

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)444/05-06
(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, 1 November 2005 at 10:45 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

- Members present** : Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung (Chairman)
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
- Members absent** : Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, GBS, JP
- Public Officers attending** : Mrs Betty IP TSANG Chui-hing
Principal Assistant Secretary (School Administration &
Support), Education and Manpower Bureau
- Mrs Ruth LAU
Principal Education Officer (Kowloon), Education and
Manpower Bureau
- Ms Eugenie WOO Yu-chun
Senior Specialist (Educational Psychology/ Special
Education), Education and Manpower Bureau
- Mrs Mary MA LO To-wan
Commissioner for Rehabilitation, Health, Welfare and
Food Bureau

Miss Ophelia CHAN
Assistant Director (Rehabilitation and Medical Social
Services), Social Welfare Department

Attendance by invitation : Hong Kong Special Schools Council

Dr Simon LEUNG
Chairman

Mr CHAN Kwok-kuen
Vice-Chairman

Hong Kong Council of Social Service

Mr Philip YUEN
Rehabilitation Chief Officer

Hong Kong Association for Specific Learning Disabilities

Mrs LAU LEE Man-ying
Vice-Chairman

Miss CHIU Wai-ki
Executive

The Parents' Association of Pre-School Handicapped
Children

Mrs CHUNG NG Sui-fong
Convenor, Main-Stream Education Working Group

Mrs LEE LAU Chu-lai
Vice-Chairperson

The Parents Association of Autistic Children in
Mainstream Education

Ms LAM Yuet-mei
Group Convener

Ms LEE Kit-fong
Member

Support Group on Integrated Education

Mr LAM Seung-wan
Executive Member

Ms Heidi HUI Sim-kiu
Convenor

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

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

Miss Sherman WOO
Legislative Assistant (2)2

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I. Implementation and effectiveness of the whole-school approach to integrated education

[LC Paper No. CB(2)186/05-06(01)]

Briefing by the Administration

Principal Assistant Secretary (School Administration & Support) (PAS(SAS)) briefed members on the implementation and the evaluation results of the whole-school approach to integrated education. She stressed that the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) had no intention to integrate all children with special educational needs (SEN) into mainstream schools regardless of the level of severity of the SEN and against the parent's will. PAS(SAS) explained that it had been the understanding with the Department of Health that only those who could benefit from mainstream setting would be recommended for mainstream schooling. Otherwise, children with SEN would be admitted to special schools. Parents would be briefed on their children's SEN and given the advice and choice to send their children to mainstream or special schools.

Presentation of views by deputations

Hong Kong Council of Social Service
[LC Paper No. CB(2)254/05-06(01)]

2. Mr Philip YUEN presented the views of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service as detailed in its submission. He highlighted that the Council supported

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the provision of integrated education for students with SEN, and requested the Administration to provide sufficient resources and support for schools, parents and their children with SEN in implementation at each district. The Council suggested that the Administration should review the provision and the use of the additional resources to schools with enrolment of students with SEN under the new funding mode. In addition, EMB should provide comprehensive training and support to teachers, reinforce coordination of assessment services and parent education on the needs of their children with SEN, and promote an inclusive culture and ethos in schools to facilitate implementation of the whole-school approach to integrated education. He added that the Administration should establish a steering committee to oversee the implementation of integrated education in mainstream schools.

Hong Kong Special Schools Council
[LC Paper No. CB(2)249/05-06(01)]

3. Dr Simon LEUNG said that he fully supported implementation of integrated education and agreed that children with SEN, if appropriate, should be integrated into mainstream schools as soon as possible. Dr LEUNG, however, considered that the provision of integrated education without adequate and competent support was tantamount to dumping these children and it was irresponsible to do so. He pointed out that there were different views on the appropriate level of resources and support for implementation of integrated education. He anticipated that various stakeholders, including schools, parents and the Administration, would continue to discuss and exchange views on the matter.

4. Mr CHAN Kwok-kuen supplemented that the Hong Kong Special Schools Council supported the adoption of the whole-school approach to implement integrated education. He highlighted that the Council suggested that the Administration should review policies on provision of special education, and the role and functions of special schools and mainstream schools with a view to enhancing effective coordination of resources for the implementation of integrated education. In particular, EMB should make better use of the professional resources in special schools and arrange mandatory and pragmatic training for serving teachers, such as classroom management, to facilitate implementation of integrated education in the long term.

Hong Kong Association for Specific Learning Disabilities
[LC Paper No. CB(2)267/05-06(01)]

5. Miss CHIU Wai-ki presented the views of the Hong Kong Association for Specific Learning Disabilities as detailed in the submission. She highlighted that the Association suggested that the Administration should review the policy, objectives and timetable for implementation of the whole-school approach to integrated education and provide sufficient resources and support to schools and

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teachers. In addition, EMB should establish mechanisms for the transfer of the academic records of students with SEN from primary to secondary schools, and from secondary schools to tertiary institutions to facilitate continuous and consistent provision of individualised education programmes for students with SEN.

6. Citing the experience of her son, Mrs LAU LI Man-ying said that students with specific learning disabilities had been limited in their choice of subjects as schools wished to achieve better overall performance in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination. She stressed that students with specific learning disabilities were intellectually capable as other students and should enjoy equal right in taking different subjects when sitting for public examinations. Mrs LAU requested the Administration to extend the new funding mode to cover secondary schools and provide additional resources and support to Direct Subsidy Scheme schools in enrolment of students with SEN.

The Parents Association of Autistic Children in Mainstream Education
[LC Paper No. CB(2)186/05-06(02)]

7. Ms LAM Yuet-mei and Ms LEE Kit-fong presented the views of the Parents Association of Autistic Children in Mainstream Education as detailed in the submission. They considered that because of their lack of training, teachers did not have adequate understanding of the behavioral characteristics of autistic children. According to Ms LAM, some students with SEN in mainstream schools were advised not to participate in the Basic Competency Assessments. These students were not allowed to participate in extra-curricular activities unless they were accompanied by their parents. They sometimes would not be able to participate in normal school activities when there were visitors. Ms LAM and Ms LEE highlighted that the Association supported the adoption of the whole-school approach to implementation of integrated education. They requested the Administration to provide clear guidelines and to enforce implementation of the approach in mainstream schools.

The Parents' Association of Pre-School Handicapped Children
[LC Paper No. CB(2)186/05-06(02)]

8. Mrs CHUNG NG Sui-fong presented the views of the Parents' Association of Pre-School Handicapped Children as detailed in the joint submission. She described cases to illustrate that parents and their children with SEN who were enrolled in mainstream schools had suffered a lot under the existing arrangements of school placement. Mrs CHUNG considered that some of the children with SEN for various reasons were unsuitable for learning through integrated education. She urged the Administration to review the current arrangements for school placement with a view to ensuring that children with varying degrees of SEN would be allocated to appropriate mainstream or special schools in the light of their abilities and needs, and their family

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circumstances. She also suggested that the Administration should review the level of resources and support for schools and teachers to implement integrated education in mainstream schools.

*Support Group on Integrated Education
[LC Paper No. CB(2)186/05-06(03)]*

9. Ms Heidi HUI and Mr LAM Seung-wan presented the views of the Support Group on Integrated Education as detailed in the submission. Ms HUI highlighted that the Administration should review the appropriate level of resources allocation, support and supervision for implementation of integrated education in mainstream schools. Mr LAM pointed out that teachers were already exhausted with the implementation of various educational reform initiatives and should not be expected to solely shoulder the responsibility of enhancing effectiveness of integrated education. He highlighted the importance of effective coordination of efforts among stakeholders in enhancing the effectiveness of the whole-school approach to integrated education. Mr LAM suggested that to improve the implementation of integrated education, the Administration should draw reference from the pilot scheme on small class teaching and develop exemplary schools for other schools to follow. He further suggested that a steering committee should be established to provide a forum for various stakeholders to put forward their views and to monitor the implementation of integrated education.

Discussion

The new funding mode

10. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed concern that despite the efforts of the Administration, schools, teachers and parents, the results of implementing integrated education in mainstream schools had not been encouraging. Referring to the joint submission from three parent associations [LC Paper No. CB(2)186/05-06(02)], he said that without sufficient resources and support to schools, and adequate supervision, implementation of integrated education under the new funding mode had become a nightmare to teachers, parents and students with SEN. Mr CHEUNG said that it would be very sad if students with SEN were left unattended in classes and wasting their time in mainstream schools. He asked how the Administration would respond to the concerns of parents and protect students with SEN from being bullied in schools.

11. Senior Specialist (Education Psychologist/Special Education) (SS(EP/SE)) responded that the Administration shared the concern that students with SEN should not be left unattended in the regular class. Hence it was imminent that schools having just one to two students with SEN should also adopt the whole-school approach, so that these students were not left unattended. Through the new funding mode, EMB encouraged schools to adopt the

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whole-school approach to cater for students' SEN. The number of participating primary schools had therefore increased from 25 in 2003-04 school year to 240 in 2005-06 school year and it had reflected the popularity of the new funding mode to schools in enrolment of students with SEN. In addition, the Administration had received favourable feedback from teachers and parents on the effectiveness of the whole-school approach to integrated education through surveys and sharing-sessions.

12. PAS(SAS) supplemented that the new funding mode were intended to bridge the service gap in those schools admitting students below the threshold for entitlement of additional resources under the Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme (IRTP) or the Integrated Education Programme (IE Programme). She pointed out that apart from the 240 primary schools which had joined the new funding mode, some 400 primary schools were funded under IRTP.

13. On provision of support to schools, PAS(SAS) pointed out that educational psychologists, inspectors and audiologists and school development officers of EMB visited schools regularly to provide professional support for the teachers, such as participating in the meetings of the Students Support Team and the Individualised Education Plans Committee in schools. In addition, EMB had made use of the Internet to provide a wide range of resource materials for schools such as resource kits, training packages, and leaflets to support students with various types of SEN, as well as guidelines on principles and strategies of teaching and learning, homework design and school-based assessment accommodation.

14. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong shared the view of parents that the additional resources allocated under the new funding mode for the provision of integrated education was insufficient. He pointed out that under the new funding mode, schools were provided with an additional \$10,000 for enrolment of every student with SEN. This meant that the additional resources allocated to a school with less than 20 students with SEN was insufficient for the employment of a resource teacher, let alone the employment of other professionals such as educational psychologist and physiotherapist. Mr CHEUNG also echoed the concerns expressed by some parents that it was difficult to ascertain whether the additional resources were used for the provision of support to students with SEN.

15. The Chairman pointed out that under IRTP, a primary school in enrolment of 15 or more students with SEN was provided with an additional resource teacher. He asked whether the new funding mode was proposed with a view to achieving efficiency savings in the 2003-04 school year.

16. PAS(SAS) responded that instead of reducing cost, additional resources had been re-deployed from EMB's expenditure budget for the implementation of the new funding mode. She pointed out that in the past, schools with number of students with SEN above the threshold would be funded through IRTP but those

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with number below the threshold would not have any additional resources. The new funding mode aimed at bridging the service gap through redeployment of existing provision on a per capita basis. If the total provision remained at the existing level, she acknowledged that schools receiving IRTP support would find the new funding mode a reduction in resource. PAS(SAS) pointed out that the ultimate aim was to enhance the capacity of all schools in catering for student diversity, so that all teachers were ready to provide early intervention to students with varying degrees of learning difficulties in the long term. At present, schools under IRTP could choose to receive additional resources under IRTP or the new funding mode.

17. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong reiterated that the new funding model fell short of the expectation of parents and the community as a whole. He considered that the Administration should review the provision of additional resources under the new funding mode and ensure the proper use of the funds on provision of integrated education to students with SEN.

18. PAS(SAS) explained that EMB would ensure that the additional resources would be used to support students with SEN in learning. She pointed out that some teaching and learning activities were organised to enhance interactions and collaborations among students with SEN and other students with a view to promoting inclusive school culture. It would be difficult to draw a clear line to ascertain whether the additional resources were used exclusively for students with SEN. PAS(SAS) added that EMB organised experience-sharing sessions for schools under the new funding mode to exchange views on the use of the additional resources for implementation of integrated education in June/July each year. Many schools indicated that they had used the additional resources to procure professional services from non-governmental organisations to support students with SEN in learning and there had been satisfactory results.

19. Miss CHAN Yuen-han said that members in general supported the direction of integrated education for students with SEN, but considered that the additional resources and support for schools under the new funding mode were insufficient. She suggested that the Administration should draw reference from the experiences of advanced countries and provide appropriate support to schools to ensure effective implementation of integrated education. Miss CHAN also called upon fellow members to bring the matter up with the Financial Secretary at their impending meetings to discuss the 2006 financial budget. She said that the Administration had allocated substantial resources for the provision of secondary education and pre-vocational training for various age groups such as Project Yi Jin, and should do the same to support students with SEN in learning.

20. The Chairman remarked that EMB which did not involve in actual school operation might not appreciate schools' difficulties in implementing integrated education under the new funding mode. At the Chairman's invitation, Mr LAM

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Seung-wan cited the case of a government school in Shatin to illustrate that schools under IRTP or IE Programme with enrolment of 15 and five to eight students with SEN respectively were provided with an additional resource teacher. For a school with only a few students with SEN, the additional provision of \$10,000 for each student with SEN under the new funding mode was apparently insufficient for employing a resource teacher.

21. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung asked the Administration to explain how a principal of a school in enrolment of four students with SEN could make effective use of the additional provision of \$40,000 to help them in learning.

22. PAS(SAS) responded that a school with seven students with SEN under the new funding mode had used the \$70,000 allocation to procure professional services offered by a non-governmental organisation, which included the service of psychologists and speech therapists and workshops for teachers on skills in handling students with SEN, etc.

23. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung questioned how schools with only a few students with SEN could procure the necessary professional services and support from non-governmental organisations. He pointed out that students with SEN were learning in different classes, and a teacher would not have sufficient time to take care of students with SEN in a class. He considered the adoption of small class teaching a practical approach to support students with SEN in learning.

24. PAS(SAS) responded that a large majority of schools under the new funding mode had enrolled at least 10-odd students with SEN. Schools with a few students with SEN might employ part-time staff or combine use with other grants such as the Capacity Enhancement Grant to procure the necessary professional and support services, or to employ a teaching assistant to assist students with SEN in learning.

25. Miss CHAN Yuen-han remarked that given the large class size and their heavy workload, teachers simply did not have spare capacity to take care of the individual needs of students with SEN in classes, even though they had the passion to help these students. She also queried whether it would be effective to simply procure services from non-governmental organisations to support schools in the implementation of integrated education.

26. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that the Administration had returned unspent funds of \$3.3 billion and \$3.8 billion in education to the Treasury in the 2003-04 and 2004-05 financial years respectively. He held a strong view that EMB should retain the unspent funds in education by appropriate means to support students with SEN in learning and other initiatives. He suggested members to raise the issue with the Financial Secretary.

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Professional development for teachers and support for schools

27. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that while parents had urged the Administration to provide teachers with more training in teaching students with SEN, principals were concerned that teachers had already been overburdened with their heavy workload and the need to attend development programmes arising from the implementation of the education reform. Referring to paragraph 9(a) of the Administration's paper, he pointed out that only 532 teachers had completed the 120-hour Professional Development Course on Catering for Student Diversity and 166 teachers had completed the 30-hour Introductory Course on Integrated Education in the 2004-05 school year. Mr CHEUNG considered that this could hardly meet parents' expectation that all serving teachers should be trained on the needs of students with SEN in the short term. He asked how the Administration would tackle the problem. Miss CHAN Yuen-han had a similar concern. She said that schools were unable to arrange their teachers to receive further training if there were no sufficient resources and support.

28. PAS(SAS) responded that the Administration considered it unrealistic to require all serving teachers to complete the specific training on provision of integrated education in the short term. The Administration considered it more appropriate to adopt the "train the trainer" approach at the present stage so that at least one teacher in each school admitting students with SEN had attended the 120-hour Course on SEN. These "seed teachers" were expected to play an advisory role to other teachers in support of students with SEN in learning. She pointed out that the most effective way to empower teachers in handling students with SEN was to provide teachers with opportunities to exchange views and share experiences with peers in other schools admitting students with different types of SEN and to have some hands-on experience. PAS(SAS) stressed that the Administration was well aware of the existing workload of teachers. EMB would explore feasible relief measures, such as the provision of supply teachers, to facilitate schools in releasing their teachers to attend the structured courses on integration education conducted by the tertiary institutions.

29. PAS(SAS) further said that apart from professional training for teachers, the Administration was implementing and exploring other alternatives to enhance support for schools on implementation of integrated education. In addition to the two special schools that had been offering support to other schools under the Scheme of Professional Development Schools, the Administration had launched a two-year School Partnership Scheme in the 2005-06 school year to provide additional funding for some mainstream and special schools to share their experiences and practices with other mainstream schools in catering for SEN.

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School placement for students with SEN

30. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong stressed that students with SEN should be placed in mainstream or special schools in the light of their abilities, needs and family circumstances. He urged the Administration to review the school placement mechanism with a view to allowing students with SEN to switch from mainstream schools to special schools as soon as they found difficulty in learning in mainstream schools. In particular, measures must be taken to ensure that no students with SEN would be bullied in schools.

31. PAS(SAS) responded that EMB had organised individual or group briefings for parents to make more informed decision on schooling for their children with SEN. In the past two years, EMB had encouraged special schools and mainstream schools to organise extra-curricular activities and visits for parents and their children with SEN to observe the teaching and learning activities in both types of schools, and subsequently make their choices of schooling in the light of their needs.

Performance of students with SEN

32. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong noted that according to paragraph 7 of the Administration's paper, around 91.4%, 92.8% and 96.8% of the 501 students with SEN in mainstream schools had showed stable performance or improvement in overall academic performance, learning motivation and social adjustment respectively. He considered that grouping students with stable performance and improvement together had failed to provide a clear picture on the performance of students and the effectiveness of integrated education.

33. PAS(SAS) responded that schools were required to conduct an annual self-evaluation survey, including evaluation on the academic performance and social adjustment of students with SEN, and reported their findings to EMB. In addition, EMB staff would observe the learning progress of individual students with SEN during school visits. She added that apart from reporting their problems to schools, parents might also approach EMB for assistance in support of students with SEN in learning.

34. Principal Education Officer (Kowloon) supplemented that around 10% and 30-40% of the 501 students with SEN as reported by schools had shown substantial and moderate improvements respectively in overall academic performance, learning motivation, social adjustment and self-esteem. About 40% of the students showed stable performance in the four areas of assessment. She added that around 30% of the 501 students were mentally handicapped and their improvement in the four areas of assessment was relatively less significant.

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Review on integrated education and establishment of a steering committee

35. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that it was unusual for some deputations to request the Administration to slow down the pace of implementing integrated education. He considered that it would be more appropriate to consolidate the implementation of integrated education at the present stage. Mr CHEUNG further said that he had reservations about the suggestion of conducting a comprehensive review on integrated education, as suggested by a deputation, because any comprehensive review would often result in introducing new measures and teachers and parents would need time to adapt. Miss CHAN Yuen-han expressed a similar view. She considered that without the provision of sufficient resources, the Administration should not introduce further measures on implementation of integration at this stage.

36. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong asked how the Administration would respond to the request of deputations on the establishment of a steering committee to monitor the implementation of integrated education in mainstream schools. He also asked why the Administration had dissolved the former steering committee established for the two-year pilot project on integrated education.

37. PAS(SAS) responded that the former steering committee was established to steer the implementation of the two-year pilot project on integrated education launched in September 1997, and was dissolved after the completion of the pilot project. Under the new funding mode, EMB had established an informal task group on implementation of integrated education consisting of representatives from the mainstream and special school sectors, the social welfare sector including the Social Welfare Department, the health sector, and parent organisations. The task group had held a meeting and agreed to meet regularly in the future.

38. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide the terms of reference of the working group after the meeting. He stressed that the task group should include parent representatives and be empowered to monitor the implementation of integrated education in schools. In response, PAS(SAS) agreed to review the role and functions of the task group in the light of the views of members and deputations, and provide its terms of reference after the meeting.

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Follow-up

39. Members agreed to follow up discussion of the subject at the next meeting. Miss CHAN Yuen-han suggested that the Subcommittee should invite representatives from the secondary school and vocational training sectors to join the discussion at the next meeting. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong requested the Administration to provide a written response to the views and concerns of members and deputations expressed at the meeting. The Chairman added that the Administration should include the following in its written response –

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- (a) the role and functions of a formally established working group composed of key stakeholders with power and authority to monitor the implementation of integrated education;
- (b) existing assessment arrangements of students with SEN participating in Basic Competence Assessments and the allegation that some teachers had persuaded or encouraged students with SEN to refrain from participating in the Basic Competency Assessments and public examinations;
- (c) relaxation of the maximum provision of \$550,000 per annum for a school in enrolment of students with SEN under the new funding mode; and
- (d) implementation of integrated education by way of small class teaching.

II. Any other business

40. Members agreed that the next meeting would be held on Friday, 25 November 2005 at 10:45am. Members also agreed that the Subcommittee would hold regular meetings on the third Friday of each month from December 2005 to June 2006 at 10:45 am

41. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:00 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
24 November 2005