessary amendments to be made to the Education Ordinance would be introduced into the LegCo in the 2000/01 session.

Action

37. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong noted that the SAC comprised five representatives from the Administration and enquired how the other five members were selected for appointment to the SAC. In response, D of E said that apart from the five representatives from ED and EMB, the other five members of SAC were selected from the education sector and other professions. She added that this combination of expertise would ensure that the SAC had a broad and balanced perspective.

38. In response to Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's enquiry about the work procedures of SAC in school allocation, D of E said that the preliminary shortlisting of SSBs would be carried out by ED and the results would be presented to the SAC before proceeding to the second stage of inviting school plans from the shortlisted SSBs. The evaluation of detailed school plans would be undertaken by the SAC. Shortlisted new SSBs would be invited to present their proposals before the SAC which would decide on the final allocation of schools.

39. In response to Mr TSANG Yok-shing, D of E said that tertiary education institutions applying for the operation of primary and secondary schools would be subject to the same application and selection procedures.

40. In reply to Miss Emily LAU, D of E said that in order to ensure that the process of selecting SSBs to run schools was conducted in an open and fair manner, members of the SAC would be required to declare interest in the evaluation process. D of E added that members of the SAC who had connections with individual SSBs would not participate in the evaluation of the proposals submitted by the SSBs concerned.

41. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong was of the view that the Administration should arrange for the SAC to brief the Panel on the school allocation process each year. He also said that the community would be anxious to know the main criteria for allocation of schools and the educational values, ideals, etc., of the successful SSBs. He stressed that the operation of SAC should be made more transparent and added that many unsuccessful SSBs did not know the reasons for their failure. Miss Emily LAU shared Mr CHEUNG's views.

42. Miss Emily LAU enquired about the completion date of the current school allocation exercise. In reply, D of E said that the 2000/01 allocation exercise had started in February and some 300 applications had been received. She anticipated that the SAC would complete the selection process by the end of May 2000.

VII Any other business

43. There being on other business, the meeting ended at 5:45 pm.

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17 March 2000