

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1029/06-07
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 8 January 2007, at 4:30 pm
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

- Members present** : Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon SIN Chung-kai, JP
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, SBS, JP
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
- Members absent** : Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon MA Lik, GBS, JP
- Public Officers attending** : Item IV

Mr Raymond WONG
Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower

Mr Chris WARDLAW
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (5)

Dr Catherine CHAN
Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum Development),
Education and Manpower Bureau

Mr CHAN Pui-tin
Chief Curriculum Development Officer (Gifted
Education), Education and Manpower Bureau

Item V

Ms Bernadette LINN
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (2)

Dr Catherine CHAN
Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum Development),
Education and Manpower Bureau

Mr Edwin TSUI
Principal Education Officer (School-based Support
Services), Education and Manpower Bureau

Mr CHENG Man-leung
Senior Curriculum Development Officer (Chinese)³,
Education and Manpower Bureau

Item VI

Mrs Betty FUNG, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education & Manpower (1)

Miss Charmaine LEE
Principal Assistant Secretary (Higher Education),
Education and Manpower Bureau

Dr HU Fai-chung
Vice President (Administration), Hong Kong Shue Yan
University

Ms Andrea HOPE
Associate Academic Vice-President, Hong Kong Shue
Yan University

Clerk in attendance : Miss Odelia LEUNG
Chief Council Secretary (2)⁶

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

Miss Carmen HO
Legislative Assistant (2)6

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I. Confirmation of minutes

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)758/06-07 and CB(2)759/06-07]

The minutes of the meetings held on 21 November and 11 December 2006 were confirmed.

II. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting

2. Members noted the following papers issued since the last meeting -

- (a) joint letter dated 11 December 2006 from two native English-speaking teachers (NETs), Mr Craig BOSWELL and Ms LEE Weston [LC Paper No. CB(2)692/06-07(01)];
- (b) information paper provided by the Administration concerning a proposal to construct a private independent school (secondary-cum-primary) at Caldecott Road, Sham Shui Po [LC Paper No. CB(2)724/06-07(01)];
- (c) information paper provided by the Administration concerning a proposal to construct a 24-classroom primary school in Sham Tseng, Tsuen Wan [LC Paper No. CB(2)724/06-07(02)];
- (d) information note provided by the Administration on Early Retirement Scheme for Aided Primary School Teachers [LC Paper No. CB(2)782/06-07(01)]; and
- (e) information note provided by the Administration on Early Retirement Scheme for Aided Secondary School Teachers [LC Paper No. CB(2)783/06-07(01)].

3. Referring to the joint letter from two NETs, the Chairman suggested that the Panel should refer the letter to the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) for a written response. The Panel would consider the Administration's response before deciding the need to discuss the matter at a future meeting. Members agreed.

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[*Post-meeting note* : The Administration's response was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1037/06-07(01) on 5 February 2007.]

4. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed support for the funding proposals on the construction of a private independent school and a primary school in Sham Shui Po and Shem Tseng respectively. He, however, expressed concern about the operation of two Nepalese schools in a shopping arcade and a village in Yuen Long respectively. He suggested that the Panel should seek information from the EMB on the policy and principles adopted by the Administration in granting land for the construction of school premises. Members agreed.

[*Post-meeting note* : The Administration's response was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1001/06-07(01) on 1 February 2007.]

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[Appendices I and II to LC Paper No. CB(2)757/06-07]

Items for next meeting

5. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting scheduled for 12 February 2007 -

- (a) Progress of the study on small class teaching; and
- (b) Final report of the Committee on Teachers' Work.

6. Members also agreed to invite deputations to attend the meeting to present views and extend the meeting until 7:30 pm.

[*Post-meeting note* : With the consent of the Chairman, a notice was posted on the Legislative Council website to invite views on the two discussion items. Deputations and individuals who had attended the Panel meeting on 13 June 2005 to present views on the subject of small class teaching were also invited to attend the meeting.]

Items for future meetings

7. Mr Abraham SHEK said that in response to the recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in PAC Report No. 43, the English Schools Foundation had sought his assistance to introduce a Members' Bill to follow up the matter. Mr SHEK further said that he would like to brief the Panel on the Bill before its introduction into the Legislative Council (LegCo). Members agreed to discuss the subject at the regular meeting in March.

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8. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that as one of the three LegCo members sitting on the Council of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), he was requested by the CUHK Council to introduce a Members' Bill to amend the CUHK Ordinance to include two recently established colleges of CUHK as its constituent colleges. He would wish to brief the Panel on the Bill before its introduction into LegCo. Responding to the Chairman on the suggested time for briefing the Panel, Mr CHEUNG said that he would consult the President of the LegCo concerning the legislative timetable and inform the Panel accordingly. Members agreed to include the subject on the list of outstanding items for discussion.

9. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong further suggested that the Panel should discuss the retitling of the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIED) as a university at a future meeting. HKIED was concerned about the matter in the light of the recent upgrading of the Shue Yan College into a university. Members agreed to include the subject on the list of outstanding items for discussion.

IV. Gifted education

[LC Paper No. CB(2)757/06-07(01)]

10. The Chairman recapitulated that the Panel had discussed the subject on 16 November 2006 and members had requested the Administration to provide detailed information on the establishment, role, functions, staffing and governance structure, as well as the financial and operational arrangements for the proposed Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education (the Academy).

11. Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower (PSEM) said that the Administration had considered the views of members and the deputations expressed at the meeting on 16 November 2006, and had provided the requested information in its paper entitled "Establishing the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education". He highlighted that the organisational and financing framework, as well as service coverage of the Academy and related matters, were proposed by the Administration. The governing body of the Academy should have the discretion to refine and modify the proposals in the interests of gifted students and other key stakeholders.

Identification and development opportunities for gifted students

12. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong supported a two-pronged approach to select gifted students for enrolment to Level 3 development programmes, namely, by teachers' nominations in schools on the basis of the listed criteria and behavioural checklist provided by the EMB and supplemented by various

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screening tests as appropriate; and by other channels of nomination such as direct nomination by parents, self or peers to ensure that gifted children would not be overlooked. He sought information on the provision of professional development for teachers to identify gifted students in schools, and direct nomination by parents, self or peers.

13. PSEM responded that the Administration recognised the importance of early identification of gifted students in schools and the provision of optimal learning opportunities for them at Levels 1 and 2. The Administration envisaged that the Academy would make reference to international practices in the development of effective mechanisms for identifying gifted students through schools' nomination or direct nomination by parents, self or peers. As research findings in recent years suggested that there was no single measure of 'giftedness', the Academy was expected to adopt a more liberal approach to its selection or nomination procedures, and a comprehensive and inclusive admission policy. The Administration anticipated that like many overseas places, the Academy would develop a mechanism to admit gifted students on the basis of their performance, potential, track records and achievements in the subject or area concerned. Reference to student's intelligence quotient test score was not a must.

14. PSEM further said that over the years, EMB had been forging partnership with local tertiary institutions and professional bodies in providing professional training courses for in-service teachers to enhance their capability in identifying and nurturing gifted students in schools. EMB would continue to offer relevant professional development programmes for in-service teachers and might provide some of these programmes in collaboration with the Academy. This would ensure a "seamless" development of gifted students across learning contexts inside and outside schools. In addition, the Academy would also allocate resources to reinforce teachers' training and upgrade existing checklists and tools for identifying gifted students.

Curriculum and development opportunities for gifted students in schools

15. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that teachers and principals in schools were now fully engaged in their teaching and administrative work with the implementation of various initiatives under the education reform. They could hardly devote sufficient time and efforts to providing learning and development opportunities for individual gifted students at Levels 1 and 2. He suggested that the Administration and the Academy should collaborate to arrange the gifted students to attend off-site enrichment or acceleration programmes conducted by experts. In this connection, he enquired about the provision of off-site programmes to meet the diverse development needs of gifted students outside schools.

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16. PSEM responded that teachers in schools played a crucial role in providing Level 1 support within classes to develop students' higher order thinking skills, creativity and personal-social competence through the curriculum, and Level 2 pull-out programmes in specific areas outside the regular classroom for systematic training of students with outstanding performance. After the establishment of the Academy, EMB would concentrate efforts on collaborating with schools to promote effective learning and teaching practices in the classroom and provide support to pull-out programmes inside schools.

Development of the exceptionally gifted

17. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered it necessary to work out measures and establish mechanisms to enhance the whole-person development of the exceptionally gifted. He suggested that the Administration should coordinate the establishment of a link between the Academy and the University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions for direct entry of exceptionally gifted students to appropriate undergraduate programmes in local or non-local universities including universities in the Mainland.

18. PSEM responded that the Academy would aim to strengthen services for the exceptionally gifted students by broadening the range of gifted education programmes and providing off-site programmes not available in schools. It would focus on services for the exceptionally gifted students by offering and co-ordinating services outside the school setting to ensure that expertise and resources could be strategically and effectively used. It would also develop close partnership with local and overseas universities to provide enrichment and acceleration programmes relevant to the diverse potential and needs of gifted students.

19. PSEM added that since 2000, EMB had been providing off-site support in partnership with tertiary institutions for the exceptionally gifted whose needs could not be met by school-based programmes. These enhancement programmes included university-based credit-bearing courses, university-based study projects, thematic Olympiad training, mentoring programmes, leadership training cum social services, etc. Since 2004, the scope of these programmes had been broadened to include the domain of Humanities in addition to Leadership, Science and Mathematics. He added that local universities had autonomy on student admission. The university-based credit-bearing programmes should help gifted students in applying for admission to local universities. Nowadays, both local and overseas universities endeavoured to enrol the exceptionally gifted students, and would/had established mechanisms for their direct admission to various programmes.

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Support for gifted students and their parents

20. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the Administration should ensure that no gifted students would be denied access to relevant enrichment and acceleration programmes due to financial reasons. He suggested that the Administration should make use of the Quality Education Fund (QEF) to provide financial support for gifted students to attend these development programmes. Dr Fernando CHEUNG added that low income families had difficulty to pay the tuition fees for the enrichment and acceleration programmes. The Administration should work out mechanisms to support gifted children in attending these development programmes.

21. PSEM responded that the Administration recognised the importance of ensuring that no gifted students would be denied access to the enrichment or acceleration programmes for development of their potential or talents. In fact, it had been the Government policy to ensure that no students would be denied access to education due to a lack of means. It was expected that the Academy would introduce fee assistance scheme for needy students taking into account eligibility criteria under the existing Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme and the fee remission schemes. Suitable programmes could apply for QEF funding support.

22. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that many gifted students had emotional or behavioural problems. He considered that the Administration and the Academy should allocate recurrent resources to reinforce parent education in this regard.

23. PSEM responded that the Administration would collaborate with the Academy to provide parent education on a range of subjects including the identification and nurturing of gifted children. In addition, the Academy would regularly organise workshops, seminars and support groups for parents to learn and share experience in supporting their gifted children in education. The Administration estimated that around 5 000 parents could be served by the Academy each year.

Purpose-built premises for the Academy

24. Prof Patrick LAU expressed concern about the feasibility of operating the Academy without purpose-built premises. He considered that like the operation of the Hong Kong Sports Institute and the Academy for Performing Arts, there should be permanent campus and facilities for the Academy to coordinate and organise various development programmes for the exceptionally gifted. He asked how the Administration would promote gifted education through the establishment and operation of the Academy without purpose-built premises.

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25. PSEM responded that as an initial stage of development, the Administration considered it appropriate to make use of the existing community resources to support the provision and development of gifted education in Hong Kong. The \$200 million would not be sufficient to support the construction of purpose-built premises to centralise the provision of development programmes for the exceptional gifted. The Administration envisaged that the bulk of the education programmes and activities would take place at the venues of the course providers, similar to the existing arrangements for Level 3 programmes. This mode of operation was implemented elsewhere such as in the United Kingdom. Depending on the development of gifted education in Hong Kong, the community might explore the merits and viability of allocating resources for the construction of purpose-built premises for the Academy at an appropriate time in future.

26. Responding to the Chairman, Mr Tommy CHEUNG, Dr YEUNG Sum, Mr Abraham SHEK, and Ms Audrey EU indicated that the Liberal Party, the Democratic Party, the Alliance and the Civic Party respectively supported the submission of the proposal to the Finance Committee for consideration. Prof Patrick LAU also expressed support for the proposal.

V. Formulation of an alternative Chinese Language curriculum for non-Chinese speaking students

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)757/06-07(02) and (03) and CB(2)804/06-07(01)]

27. Members noted the background brief on the subject prepared by the LegCo Secretariat and the submission from the Hong Kong Unison.

Briefing by the Administration

28. Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (2) (DS(EM)2) briefed members on the main points of the Administration's paper. She highlighted that the Administration had discussed with the Panel and concern groups on various occasions on the teaching of Chinese to non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students in schools. After careful consideration of the concern about the lack of a central steer and common standards in the teaching of Chinese for NCS students, the Administration would develop, under the umbrella of the central Chinese Language curriculum framework, a supplementary guide on the teaching of Chinese to non-Chinese speaking students (the Guide). The Administration aimed to publish a draft Guide by the end of 2007 for consultation, and to finalise the Guide in 2008.

29. DS(EM)2 further said that based on the information gathered so far, there had not been an alternative Chinese Language curriculum in schools for the teaching of Chinese to NCS students in major Chinese communities such as the

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Mainland, Taiwan and Singapore. She highlighted that it was not intended that the Guide would set out one single standard for schools to follow in the teaching of Chinese to NCS students. Rather, schools should make reference to the Guide in their design of school-based curriculum to cater for the diverse capability and needs of individual NCS students in learning Chinese. The Guide should also not be taken as the provision of a simpler Chinese Language curriculum or the setting of lower expectations for NCS students. NCS students who were capable of following the central Chinese Language curriculum should be encouraged to learn the subject as their local counterparts and sit for the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) or the future Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE). Notwithstanding the Guide, schools should still be prepared to make school-based adaptations on a need basis, as there might be great variations in Chinese language proficiency among the NCS students with different family background, expectation, and length of stay in Hong Kong, etc.

An alternative Chinese Language curriculum for NCS students

30. Dr YEUNG Sum said that an alternative Chinese Language curriculum for NCS students should be formulated. The current policy and practices of requiring schools with enrolment of NCS students to develop school-based curricula had resulted in inconsistent requirements and standards in the teaching of Chinese to NCS students. He supported the publication of a draft Guide for consultation with the stakeholders including academics and NCS students, and hoped that the Guide would be available to schools in 2008. Dr YEUNG considered that the development of the Guide by EMB was a step forward in enhancing teaching and learning of Chinese for NCS students.

31. Dr YEUNG Sum further said that the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) should make reference to the Guide in designing programmes on the teaching of Chinese Language to NCS students for pre-service teachers. He suggested that EMB should monitor the implementation and evaluate the effectiveness of the Guide with a view to enriching its contents. In addition, EMB should advise the textbook industry to refer to the contents of the Guide in compiling Chinese Language textbooks for NCS students.

32. DS(EM)2 responded that in drawing up the Guide, EMB would take into account the school-based curriculum being developed and the input of relevant parties including tertiary institutions. EMB would liaise with the University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions including HKIEd to make reference to the Guide in their design of education programmes for pre-service teachers. She added that the Administration was inviting tertiary institutions to bid for the running of a professional development programme for teachers who were teaching Chinese to NCS students in schools. The Administration envisaged that the programme would be rolled out before the end of the current school year.

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33. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed support for the development of the Guide on the teaching of Chinese to NCS students. He hoped that the Administration would collaborate with schools to develop an appropriate Chinese Language curriculum and provide sufficient training to teachers and textbooks for NCS students in schools.

34. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that the provision of the Guide fell far short of the requests of the Panel as expressed in the motion passed at the meeting on 10 July 2006, namely formulation of an alternative Chinese Language curriculum and establishment of another open examination that was recognized by local universities for admission purpose. He considered that as an interim measure, the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) (Chinese) qualification should be recognized for enrolment in S6 and S7 classes, and for entry to the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE). He pointed out that individual faculties and departments of tertiary institutions were accountable to the management for the admission of students attaining certain standards including Chinese Language. The Administration should take the lead to recognise GCSE(Chinese) for the purpose of enabling NCS students to participate in HKALE, and request the UGC-funded institutions to accept GCSE(Chinese) as the minimum Chinese Language qualification for admission of NCS students to individual programmes. Mr Abraham SHEK expressed a similar view.

35. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that the teaching of Chinese to ethnic minority students was essential for enhancing their integration into the local community. He considered it more appropriate to develop an alternative Chinese Language curriculum for NCS students than to develop the Guide.

36. DS(EM)2 explained that from the professional perspective of curriculum design, all curriculum frameworks developed by EMB for different subjects took the form of a general guide. The provision of the Guide to facilitate the development of an adapted school-based version of the Chinese curriculum which was competency-based and suitable for NCS students should serve the purposes of an "alternative" curriculum for students learning Chinese as their second language. Like the curriculum for other subjects, the Chinese Language curriculum in primary and secondary schools embraced all topics and skills to be taught and learned at schools, and was not the same as specification of examination requirements which usually referred to assessment objectives, contents to be assessed, expected outcomes or levels of attainment and assessment methods. In other words, the Guide would not be tied to a particular Chinese language examination, but would give advice on school-based curriculum adaptations that would make reference to the different examinations to be taken by students with different background and experiences. In this regard, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority's (HKEAA)

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examination requirements of Chinese Language were aligned with most of the intentions of the curriculum framework.

37. DS(EM)2 further said that NCS students who were able to attain Chinese language proficiency comparable to their local counterparts would be encouraged to take the Chinese Language paper in HKCEE, or in the future HKDSE Examination under the new senior secondary academic structure. NCS students who would prefer to attain alternative qualification(s) in Chinese would have access to the GCSE(Chinese) examination. She added that by design, the GCSE(Chinese) paper was simpler than the Chinese paper in HKCEE or HKDSE. The results of students in this examination would be recorded in the HKDSE as for other subjects.

38. Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum Development) (PAS(CD)) said that the Chinese Language curriculum developed by EMB for primary and secondary schools was a recommended curriculum framework which gave general guidelines rather than prescribed detailed requirements. The Chinese Language curriculum framework prepared by the Curriculum Development Council was a description of curriculum intentions which included a set of clear curriculum aims, learning targets and objectives for the four key learning stages and covered a range of strands such as reading, writing, speaking, listening, culture and literature, moral values and attitudes, and independent learning capabilities. As a framework, it was general enough to be applicable to all learners including NCS students who were learning the language for integration into the local Chinese society. It was also flexible enough to allow for appropriate adaptation at the school level by a selection of teaching contents and materials relevant to the students' experiences of the language, daily lives, interest and abilities. The Administration would take into account the various needs of NCS students in learning Chinese language in developing the Guide.

39. Ms Audrey EU said that the learning of Chinese was becoming more popular in the light of the rapid social and economic developments in the Mainland. She considered that like the provision of a curriculum on teaching English for foreign students in English-speaking nations, the Administration should develop a curriculum on teaching Chinese for NCS students in Hong Kong. She considered that the provision of such a curriculum would help attract NCS talents from overseas for the development of Hong Kong as a world-class city.

40. DS(EM)2 responded that the Guide was intended to be a reference for schools in their development of school-based curriculum for teaching Chinese to NCS students from different parts of the world, not necessarily confined to NCS students from ethnic minority groups from South Asia. Some international schools had already expressed interest to make reference to the Guide in teaching Chinese Language for their students. On members' call for a tailor-made

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Chinese examination, she pointed out that the GCSE(Chinese) had a proven track record in assessing English-speaking students' proficiency in Chinese language. In fact, many ethnic minority groups and non-government organisations had requested the Administration to administer the examination in Hong Kong for NCS students in public sector schools. For the coming examination in 2007, EMB had invited the English Schools Foundation (ESF) to use their schools as examination centres, in view of the ESF's experience in running the examination for their students.

41. The Chairman expressed doubt about the Administration's saying that there had not been an alternative Chinese Language curriculum for NCS students in the Mainland. Referring to the submission from the Hong Kong Unison, the Chairman said that similar to the provision of a curriculum on "Teaching English Language for foreign students" in English-speaking nations, the Administration should formulate a Chinese Language curriculum and effective pedagogies for the teaching of Chinese to NCS students. The Chairman also pointed out that the GCSE(Chinese) examination was designed for English-speaking students living in their native countries, and might not be appropriate for ethnic minority students from South Asian places living in a Cantonese-speaking community.

42. DS(EM)2 responded that the Administration would first develop the Guide and administer the GCSE(Chinese) examination. The need for developing a brand new examination would be reviewed later. She pointed out that the GCSE(Chinese) examination papers were mainly in simple Chinese, with only a few questions in one to two parts of the paper in English and those questions accounted for only a small portion in the overall score. The Administration believed that NCS students from Southeast Asian places would be able to read and answer those few questions in English.

43. Mr Abraham SHEK said that the Guide was a first step to improve the teaching of Chinese to NCS students in Hong Kong. The GCSE(Chinese) examination was designed for English-speaking students. The ethnic minority students in Hong Kong were not English-speaking or Chinese-speaking students but were permanent residents of Hong Kong. They needed to learn Chinese in order to live, work and integrate into the local Chinese community. As the majority of ethnic minority families were socio-economically disadvantaged, they were unable to give adequate financial and family support for their children in learning Chinese. The Administration should formulate an alternative Chinese Language curriculum for these students to facilitate their learning of Chinese and development of their potential to contribute to the community. He suggested that Administration should make reference to the experience of some Mainland institutions in the teaching of Chinese to NCS foreigners. He added that students in ESF or international schools learned Chinese in small class, while ethnic minority students learned Chinese in large class.

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44. DS(EM)2 shared the view that most ethnic minority students were not adequately supported by their families in learning Chinese. Apart from the development of the Guide, the Administration had taken steps to commission tertiary institutions to design a training programme for Chinese Language teachers involved in teaching Chinese to NCS students and would also establish resources centres to support ethnic minority students in learning Chinese after school. With improved curriculum and support for NCS students, the Administration envisaged that ethnic minority students would have more opportunities to learn Chinese in the school context. She added that unlike ethnic minority students in Hong Kong, most NCS students in the Mainland came from financially sound families.

45. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that it was reported in newspapers that EMB had published in its web-page the names of schools which offered the subject of French to encourage NCS students to study in these schools. DS(EM)2 explained that EMB published such information on its web-page to facilitate parental choice. Actually, the Administration had proactively encouraged ethnic minorities to send their children to schools which would teach Chinese to NCS students through various means, including meeting with ethnic minority groups and distributing relevant information sheets and leaflets.

Access to tertiary education

46. Dr YEUNG Sum considered it imperative that NCS students should be provided with access to tertiary education through the attainment of an alternative qualification in Chinese Language. Noting that the Administration would arrange the administration of the GCSE(Chinese) examination in Hong Kong in 2007 for NCS students in public sector schools, he asked whether the qualification would be recognised by the UGC-funded institutions for admission to their undergraduate programmes.

47. DS(EM)2 responded that the Administration had made preliminary enquiry about the acceptability of alternative Chinese qualifications including the GCSE(Chinese) qualification as a minimum requirement in Chinese Language for admission to undergraduate programmes offered by the UGC-funded institutions. The initial responses of the UGC-funded institutions were diverse. Some institutions said that they would flexibly consider the Chinese Language requirement for admission of NCS students and had been accepting alternative qualifications; some institutions asked for more information about the arrangements for administering alternative Chinese Language examinations in Hong Kong; and some others considered it more appropriate to adopt a consistent Chinese Language requirement for admission of all students including NCS students. The Administration would continue to liaise with the UGC and the UGC-funded institutions to seek a clear indication of

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their requirements on Chinese Language attainment of students for admission to individual programmes.

48. Dr YEUNG Sum expressed disappointment that the UGC-funded institutions had not specified their requirements in Chinese Language for admission of NCS students. He said that institutions should acknowledge that it was unfair to expect NCS students to achieve the same level of Chinese proficiency as their local counterparts for enrolment purpose. He urged the Administration to request the institutions to set out the Chinese Language requirements for admission of NCS students to various programmes.

49. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong cited the experience of the United States in the development of policies and rules to facilitate the access of ethnic minority students to higher education to illustrate the need for Government intervention to enable NCS students to access university education. He pointed out that in the absence of an equal opportunity to access tertiary education, ethnic minorities in Hong Kong would continue to live in poverty. He urged the Administration to liaise with the UGC-funded institutions for the recognition of the GCSE(Chinese) qualification as a minimum Chinese Language requirement for admission of NCS students to their undergraduate programmes.

50. DS(EM)2 responded that the Administration would continue to liaise with the UGC-funded institutions concerning the Chinese Language requirements for admission of NCS students to different programmes. She pointed out that apart from GCSE(Chinese), there were also General Certificate of Education (GCE) (Chinese) and other overseas qualifications in Chinese. In terms of academic status, the attainment of a pass in these examinations would not be equivalent to a pass in Chinese Language at the HKCEE as they were after all qualifications based on different examinations. Moreover, there might be different Chinese Language requirements for admission to different programmes.

51. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that no one would dispute the difference in academic standards between the GCSE(Chinese) and HKCEE Chinese Language qualification. The crucial issue was that the Administration should formulate a policy to rectify its indifference towards the right of ethnic minority students to have equal opportunities to receive tertiary education. While respecting the autonomy of the UGC-funded institutions on student admission, Mr CHEUNG considered that the UGC-funded institutions had a social responsibility to explain their policies and requirements in Chinese Language for admission of NCS students. He requested the Administration to provide information on the policies and requirements in Chinese Language adopted by the UGC-funded institutions for admission of NCS students and the number of NCS students admitted by individual institutions for different programmes.

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52. DS(EM)2 responded that the Administration would relay the views of members on the Chinese Language requirement for admission of NCS students to the UGC-funded institutions for consideration. She noted that the concept of "affirmative action" had not been incorporated in the Race Discrimination Bill. The Chairman remarked that the Race Discrimination Bill might be inadequate in terms of protecting the interests of ethnic minorities in education.

53. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that members were not expecting the Government to take "affirmative actions" in respect of ethnic minorities in education. Members were urging the Government to provide ethnic minority students, in particular Indian, Pakistani and Nepalese who were born or permanent residents in Hong Kong, with reasonable access to university education. He pointed out the serious problem of cross-generational poverty among ethnic minority families and said that if their children did not have reasonable access to university education, these ethnic minorities would continue to live in poverty.

54. Dr Fernando CHEUNG requested the Administration to provide the respective number of Pakistan, Indian and Nepalese students who had been admitted to senior secondary education and local universities in the past five years. He suggested that the Administration should publicise its policy aim and direction to adopt GCSE(Chinese) as an alternative qualification in Chinese to enable NCS students to sit for the HKALE.

55. DS(EM)2 responded that the UGC-funded institutions had not taken stock of the enrolment of NCS students for their programmes. Starting from the 2006-2007 school year, primary and secondary schools were required to report their enrolment of NCS students to EMB for planning purposes. She pointed out that the HKEAA had agreed to accept an award of Grade D or above in GCSE(Chinese) as equivalent to a pass in Chinese Language of HKCEE for the purpose of fulfilling the entry requirement for HKALE.

56. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan requested the Administration to clarify whether NCS students in possession of a Grade D or above in GCSE(Chinese) would be exempted from taking the Chinese Language in the HKALE for university admission purpose.

57. DS(EM)2 responded that students obtaining Grade D or above in GCSE(Chinese) would be regarded as having met the Chinese Language requirement for entry to HKALE. Whether the results in GCSE(Chinese) would be accepted by institutions as an alternative to the Chinese Language paper in HKALE would be a separate issue. In this regard, the Administration would continue to liaise with the UGC-funded institutions to encourage them to consider accepting alternative Chinese Language qualifications such as GCSE(Chinese) as the minimum Chinese Language requirement for NCS

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students applying for admission to their undergraduate programmes. The Administration would update members on the outcome of its discussions with the UGC-funded institutions in due course.

Civil service appointments

58. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered that the Government should take the lead to lower the requirements in Chinese Language for considering appointment of NCS persons, in particular Southeast Asians who were born or had lived in Hong Kong for years, to civil service posts. Mr Abraham SHEK considered that the Government should recognise the GCSE(Chinese) qualification for recruitment of ethnic minorities to civil service posts which required a qualification in Chinese Language.

59. DS(EM)2 responded that EMB had informed the Civil Services Bureau (CSB) of EMB's plan to run GCSE(Chinese) examination in Hong Kong for NCS students from 2007 onwards. She pointed out that departmental heads were delegated with the authority to exercise discretion on staff recruitment matters. Probably it would be for the Heads of Departments to examine the Chinese Language requirement of individual posts under their purview and decide whether the GCSE(Chinese) qualification could be accepted for recruitment purpose. She would continue to make available relevant information to CSB to facilitate its consideration. Generally speaking, she believed individual employers would have to consider whether the GCSE(Chinese) as a qualification would be a sufficient indicator of the proficiency required for the jobs. Employers, apart from looking at qualifications, could always check the applicants' proficiency through interviews or tests.

60. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong remarked that the Government should show its concern about the provision of equal employment opportunities for ethnic minorities in the civil service. The Chairman added that some states in the United States had specified a quota for appointment of ethnic minorities to civil service posts.

Support for schools and NCS students

61. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung sought information on the provision of additional resources and support for teaching Chinese to NCS students in schools.

62. DS(EM)2 responded that EMB provided on-site support to individual schools with enrolment of NCS students in adapting the Chinese Language curriculum for teaching NCS students through regular collaborative lesson planning with teachers, co-teaching/lesson demonstration, developing school-based learning and teaching resources and conducting assessment to track the progress of students. With effect from the 2006-2007 school year, the

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number of schools receiving intensive support in curriculum adaptation had increased to 17 schools. To facilitate sharing of experience, EMB had established an experience-sharing network for schools admitting NCS students and so far some 50 schools had joined this network. In addition, EMB would commission tertiary institutions to conduct training for serving Chinese Language teachers on teaching Chinese to NCS students in the coming months; establish resources centres for NCS students to learn Chinese after school; and provide remedial programmes on Chinese Language for NCS students at primary levels during the summer holidays.

63. The Chairman asked about the qualifications and experience of the EMB officers providing support to schools in adapting the curriculum for teaching Chinese to NCS students.

64. DS(EM)2 responded that EMB had established Language Support Teams to support schools in making school-based adaptations to the curriculum and developing effective pedagogies for teaching English and Chinese languages. Members of the teams were experienced local and overseas teachers in teaching English or Chinese. According to the experience of these teachers, the knowledge and skills for teaching Chinese to NCS students would accumulate through practical experience and interactions with NCS students in class.

65. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung pointed out that with the allocation of primary and secondary school places for NCS students on a territory-wide basis, the geographical distribution of NCS students was far more diverse than before. He cited his experience to illustrate the need for additional manpower to teach individual NCS students in class, and asked how the Administration would support schools which had admitted a few NCS students.

66. DS(EM)2 said that according to a recent survey, the majority of NCS students were enrolled in those schools which traditionally admitted a large number of NCS students. So far, among those schools with a few NCS students, many had not joined the experience-sharing network for schools admitting NCS students or approached EMB for assistance in teaching Chinese to NCS students.. A possible explanation was that the NCS students in these schools did not encounter much difficulty in learning Chinese because of various reasons such as having a Chinese mother.

67. The Chairman, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, and Dr YEUNG Sum urged the Administration to proactively approach the schools with enrolment of a few NCS students, and examine the necessary support for these schools in teaching Chinese to NCS students. Dr YEUNG Sum pointed out that given the resources constraint, some schools might simply leave the NCS students to study Chinese Language on their own.

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Way forward

68. Dr YEUNG Sum said that the Administration should allocate additional resources to support schools on teaching Chinese to NCS students, as education was the only way to enable ethnic minorities to move up the social ladder in the long term. He pointed out that there were a few ethnic minority students from the middle class or wealthy families who had been admitted to the UGC-funded institutions. However, most ethnic minority students in ordinary schools came from low income families who did not have access to post-secondary education. He stressed that the Administration should formulate an alternative Chinese examination for NCS students in the long term. In the short term, the Administration should accept the GCSE(Chinese) qualification for appointment of ethnic minorities to the civil service. In addition, the Administration should collaborate with the UGC-funded institutions and post-secondary education institutions to accept the GCSE(Chinese) qualification for admission to their programmes.

69. DS(EM)2 responded that EMB had earmarked additional recurrent funding of more than \$10 million to support schools in teaching Chinese to NCS students. EMB would review the support for schools on an on-going basis and revert to the Panel for any proposal for additional allocation to schools to support the teaching of Chinese to NCS students as and when appropriate.

70. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the Government should not ignore the right of ethnic minority students to have equal opportunities in education, including access to university education. Since the development and implementation of an alternative Chinese Language examination for NCS students would take a long time to materialise, the Administration should ensure the acceptance of the GCSE(Chinese) as the minimum qualification in Chinese Language for admission of NCS students to tertiary education. He considered that the Government should require the UGC-funded institutions to enrol a specified number of ethnic minority students. Mr CHEUNG stressed that with an estimated population of more than 200 000 ethnic minorities, the provision of equal opportunities in education for ethnic minorities was crucial to the long-term social stability in Hong Kong.

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71. DS(EM)2 said the Administration would update members on the outcome of its discussions with the UGC-funded institutions in due course.

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VI. Grant to the Hong Kong Shue Yan University for establishing a General Development Fund

[LC Paper No. CB(2)757/06-07(04)]

Briefing by the Administration

72. DS(EM)1 briefed members on the proposal to provide a one-off grant of \$200 million to Hong Kong Shue Yan University (HKSYU) for establishing a General Development Fund (the Fund) to support its academic development and campus enhancement initiatives as detailed in the discussion paper.

Admission of sub-degree graduates

73. Dr YEUNG Sum expressed support for the Administration's proposal to provide a one-off grant to support the development of HKSYU. He asked whether HKSYU would consider admitting sub-degree graduates to second year studies of their undergraduate programmes.

74. Dr HU Fai-chung responded that HKSYU was a private university and enjoyed a high degree of autonomy on student admission. HKSYU had in place an Advanced Standing policy to permit the admission of eligible students to advanced years of studies in its undergraduate programmes. Under the policy, HKSYU would consider applications from sub-degree graduates holding an associate degree in relevant disciplines for articulating to the second year of its undergraduate programmes. Sub-degree graduates in other disciplines would also be considered for admission to first year undergraduate programmes.

Research development

75. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong asked whether HKSYU was eligible for application of research grants under the Research Grants Council and how the Administration would assist HKSYU in obtaining funding support for its research work in future.

76. DS(EM)1 responded that at present, the eight UGC-funded institutions were eligible for grants under the Research Grants Council. In the Administration's view, HKSYU could first make use of the income generated from the Fund to sustain its research work. Where necessary, it could apply to EMB for the provision of one-off grants to support its research work in specific areas on a case-by-case basis, as in the case of the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK).

77. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the estimated income of \$10 million per annum generated from the Fund should be used to enhance academic development and campus facilities for some 3 000 full-time undergraduates. As

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a university, HKSYU would have to develop its research capacity and facilities having regard to its strengths and niches in order to upgrade its status in the international academic community in the long term. He considered that the Administration should provide funding support for HKSYU in this regard. He asked whether the Administration would consider including HKSYU as an eligible applicant for research grants under the Research Grants Council so that it could compete on a level playing field with the eight UGC-funded institutions.

78. DS(EM)1 responded that the Administration was well aware of the need of HKSYU to develop its research capability and facilities in the long term. As HKSYU was a new university which had been engaged mainly in the provision of honours degree programmes, the Administration considered it more appropriate at this stage to support the research work of HKSYU on a case-by-case basis than to leave it to compete with the eight UGC-funded institutions for research grants on the basis of research performance. She added that HKSYU had already requested the Administration to provide a land grant for the construction of a building with the necessary facilities to support its research work in future.

79. Ms Andrea HOPE said that HKSYU recognised the importance of research in its long-term development and would use part of the income generated from the Fund to support staff development in its area of excellence. She pointed out that HKSYU had already established a strong team of academic staff with 60% of them holding or in the course of obtaining a doctorate degree. HKSYU would continue to encourage and support staff in pursuit of higher academic achievements in order to upgrade the academic profile of its staff. It was also important to have the initial "seed monies" for HKSYU to develop the necessary platform to collaborate with other institutions in research work as well as to compete with them in research performance on a level playing field.

80. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Dr Fernando CHEUNG agreed that at this stage, it might not be fair or appropriate for HKSYU to compete with other UGC-funded institutions for research grants under the Research Grants Council. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong suggested that the Administration and HKSYU should discuss the best way to support the latter to develop its research strengths and facilities in the long term. Dr Fernando CHEUNG suggested that as a start, the Administration should provide the necessary funding and administrative support for HKSYU to compete with the UGC-funded institutions for the award of research grants in respect of the discipline areas of the honours degree programmes which had been accredited by the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation.

81. DS(EM)1 responded that the Administration would continue to discuss with HKSYU on the best ways to support HKSYU in developing its research capability and facilities. She reiterated that the Administration considered it

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more appropriate at this stage for HKSYU, where necessary, to apply for research grants from EMB on a case-by-case basis.

Commitment and contributions of Shue Yan College in higher education

82. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that he was a former student of Shue Yan College. He expressed appreciation of the ideals and missions of Shue Yan College in education, in particular its insistence on the provision of four-year degree programmes. He considered that the education system in Hong Kong had produced a lot of losers in pursuit of higher education. Fortunately, the operation of self-financing private colleges such as Shue Yan College and the former Baptist College had provided an alternative path for secondary school leavers who had not been admitted to UGC-funded institutions to pursue higher education. As one of these students, he expressed gratitude towards the commitment and contribution of Shue Yan College in the provision of higher education opportunities in the past decades.

Mode of funding support for private universities

83. Prof Patrick LAU declared that he was a member of the Council of the OUHK. He enquired about the policies on provision of funding support for OUHK and private universities such as HKSYU. He pointed out that OUHK had been provided with Government grants and loans in the construction of campus facilities.

84. DS(EM)1 explained that the former Open Learning Institute of Hong Kong (OLI) was originally established by the Government to provide distance learning courses for adults in pursuit of higher education. It had become self-financing in the 1993-1994 academic year, and retitled as OUHK in 1997. Since OLI's establishment, the Administration had provided some \$700 million in support of its growth and development. For self-financing post-secondary colleges such as the former Shue Yan College, the Administration had not provided any recurrent funding support for its activities in the past though they were eligible to apply, under the Land Grant Scheme and the Start-up Loan Scheme, land grant at nominal premium and interest-free loans to construct buildings and facilities for the provision of post-secondary programmes. She added that Shue Yan College had not submitted any application under the two Schemes so far.

85. Prof Patrick LAU asked whether the current proposal, if approved by the Finance Committee, would become a policy on the provision of funding to private universities in future, and whether HKSYU was a non-profit making private university. He considered that the operation of private universities would contribute to the long-term development of higher education in Hong Kong.

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86. DS(EM)1 replied that the Government had yet to establish a formal policy on the provision of funding support for private universities. It would nonetheless flexibly consider the merits of individual cases. She confirmed that HKSYU was a non-profit-making private university operating on a self-financing basis.

87. Responding to the Chairman, members expressed support for the submission of the proposal to the Finance Committee for consideration.

VII. Any other business

88. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:55 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
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