

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1782/06-07
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration and
the Council of City University of
Hong Kong)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 16 April 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 Emily LAU Wai-hing, 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
- Member attending** : Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
- Member absent** : Hon MA Lik, GBS, JP
- Public Officers attending** : Item IV
Ms Bernadette LINN
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower 2

Ms IP Ling-bik
Principal Assistant Secretary (Education Commission
and Planning), Education and Manpower Bureau

Item V

Mr Chris WARDLAW
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower 5

Mr WAI Pui-wah
Principal Education Officer (Professional Development
& Training), Education and Manpower Bureau

Mr Simon THAM
Chief Curriculum Development Officer
(Native-speaking English Teacher), Education and
Manpower Bureau

**Attendance by
invitation** : Item V

Native English-Speaking Teachers' Association

Mr Damien Piers VANCE
Chairman

Ms LEE Weston
Member

Mr Craig BOSWELL
Member

Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers

Mr WU Siu-wai
Vice President

Association of Heads of Primary Schools, The Hong
Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China

Ms LEUNG Shuk-yee
Principal

Ms WONG Yin-lay
Principal

Subsidized Primary Schools Council

Mr FUNG Chin-choi
Vice Chairman

North District Primary School Heads Association

Ms LAW Kwai-kwai
Headmistress, HKCKLA Buddhist Chan Shi Wan
Primary School

Mr HUNG Wai-shing
Headmaster, Fanling Assembly of God Church Primary
School

Wong Tai Sin District Secondary School Heads Association

Mr HO Sai-mun
Principal

Mr LING Kin-chun
Principal

Tuen Mun District Primary School Heads Association

Mr DUNG Kwong-ping
Secretary

Grant Schools Council

Mr TAM Siu-ping
Chairman

Mrs Clara LAU
Vice-Chairman

The Association of English Medium Secondary Schools

Ms Rosalind CHAN
Principal

Ms Brenda MAU
Principal

Hong Kong Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools Council

Dr LAW Hing-chung
Chairman

Dr LAM Kin-wah
Vice-Chairman

The Association of Secondary School Heads Tai Po District

Mr FUNG Sui-hing
Member

The Association of Heads of Secondary Schools of
Tsuen Wan, Kwai Chung and Tsing Yi District

Mr HO Moon-tim
Honorable Secretary

Mr LUI Ki-cheung
Executive Member (Professional Development)

Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union

Mr HON Lin-shan
Deputy Director, Rights and Complaints Department

Item VI

Council of City University of Hong Kong

Mr Vincent CHOW, BBS, JP
Council Member of City University of Hong Kong and
Chairman of Board of Management of Community
College of City University

Dr Ellen KO
Vice-President for Administration of City University of
Hong Kong

Ms Jennifer NG
Principal of Community College of City University

City University of Hong Kong Teachers' Union

Mr Nicholas TAM Pui-ho
Chairman

Mr LAM Kwok-keung
Secretary

Dr CHENG Lee-ming
President

Federation of Hong Kong Higher Education Staff
Associations

Professor SHUM Kar-ping
Chairman

Mr LEE Heng-wing
Executive

Mr CHAN Sze-chi
Executive

Dr WONG CHAN Pik-yuen
Acting Head of Division of Social Studies and Vice
Principal (Staffing) of Community College of City
University of Hong Kong

City University of Hong Kong Staff Association

Mr FUNG Wai-wah
Vice-Chairman

Dr Stephen LI Chun-yue
Senior Lecturer of City University of Hong Kong

Dr Kelston WONG Hung-wan
Senior Lecturer of City University of Hong Kong

**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)1496/06-07 and CB(2)1546/06-07]

The minutes of the meetings held on 27 February and 22 March 2007 were confirmed.

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

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1419/06-07(01)]

2. Members noted the information paper provided by the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) and the University Grants Committee Secretariat on the establishment of the Quality Assurance Council of the University Grants Committee (UGC).

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[Appendices I and II to LC Paper No. CB(2)1545/06-07]

3. The Chairman pointed out that at the regular meeting on 22 March 2007, members agreed to discuss the subject of disposal and use of vacated school premises at the meeting in May 2007. He added that the Administration proposed to brief members on the progress on "334".

4. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong proposed to brief the Panel on The Chinese University of Hong Kong (Declaration of Morningside College and S. H. Ho College) Bill, a Member's Bill to be introduced by him, at the next regular meeting.

5. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting scheduled for 14 May 2007 -

- (a) Disposal and use of vacant school premises;
- (b) The Chinese University of Hong Kong (Declaration of Morningside College and S. H. Ho College) Bill; and
- (c) Progress on "334".

IV. Small Class Teaching

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1041/06-07(01), CB(2)1106/06-07(01), CB(2)1208/06-07(01), CB(2)1545/06-07(01)(revised) and CB(2)1545/06-07(02)]

6. Members noted the Administration's paper entitled "Supplementary

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information on design and methodology of Study on Small Class Teaching" and the background brief prepared by the Legislative Council (LegCo) Secretariat on the subject.

The Chief Executive's election pledge to implement small class teaching

7. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the Chief Executive (CE) had repeatedly pledged to gradually implement small class teaching (SCT) in five years, if elected the Chief Executive for the Third Term. The Administration should formulate policies and timetable for the implementation of SCT to honour the CE's pledge. He was concerned that should the Administration continue with the current Study on SCT (the Study) and decide the way forward after its completion in 2008, it was unlikely that SCT could be implemented in most primary and secondary schools before the end of the Third Term in 2012.

8. Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower 2 (DS/EM)2 responded that the Private Secretary to CE, in her reply of 22 February 2007 to the Panel's enquiry about SCT, had pointed out that the Study aimed to assess the benefits of SCT and identify the teaching strategies and support necessary for maximising its benefits in the local context, and the Administration would map out the way forward, taking account of the outcomes of the Study. DS/EM)2 further said that the reply was in line with CE's pledge to study the implementation of small class teaching and its timetable, and move ahead progressively based on the situation at different stages.

9. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong remarked that when meeting the education sector during his election campaign, CE had undertaken to implement SCT in the majority of schools in five years. He considered that given the time constraint, the Administration should immediately formulate a timetable for the implementation of SCT; otherwise it would run the risk of failing to fulfil the CE's election pledge.

10. In response, DS(EM)2 said that the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) had consulted the CE's Office and was given to understand that the Administration's position as set out in the reply of the Private Secretary to CE to the Panel had remained unchanged.

11. Mr TAM Yiu-chung said owing to a declining student population, the Administration had to tackle the problem of surplus teachers and school places. He pointed out that some parents might have reservations about the implementation of SCT in popular schools as places in these schools would be reduced. In addition, some teachers considered reducing the number of lessons than implementing SCT a more effective way to reduce their workload. They also considered it a better approach to allow schools the flexibility of choosing ways that suited their circumstances to achieve the desired effects of SCT. Mr TAM added that the operational details of the implementation of SCT should

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be carefully examined, and the issue of SCT had become political in the light of the CE's election pledge.

12. Ms Audrey EU said that CE's view on the implementation of SCT should be consistent in his capacity as the present incumbent or candidate for CE for the Third Term. She pointed out that LegCo had passed a motion on 1 December 2004 urging the Administration to progressively implement SCT, and any further delay in implementation would jeopardize the interests of students in learning. Ms EU suggested that the Panel should write to CE to request information on the timetable for implementation of SCT in the light of his election pledge and undertaking made at the Question and Answer Session for members of the Election Committee on 1 March 2007. Dr YEUNG Sum expressed support for Ms EU's suggestion. He considered that the Administration should set out the policy and timetable for fulfilment of the CE's commitment to gradually implement SCT in five years.

13. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that as indicated by Dr Michael Fullan at a breakfast meeting, the effect of SCT on enhancing the quality of education and student learning outcome was not apparent, but SCT should be implemented in view of its popularity with parents and teachers. Mr CHEUNG considered that the implementation of SCT had political implications, as it would resolve the problems of surplus school places and teachers. He pointed out that the implementation of SCT would reduce places in popular schools and possible increase teachers' weekly lessons because of the need to teach more classes with fewer students. He considered that the Administration should carefully examine the strategies and plan the timetable for cost-effective implementation of SCT in individual districts and schools, having regard to the readiness of teachers to teach in small classes. The Administration should also allow sufficient time for serving teachers to learn and practise the appropriate pedagogies for teaching in small classes.

14. Dr YEUNG Sum said that Dr Michael Fullan did not mean that SCT was not worth implementing in Hong Kong but that SCT should be implemented with appropriate teaching strategies and pedagogies. The Chairman said that as he understood, Dr Fullan was of the view that the benefits of SCT were not apparent, but from a political perspective, SCT should be implemented to meet the expectation of parents and teachers. Dr Fullan had also said that SCT should be implemented with appropriate strategies and pedagogies.

15. Professor Patrick LAU agreed with the Chairman's understanding of the views of Dr Fullan on SCT. Professor LAU said that nowadays, teaching and learning were interactive and should go beyond the classroom setting, and it was impractical to expect a teacher to teach a class of 40 students. The popularity of tutorial schools was a reflection of insufficient interactions between teachers and students in classes. Professor LAU agreed that the Study should aim to identify and develop the appropriate teaching strategies and pedagogies for implementing SCT in the local context. He considered that the focus of

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discussion should be on effective strategies and pedagogies for implementing SCT in Hong Kong.

16. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that to fulfil CE's election pledge, the Administration should start to formulate the policies, framework and timetable for consultation with the stakeholders on the implementation of SCT in five years. He pointed out that to facilitate smooth and successful implementation, the Administration would need to undertake the necessary preparation work, including the development of curriculum and the provision of support facilities in schools and professional training for teachers.

17. DS(EM)2 responded that apart from releasing a report on the Study, the Administration would propose the way forward on SCT for public consultation in 2008. She stressed that there was no conflict between the CE's election pledge and the Administration's current plan to map out the way forward on SCT, having regard to the outcome of the Study in 2008. Dr Fernando CEHUNG remarked that the Administration should set up a working group to oversee the preparation and consultation work for implementation of SCT in 2008.

18. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered that the decision to implement SCT should not be made on the basis of the outcome of the Study. The Administration should make reference to the findings and observations of the Study in formulating the policies and strategies that would maximise the benefits of implementing SCT in the local context.

19. DS(EM)2 responded that the objectives of the Study were to assess the benefits of SCT and identify the appropriate strategies and pedagogies to maximise the benefit of implementing it in Hong Kong. In other words, the outcome of the Study would provide useful information for the Administration to map out the way forward on SCT. DS(EM)2 added that as in the case of planning for other policy areas, EMB would take into account all relevant factors in formulating a policy on SCT in local schools. The Study would not be the only reference.

Follow-up

20. Members agreed that the Chairman should write to CE to request information on the timetable for the implementation of SCT in the light of his pledge in the election platform as well as his undertaking made at the Question and Answer Session for members of the Election Committee on 1 March 2007 to gradually implement SCT in five years, if elected CE for the Third Term.

[*Post-meeting note* : The Chairman's letter to CE dated 19 April 2007 and the reply from the Private Secretary to CE dated 27 April 2007 were circulated to members vide LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1653/06-07 and CB(2)1735/06-07 respectively.]

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V. Review of the Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1545/06-07(03) and (04)]

21. Members noted the Administration's paper and the background brief prepared by the LegCo Secretariat on the Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme (NET Scheme).

Oral presentation by deputations

Native English-Speaking Teachers' Association

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1613/06-07(01) and CB(2)1721/06-07(01)]

22. Mr Damien Piers VANCE introduced the submission of the Native English-Speaking Teachers' Association. Ms LEE Weston highlighted the issue of the downward adjustment of the special allowance in 2004-2005 and the justifications for claiming a compensation of \$29,400 for the 2004 NETs. She pointed out that the two civil service pay cuts in 2004 and 2005, the depression of the US dollar against the currency of the NETs' home countries, increases in taxation and education fees, and the reduction of the special allowance from \$13,000 to \$10,500 in the 2004-2005 school year had made the Native-speaking English Teacher (NET) Scheme less competitive. Although the special allowance was adjusted upward to \$12,950 from the 2005-2006 school year, NETs who signed contracts in the 2004-2005 school year suffered an income reduction of \$30,600. By refusing to make retrospective payments to the 2004 NETs, EMB had created a two-tier special allowance and violated the principle of "equal pay for equal service".

Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1613/06-07(02)]

23. Mr WU Siu-wai presented the views of the Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers as detailed in its submission. He highlighted that the Federation supported the NET Scheme and the improvement on the remuneration package for NETs in the 2005-2006 school year. The Federation suggested that the Administration should reinforce induction programmes for new NETs; extend the contract period for NETs up to five years; provide salaries commensurate with the professional qualifications and experience of individual NETs; and allow schools without a NET to recruit qualified local teachers in the interim. The Federation considered that given the shortage of NETs, priority in the allocation of NETs should be given to schools with a good track record in deployment and collaboration with NETs to enhance the quality of English teaching.

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Association of Heads of Primary Schools, The Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1613/06-07(03)]

24. Ms LEUNG Shuk-yee presented the views of the Association of Heads of Primary Schools, The Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China as detailed in its submission. She highlighted that the Association suggested that the Administration should provide each school with two NETs; explain the peculiarities of the Hong Kong education system to new NETs during the induction programmes; improve deployment of NETs in schools; and improve communication between schools and NETs. The Association supported the NET Scheme and hoped that the remuneration package for NETs would remain competitive enough to attract and retain qualified NETs who were enthusiastic to teach local students.

Subsidized Primary Schools Council
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1721/06-07(01)]

25. Mr FUNG Chin-choi said that the Subsidized Primary Schools Council considered that the NET Scheme had enriched the English-learning environment in schools and should be continued. The Association suggested that the Administration should allocate two NETs for primary schools with more than 24 classes and provide a cash allowance for primary schools without a NET to appoint qualified teachers to teach English in the interim.

North District Primary School Heads Association

26. Mr HUNG Wai-shing said that North District Primary School Heads Association considered that the NET Scheme had enriched the English learning environment and the quality of English teaching and learning in schools. The Association agreed that schools without a NET should be given a sufficient cash allowance to employ qualified personnel to teach English in the interim. The Association also agreed that NETs should be offered an attractive remuneration package. The Association, however, considered that leave for NETs and local English teachers should be arranged on a fair and need basis.

Wong Tai Sin District Secondary School Heads Association
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1613/06-07(04)]

27. Mr HO Sai-mu presented the views of the Wong Tai Sin District Secondary School Heads Association as detailed in its submission. He highlighted that the Association supported the NET Scheme and the provision of flexibility in recruitment and deployment of NETs in schools. The Association suggested that the Administration should reinforce support for schools without a NET; provide adequate support to schools and NETs; enhance collaboration between NETs and schools through experience-sharing and networking

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activities; and reinforce professional development programmes for NETs. He added that the performance of NETs varied. Some NETs had difficulty in adjusting to the local conditions and their sick leave rate was relatively high. He called on the Administration to set appropriate criteria and benchmarks for recruitment of NETs.

Tuen Mun District Primary School Heads Association
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1545/06-07(06)]

28. Mr DUNG Kwong-ping presented the views of the Tuen Mun District Primary School Heads Association as detailed in its submission. He highlighted that given the different qualifications and professional experience of NETs, EMB should set consistent recruitment criteria and improve the selection process to ensure the quality of NETs. He added that with appropriate support from EMB, schools should be able to recruit appropriate NETs for themselves.

Grant Schools Council
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1574/06-07(02)]

29. Mr TAM Siu-ping presented the views of the Grant School Council as detailed in its submission. He highlighted that the Council supported the NET Scheme as it provided students with opportunities to be exposed to an authentic English environment. This was particularly helpful to students from low income families who had little chance to interact with native English speakers. To ensure that students were benefited from the Scheme, EMB should closely monitor its implementation. The Council also believed that the provision of two NETs for all aided secondary schools adopting English or Chinese as the medium of instruction (EMI or CMI schools) would enhance the quality of English teaching and learning,

The Association of English Medium Secondary Schools

30. Ms Rosalind CHAN said that the Association of English Medium Secondary Schools considered that EMI schools should be provided with two NETs as all classes and extra-curricular activities were conducted in English. She pointed out that NETs were trained and should be assigned to teach drama and literature under the subject of English Language in the new senior secondary curriculum. Ms CHAN added that NETs should be given sufficient time to understand the local culture and education system, and develop relationship and trust with local teachers before they could perform the role of an agent to change the English teaching pedagogies in schools. She added that leave arrangements for NETs should be planned in accordance with the educational needs of students and schools.

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Hong Kong Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools Council

31. Dr LAW Hing-chung said that the Hong Kong Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools Council supported the implementation of the NET Scheme as it helped create an authentic English environment for students and enhance the quality of teaching and learning in schools. He added that the Association also supported the continued operation of the Scheme in aided schools.

The Association of Secondary School Heads Tai Po District

32. Mr FUNG Sui-hing said that the Association of Secondary School Heads Tai Po District supported the implementation of the NET Scheme to enhance student learning in English. The Association suggested that EMB should provide two NETs for primary schools with 12 classes or more; enrich the professional development programmes for NETs to include training in Cantonese language; and provide a cash allowance for schools without a NET to appoint temporary local teachers or NETs with slightly lower qualification or lesser professional teaching experience.

The Association of Heads of Secondary Schools of Tsuen Wan, Kwai Chung and Tsing Yi District

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1613/06-07(05)]

33. Mr HO Moon-tim presented the views of the Association of Heads of Secondary Schools of Tsuen Wan, Kwai Chung and Tsing Yi District as detailed in its submission. He highlighted that the Association supported the implementation of the NET Scheme and the English Enhancement Scheme in parallel. The Association suggested that EMB should exercise flexibility in recruitment of NETs who were able and enthusiastic to teach local students but did not have the required qualifications or professional experience, and provide a cash allowance for schools without a NET to employ qualified local teachers in the interim.

Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1734/06-07(01)]

34. Mr HON Lin-shan said that the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union all along supported the NET Scheme as NETs could enrich the authentic English environment in schools and collaborate with local English teachers in enhancing the English standards of local students. The Union supported the principle of parity and the provision of equal pay for Nets providing the same service. The Union suggested that EMB should ensure consistent and fair administration of the NET Scheme and consult NETs on matters relating to its implementation.

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Other submission received
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1561/06-07(01)]

35. Members noted the submission from Southern District Joint Schools Conference.

The Administration's response

36. DS(EM)5 expressed appreciation of the support given by the deputations for the implementation of the NET Scheme. In response to the issues of concern raised by the deputations, DS(EM)5 said that -

- (a) NETs were recruited centrally by EMB as well as individually by schools. EMB recruited NETs through open and transparent selection process conducted by panels consisting of principals nominated by school councils and advisory teachers from the Advisory Teaching Team (ATT). For cases where EMB undertook the recruitment on behalf of schools, EMB would recommend new NETs to schools, and schools had the discretion to accept or decline the recommended NET. Despite the difficulty in recruitment of NETs, EMB envisaged that all primary schools would have their own NET in the 2007 school year.
- (b) EMB was aware of the need to enhance job satisfaction of NETs in schools. NET Deployment Guidelines for both secondary and primary schools had been developed to help schools effectively achieve the objectives of the NET Scheme. EMB would continue to update the Guidelines in the light of changing circumstances and needs as well as feedback from schools.
- (c) There were a few mismatches in the allocation of NETs to schools in the past. EMB would normally arrange a transfer of school for the NETs concerned so that they would have another opportunity to demonstrate their ability to perform the role and duties of a NET in a satisfactory manner.
- (d) EMB recognized the importance of providing attractive remuneration package for recruitment and retention of qualified NETs, and had introduced the retention incentive and adjusted the special allowance from \$10,500 to \$12,950 in the 2005-2006 school year. As a result, there was a lower percentage of contract non-renewal in the 2005-2006 school year when compared with the 2004-2005 school year.
- (e) NETs might leave the service due to personal or professional reasons. EMB would continue to monitor the competitiveness of

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the remuneration package for NETs from a global perspective and would adjust the remuneration package in the context of local conditions.

- (f) According to the School Self-reflection Exercise and the preliminary findings of the Territory Wide Three-year Evaluation (TWE), the Primary NET Scheme had enhanced students' attitude and interest in learning English, and together these evaluations provided insights on the conditions which would enhance the impact of the Scheme. The results of the TWE would be available by the end of 2007.

Special allowance for NETs in the 2004-2005 school year

37. The Chairman asked how the Administration would respond to the views of NESTA about the lower special allowance for NETs in the 2004-2005 school year.

38. DS(EM)5 responded that the Administration had carefully considered the views of NESTA on the lower special allowance for NETs in the 2004-2005 school year. The Administration understood the concerns of the reduction of the special allowance for the NETs concerned, but considered that there was no justification for retrospective payment of the revised special allowance to NETs who joined or renewed their contracts in the 2004-2005 school year. The Administration had explained to their representatives about the local system and practices in this regard.

39. Dr YEUNG Sum considered it reasonable and fair to provide equal pay for equal service. He said that although adjustments of salary and allowance normally would not have a retrospective effect, the lower special allowance for NETs who joined or renewed their service contracts in 2004 had an adverse impact on their morale.

40. DS(EM)5 responded that there were different remuneration packages for staff of the same rank who joined the civil service at different period of time. Apart from the parity principle, the Administration would have to consider the practical circumstances at a particular time in determining the remuneration package for staff of the same rank.

41. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the Administration should consider the adverse impact of offering the revised special allowance to NETs who joined the service or renewed their contracts in the 2005-2006 school year but not to those in the 2004-2005 school year, as they had jointly made efforts to urge the Administration to review the special allowance for NETs in the light of the rising flat rentals in Hong Kong.

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42. DS(EM)5 explained that the Administration had carefully considered the request of the NETs concerned. The revised special allowance for NETs was approved by the Finance Committee to take effect from the 2005-2006 school year. There was no justification for effecting the revision retrospectively from the 2004-2005 school year. He added that any retrospective payment of this nature would have serious policy implications on salary and benefit administration in the civil service.

Recruitment and retention of NETs

43. Dr YEUNG Sum expressed support for the NET Scheme and appreciation of the contribution of NETs in enriching the English environment for student learning in schools. He considered it appropriate to be flexible in determining the contract period to meet the different needs of individual NETs, with a view to retaining experienced NETs who would wish to renew their service contracts for a period of longer than two years. DS(EM)5 responded that the Administration would consider the suggestion in the context of the evaluation of the Primary NET Scheme.

44. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that the fluctuation of the exchange rates between the US dollar and the currencies of the NETs' home countries would affect the take-home pay of NETs. He asked how the Administration would address the issue with a view to retaining experienced NETs.

45. DS(EM)5 responded that when submitting the proposals to adjust the special allowance and provide a retention incentive for NETs to the Finance Committee on 15 November 2005, the Administration had undertaken to review the remuneration package for NETs in the light of changing circumstances on an on-going basis. Actually, the attrition rate of NETs in the 2005-2006 school year had improved to 32% and 25% for primary NETs and secondary NETS respectively. The Administration would closely monitor the situation and adopt appropriate measures to improve the competitiveness of the remuneration package if the attrition rate increased in the 2006-2007 school year. Mr Tommy CHEUNG remarked that the Administration should also keep an eye on the latest developments in property rentals and the exchange rates of currencies, and take prompt actions, as appropriate, to retain NETs.

46. Mrs Selina CHOW said that the Liberal Party had all along supported the implementation of the NET Scheme since its inception in the 1998-1999 school year. She asked how the Administration would improve recruitment of NETs and retention of experienced NETs, given the existing difficulties. She also asked whether the Administration had preference for NETs meeting certain criteria, such as their years of experience, age and marital status, in recruitment.

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47. DS(EM)5 explained that EMB had adopted a number of measures to improve recruitment of NETs from target countries over the past three years, including the appointment of external agents in these countries to help identify qualified NETs and simplification of the recruitment formalities to facilitate the provision of timely offer for qualified NETs with a teaching post. During the selection interviews, the recruitment panel would aim to identify the qualified and experienced NETs with an enthusiasm to teach in Hong Kong. The Administration had no pre-set target groups in recruitment of NETs.

48. Ms Emily LAU expressed support for the implementation of the NET Scheme and the provision of attractive remuneration package for recruitment and retention of quality NETs who would enhance English teaching and English proficiency of students in Hong Kong. Ms LAU said that given the substantial investment of the Scheme, the Administration should monitor the implementation of the Scheme closely, with a view to enhancing cost-effectiveness and ensuring equal and fair treatment of NETs and local English teachers in schools. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung shared the views of Ms LAU. He considered that the Administration should review the recruitment process and exercise flexibility in recruitment of NETs.

49. DS(EM)5 responded that the Administration was open in the provision of flexibility for recruitment of NETs. He pointed out that nevertheless, EMB would have to follow the prescribed qualifications and professional requirements for selection of qualified NETs.

50. Dr YEUNG Sum requested the Administration to clarify whether the English Enhancement Scheme was intended for replacing the NET Scheme in future. DS(EM)5 replied that the English Enhancement Scheme was intended to complement the implementation of the NET Scheme. The Administration had no intention to substitute the NET Scheme with it.

Provision of NETs

51. Dr YEUNG Sum, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung and Ms Emily LAU expressed support for the provision of two NETs for each EMI and CMI school in the long term. Dr YEUNG considered that the provision of two NETs would help retention of NETs and enhance collaboration of efforts among NETs and local English teachers in schools.

52. DS(EM)5 responded that currently the Administration was aiming to achieve the target of providing each primary school with a NET. The provision of additional NETs could only be considered after the accomplishment of the current policy target. The results of the evaluation of the Primary NET Scheme would provide a basis for the Administration to consider the NET establishment, having regard to the competing priorities in education.

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53. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong asked whether the Administration would provide a cash allowance for schools without a NET to appoint temporarily a qualified English teacher. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered that the Administration should provide sufficient flexibility for schools in the recruitment of qualified NETs or local English teachers.

54. DS(EM)5 responded that schools were given the flexibility and resources to recruit a NET, or a qualified local English teacher on the condition that the objectives of the NET Scheme were fulfilled. The Administration would review whether more flexibility could be given to schools in respect of the NET Scheme when the results of the evaluation of the Primary NET Scheme were available.

Support and evaluation

55. Mrs Selina CHOW considered that EMB should collaborate with schools and local teachers to support NETs to enhance English learning in schools. She asked how the Administration would reinforce support services for NETs.

56. DS(EM)5 responded that EMB had set up the ATT and networks to support primary and secondary NETs. In response to a call for more structured professional networking support for secondary NETs and local teachers, a Regional NET Coordinating Team (RNCT) was formed in the 2006-2007 school year. This team built capacity in NETs and local English teachers by sharing of effective strategies and resources through nurturing networks of teachers. The RNCT promoted the integration of curriculum guidelines and initiatives into the school curriculum and assessment design, and advised on NET deployment to best suit characteristics of individual schools and their students.

57. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung expressed reservations about the cost-effectiveness of the NET Scheme in enhancing the quality of English teaching and the English proficiency of Hong Kong students. He cited overseas experience to illustrate the results of similar schemes in enhancing the English standards of students. He considered that NETs without an enthusiasm to teach local students would bring little benefits in English teaching and learning in schools. Given the substantial investment in the NET Scheme, the Administration should evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the NET Scheme in terms of its impact on enhancing the English proficiency of local students in the long run.

VI. Remuneration policy for staff seconded to the Community College of the City University of Hong Kong

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1545/06-07(07) and CB(2)1574/06-07(01)]

58. Members noted the information paper on remuneration policy for staff deployed to the Community College of City University (the College) provided

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by the Council of the City University of Hong Kong (the CityU Council).

Oral presentation by deputations

The Council of City University of Hong Kong

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1545/06-07(07) and CB(2)1574/06-07(01)]

59. Mr Vincent CHOW briefed members on the background and development on the remuneration policy for staff appointed on superannuable terms who were deployed to serve the College. He highlighted that the Special Group on College Transition in 2008 (the Special Group) had refined the proposal offered to staff, taking into account the staff's aspirations. The refined proposal included three options, the details of which were set out in Appendix 3 to LC Paper No. CB(2)1545/06-07(07). Staff were being consulted on the proposal. Mr CHOW added that of the 112 staff concerned, 70 had signed a non-binding proforma indicating their acceptance of the three options. The Special Group would submit the refined proposal to the CityU Council for consideration as it would involve substantial resources.

City University of Hong Kong Teachers' Union

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1574/06-07(03)]

60. Mr Nicholas TAM presented the views of the City University of Hong Kong Teachers' Union as detailed in its submission. He highlighted that the CityU had attempted to terminate the employment contracts of the 112 staff deployed to work in the College by various means in the past three years. He pointed out that the majority of the 112 staff deployed to work in the College on CityU's superannuable terms had signed to accept only a 20% reduction in salary in January 2004. They had already indicated that they did not accept any other changes in employment terms. With a reserve of some \$3 billion, the financial viability of the College should not be in question. The Union requested the CityU Council to review the remuneration policy for the 112 staff and offer them with employment on substantiated rather than superannuable terms.

Federation of Hong Kong Higher Education Staff Associations

61. Professor SHUM Kar-ping said that the Federation of Hong Kong Higher Education Staff Associations considered that the CityU Council should follow up and respond to the allegations made by the CityU Teachers' Union concerning its attempt to dismiss the 112 staff deployed to work in the College. He explained the importance of providing academics with employment on substantiated terms and requested the CityU Council to review the remuneration policy and package for the 112 staff.

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Dr WONG CHAN Pik-yuen
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1561/06-07(02)]

62. Dr WONG CHAN Pik-yuen presented the views of the five Vice-Principals/Heads as detailed in their joint submission. She highlighted that the three options proposed by the Special Group allowed colleagues who wished to continue their services with the College to keep their superannuation status and current remuneration packages. For those who wished to opt for early retirement with an ex-gratia payment, they might still have the opportunity of being re-employed by the College. As middle management staff, the five Vice-Principals/Heads considered that these options would enable the College to continue to provide quality associate degree education on a self-financing basis. She added that they had consulted colleagues and the majority of them hoped that the proposed staffing arrangements could be implemented as soon as possible to facilitate smooth transition of the College to a self-financing institution.

City University of Hong Kong Staff Association
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1613/06-07(06)]

63. Mr FUNG Wai-wah presented the views of the City University of Hong Kong Staff Association as detailed in its submission. He described the negotiation process between the Association and the CityU Council on the staffing arrangements and remuneration package for the affected 112 staff since March 2006. He highlighted that the Association had been authorized by more than 100 affected staff to negotiate on their behalf with the CityU Council. The Association accepted the three options proposed by the Special Group. The Association had consulted the affected staff on 9 March 2007 and around two-thirds of them had indicated acceptance of the three options. He requested the CityU Council to confirm that under Option 3, staff would continue to be employed by CityU on superannuable terms.

Dr Stephen LI Chun-yue

64. Dr LI said that he represented a group of staff members who were employed on superannuable terms and did not accept the three options proposed by the Special Group. He stressed that in line with the spirit of employment on superannuable terms, the affected staff should be provided with an option to stay in the College or return to the Faculty of their choice, without the need to sign a new service contract.

Dr Kelston WONG Hung-wan

65. Dr WONG said that the terms of employment for CityU staff on superannuable terms who were deployed to the College should not be changed

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without the consent of the staff concerned. He cited his personal experience to illustrate that the Deans of Faculties in CityU preferred to appoint staff on contract terms than accepting staff on superannuable terms for transfer to their Faculties. He considered that there was little chance for staff transferring to Faculties without changing their current remuneration package and employment terms.

Discussion

66. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Dr YEUNG Sum considered that like other UGC-funded institutions, CityU should aim to retain quality staff in preparation for the implementation of four-year undergraduate programmes under the new academic structure. From this perspective, CityU should improve the staff remuneration package to attract quality academics and provide more opportunities for staff deployed to the College to transfer to Faculties if they so wished. Mr CHEUNG asked whether staff who opted for Option 3 would continue to be employed by CityU on superannuable terms.

67. Dr Fernando CHEUNG asked why staff members who opted for Option 3 were required to sign new contracts and subject to future salary reviews of the College, if any, and whether there would be any changes in the remuneration package for or terms of employment of staff who continued employment on CityU's superannuable terms. He also asked whether CityU or the College had the authority to change the terms of employment, and whether the terms of employment under Option 3 included the relevant clauses concerning termination of employment on good cause only.

68. Dr YEUNG Sum considered that the CityU Council should bear in mind that in agreeing to a 20% reduction of salary in January 2004, the staff concerned deployed to the College had made it clear that they had signed the agreement under duress and did not accept any changes to their terms of employment including their superannuation status. He considered that the CityU Council should clarify that employment on CityU's superannuable terms under Option 3 included the term on termination of employment on good cause only, and staff deployed to the College should be given the choice to transfer to Faculties, instead of subjecting to the selection of the Faculties.

69. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that the agreement signed by staff for a 20% reduction of salary in January 2004 did not include termination of employment or changes in terms of employment after June 2008. He considered it groundless to change the remuneration package and terms of employment for the affected staff to transfer to Faculties in CityU.

70. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung considered that employment on CityU's superannuable terms, including termination of employment on good cause only, was paramount to the maintenance of academic freedom in higher education. He

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supported that staff deployed to the College should insist on their continued employment on such terms.

71. Responding to members' questions, Dr Ellen KO pointed out that according to the recommendations of the Working Group on Associate Degree Programmes approved by the CityU Council at its meeting in January 2004, superannuable employment with CityU would end on 30 June 2008 and appointment offered by the College thereafter would be in fixed contract terms based on a new remuneration package on market terms. However, the Special Group had considered the strong views of staff to continue employment on CityU's superannuable terms and proposed Option 3 to address staff's aspiration in this respect. Staff choosing Option 3 would retain their salary and other fringe benefits at the June 2008 level. They would be subject to the salary structure of the College, thus technically Option 3 represented a new contract. For staff whose salary at June 2008 exceeded the maximum for the corresponding rank under the College's salary structure, they would retain their salary on a personal basis. Responding to the Chairman, Dr KO confirmed that CityU would continue to be the employer of staff who opted for Option 3. However, any future reviews of salary would be at the discretion of the College.

72. Mr Vincent CHOW explained that the College was a wholly owned subsidiary of CityU which was no longer subject to the funding provision for the UGC-funded institutions since its establishment in July 2004. As the College was required to operate on a self-financing mode, it might have to review its staff establishment in case of unsatisfactory student enrolment in future. Mr CHOW also pointed out that the staff concerned were transferred to the former College on Higher Vocational Studies in the early nineties, and since then, the staff recruitment procedures and requirements in individual Faculties in CityU had changed considerably. Under the premise of academic freedom and institutional autonomy, Faculties had developed their practices and policies relating to staff recruitment and transfer matters. It would not be appropriate for the CityU Council to interfere with the staff administration matters in individual Faculties.

Follow-up

73. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung and Dr Fernando CHEUNG considered it necessary to further discuss the matter. The Chairman suggested and members agreed that the CityU Council be requested to provide a written response to the questions raised by members and the Panel would revisit the matter upon receipt of the CityU Council's reply.

[*Post-meeting note* : A special meeting was scheduled for 25 May 2007 to further discuss the matter.]

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VII. Any other business

Academic freedom and institutional autonomy

74. The Chairman said that members agreed at the special meeting on 13 April 2007 to consider ways to follow up on the subject of academic freedom and institutional autonomy. It had been suggested that a subcommittee be appointed under the Panel to examine the subject. The Chairman opined that as 11 subcommittees on policy matters were in operation, approval of the House Committee was needed for the activation of any further subcommittees. In the circumstances, he suggested that the Panel follow up the subject at its meetings regularly. Dr YEUNG Sum shared the view of the Chairman and expressed support for its suggestion. Members agreed that the subject of academic freedom and institutional autonomy be followed up by the Panel as a standing item.

[Post-meeting note : The item was added to the agenda for the regular meeting on 14 May 2007. The subject of "Progress on 334" was rescheduled for discussion at the special meeting on 25 May 2007.]

75. The meeting ended at 7:28 pm.

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Legislative Council Secretariat
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