

立法會

Legislative Council

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(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

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Panel on Education

**Minutes of special meeting
held on Thursday, 20 January 2005 at 11:45 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present	: Dr Hon YEUNG Sum (Chairman) Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP (Deputy Chairman) Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-yee, GBS, JP 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 Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, SBS, JP Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
Members attending	: Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Member absent	: Hon MA Lik, JP
Public Officers attending	: Professor Arthur K C LI, GBS, JP Secretary for Education and Manpower Mrs Fanny LAW, GBS, JP Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower

Mr M Y CHENG, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (3)

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. Briefing by the Secretary for Education and Manpower on the Chief Executive's Policy Address 2005

[LC Paper No. CB(2)660/04-05(01), The 2005 Policy Address booklet entitled "Working Together for Economic Development and Social Harmony" and The 2005 Policy Address booklet on Policy Agenda]

Initiatives in education

At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM) briefed members on the new initiatives in the 2005 Policy Address and the new and on-going initiatives in the 2005 Policy Agenda which fell under the purview of the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) as detailed in the Administration's paper.

Improving teacher-to-class ratio in public sector primary schools

2. Referring to paragraph 8 of the Administration's paper, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong asked whether and how bi-sessional primary schools, like whole-day primary schools, with 12 or more classes would be provided with additional resources initially for three years from the 2005-06 school year to improve teacher-to-class ratio with a view to reducing teachers' workload and implementing specialised teaching.

3. SEM responded that like whole-day primary schools, bi-sessional primary schools would also be provided with additional resources to reduce teachers' workload and implement specialised teaching. Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower (PSEM) supplemented that the wording in paragraph 8 of the Administration's paper followed the proposal in the Education Commission Report No.5 which recommended improving teacher-to-class ratio in whole-day primary schools from 1.4:1 to 1.5:1. However, EMB had taken into consideration the strong views of the primary school sector and would provide additional resources to bi-sessional schools on the basis of improving their teacher-to-class ratio from 1.3:1 to 1.4:1. She

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added that EMB would notify the bi-sessional schools of the policy decision shortly.

4. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed appreciation that EMB had listened to the views of the primary school sector and would provide additional resources for bi-sessional schools to implement specialised teaching. He added that the school heads associations in the 18 districts considered it fair and reasonable to do so.

5. Mr Tommy CHEUNG declared interest as a manager of a Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) school. He asked whether primary schools under the DSS Scheme would also be provided with additional resources to reduce teachers' workload and implement specialised teaching. SEM responded in the affirmative.

6. Ms Audrey EU pointed out that while paragraph 58 of the Chief Executive Policy Address stated that Hong Kong had a dedicated and zealous teaching force which had toiled without complaint for the benefit of students and contributed enormously to the promotion of education reforms, some local researches had found that serving teachers were working under extreme pressure and many had displayed symptoms of emotional disturbances. She asked whether the proposed improvement in teacher-to-class ratio and the provision of school-based professional support to schools and teachers were sufficient in terms of reducing teachers' workload and motivating the workforce. She also asked whether EMB would introduce other measures to improve the situation.

7. SEM responded that EMB had provided additional resources to support schools and teachers in the implementation of the education reform and other initiatives within budgetary constraints. He pointed out that there were different ways to reduce teachers' workload, such as improving the teacher-to-class ratio to reduce teachers' workload and facilitate implementation of specialised teaching. In addition, EMB would allow flexibility for schools to use the additional resources in the light of students' learning needs and teachers' development needs.

8. Ms Audrey EU considered that the proposed 33% reduction in recurrent funding for the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) in the 2005-08 triennium would create an impression among the general public that the Administration did not value teacher education. She asked how the Administration would rectify the public perception of the importance of teacher education. She also considered that the Administration should work out strategies to attract high calibre graduates to join the teaching profession and retain serving teachers in the workforce.

9. SEM explained that the reduction in funding for HKIEd was proposed

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on the basis of a substantial decline in student population and the demand for upgrading programmes for serving teachers. The Administration attached great importance to teacher education and had allocated \$550 million to provide school-based professional support for teachers in order to facilitate implementation of the education reform. In addition, the Administration had set aside substantial funds for the provision of professional development programmes for teachers and the support measures to facilitate implementation of the proposed new academic structure for senior secondary education and higher education.

10. SEM considered that HKIEd should aim at obtaining new resources to provide appropriate development and upgrading programmes for serving teachers in support of the education and curriculum reform. The Administration had confidence that as the main provider in teacher education, HKIEd would be able to secure additional funding by submitting quality and cost-effective proposal for such development programmes.

11. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung asked whether secondary schools would also be provided with additional resources to improve teacher-to-class ratio and hence reduce teachers' workload.

12. SEM responded that specialised teaching was already implemented in public sector secondary schools. He reiterated that substantial fund had been set aside for implementation of the proposed new academic structure for senior secondary education. The Administration would continue to solicit the views of the workforce on ways to enhance teachers' professional development and reduce unnecessary workload.

Helping the Poor and Needy

13. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed support for the provision of school-based after-school learning and other support services for needy children. He requested the Administration to elaborate on the use of the recurrent allocation of \$75 million for that purpose.

14. SEM responded that at present, the Government provided a range of subvented after-school learning and related activities as well as different forms of student financial assistance to needy children. The additional allocation of \$75 million would be used to enable schools to strengthen co-operation with youth organisations at district level to provide school-based after-school learning support and extra-curricular activities as appropriate to those in need most. In the next few months, EMB would consult schools and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the formulation of the eligibility criteria for needy students, and the types of after-school learning support and extra-curricular activities which would not overlap with existing services provided by NGOs for implementation from the 2005 summer holidays.

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15. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung asked whether part of the \$75 million recurrent allocation could be used to support the provision of more remedial classes for academically low achievers in secondary schools, in particular secondary one (S1) to secondary three (S3) students. He pointed out that existing after-school remedial learning support offered by NGOs were mainly targeted at primary school students. He pointed out that remedial classes were normally conducted in smaller size to enhance teaching and learning interactions between teachers and students. He considered that the Administration should allocate resources for secondary schools to operate more remedial classes for S1 – S3 students.

16. SEM responded that EMB would aim at using the recurrent allocation of \$75 million to provide needy students, both primary and secondary, with after-school remedial learning support and activities conducive to their whole-person development. EMB would consult schools and NGOs to avoid duplication with existing programmes and services for children of low-income families.

17. PSEM supplemented that secondary schools with a large enrolment of low academic achievers were provided with additional resources to operate remedial classes for students. She pointed out that further allocation of remedial classes in secondary schools should be considered in the light of the competing priorities in education. She added that a review of the cost-effectiveness of remedial classes in primary schools a couple of years ago was not encouraging.

18. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong suggested that the Administration should carefully set the eligibility criteria for needy children/low-income families to avoid unnecessary disputes over the use of the \$75 million recurrent allocation. Dr Fernando CHEUNG suggested that EMB should consider providing out-reaching services to needy children who did not wish to participate in support programmes and activities conducted in schools, youth centres and locations in other districts. Dr CHEUNG also requested the Administration to review the eligibility criteria for various student financial assistance schemes as soon as practicable. SEM said that the Administration would consider their views and suggestions.

Reducing inter-generational poverty through education for children of ethnic minorities

19. Mr Jasper TSANG expressed concern about the serious problem of inter-generational poverty among families of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. He pointed out that families of some ethnic minorities from South-East Asian countries were mostly of low socio-economic status and most of their children could not learn through Chinese or English. As vulnerable groups in the

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community, a large majority of these ethnic minority children would terminate their school education at junior secondary levels, and some of them went astray and became gang members. Mr TSANG considered that the current policy on provision of integrated education for children of ethnic minorities could not improve the situation because they mainly came from low-income families and were disadvantaged in terms of support from parents. He asked how the Administration would assist these children in pursuit of education and development of skills and abilities to lead a normal and fruitful life.

20. SEM responded that poverty of families of ethnic minorities was a complicated problem which could only be resolved through a holistic package of policies and measures. The Administration would continue to collaborate with NGOs and educational institutions in the provision of education support services for children of ethnic minorities. In particular, the Vocational Training Council had agreed to offer career-oriented programmes suitable for children of ethnic minorities who could learn through English. SEM also explained that starting from the 2004-05 school year, children of ethnic minorities were provided with a choice to attend mainstream schools with or without a large intake of children of ethnic minorities. He considered that the results of the provision of integrated education for children of ethnic minorities should be assessed over a suitable length of time.

21. Mr Jasper TSANG said that he doubted how many ethnic minority children could be enrolled in mainstream schools with a reputable history through the provision of integrated education. He pointed out that owing to language barrier and in the absence of active bodies representing ethnic minorities, it was difficult to solicit the views of the ethnic minorities on educational policies and initiatives affecting their children. Mr TSANG suggested that the Administration should conduct a detailed study on the issue and allocate sufficient resources to assist children of ethnic minorities to receive education. The Chairman shared the concern of Mr Jasper TSANG. He requested the Administration to provide periodic reports on the issue for members' information.

Enlightened people with a rich culture through admission of non-local students

22. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed concern about the impact of the proposal to increase enrolment of non-local students in University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions on local students as there were already insufficient places for local students. He considered that given the reduction of recurrent funding and competition for enrolment of non-local students, institutions might shift the emphasis on provision of higher education from academically-based to commercially-driven.

23. SEM responded that enrolment of non-local students in degree or above programmes in UGC-funded institutions was currently restricted to not more

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than 4% of the student intake. The Administration intended to allow institutions to increase non-local student intake to around 10%, on condition that the educational opportunities of local students must be fully taken into account and necessary immigration control had to be in place to guard against abuse. He pointed out that institutions would be allowed to set tuition fees for non-local students on the basis of the marginal student unit costs of the programmes concerned. Based on such calculation, institutions estimated that the annual tuition fees for non-local students would be around \$60,000 or above.

24. Dr Fernando CHEUNG considered that a 10% enrolment of non-local students was very high and would affect internal distribution of institutional resources for local students. He pointed out that some institutions were considering the provision of financial assistance such as award of scholarship to non-local students from the Mainland to pursue higher education in Hong Kong, and the medium of instruction in programmes with a large intake of Mainland students might switch to Putongha. He suggested that EMB should consult the views of staff and students in the course of its pursuit for Hong Kong becoming the regional education hub.

25. SEM explained that at present, institutions were allowed to recruit not more than 4% non-local students of the 14 500 first-year-first-degree places which were subsidised by public funds. The proposed 6% increase of places for admission of non-local students on top of the 4% of the 14 500 places would not be publicly funded. UGC-funded Institutions suggested that non-local students who were admitted by way of the additional places for non-local intake should bear the marginal costs incurred, and estimated that the marginal cost of an additional place on top of the publicly-funded 14 500 places was at least \$60,000 a year. Apart from this, institutions were also considering whether all non-local students in the same programme of study should pay the same level of tuition fee.

26. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed reservations about the estimate of \$60,000 for the marginal cost of providing an additional undergraduate place. SEM explained that the proposed increase in admission of non-local students on top of the 14 500 places would not increase the overall staff and operational costs, and the tuition fee of at least \$60,000 a year should suffice to recover the marginal costs incurred for the provision of an additional place.

27. Mr Tommy CHEUNG expressed support for the admission of non-local students into UGC-funded institutions to enrich ethnic and cultural diversity in UGC-funded institutions and the community. He agreed that non-local students could help broaden the perspectives of local students and create a more English-rich learning environment for local students. He considered it beneficial to extend the enrolment of non-local students to public sector secondary schools. Mr CHEUNG asked whether the Administration had

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formulated a timetable for admission of non-local students in public sector schools.

28. SEM responded that as Hong Kong's education services enjoyed high professional standards, the Administration considered that apart from catering for the needs of local students, both the school and higher education sector could be further developed to serve students from the Mainland and other Asian countries. SEM said that school heads in general had expressed support for the formulation of a policy on admission of non-local students in public sector schools. EMB was now advertising the quality of school education in Hong Kong and liaising with the relevant authorities in the Mainland and other Asian countries on the necessary arrangements for non-local students to come to Hong Kong to study in different types of programmes in different institutions and schools.

29. Ms Audrey EU observed that many non-local students in UGC-funded institution came from the Mainland. She asked whether the composition of the existing 4% non-local student intake was in line with the policy objective to add a greater international dimension to the higher education sector.

30. SEM responded that there were a few thousand non-local students studying in UGC-funded institutions under various student exchange programmes between UGC-funded institutions and overseas institutions. He acknowledged that Mainland students would constitute the majority of the proposed 6% increase of non-local student intake. He explained that institutions would enrol non-local students with proven academic attainments and would continue to organise student exchange programmes with overseas institutions to enhance cultural exchanges within university campuses.

31. Ms Audrey EU remarked that non-local students under various student exchange programmes should not be counted towards the quota of non-local students. She considered that EMB should collaborate with UGC and institutions to further facilitate internationalisation through the proposed increase in admission of non-local students.

32. Mr Patrick LAU expressed support for increasing the percentage of non-local intake to around 10% in UGC-funded institutions. He, however, expressed concern about the provision of sufficient student hostel places to cater for the accommodation needs of non-local students. He pointed out that non-local students might live in student hostels throughout their studies in institutions, which would mean a four-year occupation of hostel places under the new academic structure for higher education.

33. SEM responded that the policy objective was to provide each undergraduate with at least one-year accommodation in university campus. He shared Mr Patrick LAU's view that when four-year degree programmes

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came into operation, the demand for student hostel places in university campus would increase. He added that UGC-funded institutions would review their space requirements and draw up their campus development plans accordingly.

34. Mr Patrick LAU asked whether increasing admission of non-local students was proposed in the light of a long-term policy to commercialise the provision of higher education in Hong Kong. SEM replied that the Administration had no intention to commercialise the provision of higher education by way of enlarging non-local student intakes in UGC-funded institutions. The Administration anticipated that the proposed increase in admission of non-local students would bring educational, cultural and economic benefits to Hong Kong, which would help Hong Kong become the regional education hub in the longer term.

Continuing education for junior secondary school leavers

35. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that under the policy on provision of nine-year free education, students who were less academically inclined would have to discontinue their secondary studies at the age of 16 and engage in employment. He asked whether the Government would allocate resources for these young adolescents to pursue continuing education in the long term. Referring to the provision of career-oriented studies under the proposed new senior secondary curriculum, he requested the Administration to establish pathways for junior secondary school leavers to pursue continuing education in accordance with their personal needs. He also asked whether the Administration would consider providing 12-year free education for all children of the appropriate ages.

36. SEM responded that at present, there were sufficient secondary four (S4) places in public sector secondary schools for S3 students to proceed with their studies. Alternatively, junior secondary school leavers who were less academically inclined might apply for enrolment in vocational training programmes offered by Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education and other providers. The Government was subsidising 85% of the average unit cost for senior secondary education and did not consider that there was a need to provide 12-year free education at this stage.

Whole-day primary schooling

37. Mr Patrick LAU asked about the arrangements for full implementation of whole-day primary schooling. SEM responded that subject to support of the Panel and the approval of funding by the Finance Committee on the construction of new school premises, the Administration aimed to achieve full implementation of whole-day primary schooling in the 2007-08 school year.

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National Education

38. Mr WONG Kwok-hing considered that EMB should endeavour to promote students' understanding of China and arouse their awareness of their national identity through implementation of national education in primary and secondary schools. He asked whether the Administration had required government and aided schools to display national flag and work out a timetable for implementation of policies and measures to enhance national education in the school sector. He pointed out that some international schools displayed the national flags of their respective countries. He considered that aided schools should display national flag.

39. SEM responded that the Administration attached great importance to national education and had collaborated with local communities in enhancing national education such as the provision of funding for the establishment of the National Education Centre in January 2005. He pointed out that EMB had issued a circular and guidelines on display of national flag for the reference of aided and private schools in 1998, and approval had been given for Government schools to display national flag on the New Year's Day (1 January), the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Establishment Day (1 July), and the National Day (1 October). The Administration had encouraged aided and private schools to display national flag on the above days, and many aided schools had indeed followed the guidelines on display of national flag. He, however, pointed out that aided schools and private schools were operated by school sponsoring bodies of different background or with different religious beliefs.

Consultation with stakeholders

40. Dr Fernando CHEUNG pointed out that the recommendations of the Higher Education Review were controversial and had in effect forced UGC-funded institutions to develop programmes along the line of market differentiation, which might deviate from their specific roles and missions in the higher education sector. He considered that the Administration should provide staff and students with opportunities to express their views on the future development of higher education in Hong Kong.

41. Miss CHAN Yuen-han said that she had discussed with some school heads and teachers as well as staff and students of HKIEd and was given the impression that the Administration had not consulted teachers extensively on the implementation of the education reforms and the staff and students on reduction of funding for HKIEd in the 2005-08 triennium. She considered that EMB should respect and consult the views of the stakeholders concerned.

42. SEM responded that he could not agree with Miss CHAN's remark. In fact, EMB had conducted extensive consultations with the stakeholders before

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the implementation of the education reform and related educational initiatives. He highlighted that EMB had held series of meetings with school heads and teachers, and parents on the proposed new academic structure for senior secondary education and higher education. He considered it unfair to allege that EMB had not consulted the teaching profession before the introduction of education reforms, and staff and students of HKIEd before proposing the reduction of recurrent funding in the 2005-08 triennium.

43. Miss CHAN Yuen-han remarked that according to feedback from teachers, EMB had conducted consultations in the form of large-scale seminars and workshops for teachers and other stakeholders before the introduction of the reform initiatives. Many teachers considered such mode of consultation inadequate. They also held the view that EMB was inclined to listen to the supportive views and ignore the dissonant views of participants expressed at these seminars and workshops.

Increasing Employment

44. Ms LI Fung-ying asked how the Administration would alleviate the unemployment problem, given the estimate of the manpower projection study conducted in 2003 that by 2007 the workforce would face a shortage of over 100 000 well-educated persons but a possible excess of 230 000 workers with relatively low educational attainment. SEM responded that he would elaborate on the Administration's measures to promote employment at the meeting of the Panel on Manpower held on the same day. Ms LI agreed.

II. Any other business

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

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
20 May 2005