

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1134/04-05
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/HS/2/04

**Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to the Provision of
Boarding Places, Senior Secondary Education and Employment
Opportunities for Children with Special Educational Needs**

**Minutes of meeting
held on Tuesday, 22 February 2005 at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

- Members present** : Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung (Chairman)
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, GBS, JP
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
- Public Officers attending** : Item II
- Mrs Mary MA LO To-wan
Commissioner for Rehabilitation, Health, Welfare and
Food Bureau
- Miss Ophelia CHAN Chiu-ling
Assistant Director (Rehabilitation and Medical Social
Services), Social Welfare Department
- Mr CHENG Man-yiu
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower(3)
- Mrs Betty IP TSANG Chui-hing
Principal Assistant Secretary (School Administration &
Support), Education and Manpower Bureau

Mr Tony TANG
Principal Education Officer (Curriculum Development),
Education and Manpower Bureau

Clerk in attendance : Miss Flora TAI
Chief Council Secretary (2)2

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

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I. Election of Chairman

Dr Fernando CHEUNG was elected Chairman of the Subcommittee.

II. Meeting with the Administration

[LC Paper No. CB(2)866/04-05(02)]

Scope and approach

2. The Chairman briefed members on the establishment of the Subcommittee to follow up the issues raised by members and the deputations at the joint meeting of the Panel on Education and the Panel on Welfare Services on 10 January 2005. He highlighted that the issues raised by the deputations fell under the policy purview of the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) and the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (HWFB).

3. The Chairman considered that the Subcommittee should examine in detail the transitional arrangements and support for children with special educational needs (SEN) to adapt to the changes from learning in special schools to attending training in sheltered workshops or rehabilitation centres. He suggested that the Subcommittee should invite the deputations to join the discussion at future meetings as and when appropriate. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed support for the Chairman's suggestions.

4. Responding to the Chairman, Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower(3) (DS(EM)3) pointed out that EMB reviewed the provision of boarding places for children with physical disability (PD children) on an annual basis, and would publish a report on the outcome of the consultation on the proposed new academic structure for senior secondary education and higher education (the Report) in the second quarter of 2005. He suggested the Subcommittee to discuss the provision of senior secondary education to children with SEN under the reform proposal first so that EMB would have more

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opportunities to consider and incorporate the views and suggestions of the Subcommittee in the final report.

5. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered that the Subcommittee should examine the provision of senior secondary education, employment and rehabilitation services for children with SEN in a comprehensive manner. He pointed out that children with SEN were found much happier in schools than in sheltered workshops or rehabilitation centres, and they sometimes encountered adjustment difficulties after having left schools. Their parents were generally satisfied with the existing provision of education in special schools because they considered that school life was more valuable and the resources there was comparatively more abundant. Mr CHEUNG said that having visited some special schools, sheltered workshops and rehabilitation centres, he felt strongly for the needs of children with different types of disabilities, in particular those with severe mental handicap or physical disabilities. He anticipated that the Subcommittee would collaborate with the Administration to work out appropriate support measures for these children to lead a more meaningful life. He held a strong view that the community should show its care and love towards children with different types of disabilities. Mrs Selina CHOW agreed that the Subcommittee should consider the issues in the light of the needs of children with SEN from an all-encompassing perspective.

6. The Chairman shared the view of Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong that the community should assist children with SEN to develop self-care skills so that they could lead an independent life. He considered that the Administration should aim at providing rehabilitation services and support employment to children with SEN in accordance with individual developmental needs. The Chairman observed that while the services provided to children with SEN at schools were more learning-oriented, the services provided after they had left school were more career-oriented. He requested the Administration to provide a paper to elaborate on the current policies and objectives as well as the future directions and developments in the provision of rehabilitation services to children/persons with different disabilities.

7. Commissioner for Rehabilitation, Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (CR(HWFB)) responded that the current review on Rehabilitation Programme Plan would include the provision of supported employment for the disabled. She undertook to provide detailed information on the provision of rehabilitation and supported employment services in the context of the agenda items for discussion at future meetings.

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Overview of children with special educational needs

8. Ms Audrey EU was of the view that to facilitate its study, the Subcommittee should have an overall picture of the situation of the children with SEN in Hong Kong. For this purpose, she requested the Administration to

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provide information on –

- (a) breakdown of children with SEN by age group (or those below the age of 12 and those at or above the age of 12) and the type of their disabilities;
- (b) the types of SEN of these children and the services they were receiving; and
- (c) the types of training and programmes for the teachers of these children in special and integrated education and the number of places of these training and programmes.

9. The Chairman requested that the Administration should also provide detailed background information on the existing provision of senior secondary education, rehabilitation and supported employment services for children with SEN after completing junior secondary education. The information should include, among others, the number of children with SEN in different types of rehabilitation services and the lead time for the children to receive the service after completing junior secondary education.

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10. In response to the request of Ms Audrey EU and the Chairman, the Administration undertook to provide relevant information for members' reference at the next meeting.

Special and integrated education under the new academic structure

11. The Chairman asked how the provision of senior secondary education for children with SEN would be proposed in the Report for further consultation on the new academic structure composing of a three-year junior secondary and a three-year senior secondary education, linking to a four-year undergraduate university programme (the “3+3+4” structure). DS(EM)3 responded that the Report would cover more details on special education under the proposed “3+3+4” structure. He added that the community in general supported that children with SEN should enjoy six-year secondary education as other children. The Report would highlight the curriculum framework, assessment mechanisms, support services and additional resources required for implementing the proposals on special education and integrated education in mainstream schools under the new academic structure.

12. Mrs Selina CHOW said that members had the consensus that children with SEN had the right to receive six-year secondary education. She asked how the Administration would plan the timetable, curriculum and support measures for the implementation of senior secondary education in special schools and mainstream schools providing integrated education for children with SEN under the proposed “3+3+4” structure.

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13. DS(EM)3 responded that the Administration shared the view that children with SEN had the right to six-year secondary education as other students. He pointed out that there were different types of disabilities which required different types of supports in special schools and mainstream schools. While children with mild hearing or visual impairment could learn as good as other students in mainstream schools and universities, education for children with mental handicap should adopt the approach of individual education programme (IEP) with school-based curricula and appropriate support measures. For instances, children with severe mental handicap would be provided with IEP in accordance with their intellectual developments instead of mainstream senior secondary curriculum. Most importantly, the Administration would consult the academics, professionals, teachers and parents in the special education sector on the provision of secondary education to children with different disabilities, in particular the support measures for mainstream schools admitting children with SEN.

14. The Chairman asked whether EMB would estimate the number of children in need of special education and integrated education at regular interval, and henceforward plan the provision of appropriate supports to special schools and mainstream schools.

15. DS(EM)3 replied that in collaboration with other departments including the Department of Health and Social Welfare Department (SWD), EMB conducted annual assessment of the number of children with SEN, and planned the provision of appropriate supports to special schools and mainstream schools admitting children with SEN.

16. Mrs Selina CHOW asked whether the Administration had planned the provision of appropriate professional development programmes for serving teachers in special schools and mainstream schools providing integrated education, and estimated the resources required in this regard.

17. DS(EM)3 pointed out that professional development programmes on special education and integrated education were provided throughout the year for in-service principals and teachers in special schools and mainstream schools in order to keep them in pace with the latest developments in special and integrated education. Under the proposed “3+3+4” structure, resources would be set aside for professional development of serving teachers in different types of special schools and mainstream schools in different areas of teaching including the teaching of Liberal Studies in senior secondary schools.

Curriculum and duration of secondary education for children with SEN

18. Mr Jasper TSANG asked how the concept of “equal opportunities” would apply to children receiving education in mainstream schools and to children with SEN receiving education in special schools. He considered it unnecessary to

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adopt the same set of policies for provision of senior secondary education in mainstream schools and special schools. In particular, the duration of free education for children with SEN needed not follow the policy on provision of nine-year free basic education in mainstream schools. He pointed out that children with different types of disabilities had different needs in education, and it would be more appropriate to allow flexibility in the duration of providing secondary education. He added that parents of children with SEN should be provided with a choice in deciding whether to send their children to receive senior secondary education in mainstream schools or special schools, or to receive training in sheltered workshops or rehabilitation centres.

19. DS(EM)3 responded that under the existing policies, children with SEN in special schools were provided with ten-year free education, and depending on their academic abilities, could proceed to senior secondary schools or vocational training courses. He explained that the Administration had not included much detail about special education in the consultation document entitled “Reforming the academic structure for senior secondary education and higher education” because it was considered more appropriate to consult the sector first and then provide more details on the direction of changes for special education in the final report later this year. EMB would consult special schools on implementation details.

20. Mr Jasper TSANG said that given the existing policies on the provision of mainstream education and special education, the Subcommittee should examine the appropriate academic structures and curriculum frameworks for the provision of senior secondary education to children with different types of disabilities in the context of the proposed “3+3+4” structure. He added that EMB should allocate sufficient resources to special schools for implementing the new secondary curriculum for children with different types of disabilities.

21. The Chairman concurred with Mr Jasper TSANG’s view. He pointed out that the concept of “equal opportunities” in the provision of education to children in mainstream schools and special schools should also be interpreted in terms of the different educational needs between children without a disability and children with different disabilities. He further cited the existing two-year extension programmes for MH children to illustrate the need that policies on provision of senior secondary education in special education under the proposed “3+3+4” structure should be formulated in the light of the needs of children with specific disabilities, rather than strictly following the policies adopted for implementing the new academic structure in mainstream schools.

22. DS(EM)3 responded that he shared the view with the Chairman and Mr Jasper TSANG that the policies and curriculum for the provision of six-year secondary education in special schools should be formulated and designed in accordance with the different needs of children with specific disabilities. He added that the Administration was well aware of the need to provide flexibility in

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providing special education to children with different disabilities, such as the curriculum for mild, moderate and severe MH students and accommodations for students with physical disabilities or impairments in mainstream schools to participate in public examinations.

23. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung asked whether the age of children with SEN should be a major consideration in the provision of secondary education in special schools under the proposed “3+3+4” structure. He considered that children with specific disabilities should be provided with appropriate curricula and years of secondary education which might, depending on the needs of the children, extend beyond a period of six years. He cited the suggestion of deputations that in principle, children with SEN should be provided with senior secondary education at least up to the age of 21 and asked how the Administration would formulate a policy in this regard.

24. DS(EM)3 responded that children with SEN should receive education which suited their needs. The Administration did not consider it appropriate to specify a certain age limit for the provision of secondary education to children with SEN. Subject to resources constraints, the Administration would formulate appropriate policies on the provision of senior secondary education in special schools in the light of the education reform.

25. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung expressed appreciation that the Administration would allow flexibility in provision of education to children with SEN on the basis of their needs and abilities, but expressed concern that such flexibility would be subject to availability of resources. DS(EM)3 replied that the Administration would have to balance the needs of children with SEN and the budgetary constraints.

26. The Chairman remarked that both Mr Jasper TSANG and Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung shared the concern that the duration and curriculum for the provision of special education should be designed and structured to suit the needs of children with different types of disabilities. He requested the Administration to formulate the appropriate policies and objectives in the light of the needs of the children with SEN, having regard to the availability of resources. He added that the Subcommittee would discuss these issues in detail at future meetings.

Transition from schools to sheltered workshops and rehabilitation centres

27. Mr Jasper TSANG said that parents would prefer their children with SEN continuing their studies in special schools rather than being transferred to sheltered workshops or other rehabilitation facilities at the age of 16 because the learning environment in the former was far better than that of the latter. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong echoed that parents of children with SEN in general preferred the interactive learning environment in special schools rather than the training environment in sheltered workshops and rehabilitation centres. He

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added that the age limit of receiving secondary education might not be an issue if there was not such a contrast in environment between the two. Mr CHEUNG also considered that the Administration could address the parents' concern by assisting PD and MH children to prepare themselves for smooth transition from schools to sheltered workshops or rehabilitation centres.

28. Referring to the visit of the Panel on Education and the Panel on Welfare Services on 6 January 2005, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong described his personal feelings about the simple processing, finishing and assembly work carried out in sheltered workshops and expressed sympathy for the monotonous livelihood of PD and MH persons in sheltered workshops and rehabilitation centres. Mr CHEUNG considered that the community should endeavour to assist children with different types of disabilities to lead a vivid and meaningful life. Since the Government provided junior and senior secondary school graduates with a number of pathways to develop their potentials and careers, children with SEN should also be provided with similar pathways after leaving schools.

29. Assistant Director (Rehabilitation and Medical Social Services), Social Welfare Department (AD(RMSS)SWD) explained that PD and MH children were arranged to attend training and develop their work habits and skills in different sheltered workshops according to their abilities, the preference of their parents, and the proximity of their residence with the workshops. Boarding places would be provided to those who lived at a long distance from the workshops. She added that on average, MH and PD children in sheltered workshops received a daily pay of about \$30.

30. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that he appreciated the efforts of SWD and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the provision of appropriate rehabilitation services for children with different types of disabilities. He, however, considered that there was room for improvement in that area and the Government should do more to enrich their lives, having regard to their shorter lifespan in general.

31. AD(RMSS)SWD responded that SWD would collaborate with the NGOs operating sheltered workshops to arrange suitable tasks and provide professional guidance to help PD and MH children develop their work habits and skills, and personal confidence in social aspects of life. NGOs were well aware that persons with different types of disabilities had their personal and social needs in life, and would organise outdoor recreational and social activities for their disabled clients on a regular basis. In particular, SWD provided financial support to NGOs to operate Gateway Clubs which organised programmes for adults and children with mental handicap to participate in leisure and recreational activities at weekends after office or school hours. These programmes provided opportunities for MH persons and children to interact with others, thereby improving their abilities and confidence in interpersonal communication and different social settings.

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32. Miss CHAN Yuen-han suggested that the Administration should explore the feasibility of providing appropriate apprenticeship schemes for children with SEN to learn and develop their work skills through on-the-job training. She described the historical development of the Apprenticeship Schemes under the Apprenticeship Ordinance which aimed at helping secondary school leavers who were less academically inclined to pursue a viable and alternative career pathway. Miss CHAN suggested that the Administration should examine whether it was feasible to apply the same principle and rationale to provide effective and systematic training for children with SEN. Subject to availability of resources, she considered that the Administration should make reference to the contract of apprenticeship registered with the Executive Director of the Vocational Training Council (VTC) and formulate policies and schemes to match with the different intelligence, interest, dexterities, personality traits and work attitudes and performance of children with SEN.

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33. CR(HWFB) responded that the three skills centres under VTC - Tuen Mun Skills Centre, Pokfulam Skills Centre and Kwun Tong Skills Centre - provided a wide range of full-time and part-time programmes for the disabled. These programmes aimed to equip the disabled with employable skills as well as independent living and social skills which would enhance their employability, and facilitate their integration into the society. Some 600 disabled persons were now studying in these three centres. Responding to the Chairman, CR(HWFB) said that the Administration would take into consideration Miss CHAN Yuen-han's suggestion in its Rehabilitation Programme Plan review.

III. Any other business

Dates of future meetings and items for discussion at the next meeting

34. The Chairman suggested and members agreed that the Subcommittee should hold monthly meetings during the months of March to June 2005. Members also agreed that the Chairman would work out the schedule of future meetings with the Clerk after the availability of members was ascertained.

[Post-meeting note : The Subcommittee subsequently decided to hold meetings on 30 March, 25 April, 30 May and 27 June 2005 respectively.]

35. The Chairman suggested that in addition to the overview of children with SEN in Hong Kong, the Subcommittee should discuss issues related to the provision of senior secondary education under the proposed "3+3+4" academic structure with the Administration and deputations at the next meeting to be schedule. Members agreed. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong added that while the discussion on the provision of senior secondary education under the proposed "3+3+4" academic structure was in progress, the Administration should also

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review the provision of boarding places as well as arrangements and related support services for children with SEN to adapt to the transition from school to adult life.

36. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 5:55 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
22 March 2005