

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(2) 2552/99-00  
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the Administration and cleared by  
the Chairman)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

**LegCo Panel on Education**

**Minutes of Meeting**  
**held on Monday, 22 May 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 Cyd HO Sau-lan  
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong  
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung  
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP  
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, JP  
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum  
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP  
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo  
Hon SZETO Wah
- Members Absent** : Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, JP  
Hon SIN Chung-kai  
Hon CHOY So-yuk
- Public Officers Attending** : The Hon Antony K C LEUNG, GBS, JP  
Chairman  
Education Commission
- Mr Joseph W P WONG, JP  
Secretary for Education and Manpower
- Professor CHENG Kai-ming, SBS, JP  
Chairman  
Working Group on Post-Secondary 3 Education

Education Commission

Mr TAI Hay-lap, BBS, JP  
Chairman  
Working Group on Early Childhood and Basic Education  
Education Commission

Mrs Avia LAI  
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (2) (Ag)

Mr Anthony K H TONG  
Deputy Director of Education

**Clerk in Attendance** : Mr LAW Wing-lok  
Chief Assistant Secretary (2) 5

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

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**I Confirmation of minutes of meeting and matters arising**  
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2) 2022/99-00]

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 April 2000 were confirmed.

2. Regarding the Panel's visit to four primary and secondary schools scheduled for 8 June 2000, Miss Emily LAU requested the Administration to provide the Panel with an information paper on the physical space and facilities available in these schools, as well as the number of other schools providing similar learning environment as the four schools to be visited and the improvement programmes for these schools, if any.

**II. Items for discussion at the next meeting**  
[Appendices I and II to LC Paper No. CB(2) 2024/99-00]

3. Members agreed to discuss the following at the next meeting scheduled for 19 June 2000 -

- (a) Differential fees in University Grants Committee-funded tertiary education institutions;
- (b) Information Technology Education in Hong Kong; and

- (c) Revision of fees of hiring of accommodation in/equipment in Government schools.

### **III Consultation document on proposals for education reform**

[LC Paper No. CB(2) 2024/99-00(01)]

4. The Chairman declared interest as a member of the Education Commission (EC). He briefed the meeting on the main theme of the consultation document for education reform.

5. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Antony LEUNG, Chairman of EC, briefed members on the background and latest developments of the review of education system. He stated that EC had conducted two rounds of extensive public consultation - one on the aims of education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century which stressed student-centred education, and the other on the framework for education reform which focused on enabling members of the community to pursue all-round development through life-long learning. The current round of consultation covered the academic structure, the curricula and the assessment mechanism, and the interface between different stages of education. The slogan was "Excel and Grow" which signified that the aim of the review was to examine how the education system should be changed to provide the most favourable environment for both teaching and learning, so that students could fully realize their potentials and teachers could have more room to help students learn more effectively.

6. Dr YEUNG Sum expressed support for EC's proposals on education reform as highlighted in the consultation document. However, he asked whether EC would consider proposing a direct subsidy scheme for kindergartens, with the aim of enhancing quality of teachers and reducing parents' financial burden.

7. In response, Mr Antony LEUNG said that EC had not proposed a direct subsidy scheme for kindergartens because of the substantial cost involved and the fact that the existing system was conducive to providing diversity in pre-school education. He pointed out that families with financial difficulties currently received Government subsidy on pre-school education.

8. Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM) said that Government had earmarked \$800 million for the implementation of the priority education reform measures. He added that Government would accord priority to basic and pre-primary education.

9. Dr YEUNG Sum supported the proposal to accord priority to basic education. He suggested that to improve teaching and learning environment and quality of education, the Government should reduce the class size and teacher-to-students ratio in

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schools. He considered that the current class sizes in primary and secondary schools did not facilitate implementation of the project learning approach.

10. Mr Antony LEUNG responded that the teacher-to-student ratios in primary schools and secondary schools were about 1:21 and 1:19 respectively, which compared favourably with other places in Asia. He pointed out that due to historical reasons and cultural difference, Asian countries in general had a larger class size and teacher-to-student ratio than their western counterparts. He was of the view that schools could adjust the number and duration of lessons to accommodate a smaller class size, but acknowledged that this would be a complicated issue and the support of the community as a whole should first be sought.

11. Professor CHENG Kai-ming said that in comparison with schools in Japan and Korea, schools in Hong Kong had smaller class sizes. The teacher-to-student ratios in Hong Kong were also in line with those of western countries. He pointed out that as a result of the new education initiatives in recent years, teachers were overloaded with various tasks and activities in schools.

12. Mr Andrew CHENG said that both students and their parents should be consulted on the abolition of Academic Aptitude Tests (AAT) and the use of schools' average results of the AAT over the past three years for scaling purpose during the transition period. Mr CHENG expressed concern that the EC's proposal to combine the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) and the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination might affect standards of school students who would have to prepare for only one public examination. Mr CHENG pointed out that the experience in some overseas countries adopting similar school education systems was not encouraging.

13. Mr Antony LEUNG responded that the time-table for abolishing the AAT would depend on the outcome of the consultation and so far the majority of public views were in favour of cancelling the AAT from the 2000/01 school year. He added that the focus of school education was to help students achieve all-round personal development in the domains of ethics, intellect, physique, social skills and aesthetics according to individual attributes, and to enable them to attain a basic level of competence in various aspects for pursuing life-long learning. He pointed out that with the reduction in the number of public examinations, the internal assessments under the school-based assessment system would incorporate Basic Competency Assessments (BCA) in English, Chinese and Mathematics at different stages of the nine-year basic education.

14. Mr Antony LEUNG further said that the new public examination for senior secondary school graduates would comprise a core-competence part to assess the basic skills and knowledge considered by curriculum specialists to be essential for S5 students. Depending on the university admission requirements, the internal assessments and the new public examination would create substantial pressure on teachers and students throughout their teaching and learning process.

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15. Miss Emily LAU enquired whether the existing allocation system for P1 and S1 places would be reformed, such as the adoption of a voucher system to enhance students' chance of being admitted to the school of their choice.

16. Mr Antony LEUNG responded that in view of the keen competition for places in elite primary schools, EC proposed reducing the discretionary P1 places from 65% to 15% to improve the existing admission mechanism. He pointed out that including places to be allocated to pupils who had siblings studying or parents working in the same school, the proportion of P1 places allocated by schools directly should be as high as 40%. As for S1 places, he said that the increase of discretionary places from the existing 10% to 30% in 2005/6 would significantly improve parental choice. Supplemented by an increased number of Direct Subsidy Scheme and private independent schools, it was anticipated that parents would enjoy a greater autonomy in choosing schools for their children. Mr LEUNG added that given the current supply and demand situation, the adoption of a voucher system could not mitigate the intense competition for places in elite schools.

17. Professor CHENG Kai-ming added that the competition for places in elite primary and secondary schools was a common phenomena in other countries. Given the very keen competition in Hong Kong, measures to improve parental choice should be introduced on a gradual basis.

18. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that Government should allocate additional resources for implementing the education reform measures. He pointed out that many students did not enjoy learning because they considered the existing curriculum boring and impractical. He was of the view that implementation of the project learning approach in schools would significantly increase the workload of teachers. He was also concerned about the progress of low achievers in schools and pointed out that since only S3 to S5 students were allowed to repeat classes, primary students who could not catch up with their peers would lose interest in learning.

19. Mr Antony LEUNG said that teachers could inspire students to develop a positive attitude towards reading and learning. He pointed out that schools should make use of the BCA to assess students' learning needs and difficulties and provide timely assistance. Apart from provision of places for repeaters at S3 or above, schools should arrange remedial classes for students whose deficiency in certain key learning areas had been identified through the student assessment programme. He added that to support the education reform, the Government had earmarked \$800 million in the 2000/01 Draft Estimates for the implementation of the priority items.

20. Mr TAI Hay-lap of the EC said that an interest in learning was the prime driving force for life-long learning and the key to promoting it was to cultivate students' positive values and attitudes towards learning for life, which should be made through an integrated and life-wide approach in moral and civic education. Students should also be encouraged to make better use of the information technology resources in schools to

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enhance the effectiveness of learning. He added that to foster a change in the culture of learning and teaching, the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) was conducting a holistic review of the primary and secondary school curricula with the aim of formulating an open and flexible curriculum framework. CDC would publish a consultation document in around September to October 2000.

21. Mr TAI further said that the Chinese community generally attached great importance to children's achievements in public examination results. As a result, the younger generation was not inspired with an inner motive to learn. To change this learning culture, the community as a whole should share the responsibility and support the education reform measures. He considered that apart from school education, family education played an equally important role in ensuring healthy development of the next generation. To enhance the involvement of parents, schools and parents should maintain close communication through electronic means and exchange views on students' learning progress. He added that Government should consider providing assistance to parents, in particular those with a low education level and having financial difficulties to pursue continuing learning.

22. Miss Cyd HO was concerned about the financial implications of the proposed reform measures. She pointed out that the consultation document had not set out in detail the resources required and the sources of income for implementing the reform proposals. Miss HO added that compared to the \$45 billion education budget, the additional \$800 million was only a small fraction which would not be sufficient to support implementation of the proposed reform measures.

23. SEM responded that the Government had all along attached great importance to education and made substantial commitment in terms of resources. Education was now the single largest item of public expenditure and occupied about one-fifth of the Government's total recurrent expenditure, amounting to \$45 billion (equivalent to 4% of Hong Kong's Gross Domestic Product). He pointed out that as highlighted in the consultation document, the proportion of private contribution to education was less than 10% of the total expenditure in education, which was considerably less than that in Germany and the United States. He hoped that different community sectors would make their contributions to education and cited the example of the business sector responding favourably to the Business and Schools Partnership Programme which aimed to foster a closer relation between the business and school sectors for the learning of English in the workplace.

24. Mr Antony LEUNG said that the Chief Executive had repeatedly stressed that in a knowledge-based economy, education should be a priority consideration in resources allocation. He said that good education was the collective responsibility of the entire community, and that families, schools and the society should collaborate in maximizing cost-effectiveness of education resources and achieving the educational goals. Mr LEUNG added that the Administration would continue to provide its share of resources for education. Given Hong Kong's competitive teacher-to-student ratio, Government

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should aim to enhance utilization of the education resource and ensure better division of work and coordination of resources.

25. Professor CHENG Kai-ming said that the Government should not be expected to pay the cost of providing lifelong learning opportunities for the whole community. He hoped that LegCo Members would tender advice to the Administration in working out how to make the best use of the education resource in the implementation of reform measures in order to foster a lifelong learning culture in the community.

26. Mr TAI Hap-lap added that Government alone could not support lifelong learning for the whole community, but it had the responsibility to provide financial assistance to needy students in pursuit of lifelong learning. He also said that Government should continue to provide nine-year compulsory education to eligible children. Public sector schools should aim to develop their unique tradition and culture and seek funding support from the Quality Education Fund for sponsoring special education programmes.

27. Deputy Direct of Education (DDE) said that project learning aimed to create interactive learning environment and experience for students to develop their thinking, interpersonal skills, ability to work with others and attitude for independent learning. Examples had demonstrated that teachers could play the role of advisers to students in the project learning process and unnecessary workload to teachers could be avoided. He added that the Education Department (ED) had undertaken a number of initiatives to promote effective teaching methods which would not create too much work for teachers. ED would continue to disseminate successful teaching and learning experience to schools and educators for reference.

28. Miss Cyd HO enquired about the development opportunities for S3 school leavers to pursue life-long learning. Mr Antony LEUNG said that EC had proposed promoting the establishment of community colleges to cater for the learning needs of S3 school leavers and S5 graduates, as well as newly arrived immigrants at about the same education level. He further said that the courses provided by these community colleges would aim to provide learners with an alternative route to higher education and pursuing vocational courses which would be recognized by employers.

29. Mr SZETO Wah expressed concern about the setting of benchmark tests for serving language teachers to improve quality of language teaching. He questioned whether teachers should be held solely responsible for the decline in the language standard of students and the community as a whole. He urged the Administration to seriously consider the strong sentiments expressed by teachers towards the benchmark tests.

30. SEM pointed out that the EC Report No.6 had recommended a portfolio of measures to improve the language learning environment, which included the setting of benchmarks for new language teachers and the provision of continuous professional

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development programmes for serving language teachers. He said that Government would provide sufficient resources for serving language teachers to enhance their professional competence. He also said that school heads and teachers played an essential role in enhancing students' learning effectiveness, and their continuous professional development would contribute to the success of the education reform as well as enhance the professional status of teachers.

31. Professor NG Ching-fai said that more resources should be given to early childhood and primary education. However, he had reservations about the view expressed in the consultation document that, in the light of the fact that the public resources devoted to higher education already made up about one-third of the total resources allocated to education, it would not be appropriate to increase the recurrent subsidy to universities.

32. Mr TSANG Yok-sing expressed concern about the poor teaching and learning environment in primary and secondary schools. He pointed out that many school teachers were provided with very limited working space and some primary schools could not find sufficient space to accommodate computers provided by ED. He urged the Administration to set minimum standards of space for primary and secondary schools.

33. Miss Emily LAU echoed Mr TSANG's view and said that Government should set aside more land for the construction of new schools.

34. Mr Antony LEUNG acknowledged that teachers in schools had suffered from a poor working environment for a long time. He anticipated that more non-recurrent resources would be allocated for the construction of new schools and the carrying out of improvement works to existing schools. However, he pointed out that there was a very limited supply of suitable land sites in the urban area for building new schools. He suggested that Government should consider establishing an inter-departmental working group to co-ordinate the provision and utilization of land resources for the construction of schools.

35. SEM said that Government had allocated substantial resources to improve the physical environment in schools and tertiary education institutions. Under the School Improvement Programme (SIP), some 300 schools had undergone improvement works, 80 schools were undergoing improvement works, and another 47 schools would soon be improved under phase IV of the SIP. He assured members that Government would accord priority to early childhood and primary education in future resource allocation exercises. He pointed out that it might not be technically feasible to include some old schools in the SIP, and the school management committees of some schools might prefer to retain the tradition and culture of their school and refuse to relocate or re-develop their school premises.

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36. Miss Emily LAU enquired about the progress of the reform of ED, given that ED would play a significant role in the implementation of future reform measures.

37. Mr Antony LEUNG responded that under the leadership of the Education Department Reform Steering Committee, ED was undergoing a major organizational change which focussed on establishing a client-based service culture within the ED.

38. DDE said that ED had implemented a series of initiatives to streamline the workflow and procedures in school administration and reduce the non-teaching workload of teachers. In particular, the establishment of an Operating Expenses Block Grant in aided schools would provide schools with greater flexibility to practise school-based management and make effective use of their operating reserves.

39. Dr YEUNG Sum enquired about the initial feedback on the proposed allocation of P1 places based on the principle of vicinity and supplemented by a number of uncontroversial criteria for priority entry, such as whether the pupils had siblings or parents who went to or work in the same school.

40. Mr TAI Hay-lap responded that parents in general supported the allocation of P1 places based on the principle of vicinity, but there were suggestions that the percentage of discretionary places should be flexibly determined and that the school nets should be adjusted as appropriate. He pointed out that some parents and sponsoring bodies had indicated the wish to retain the school tradition and culture, and admit more children of former graduates. Some parents also suggested that the working location of parents should be taken into account in allocation of P1 places. Mr Antony LEUNG supplemented that the proposed allocation of S1 places mechanism was generally supported by members of the public.

41. Mr SZETO Wah expressed concern about the manpower needs for developing and implementing the new curriculum. He considered that the functions and staff establishment of the existing CDC should be reviewed as soon as practicable. Dr YEUNG Sum shared Mr SZETO's view and said that specialists and educators should be appointed on a full-time or part-time basis for the design of school curriculum and public examination syllabuses.

42. Mr Antony LEUNG responded that the CDC would publish the results of their holistic review of the primary and secondary school curricula in September or October this year. To better meet the needs and expectations of the society, EC had encouraged CDC to invite experts from local universities and employers to participate in the design of the new curriculum. DDE added that as a review of the education system was underway, a comprehensive review of CDC and curriculum development would be conducted at a later stage.

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43. The Chairman thanked Mr Antony LEUNG, Professor CHENG Kai-ming and Mr TAI Hay-lap for attending the meeting to brief members on the proposals in the consultation document.

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**IV Any other business**

Draft report of the Panel on Education for 1999-2000 for submission to the Council

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44. Members raised no comments on the draft report.
45. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:35 pm.

Legislative Council Secretariat  
24 July 2000