

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

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**Panel on Education**

**Minutes of special meeting  
held on Wednesday, 14 January 2004 at 11:55 am  
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

- Members present** : Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung, BBS (Chairman)  
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum (Deputy Chairman)  
Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP  
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan  
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong  
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung  
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, GBS, JP  
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP  
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP  
Dr Hon LO Wing-lok, JP  
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
- Member attending** : Hon Margaret NG
- Members absent** : Hon SIN Chung-kai  
Hon SZETO Wah  
Hon WONG Sing-chi  
Hon MA Fung-kwok, JP
- Public Officers attending** : Professor Arthur LI, GBS, JP  
Secretary for Education and Manpower
- Mrs Fanny LAW, GBS, JP  
Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower

**Clerk in attendance** : Ms Doris CHAN  
Chief Council Secretary (2)2

**Staff in attendance** : Mr Stanley MA  
Senior Council Secretary (2)6

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**I. Briefing by the Secretary for Education and Manpower on the Chief Executive's Policy Address 2004**

[LC Paper No. CB(2)941/03-04(01)]

The Chairman welcomed the Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM) and the Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower (PSEM) to the meeting.

2. At the invitation of the Chairman, SEM briefed members on the policy initiatives of the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) as set out in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(2)941/03-04(01)].

Improving language education

3. Mr Tommy CHEUNG asked whether the Administration would review the cost-effectiveness of native-speaking English teachers (NETs) in terms of improving language education and the language proficiency of students in schools, i.e., biliterate in written Chinese and English and trilingual in Cantonese, Putonghua and spoken English. He expressed concern that NETs in the primary sector were required to serve two primary schools and asked how NETs who did not speak Cantonese could teach Chinese students to learn English in an effective manner. SEM responded that apart from conducting English classes in schools, NETs were required to collaborate with local teachers to work out effective methods and strategies to teach local students to learn English.

4. Mr Tommy CHEUNG considered that enrolment of non-local students would enrich the language learning environment in schools by creating more opportunities for local students to communicate with them in non-native languages. He asked whether the Administration would consider formulating a policy for enrolment of non-local students in aided schools.

5. SEM pointed out that the University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded tertiary institutions were now allowed to recruit non-local and taught post-graduate students up to 4% of their publicly funded places plus another 4% using private funding. In addition, institutions were allowed to charge higher fees for non-local students. He added that the Administration would encourage secondary schools to enrol non-local students to enrich the language learning

Action

environment in local schools. However, the provision of appropriate residential accommodation for non-local students to study in local schools was an important consideration in the formulation of a policy for enrolment of non-local students in local schools. At present, the Administration was liaising with the relevant Mainland authorities for the organisation of student exchange programmes between local and Mainland secondary schools.

6. Mr Tommy CHEUNG remarked that the duration of an exchange programme was relatively short and did not provide sufficient opportunities for local students to learn a foreign language. He suggested that the Administration should formulate a policy to attract Mainland families and Chinese families in overseas countries to send their children to study in Hong Kong schools. He considered that parents who decided to send their children to study in Hong Kong school would arrange appropriate residential accommodation for their children.

The proposed “3+3+4” structure for the junior secondary, senior secondary and university programmes

7. Mr Tommy CHEUNG noted that the Administration would launch a consultation exercise to solicit public views on the critical issues affecting successful implementation of the proposed three-year senior secondary and four-year first-degree academic systems as recommended in the Review of the Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education published in May 2003. He asked when the consultation would be completed and whether the Administration would consult the Panel on the implementation of the proposed “3+3+4” structure. He considered that the merits of a “3+3+4” structure for secondary and university education were commonly accepted and expressed concern whether the implementation of such structure would be delayed due to financial constraints.

8. SEM responded that the Administration was in support of the proposed “3+3+4” structure as a major initiative of education reform. He explained that the successful implementation of the new academic systems required strong community consensus, sufficient lead time to manage the transition, and practical ways to resolve the financial aspects of the reform. The Administration would consult the public on the design blueprint, timetable for implementation and financial arrangements. He added that the consultation document would be published in the first half of 2004 and the consultation process would be completed in three to four months. The Administration would revert to the Panel when the results of the consultation were available for discussion.

Admin

9. Mr Tommy CHEUNG asked whether UGC-funded institutions would be provided with additional resources for implementation of the four-year undergraduate programmes. He pointed out that implementation of the proposed “3+3+4” structure would result in a six-year secondary education which might in

Action

turn lead to a reduction in the manpower establishment for the secondary school sector. Since any reduction in employment opportunities would create surplus teachers, he asked how the Administration would tackle the possible objection from the teaching profession during the consultation process.

10. SEM responded that additional resources would be provided for UGC-funded institutions to implement four-year undergraduate programmes. He pointed out that while about one-third of the secondary five (S5) graduates would be able to access S6 and S7 studies under the existing secondary school structure, the proposed “3+3+4” structure would enable all S5 graduates to study in S6. The resources now allocated for the provision of S7 classes to about one-third of S5 graduates would not be sufficient to support the provision of additional S6 places to the remaining two-thirds of S5 graduates. Although the community in general was in support of the “3+3+4” structure, the Administration would have to ascertain the community’s consensus on the best ways to implement the new structure by way of a comprehensive consultation exercise.

11. Mr Tommy CHEUNG considered that the consultation document should set out the sources of the additional resources required for the implementation of the proposed “3+3+4” structure such as an increase in taxation. SEM responded that the consultation document would set out the estimated costs of the feasible options and the proposed increases in Government expenditure for the implementation of the proposed “3+3+4” structure for public consideration.

Education reform

12. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong referred to paragraph 45 of the Chief Executive’s 2004 Policy Address which acknowledged that implementation of education reforms had increased the workload of teachers and confused some parents. He pointed out that many teachers and parents were confused and could not follow the rapidly changing policies on education reforms. He requested the Administration to elaborate on the areas of success and areas of failure encountered in the implementation of education reforms so far, and asked how the Administration would address the concerns of teachers and parents about the adverse effects of education reforms on school education.

13. SEM responded that education was a long-term mission and the merits of the education reform should be assessed from a long term perspective. He pointed out that a recent survey indicated that as a result of the education reform, primary school students were now more active and happier in learning. Referring to the report of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), SEM pointed out that Hong Kong students at the age of 15 ranked first in mathematics, third in science, and sixth in reading among some 40 participating countries. He added that the rankings reaffirmed the quality of the education system in Hong Kong as compared with western countries, most of which had

Action

allocated a higher share of their national budgets to school education than Hong Kong.

14. SEM acknowledged that the implementation of the education reform had increased the workload of teachers. He pointed out that although there had been adverse comments on the effects of the education reform since 2000, no one had been able to name a policy that had been changed overnight. He considered that the education reform carried out in primary and secondary schools over the past three years had been on the right track. He assured members that the Administration would strengthen communication with school principals, teachers, parents, students and the community at large to clearly explain the concepts behind the policies and listen to views from all sectors. He stressed that for the sake of Hong Kong's long term interests, the Administration must persist with the education reform.

15. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that the policy that Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools, unlike aided schools, had discretion on using different mediums of instructions for teaching different subjects was an example of inconsistent policy in school education. Referring to the recommendation of the education review report published by the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) on 27 June 2003 that starting from the 2004-05 school year, new English language teachers were required to complete a degree programme in teaching English, Mr CHEUNG said that serving English language teachers were confused as to whether they should pursue a degree programme or attain the Language Proficiency Requirement in order to be qualified for teaching English language. Mr CHEUNG also pointed out that compared with their western counterparts, the achievements of local students under the age of 15 in mathematics and science subjects had all along been outstanding. He considered that the key success factor should be attributed to the dedicated and hardworking teaching force in Hong Kong, and not the outcome of the education reform which had only been implemented since 2000.

16. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered that the success of education reform depended to a large extent on the confidence, enthusiasm and persistency of the stakeholders throughout the implementation process, as well as the provision of sufficient funding for implementing the reform initiatives and measures. He asked whether the Administration would continue to implement the reform initiatives or adjust the pace of education reforms in the face of the funding cuts in education.

17. SEM responded that he agreed that sufficient funding support was essential for implementing the reform initiatives and improving the quality of education. As the principal official responsible for education matters, SEM said that he would try his best to liaise with the Financial Secretary (FS) for a smaller reduction of funding in education. He pointed out that the Chief Executive had stressed the importance of education to the future development of the

Action

community and FS had said that reduction of funding for education would be far less than the average of 11% for the 2004-05 year. He expressed confidence in securing sufficient funding for the implementation of the reform measures. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed support for SEM to liaise with FS for a smaller reduction of education funding.

18. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered that the biggest failure of the education reforms was that while teachers' workload had substantially increased, teachers were unable to perceive the positive effects of the education reforms on improving the quality of school education. He queried the need to close the four practical schools to implement integrated education for students with certain types of learning difficulties and pointed out that the reduction of teaching and non-teaching staff in schools such as laboratory technicians had created additional workload for serving teachers. He asked how such measures could improve the quality of education. He also asked why the Administration had not yet decided to implement small class teaching and the proposed "3+3+4" structure which were reform initiatives widely supported by the community.

19. PSEM responded that the Administration was well aware of the increase in teachers' workload arising from the implementation of the education reforms. She suggested that schools and teachers should work towards reducing unnecessary paper work such as by preparing concise instead of detailed minutes of meetings. She also pointed out that the current policy on integrated education had been reviewed by the Director of Audit and supported by the Public Accounts Committee, and was the prevailing international trend in the provision of school education to children with different types of learning difficulties. She added that EMB would assist schools which had encountered difficulties in the provision of integrated education. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung remarked that the affected parents, as well as the teachers and social workers concerned, did not support the closing of the four practical schools.

20. PSEM further said that at the heart of the reform initiatives there were two over-arching objectives, i.e., "to motivate students to learn" and "help them to learn how to learn". The desired outcome was to see a new generation of lifelong learners who enjoyed learning and were equipped with the generic skills and a positive attitude to cope with changes. She stressed that learning was a complex process and schools were encouraged to make reference to the new curriculum framework and develop their own school-based teaching and learning programmes based on the needs and characteristics of their students. She pointed out that the merits of the education reforms should be assessed by both quantitative and qualitative indicators. She pointed out that the positive effects of the education reforms were now apparent in many schools, and students were now more interested in learning, the school curricula had become more varied, and there was now more scope for developing students' potential in school education. She suggested that the Administration should arrange school visits for Legislative Council Members to observe the positive effects of the education

Action

reforms in early February 2004.

21. The Chairman and Ms Emily LAU expressed support for PSEM's suggestion. Ms LAU considered that the visit should enable members to observe the positive and negative effects of education reforms on teaching and learning activities in classrooms and the quality of school education.

[*Post-meeting note* : A visit to two schools was subsequently scheduled for Tuesday, 3 February 2004 from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon.]

22. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered that given the existing large class sizes of 35 and 40 for primary and secondary schools respectively, teachers would not be able to teach in accordance with the needs and characteristics of their students. He pointed out that while some schools had enhanced the quality of teaching and learning through the reform measures, many were restrained by limited resources and were unable to improve the quality of education. He urged the Administration to explore the reasons why the education reforms had failed to help these schools improve in performance.

23. PSEM explained that the quality of education in a school did not depend solely on a single factor and it would not be realistic to expect a visible improvement in all schools three years after the implementation of the education reforms. She pointed out that the academic and non-academic performance of students were affected by a combination of personal and situational factors including students' abilities and enthusiasm to learn, the quality of teachers, the level of parental guidance, the facilities and the learning environment in the schools, the management and culture of the schools, and the surrounding environment in the community. PSEM added that the gradual development of "professional learning communities" had enabled exchange of views and sharing of experience within schools and among teachers that would contribute to the success of the education reforms in the years to come.

24. Ms Emily LAU expressed concern about the workload of teachers and urged the Administration to consult principals, teachers, parents and students on the merits and demerits of the education reforms on school education. Ms LAU considered it imperative that the education reforms in schools should aim at developing students' abilities to think independently and their courage to express their views in classrooms freely. She asked about the proportion of schools which had demonstrated improvement in performance since the implementation of the education reforms in 2000.

25. SEM responded that improvement in schools' performance as a result of the education reform could be reflected by a variety of quantitative and qualitative indicators. A school could be more successful in certain areas of teaching than others.

Action

26. PSEM supplemented that the core element of school education was the teaching and learning interactions between teachers and students in a classroom setting. Apart from academic assessments, improvement in students' learning behaviours and attitudes could be reflected by the teaching and learning atmosphere inside classrooms. She pointed out the importance of corresponding changes to the pedagogy in order to reap the full benefit of the education reform. She cited a study in the United Kingdom which showed that, despite small class teaching, the level of classroom interaction had not changed much over the past 10 years. PSEM added that under the curriculum reform, schools could flexibly exercise their professional autonomy to select teaching contents, teaching and learning activities, homework arrangement, assessment strategies that would cater for their students' needs. The Administration appreciated that teachers had put in extra time and efforts in the development of school-based curriculum for enhancing the effectiveness of teaching and learning in classes. In line with the spirit of school-based management, schools were now required to conduct self-evaluations on their performance. For such purpose, principals and teachers would hold frequent meetings and maintain a close professional dialogue which would facilitate the successful implementation of the education reforms in the long run.

27. Ms Cyd HO considered that the Administration should provide multifarious education opportunities to suit diverse interests and aptitude so that all students could develop their potential to the full. She suggested that the Administration should provide a variety of specialty schools or classes to cater for students with special talents, abilities and needs in learning, such as remedial classes for students whose learning progress fell behind their peers in mainstream subjects. Ms HO anticipated that the community as a whole would collaborate to work out a feasible strategy to resolve the problem of budgetary constraints on the provision of appropriate education to students with special talents and learning needs. She asked how the Administration would help students who were less successful under the existing assessment mechanism for allocation of primary one and secondary one places. She also asked how the Administration would provide students with special talents and potentials in artistic and athletic subjects to pursue higher level studies which were not available in local universities.

28. PSEM responded that many schools had adopted more diverse format of student assessment under the education reform. She considered it premature to stream at the age of 12 on the basis of academic attainment only. She pointed out that the Administration encouraged the establishment of through train schools to ensure a smooth transition from primary to secondary education, which would obviate the need for school places allocation. Starting from 2003, the senior secondary school curriculum had incorporated employment related subjects to promote students' interests in learning. Senior secondary schools would also provide sub-degree programmes for students to pursue higher level studies at reasonable costs. In addition, a qualifications framework would also be



Action

established to set out different pathways for students to obtain alternative qualifications that would be recognised for employment purposes.

29. Ms Cyd HO remarked that the Administration should be more proactive in listening to the views of parents and students in the course of implementing the education reforms. She expressed support for SEM to negotiate with FS for a smaller reduction in education funding so that students who were less successful in mainstream studies would not be sacrificed for a lack of funding support. She agreed that education was an investment and not an expenditure and the allocation for education in Hong Kong should not fall behind other countries at a similar level of economic and social development.

Recurrent funding for the UGC sector for the 2005-08 triennium

30. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that FS had recently proposed a zero reduction for the 2005-06 and 2006-07 academic years, and a further 5% reduction for the 2007-08 academic year for UGC-funded institutions, i.e., the "0+0+5" option. He expressed concern about the possible funding cuts for the school sector and asked whether the Administration would reduce funding support for the school sector. He cautioned that if the school sector was required to absorb the remaining funding cuts in education, the quality of school education might be sacrificed.

31. SEM responded that he shared the concern of Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong about possible reduction of funding for the school sector. He stressed that he had not agreed to the proposed "0+0+5" option for the UGC sector. He assured members that he would consult the education sector on the impact of the proposed option on the higher education sector and the implications on the school sector.

32. Dr YEUNG Sum pointed out that the "0+0+5" was proposed by FS a few days after the proposal on recurrent funding for UGC sector for the 2004-05 academic year was not approved at the meeting of the Finance Committee on 7 January 2004. He queried why SEM had not mentioned the proposed 5% funding cut for the 2007-08 academic year at the meeting. He considered that heads of UGC-funded institutions were reluctant to accept the proposed 10% funding cut for the 2004-05 academic year, and said that some of them had expressed objection to a further 5% cut for the 2007-08 academic year. He therefore asked whether the Administration would consult heads of UGC-funded institutions on a further 5% reduction of funding.

33. SEM responded that at the open forum organized by the City University of Hong Kong on 6 January 2004, FS had said that the recurrent funding for the UGC sector for the 2005-08 triennium had not yet been determined. The "0+0+5" option was suggested for SEM's discussion with UGC on 9 January 2004, the purpose of which was to provide a working reference for UGC and the eight UGC-funded institutions to plan their development programmes for the

Action

next triennium. He added that the "0+0+5" option had not been widely discussed by the stakeholders.

34. Dr YEUNG Sum considered that SEM should disclose the proposed "0+0+5" option to facilitate deliberation at the FC meeting on 7 January 2004. He stressed that the Democratic Party opposed the proposed 10% and 5% funding cuts for the 2004-05 and the 2007-08 academic years respectively.

Education expenditure and unit costs

35. Mr TSANG Yok-sing noted that 25% of the Government's expenditure was allocated to education. He asked whether the allocation was reasonable when compared with overseas countries at a similar level of economic development. He highlighted that the Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong supported no reduction of education funding, but there was criticism in the community that given the fiscal deficits, allocation for education should be reduced along with the allocations for other policy areas. Referring to paragraph 43 of the Policy Address which stated that every cent spent on education was an investment and not an expense, Mr TSANG asked whether education should be given special consideration and whether funding cut for education should be far less than the average 11%.

36. SEM responded that compared with government expenditure of other countries which comprised an element of national defence and other items not applicable to Hong Kong, the allocation for education in Hong Kong was reasonable. The Administration would invest in education in a cost-effective manner, with the aim of promoting economic restructuring and establishing a knowledge-based economy.

37. Mr TSANG Yok-sing asked whether the average unit costs of primary, secondary and tertiary education in Hong Kong were higher or lower than those of the western countries.

38. SEM responded that the average unit costs of primary and secondary education in Hong Kong were around 60% of those of the western countries, and the average student unit cost of university programmes was in general about the same as those of state universities in the United State of America. He pointed out that as recommended by the Director of Audit, universities should be able to achieve savings in a number of areas. In view of the fiscal deficits, heads of UGC-funded institutions had agreed to the proposed 10% funding cut for the 2004-05 academic year. SEM anticipated that although funding for the 2005-08 triennium had yet to be determined, members should consider approving the funding proposal for the 2004-05 academic year to help institutions plan their development programmes.

39. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that the student unit cost of a university student was 6.5 and 9 times higher than their primary and secondary

Action

counterparts. He considered that funding for primary and secondary education had hitherto been low because of the bi-sessional mode of operation, the large class sizes, the efforts of the dedicated teaching workforce etc. He considered that it would not be fair to adopt an across-the-board percentage for reduction of funding for the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors.

**II. Any other business**

40. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:05 pm.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
11 March 2004