

立法會  
*Legislative Council*

LC Paper No. CB(2)1177/02-03  
(These minutes have been seen  
by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

**Panel on Education**

**Minutes of meeting  
held on Monday, 20 January 2003 at 4:30 pm  
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

- Members Present** : Dr Hon YEUNG Sum (Chairman)  
Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung, BBS (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan  
Hon Eric LI Ka-cheung, JP  
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong  
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung  
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, GBS, JP  
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP  
Hon CHOY So-yuk  
Hon SZETO Wah  
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP  
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP  
Hon MA Fung-kwok, JP
- Members Absent** : Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP  
Dr Hon LO Wing-lok  
Hon WONG Sing-chi
- Public Officers Attending** : Item IV  
Mr Clement LEUNG  
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and  
Manpower (Higher Education)

Mr Lawrence KWAN  
Project Coordinator (Higher Education)  
Education and Manpower Bureau

Item V

Mr Michael TIEN, BBS, JP  
Chairman of Standing Committee on Language  
Education and Research

Mr CHENG Yan-chee  
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (4)

Item VI

Mrs Cherry TSE, JP  
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (2)

Mr Patrick LI  
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and  
Manpower (Infrastructure and Research Support)

Mr Daniel CHENG  
Principal Assistant Secretary for Housing, Planning and  
Lands (Planning and Lands)<sup>2</sup>

**Clerk in Attendance** : Miss Flora TAI  
Chief Assistant Secretary (2)<sup>2</sup>

**Staff in Attendance** : Mr Stanley MA  
Senior Assistant Secretary (2)<sup>6</sup>

---

Action

**I. Confirmation of minutes**  
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)901/02-03 and CB(2)902/02-03]

The minutes of the meetings held on 2 and 16 December 2002 were confirmed.

Action

**II. Information paper issued since the last meeting**

2. Members noted that no information paper had been issued since the last meeting.

**III. Items for discussion at the next meeting**

[Appendix I to LC Paper No. CB(2)894/02-03]

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items proposed by the Administration at the next regular meeting scheduled for 17 February 2003 at 4:30 pm -

- (a) Progress of the harmonisation of pre-primary services;
- (b) Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill;
- (c) Review of the adult education courses operated by the Education and Manpower Bureau; and
- (d) Deregulation of university salaries.

4. The Chairman advised the meeting that the Administration intended to submit the proposal on deregulation of university salaries to the Finance Committee for consideration at its meeting scheduled for 7 March 2003.

**IV. Accreditation grant for post-secondary programme providers**

[LC Paper No. CB(2)894/02-03(01)]

5. At the Chairman's invitation, Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower (Higher Education) (PAS(HE)) briefed members on the Administration's proposal on an additional allocation of \$20 million for continued provision of financial assistance for the accreditation of post-secondary programmes. In response to the Chairman, PAS(HE) said that the Administration intended to submit the proposal to the Finance Committee for consideration at its meeting scheduled for 21 February 2003.

6. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong asked how the Administration would prevent abuses of the accreditation grant scheme.

7. PAS(HE) responded that to prevent abuses, assistance would only be offered upon successful accreditation. He explained that an academic accreditation might involve an institutional review and programme validations processed in phases. The Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (HKCAA) would give advice to the applicant on programme improvements at

Action

different stages of the accreditation process, and collect the costs incurred by instalments. In such circumstances, the applicant would have to pay the instalments first and apply for reimbursement from the accreditation grant after successful accreditation.

8. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that since successful accreditation would promote student enrolment, a provider might apply for academic accreditation on a programme which had not been fully developed. He expressed concern that a provider who had submitted an application for academic accreditation prematurely might transfer the cost to students by charging higher tuition fees.

9. PAS(HE) responded that students enrolled in an unaccredited programme would not be eligible for the Means-tested Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students, Student Travel Subsidies and the Non-means-tested Loan Scheme. In practice, a provider would not operate an unaccredited programme which was not recognised by the Government as it would not attract students. He pointed out that the accreditation mechanism was designed to enhance the quality of self-financing post-secondary programmes. In general, providers were well aware of the requirements for successful accreditation and would not submit applications on programmes which would unlikely be accredited.

10. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong asked whether a provider could apply for an academic accreditation on a programme which had yet been operated. PAS(HE) responded that a provider might apply for accreditation when he had a campus and employed the necessary staff to work out the details of the programmes. After successful accreditation, an institution and its accredited programmes would be subject to periodic reviews and re-validations for on-going quality assurance purposes.

11. Mr YEUNG Yiu-chung noted that so far a total of \$8,346,000 had been granted for five institutional reviews and 25 programme validations (Enclosure 2 of the Administration's paper refers). He asked about the average cost of programme validation and the effective period of a programme validation.

12. PAS(HE) responded that the cost of each programme validation was calculated in accordance with the fee structure of HKCAA on a cost-recovery basis in 2001-02. The cost would cover both internal staff costs and the engagement of overseas experts for the assessment of the programme. Normally, the cost of accreditation for a degree programme would be higher than that of a sub-degree programme. Depending on the history of individual programmes, a validation could remain effective for a maximum period of five years. PAS(HE) undertook to provide further information on HKCAA's fee schedule for different programme validations after the meeting.

Action

[*Post-meeting note* : Further information on HKCAA's fee schedule for different programme validations was issued to members vide CB(2)1108/02-03 on 6 February 2003.]

13. Mr YEUNG Yiu-chung further asked whether the Administration would prescribe a period for an accredited programme to start operation. He pointed out that a provider might overestimate the demand of a particular programme, and withhold the operation of an accredited programme in the light of changing market situations.

14. PAS(HE) responded that to encourage the development of a self-financing post-secondary education sector, a provider should be given the flexibility to decide when and whether an accredited programme should operate. Since a provider would have to bear 50% of the cost of programme validation, it was unlikely that he would delay the operation of a programme without a good reason.

15. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong asked about the student enrolment of the 80 accredited programmes offered by the continuing education arms of University Grants Committee(UGC)-funded institutions, Open University of Hong Kong, Vocational Training Council and colleges registered under the Post-secondary College Ordinance and institutions authorised under the Education Ordinance. Mr YEUNG Yiu-chung also sought clarifications about the student distribution of the 42% participation rate for post-secondary education.

16. PAS(HE) responded that the average enrolment of the 80 accredited programmes providing some 9 000 places at sub-degree level or above was about 80% and for some popular programmes, only one out of three applicants could gain a place. As regards the 42% participation rate, PAS(HE) explained that there were 18% of the population with the 17 to 20 age cohort studying first-year-first-degree programmes in UGC-funded tertiary institutions, 5% studying in overseas institutions, 10% engaging in public-funded sub-degree programmes and 10% engaging in self-financing sub-degree programmes.

17. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong had expressed support for the proposal in principle. Other members raised no objection.

**V. Language Education Review**

Legislative Council Brief issued by the Education and Manpower Bureau [File Ref : EMB/SSU/CR 6/2041/96] and Consultation Document entitled "Action plan to raise language standards in Hong Kong" issued by the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research.

Action

18. The Chairman welcomed Chairman of the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) and Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (4) (DS(EM)4) to the meeting. At the Chairman's invitation, the Chairman of SCOLAR took members through the contents of the Consultation Document entitled "Action Plan to raise language standards in Hong Kong (the Consultation Document).

19. DS(EM)4 informed the meeting that as promulgated in the Policy Agenda in respect of the 2003 Policy Address, the Administration was committed to improving language education and the language proficiency of the community through a package of measures recommended by SCOLAR. The Administration would shortly submit a funding proposal to the Finance Committee to seek an injection into the Language Fund to support implementation of SCOLAR's recommendations.

Language teachers

20. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed concern about the training requirements for in-service language teachers. He considered that the qualifications of language teachers specified in paragraphs 3.4.7 and 3.4.8 of the Consultation Document had provided an alternative option for serving language teachers to acquire the qualification of a professional teacher in language teaching. He asked whether serving teachers who had achieved the specified qualifications in paragraph 3.4.7 would be exempted from the current Language Proficiency Requirement for Teachers (LPRT) which was compulsory for serving language teachers to meet before the end of the 2005-06 school year.

21. In response, DS(EM)4 explained that according to the recommendations of SCOLAR, effective language teachers should be proficient in the language they taught, had a good grounding in subject knowledge, and be acquainted with the latest theories and practices in language teaching and learning. Under LPRT, a language teacher who had the specified qualifications in paragraph 3.4.7 would be eligible for exemption.

22. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong noted that SCOLAR had proposed to set up an incentive grant scheme to support and encourage serving language teachers to acquire a Bachelor of Education degree, or a Postgraduate Diploma or Certificate in Education (PGDE or PCEd) in the relevant language subject. The maximum grant would cover 50% of the course fees, subject to a maximum of \$30,000. He considered that given the option, serving language teachers would prefer to pursue a degree qualification in education than to attend the authorised language proficiency courses for language teachers. Mr CHEUNG expressed concern whether there would be sufficient degree and postgraduate level programmes for enrolment of serving language teachers within a short time.

Action

23. DS(EM)4 responded that the Administration had maintained close contacts with UGC-funded institutions and other providers on provision of sufficient degree and postgraduate level places for the teaching profession, and had impressed upon them the great demand for language teachers. They would endeavour to redeploy their resources to meet the demand of serving language teachers, when necessary.

24. The Chairman of SCOLAR supplemented that SCOLAR did not recommend a deadline for some 20 000 serving Chinese and English Language teachers without the required qualifications to acquire the specified qualifications. SCOLAR reckoned that it was unlikely that all serving language teachers without the specified qualifications would pursue a degree or a post-graduate level programme at the same time. He added that SCOLAR would give priority in provision of incentive grant to some 6 000 serving Chinese and English Language teachers who did not have post-secondary education or teaching training in the language subject they taught.

25. Mr SZETO Wah asked about the budget for the incentive grant scheme to meet the demand of some 20 000 serving language teachers. The Chairman of SCOLAR responded that a budget in the region of \$200 million would be required for the purpose. He added that if the Government accepted the recommendations in the Consultation Document, additional resources should be provided for the establishment of a special task force of teaching consultants to help serving language teachers acquaint with the latest pedagogical knowledge and skills required for the curriculum reform.

26. Mr Tommy CHEUNG asked about the contributions of the native English-speaking teachers (NETs) to language education in schools and whether SCOLAR would conduct a research on the cost-effectiveness of the NET Scheme in the future.

27. The Chairman of SCOLAR responded that NETs in secondary schools should be deployed to achieve the objectives of enriching the language environment of schools, developing students' interest in learning English and helping local teachers to develop innovative teaching methods. Unfortunately, while some secondary schools had made the best use of their NETs, some had not fully utilised the NETs and simply deployed them to teaching only.

28. Mr Tommy CHEUNG was of the view that the cost-effectiveness of the NET scheme should be reviewed to ensure that the public money had been properly used. He then asked why the Consultation Document had not mentioned about the latest developments of the NET Scheme and the cost-effectiveness of NETs in English Language teaching in schools. DS(EM)4 responded that the development and evaluation of NET Scheme fell outside the terms of reference of SCOLAR. He said that Education and Manpower Bureau

Action

(EMB) in fact had already reviewed the NET Scheme for secondary schools with the aim of improving overall cost-effectiveness, and had reported the review findings to the Panel last year.

29. Miss CHOY So-yuk asked about the effectiveness of Chinese Language teachers from the Mainland in Putonghua teaching and Chinese Language teaching in local schools. She also asked how many non-local Chinese Language teachers had applied to teach in local schools and how many of them had met the accreditation requirements.

30. DS(EM)4 responded that the overall effectiveness of non-local Chinese Language teachers would have to be assessed by way of a study. He pointed out that the accreditation of a non-local degree programme and recognised teacher training in the subject offered in the Mainland by the HKCAA would take time. In general, non-local teachers holding qualifications that were equivalent to a local degree in Chinese Language and recognised teacher training in the subject would be allowed to teach in local schools. He undertook to provide a written response after the meeting.

Adm

31. Miss CHOY So-yuk remarked that the Administration should solicit feedback from schools on the effectiveness of non-local teachers teaching Chinese Language in local schools. She considered that the Administration should also review the operation of the accreditation mechanism for non-local teachers applying to teach a language subject in local schools.

32. Ms Emily LAU said that she supported enhancing the English and Chinese proficiency of school students, developing a professional language teaching force with the qualifications specified in paragraph 3.4.7 of the Consultation Document, establishing an incentive grant scheme to support and encourage serving language teachers to acquire the specified qualifications, giving the title of “Professional Chinese Language Teacher” or “Professional English Language Teacher” to language teachers with the specified qualifications and more than three years of teaching experience, and offering a salary increment as recognition for the language teachers who had acquired the specified qualifications. Referring to the issues to be further considered by SCOLAR, she asked how teacher representatives in SCOLAR had commented on setting a deadline for language teachers to acquire the specified qualifications and the offer of a salary increment after acquisition of the specified qualifications.

33. The Chairman of SCOLAR responded that the views of the SCOLAR were detailed in the proposals of the Consultation Documents. SCOLAR considered it appropriate to provide flexibility for serving language teachers to plan their schedules for acquiring the qualifications specified in paragraph 3.4.7 of the Consultation Document. However, school management should encourage serving language teachers to acquire the specified qualifications, and



Action

move progressively towards deploying only teachers with the required qualifications to teach language. Currently, there were some 15 000 serving English Language teachers in schools, and 5000 of them, mostly in primary schools, did not possess a post-secondary education or teacher training in English Language. However, many of these 15 000 English Language teachers were also required to teach other subjects. If English Language teachers were deployed to teach English Language only, then around 10 000 English Language teachers would be required in school education. In other words, the number of serving English Language teachers who needed to acquire a PGDE or PCEd qualification would not be very large when schools were required to recruit teachers with the specified qualifications to teach languages from the 2003-04 school year. He added that there were teacher representatives in SCOLAR who considered that pursuing continuing professional development was a responsibility of all serving teachers. They considered that giving a professional title was adequate as recognition for the language teachers who had acquired the specified qualifications, and a salary increment was not necessary.

34. Ms Emily LAU asked whether schools could offer higher salaries to language teachers. The Chairman of SCOLAR responded that in line with the spirit of school-based management, aided schools could use their own funds to enhance the salaries and allowances of their staff.

Curriculum and pedagogy

35. Mr SZETO Wah noted that paragraph 3.3.1 of the Consultation Document specified that students were more likely to be motivated to learn a language if what they were being taught in language lessons was appropriate in depth and breadth, relevant to students' daily life, and stimulating and interesting. He asked how the Administration would ensure that the contents of language textbooks could fulfil these objectives.

36. The Chairman of SCOLAR responded that the survey conducted in March 2002 had found that students would have a stronger motivation to learn languages if they liked the language subjects, had teachers who could arouse their interests in the subjects, or found the content of the subjects interesting. The survey had also shown that most language textbooks had failed to stimulate students' interests to learn. SCOLAR would continue to collaborate with the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) to improve the new language curriculum framework for schools to develop their whole-school language curriculum in the light of the three objectives as stated in paragraph 3.3.1 of the Consultation Document. In response to Mr SZETO Wah, the Chairman of SCOLAR said that he would follow up with relevant parties on improvement of language textbooks with the aim of promoting students' interests in language learning.

Action

*Language teaching at pre-primary level*

37. Mr Tommy CHEUNG expressed support for the majority of the recommendations in the Consultation Document. Referring to paragraph 3.3.2 of the Consultation Document which stated that development of a child's mother tongue should take precedence over the acquisition of other languages, Mr CHEUNG said that he held a different view. He considered that as some early childhood education experts had pointed out, young children were receptive to different languages and early exposure to a second language would benefit their subsequent language development. The Chairman, however, remarked that there were different schools of thought in language teaching at the pre-primary level.

38. The Chairman of SCOLAR stressed that the most important objective of pre-primary education was to foster among young children the interest to learn and think, which could be more effectively achieved if they were taught in their mother tongue. SCOLAR did not object to providing some form of English and Putonghua activities for young children on the conditions that such exposure was developmentally appropriate, authentic, accurate, in context, pressure-free and enjoyable. He stressed that kindergartens should employ qualified teachers who were proficient in speaking English or Putonghua to teach in the respective language, and adopt good strategies and use creative textbooks for providing effective and appropriate exposure to these languages for young children.

*Language teaching at primary and secondary level*

39. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung pointed out that given the current teacher to students ratio in schools, it was unlikely that a teacher could enrich students' balanced and holistic learning experience in listening, speaking, reading and writing. He considered that students could practise and improve their listening and reading skills themselves, but could hardly improve their speaking and writing abilities without teachers' guidance.

40. The Chairman of SCOLAR responded that SCOLAR anticipated that the education reform and curriculum reform measures would enhance interactions between students and teachers inside and outside classroom. In fact, schools should create an environment which would provide more opportunities for the use of English and Putonghua. In particular, Chinese-medium schools should enable students to learn English Language through language camps, debates, speech and drama activities, etc. He added that English Language teachers should be competent in linguistic knowledge of the language as well as the knowledge of language education in order to teach students in speaking and writing English.

Action

41. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung remarked that an effective language teacher simply would not have sufficient time to assist a class of 40 students in listening, speaking, writing and reading. He considered that small class teaching would be the key to resolve the problem.

42. Ms Cyd HO said that she supported the majority of recommendations in the Consultation Document. She agreed that students who failed to achieve the basic competencies in either Chinese or English Language for a particular key stage should be allowed to proceed to the next school level, but additional support such as placement in remedial classes should be provided to ensure that these students could achieve the basic competencies in the particular language at the end of the next key stage. She anticipated that the Administration would ensure schools to allocate sufficient resources for provision of adequate qualified teachers and remedial classes to these students.

43. Miss CHOY So-yuk asked how SCOLAR would make use of the mass media to enrich the language learning environment in Hong Kong. She cited a popular television programme as an example to illustrate that the Administration should make television a better resource for learning languages. She also suggested that schools should make better use of their multi-media resources and facilities in the teaching and learning of languages.

44. The Chairman of SCOLAR responded that the mass media was one of the most potent agents of public education and in particular television was the most popular mass medium among students. To promote the teaching and learning of English through television programmes, the Language Fund had provided support for a pilot project to develop learning materials and activities on the basis of two selected television programmes comprising eight and 13 episodes. The programmes would be broadcasted in February 2003 and a series of publicity activities would be launched shortly. SCOLAR would consider funding similar television programmes on Putonghua teaching and Chinese Language teaching at a later stage. He added that in line with the spirit of school-based management, school management should exercise discretion on the optimal use of multi-media resources and facilities for teaching and learning languages.

The target of language standards

45. Mr YEUNG Yiu-chung pointed out that the Government had put in considerable resources in a wide variety of language projects and the provision of NETs in public sector schools. He asked whether SCOLAR had set preliminary targets for improving students' language abilities. Mr YEUNG expressed concern that if targets had not been set, there would be no way to measure the effectiveness of the initiatives recommended in the Consultation Document.

Action

46. The Chairman of SCOLAR responded that the recommendations in the Consultation Document set the direction for future language education policies and measures which were considered realistic and achievable, taking into account the availability of resources and qualifications of serving language teachers. He did not anticipate that such direction would be changed in future review.

47. The Chairman of SCOLAR stressed that language learning was a complex issue and it would be more important to set the direction instead of the targets to be achieved in language learning. In fact, SCOLAR had aimed to build up a basic infrastructure for development of language education in the long run. The work of SCOLAR was to advise on the setting of language standards, including general goals for language learning at different levels of education and basic competencies at each stage of education. In this connection, CDC was developing a full set of learning outcomes which would describe the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes in Chinese Language and English Language that students were expected to achieve on completing the Key Stages of learning i.e., Key Stage I covered Primary 1 to 3, Key Stage II Primary 4 to 6, Key Stage III Secondary 1 to 3, and Key Stage IV Secondary 4 to 5 respectively. He added that the standards of the basic competencies at different Key Stages were subject to change in the light of changing community expectations and circumstances.

Employers' demands as driving force

48. Ms Cyd HO expressed concern that the incorporation of employers' demands as a driving force to promote students' language standards was in conflict with the objective of stimulating students' interests in language learning by way of creating a language-rich environment. She considered that parents would force students to learn language in the light of employers' demands and forget all the guiding principles of language learning as suggested in chapter three of the Consultation Document. As a result, students' motivation in language learning would be undermined.

49. The Chairman of SCOLAR responded that SCOLAR had thoroughly deliberated about the best ways to create more motivating language learning environment to help students achieve their competencies in languages. In theory, students' motivation to learn could be stimulated by both intrinsic and external factors. While intrinsic factors played a major role in pre-primary and primary education, external factors would come into play in secondary and higher education.

50. The Chairman of SCOLAR stressed that the Basic Competency Assessment (BCA) which was being developed by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority to monitor students' achievement of the basic competencies for Chinese Language and English Language at the end

Action

of Key Stages I to III was a low-stake assessment and monitoring tool to enhance learning and teaching. It would not assess and disclose students' achievements on a comparison basis. The System Assessment programme of the BCA would be conducted on samples of local students to provide the Government with information on the overall percentage of students achieving the basic competencies in listening, speaking, reading and writing at the end of the Key Stages, and the variance among schools. It would also allow individual schools to understand the overall language standard of their own students as compared to the standard of the student population as a whole. The Government should channel available resources to schools which needed additional support. On the other hand, students could access an on-line self-directed learning programme on reading and listening. Through this Student Assessment programme of the BCA, school management and teachers could obtain additional information on individual students' learning needs and problems, and identify students who required additional support in language learning. He stressed that unlike the former Academic Aptitude Tests, BCA would benefit students in language learning and would not create labelling effects on less successful learners. He added that external factors such as employers' demand of an applicant's language standards would inevitably come to play when a student left school to find employment.

51. Ms Cyd HO reiterated that there was no need to include employers' demands as a driving force to motivate students to learn languages. She considered that employers should design their programmes to assess the language abilities of their prospective employees and suggested that the element of employers' demands should be deleted from the future action plan to raise language standards in Hong Kong. Ms HO pointed out that the inclusion would only reinforce the impact of employers on language education.

52. The Chairman of SCOLAR responded that while more than 30% of secondary students failed in English Language of the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), the BCA aimed to enable all students to achieve the basic competencies. He stressed that students' competencies in English Language had all along been considered by employers as a crucial factor in staff recruitment.

53. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung asked why SCOLAR would recommend the inclusion of employers' demands as an external motivation for improvement of language standards, while acknowledging students in the perception survey were less likely to feel strongly motivated to learn languages if all they had in mind was to pass in examinations. He asked how employers' demand as an external motivation would promote students' interest in language learning.

54. The Chairman of SCOLAR responded that examination was a necessary but not sufficient motivation for students to learn languages, and that was why SCOLAR had not recommended the abolition of public examinations such as

Action

the HKCEE. He stressed that both internal and external motivations were essential for promoting students' interest in learning languages.

55. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung remarked that since entrance to university required a satisfactory standard in English, senior secondary students were already subject to extreme pressure in learning English. He considered that including employers' demands in the assessment process would add pressure on students instead of creating a motivating effect.

56. The Chairman of SCOLAR reiterated that employers' demands in respect of a job seeker's language standard was not a new external motivation to students in learning language. In response to Ms Cyd HO's further enquiry, he stressed that intrinsic and external factors were equally important in motivating students to learn languages. Given the prevalence of external factors of motivation, SCOLAR had aimed to reinforce students' intrinsic motivation in learning languages.

**VI. Reservation of school sites**

[LC Paper No. CB(2)894/02-03(02) to (04)]

57. At the invitation of the Chairman, Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (2) (DS(EM)2) briefed members on the main points of the Administration's document on the subject [LC Paper No. CB(2)894/02-03(02)].

58. The Chairman asked whether the Administration had reviewed the demand and supply of school sites in the light of the latest population forecast, which projected a decline in student population in the next few years.

59. DS(EM)2 responded that the Administration had taken into account the last population forecast in deciding which projects should proceed for the committed education objectives. On provision of whole-day primary schooling, 19 of the 48 new schools based on the previous population projection had become unjustified because of the projected decline in student population between now and 2007-08. However, other than population demand, the Administration had to take into account other factors such as parental choice and the popularity of a school in planning the conversion from bi-sessional to whole-day primary schooling. Having regard to these and related considerations including the existing financial stringency, the Administration would keep 12 out of the 19 new school projects for whole-day conversion purpose and would continue to monitor the situation and make necessary adjustments as circumstances changed.

60. Ms Emily LAU asked how the Administration would tackle the 30 schools having an operating cost which was more than 100% of the average cost.

Action

61. DS(EM)2 responded that the Administration intended to merge, relocate or phase out some of the 30 schools over the next five years, depending on the overall provision of school places at the district level, parental choice, class structure, economy of scale and operating standard of the schools. However, the Administration would first examine the causes of the high operating cost in each of these 30 schools and the need for their continued operation for the interests of their students.

62. Ms Emily LAU asked how long would it take for reprovisioning and redevelopment of some 300 existing primary and secondary schools which had a site area of less than 3 000 square metre and about 350 schools which were built more than 30 years ago, given that the number of projects each year was limited by the availability of funds and land.

63. DS(EM)2 clarified that the two groups of schools overlapped one another and there should be a total of 429 primary and secondary schools which were built more than 30 years ago and/or of a site area less than 3000 square metres. She added that for various reasons, it would not be meaningful to set a timeframe for reprovisioning and redevelopment of all 429 schools. For instance, many bi-sessional primary schools had been reprovisioned to new school premises through whole-day conversion. PAS(EM)(IRS) added that the existing facilities of most schools had also been significantly improved through the School Improvement Programme (SIP). DS(EM)2 said that some schools might not prefer relocation outside the districts where they were located at and the Administration would have to consult the school management, parents and students before making a decision. Despite the prevailing budgetary constraints, the Administration had set aside sufficient funds for reprovisioning and redevelopment of about 10 schools in the next few years.

64. Ms Emily LAU expressed grave concern about the schedule for reprovisioning and redevelopment of the 429 existing primary and secondary schools which were far below the standards of the Year 2000 model. DS(EM)2 responded that the Administration would launch a rolling programme to redevelop/reprovision schools from the next school year, but was unable to provide a schedule for reprovisioning and redevelopment of these schools. The number of projects to be included each year would depend on amongst others land and financial resources available.

65. Ms Emily LAU asked how the criteria for according priority for relocation or redevelopment would be objectively set. DS(EM)2 acknowledged that while some criteria such as schools which were SIP non-feasible could be objectively assessed, some criteria such as “schools which offered good quality education” would require qualitative assessment such as the reports of the Quality Assurance Team.

Action

66. Miss CHOY So-yuk asked about the arrangements for provision of kindergartens and primary schools in public estates with an aging population and a decline in student population. She pointed out that many kindergartens and primary schools in old public estates had a large number of vacant places, resulting in substantial waste of public resources.

67. DS(EM)2 acknowledged that the supply of places in kindergartens and primary schools in old public estates would exceed the demand as a result of an aging population and a decline in birth rate. She pointed out that while kindergartens with insufficient enrolment could hardly survive, primary schools in old public estates might survive if they were able to provide quality education and attract students residing in the same or other districts to enrol. She supplemented that if a kindergarten premises in a public estate was at the end left vacant, it could be used for other purposes. She added that a degree of surplus supply of school places was necessary for parental choice to make an impact on student enrolment and differentiation between schools.

68. To conclude the discussion, the Chairman remarked that the Administration should take the opportunity to implement small class teaching in public estates and districts where the student population had significantly decreased. He pointed out that small class teaching would promote quality of education and reduce surplus of teachers in school education.

**VII. Any other business**

69. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 7:15 pm.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
14 February 2003