

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)502/07-08
(The minutes have been seen by the
Administration and The Chinese
University of Hong Kong)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 12 November 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, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon SIN Chung-kai, SBS, JP
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
Hon LI Kwok-ying, MH, JP
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
- Members absent** : Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, SBS, JP
- Public Officers attending** : Item V
Mr Michael SUEN Ming-yeung, GBS, JP
Secretary for Education

Mr Eddie CHEUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary (Education Infrastructure)

Mr CHING Kwok-chu
Chief Curriculum Development Officer (Information
Technology in Education)

Item VI

Mr Michael SUEN Ming-yeung, GBS, JP
Secretary for Education

Mr Michael WONG, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education (1)

Mr Michael V STONE, JP
Secretary-General, University Grants Committee

Item VII

Mrs Betty IP
Deputy Secretary for Education (4)

Mr Chris WARDLAW
Deputy Secretary for Education (5)

Dr Catherine CHAN Ka-ki
Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum Development)

**Attendance by
invitation** : Item IV

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Professor LIU Pak-wai
Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the University

Mr Jacob LEUNG
Secretary of the University

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

**Staff in
attendance** : Mr Watson CHAN
Head (Research & Library Services)

Mr Kelvin LEE
Assistant Legal Adviser 1

Mr CHAU Pak-kwan
Research Officer 5

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 No. CB(2)175/07-08]

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2007 were confirmed.

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

2. Members noted that no information paper had been issued since the last meeting.

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[Appendices I and II to LC Paper No. CB(2)244/07-08]

Regular meeting

3. Members agreed to discuss the following financial proposals suggested by the Administration at the next regular meeting scheduled for 10 December 2007 -

- (a) Scholarship Endowment Fund;
- (b) One-off Special Equipment Grant for the University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions;
- (c) Recurrent funding for the UGC-funded institutions for the 2008-2009 roll-over year;
- (d) Redevelopment of Li Shu Fan site - phase 1 by The University of Hong Kong; and

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- (e) Construction of student hostels at Lung Wah Street, Kennedy Town by The University of Hong Kong.

4. Members agreed to extend the meeting for one hour to 7:30 pm.

[*Post-meeting note* : With the consent of the Chairman, the next regular meeting would be extended for half an hour to 7:00 pm.]

Special meeting

5. Ms Audrey EU proposed that the Panel should discuss the progress of the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme launched in the 2007-2008 school year. She was concerned that some private independent kindergartens might not have sufficient enrolment to continue operation as a result of the implementation of the Scheme.

6. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong noted the conduct of a review in the 2007-2008 school year on the financial assistance scheme for adults attending evening senior secondary education. He said that many evening students were concerned about the continued provision of financial assistance and mode of operation of evening schools. He proposed that the Panel should discuss the subject.

7. The Chairman proposed that the Clerk should liaise with the Administration on its readiness for discussing the two subjects proposed by Ms Audrey EU and Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong. Subject to the Administration's readiness, the Panel would schedule a special meeting to discuss the subjects in December 2007. Members agreed.

[*Post-meeting note* : the Administration advised that both subjects would be ready for discussion in January 2008.]

IV. The Chinese University of Hong Kong (Declaration of C. W. Chu College, Wu Yee Sun College and Lee Woo Sing College as Constituent Colleges) Bill

[LC Paper No. CB(2)244/07-08(01)]

Briefing

8. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the implementation of four-year undergraduate programmes from the 2012-2013 academic year would increase by over 3 000 undergraduates in The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). Unlike other universities, CUHK operated a college system, and the establishment of new colleges was necessary to cater for the addition. The Morningside College and S. H. Ho College had been statutorily declared as

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constituent colleges in July 2007. He intended to introduce the Bill to declare C. W. CHU College, Wu Yee Sun College and Lee Woo Sing College as constituent colleges of CUHK.

9. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that members had been concerned about fair representation of the various constituent colleges in the CUHK Council. The existing CUHK Council had 57 members, and a review was being conducted to reduce its membership to around 25. The CUHK Council aimed to work out a fair and reasonable system for representation of the five new colleges in the Council. After the review, an amendment bill to restructure the composition of the CUHK Council would be introduced.

10. Professor LIU Pak-wai, Pro-Vice-Chancellor of CUHK appealed to members to support the Bill. He pointed out that after the enactment of the Bill, the CUHK Council would proceed with the necessary preparatory work for the establishment of the new colleges, in order to have sufficient undergraduate and hostel places for the implementation of the four-year programmes in the 2012-2013 academic year. In the meantime, the CUHK Council was reviewing its composition with a view to making recommendations for reduced membership taking into consideration of the representation of the nine constituent colleges at an appropriate time.

Representation of new constituent colleges in the CUHK Council

11. Ms Audrey EU was concerned about the progress made on the review since CUHK briefed the Panel on the proposed declaration of the Morningside College and S. H. Ho College as constituent colleges. She highlighted the concern of interested groups and alumni associations about differential treatment among the constituent colleges in their representation in the CUHK Council. The existing four colleges had representation in the CUHK Council, whereas the new colleges would not. She sought information on the consultation made and the timetable for restructuring the composition of the CUHK Council.

12. Professor LIU Pak-wai responded that the planning committees for the Morningside College and S. H. Ho College had been established, and upon the enactment of the Bill, planning committees for the three new colleges would also be established. CUHK had established a co-ordination committee to co-ordinate discussions among the existing colleges and the preparatory committees for the new colleges on various matters including their representation in the CUHK Council. As the membership of the CUHK Council should be reduced after restructuring, the various colleges would need to discuss how they would be represented in the restructured CUHK Council.

13. While accepting differential treatment among the old and new colleges in respect of their representation in the CUHK Council in the transitional period before restructuring, Ms Audrey EU sought assurance on equal representation of

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the nine constituent colleges in the restructured CUHK Council. Professor LIU Pak-wai responded that each college would be represented in the restructured CUHK Council but how this should be achieved was a matter for the colleges to work out given their varying sizes and features.

14. Dr YEUNG Sum shared the view that all constituent colleges should have fair representation in the CUHK Council. He pointed out that many graduates of CUHK considered it important to maintain the traditions of their colleges in the provision of higher education. He asked how the features and traditions of individual colleges would be retained in the expansion of CUHK.

15. In response, Professor LIU Pak-wai said that like the Oxford University and the Cambridge University, CUHK was continuing to develop, hence the need for the establishment of new constituent colleges. The student population of the existing four colleges had increased from about 500 to around 2 500 at present. The CUHK Council considered it more appropriate to establish new constituent colleges than to increase the student population of existing colleges in order to facilitate teacher-student interactions. Indeed, such an arrangement would help strengthen the features and traditions of individual colleges. Establishing and maintaining the traditions of individual colleges should be the joint effort of staff, graduates and undergraduates.

16. Dr Fernando CHEUNG shared Ms Audrey EU's concern about differential treatment between the existing and new colleges in terms of representation in the CUHK Council. This would mean in effect the existence of two levels of colleges in that the existing colleges were in an advantaged position in terms of power and resource allocation, whereas the new colleges were established for managing facilities and hostels. Dr CHEUNG considered it necessary for the CUHK Council to clarify its policy concerning the existing and new constituent colleges.

17. Professor LIU Pak-wai responded that the new constituent colleges would be on a par with the existing colleges in their participation in the management of CUHK and resource allocation based on the same teacher-student ratio. However, the absolute amount of resources obtained by individual colleges differed owing to their varying sizes and abilities to raise private donations.

18. The Chairman enquired if the CUHK Council had a policy to standardize the size of its constituent colleges. In response, Professor LIU Pak-wai said that CUHK did not have such a policy. It was up to individual colleges to decide the appropriate size of its student population taking account of their own features and facilities. For instance, some colleges had a relatively smaller size because of its mission to provide each undergraduate with a hostel place throughout his/her studies.

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Conclusion

19. Summing up the discussion, the Chairman said that members in general supported the Bill. However, members were concerned about the policy for the new constituent colleges, in particular about their representation in the CUHK Council. He requested the CUHK Council to formulate its policy and propose the legislative amendments in this regard as soon as practicable.

20. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong added that the declaration of new constituent colleges and the restructuring of the CUHK Council were two different issues. Nevertheless, the CUHK Council should set out the broad principles and direction for restructuring the CUHK Council to address members' concern.

V. The Third Strategy on Information Technology in Education

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)159/07-08(01), CB(2)244/07-08(02) and (03)]

21. Members noted the background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat [LC Paper No. CB(2)244/07-08(03)].

Briefing by the Administration

22. By way of powerpoint presentation, Principal Assistant Secretary (Education Infrastructure) (PAS(EI)) briefed members on the major proposals in the consultation document on the Third Strategy on Information Technology (IT) in Education (the Third Strategy) as detailed in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(2)244/07-08(02)].

Provisions for replacing and upgrading IT facilities

23. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed support for the Administration's proposal to set aside a \$200 million one-off grant for replacing and upgrading IT facilities in all public sector schools. He noted that schools could apply for the Quality Education Fund for replacing and upgrading IT equipment, and were currently provided with a composite IT grant which could be used for employing technical support services and purchasing consumables. Mr CHEUNG relayed the view of many schools that to facilitate the implementation of school-based IT development plans, it was necessary for the Administration to provide resources for upgrading IT facilities in schools at regular intervals, say, every three years.

24. Secretary for Education (SED) responded that given the rapid advance and changes in IT, the Administration would, at appropriate time, review the need to replace and upgrade IT facilities in public sector schools, having regard to the financial implications. It would be difficult for the Administration to state categorically the interval for replacing and upgrading IT facilities in public sector schools.

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Support for needy families

25. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong noted that about 95% of primary and secondary school students had access to computers at home. Of the remaining 5% students who did not have a computer at home, it would be practically difficult for their parents to assist or guide them in using IT. He asked how the Administration would help these parents and narrow the digital divide in the community.

26. PAS(EI) responded that EDB, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, operated a Computer Recycling Scheme (the Scheme) in the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school years. EDB estimated at the time that there were 20 000 students who would require a recycled computer. So far, only around 10 000 applications had been received under the Scheme. At the same time, the Caritas had launched a similar recycling scheme under which some 600 recycled computers were readily available to needy families. He added that the penetration rate of 95% was based on the Thematic Household survey conducted by the Census and Statistics Department in 2006. The rate would very likely rise in 2007. For various reasons, some parents might not wish to have a computer at home. Responding to the Chairman, PAS(EI) said that EDB would continue to collaborate with schools and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to promote public awareness of the availability of recycled computers.

27. Dr Fernando CHEUNG shared the view of Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and requested the Administration to give an undertaking that the 5% school students without a computer at home could be provided with a recycled computer should they so request. He also urged the Administration to discuss with Internet service providers to offer needy families with children at school Internet connection service at concessionary fees.

28. PAS(EI) responded that the Administration could undertake to provide the 5% students with a recycled computer should they so request under a computer recycling scheme. Indeed, students could replace worn-out recycled computers. EDB would continue to collaborate with concerned parties to promote the existing recycling scheme. Regarding Internet connection service, he explained that under the Scheme, EDB had reached agreement with a major service provider to provide needy students with one-year free access to Internet, and, thereafter, access at concessionary charges.

29. Mr Albert CHAN remarked that despite the territory-wide penetration rate of 95%, it was possible that there were proportionally more students without access to a computer at home in low income families in Tin Shui Wai. He considered that the Administration should pool its resources to help needy parents and students in districts with a large concentration of low income families. PAS(EI) responded that EDB would step up communication with

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schools to promote parental awareness of the Caritas's recycling scheme in particular in districts with more low income families.

30. Dr Fernando CHEUNG noted that some IT assignments for students required the use of digital camera or color printer to enhance presentation and quality. Low income families could not afford the use of expensive equipment and accessories. He considered that the Administration should advise schools to be sensitive to the financial situations of economically-disadvantaged students when engaging students in using IT in education.

31. SED responded that the objective of the policy on the use of IT in education was to improve learning outcomes and not for aesthetic or presentation purpose. The use of expensive IT equipment and consumables was not necessary. The Administration would remind schools and teachers in this regard through appropriate channels.

Guidance on use of IT

32. Dr Fernando CHEUNG supported providing parents with assistance to guide their children in e-learning. He, however, expressed reservation about the adequacy of the allocation of \$1 million to NGOs to raise parents' information literacy and launch programmes on parental guidance on e-learning at home.

33. PAS(EI) explained that the provision of \$1 million should be adequate for the purpose as not all parents needed guidance. Support programmes for parents had been organized by schools so far, but the response was not enthusiastic. EDB believed that NGOs would be in a better position to organize such programmes. The Steering Committee on Strategic Development of IT in Education (the Steering Committee) would review the effectiveness of support programmes for parents in mid 2008 and, if necessary, would recommend allocation of additional funding for the purpose, subject to availability of resources.

34. Referring to the statement that it was difficult to evaluate quantitatively the effectiveness of IT in education in paragraph 11 of the consultation document entitled "Right Technology at the Right Time for the Right Task", Mr Albert CHAN asked if the Administration had something to hide. In addition, he considered that the Administration had not addressed squarely the problems arising from the use of IT. He opined that while the use of IT in education had enhanced student learning, it had at the same time facilitated access to pornographic materials and gambling activities on the Internet. He considered that the Administration should assess the extent of the problems and advise how the negative impact of IT could be addressed in the consultation document.

35. PAS(EI) responded that the difficulty in evaluating quantitatively the effectiveness of IT in education was commonly suggested in many research

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studies and policy documents in other jurisdictions such as Education at a Glance 2006 published by Organizations for Economic Co-operation and Development. The Administration had not overlooked the negative impact of IT. The proposed on-line depository of teaching modules and the enhancement of parents' information literacy were some of the ways to address this issue. Furthermore, EDB, in collaboration with the Police and the Social Welfare Department, had set up a web-site to provide schools, teachers and parents with relevant information on the safe and effective use of the Internet to enhance student learning. Mr Albert CHAN was disappointed with the Administration's response.

Support for schools

36. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that in addition to the provision of a depository of curriculum-based teaching modules with appropriate digital resources and the continuous development of teacher's IT pedagogical skills, the provision of sufficient venues to facilitate teacher-student interactions was crucial to enhancing teaching and learning outcomes. With only one to two computer rooms in each school, it was difficult for teachers to arrange interactive learning for students in class. He considered it a matter of resources, and called for improvement to the situation.

37. PAS(EI) responded that the Administration had allocated additional resources under the Second Strategy and the Third Strategy to schools for installing projectors and computers in classrooms to facilitate teaching and learning. He cited an example of using personal digital assistants by students to tackle mathematical problems to explain the pedagogical application of mobile technologies to enable interactive teaching and learning outside the classrooms. He added that some schools in Hong Kong were experimenting projects of innovative interactivity in education such as using portable e-whiteboards and classroom response systems to facilitate teacher-student interactions.

38. Chief Curriculum Development Officer (Information Technology in Education) supplemented that teacher-student interactions should not be confined to within classrooms. With the development of web-based environment for collaboration and sharing such as Web 2.0 Applications, teachers and students could use blogs, for example, for collaborative learning and sharing knowledge in cyber-connected communities. In other words, teachers and students could interact by way of electronic platforms anywhere and anytime.

39. Mr Albert CHAN said that EDB should properly monitor the use of resources allocated to schools for IT in education to ensure their use for students and not for the personal use of principals or teachers.

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Evaluation

40. The Chairman enquired if the Administration had set quantitative targets to assess the effectiveness on the use of IT in education under the Third Strategy, such as raising the percentages of students with access to computers at home and of teachers frequently using IT in classes.

41. SED responded that the broad objectives of the Third Strategy were to, namely, establish a basic infrastructure for the use of IT in schools and their access to the Internet; provide sufficient IT training to teachers and technical support services to schools; and develop information literacy in parents and the community to facilitate student learning.

42. PAS(EI) supplemented that policy documents on IT in education in other jurisdictions usually did not include targets for evaluating the effectiveness of IT in education. Nevertheless, if there was a strong demand for such targets, EDB would consider. One of the considerations concerning targets was that they should not create additional workload and pressure on schools and teachers. Regarding evaluation of effectiveness, the Steering Committee would also evaluate the effectiveness of measures under the Third Strategy.

Follow-up

43. In response to the Chairman, SED said that the Administration would consolidate the views received during the consultation period and report the outcome of the consultation to the Panel.

VI. Fourth Matching Grant Scheme for University Grants Committee-funded institutions and self-financing local universities

44. Members noted the background brief prepared by the LegCo Secretariat on the subject [LC Paper No. CB(2)263/07-08(02)].

Briefing by the Administration

45. SED briefed members on the Administration's proposal to introduce a \$1 billion Fourth Matching Grant Scheme (the Scheme) for matching private donations secured by the eight UGC-funded institutions and two self-financing local universities as detailed in its paper [LC Paper No. CB(2)263/07-08(01)].

Coverage of the Scheme

46. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed support for the Scheme and its expansion to cover the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) and the Hong Kong Shu Yan University (HKSJU). He opined that the Scheme should be

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further expanded to cover the self-financing sub-degree programmes offered by the UGC-funded institutions, given that the two self-financing local universities were eligible for the Scheme and the government matching grants could be used to offer scholarships for meritorious non-local students. Such expansion would provide an impetus to the institutions for raising private donations for sub-degree education. Mr CHEUNG requested the Administration to consider his view without changing the proposed eligibility criteria, operating terms and conditions and total amount of the government matching grants under the Scheme.

47. SED responded that the Administration intended to submit the proposal to the Finance Committee for consideration at its meeting on 14 December 2007 and implement the Scheme with effect from 1 January 2008. Given the time constraint, the Administration considered it inappropriate at this stage to revise the proposed coverage of the Scheme. Moreover, as a motion debate on the subject of "Consolidating the quality of post-secondary education" would be moved at the Council meeting on 21 November 2007, it would be more fruitful to have a thorough discussion on self-financing post-secondary education and the related issues first before making any decision on the matter.

48. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong stressed that his proposal to expand the Scheme to cover self-financing sub-degree programmes should not affect the submission of the proposal to Finance Committee or the implementation of the Scheme as the total amount of the government matching grants and the number of eligible institutions would remain unchanged. The UGC-funded institutions could have the flexibility to decide on the appropriate proportion of private donations for degree and sub-degree programmes. Should government grants be used for matching private donations for sub-degree education, many problems relating to sub-degree education could be mitigated and the status of sub-degree education could be enhanced.

49. SED responded that the Administration had already discussed with the eight UGC-funded institutions and the two local universities concerning the coverage and the terms and conditions of the Scheme. Some institutions might have made a verbal undertaking to their prospective donors for the designated use of their donations which might not have included sub-degree programmes.

50. The Chairman and Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong were of the view that as the Scheme would last for 14 months up to 28 February 2009, there should be sufficient time to consider expanding the Scheme to cover self-financing sub-degree programmes. SED undertook to consider their view.

51. Mr Abraham SHEK expressed support for the Scheme and its implementation as soon as possible. He opined that the expansion of the Scheme to cover self-financing sub-degree programmes would impact on the amount of the matching grants for degree programmes should the \$1 billion allocation for

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the Scheme remain unchanged.

52. SED responded that as he understood, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's proposal aimed to provide greater flexibility for the eligible institutions to raise funds without incurring additional public expenditure or changing the operating terms and conditions of the Scheme. He said that the expansion of the Scheme to cover self-financing sub-degree programmes would have policy implications which should be examined carefully.

Terms and conditions of the Scheme

53. Dr Fernando CHEUNG considered that the Scheme should encourage healthy competition among the institutions. As shown from the previous three matching grant schemes, only the two universities with the longest history had been able to receive the matching grants at the upper limit. He enquired if the Administration would introduce additional measures to assist the smaller and younger institutions to raise private donations, in addition to the setting of a floor and a ceiling for the matching grants. As OUHK and HKSYU were self-financing and relatively young in terms of their history of development, Dr CHEUNG urged the Administration to ensure that they would enjoy equal opportunities and were subject to the same operating terms and conditions for the provision of matching grants.

54. SED responded that in recognition of the contributions of OUHK and HKSYU in the provision of tertiary education, the Administration therefore proposed to include these two self-financing universities in the Scheme.

55. DS(Ed)1 supplemented that the Administration had consulted the eight UGC-funded institutions, OUHK and HKSYU, and had obtained their agreement to the terms and conditions of the Scheme. To facilitate smaller and younger institutions with less fund-raising capabilities to secure a reasonable share of the matching grants, the UGC would set aside an amount of \$45 million for matching by each institution as a guaranteed minimum in the first 12 months after the Scheme was open for application. There would be an upper limit of \$250 million applicable to the aggregate amount received by each institution. Indeed, as OUHK and HKSYU were self-financing universities that were not receiving recurrent funding from the UGC, the Administration had proposed different parameters to meet their needs. For instance, the matching grants received by these two universities could be used to support capital works projects, whereas the matching grants for the eight UGC-funded institutions could only be used on activities within the ambit of UGC recurrent grants or scholarships for non-local students.

56. Mr Albert CHAN was concerned about the relationship between naming of campus buildings and private donations raised under the Scheme. He opined that some people might be reluctant or even feel shameful to study at a building

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named after some wealthy persons. Furthermore, it was unfair to name a building or even a faculty after a donor's name if he had contributed only part of the construction costs but his donations were matched by the government grants under the Scheme.

57. SED responded that the UGC-funded institutions had the autonomy to enter into agreement with prospective donors on the naming of campus buildings. He considered that the issue of the naming of campus buildings should not be addressed in the context of the Scheme.

58. Secretary General, University Grants Committee (SG/UGC) supplemented that the various matching grant schemes had benefited the UGC-funded institutions as they could obtain more public resources and receive more private donations including for the use of constructing buildings on campus. Except for the expansion of the Scheme to cover two self-financing local universities, there had not been any change to the operating terms or conditions of the Scheme.

59. The Chairman questioned whether it was fair to name a building after a person if the financing of the building came partly from the person and partly from the public fund. SG/UGC considered that it was fair to do so. He added that the naming of a building after the donor had long been a common practice in Hong Kong but in the past the amount involved was generally much less. With the matching grant scheme, institutions were able to attract more funds for such naming. As regards naming of Faculties or Schools after persons, such was quite common overseas, although it was not very common yet in Hong Kong.

60. Mr Albert CHAN said that he would only support the Scheme if the Administration set out a mechanism to regulate the naming of campus buildings the financing of which was matched under the Scheme in its submission to the Finance Committee for funding approval.

Conclusion

61. Concluding the discussion, the Chairman said that other than Mr Albert CHAN who indicated conditional support for the Scheme, other members present at the meeting supported the submission of the proposal on the Scheme to the Finance Committee.

VII. Retention of two supernumerary posts of Principal Education Officer for a period of two years and six months up to 30 June 2010

62. Members noted the background brief prepared by the LegCo Secretariat on the subject [LC Paper No. CB(2)244/07-08(05)].

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Briefing by the Administration

63. DS(Ed)5 briefed members on the Administration's proposal to retain two supernumerary Principal Education Officer (PEO) posts, which would lapse on 1 January 2008, for a period of two years and six months up to 30 June 2010 as detailed in its paper [LC Paper No. CB(2)244/07-08(04)]. The PEO posts were created to provide dedicated professional support for the implementation of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum, as well as to provide school-based support to individual schools to assist their smooth transition to the new academic structure.

Job descriptions of the PEOs

64. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed support for the proposal for the retention of the two PEO posts for two and a half years. He suggested that as there could be changes to the implementation details of the NSS structure, the respective job descriptions of the two posts should be flexible. Dr Fernando CHEUNG shared Mr CHEUNG's view.

65. DS(Ed)5 agreed with Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong that the duties and responsibilities of the two PEO posts would have to be modified in the light of changing circumstances and needs. He pointed out that the two PEOs would involve heavily in maintaining dialogues with stakeholders including parents on the progress of the preparatory work for the implementation of the NSS structure. In addition, they would have to collaborate with the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority on the development of subject descriptors for the standards-referenced reporting and assessment criteria for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) as well as to liaise with overseas authorities on international recognition of HKDSE examinations.

Dedicated post for special and integrated education

66. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed concern about the implementation of the NSS structure for students with special education needs, in particular about the development of the curriculum and assessment (C&A) frameworks for special education which was progressing at a slow pace. He noted that one of the two PEOs would take part in coordinating the development of C&A frameworks and related Learning Outcomes frameworks for selected core and elective subjects for students with intellectual disability (ID). He pointed out that the former Education Department had a dedicated division to oversee the provision of special education, but the division was removed after the merging of the former Education and Manpower Bureau and the Education Department. Dr CHEUNG considered that EDB should designate a team headed by a Principal Assistant Secretary at least to oversee the provision and implementation of integrated and special education under the NSS structure. He urged the Administration to allocate sufficient resources including manpower

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resources for special and integrated education.

67. DS(Ed)5 responded that the Administration had made substantial efforts and progress in the development of the C&A frameworks for ID students in the past year. DS(Ed)4 supplemented that a number of research and development projects in this regard had been or were being conducted. A few pilot studies on a NSS curriculum for ID students had been started since the 2006-2007 school year. Disabled students with normal intelligence would follow the mainstream curriculum with appropriate support. The Administration would continue to collaborate with the stakeholders in the special education sector to develop the C&A frameworks, and the good pedagogies and practices identified from the pilots would be disseminated to other special schools for reference.

68. DS(Ed)4 further explained that special education had formerly been overseen by a dedicated team. After the restructuring in 2000, the responsibilities for special education were decentralized to various branches of EDB. Specifically, the School Administration and Professional Development Branch was overseeing the administration policies for special schools and would collaborate and/or coordinate with other Branches for the provision of various professional and support services for special education. Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum Development) added that further restructuring had also taken place, for example, in the past, the curriculum development for special and gifted education was overseen by a Chief Curriculum Development Officer. But this responsibility had now been taken up by two Chief Curriculum Development Officers, and they were respectively supervised by a Principal Education Officer and supported by other professional staff.

69. Mr Abraham SHEK expressed support for Dr Fernando CHEUNG's views. He pointed out that in his 2007 Policy Address, the Chief Executive had not mentioned the provision of any additional resources for special education in the next five years. He considered that the Panel should discuss the subject of special education at a future meeting.

Conclusion

70. Concluding the discussion, the Chairman said that members supported the submission of the proposal to the Establishment Sub-Committee of the Finance Committee for consideration on 28 November 2007.

VIII. Research report on academic freedom and institutional autonomy of higher education in the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Hong Kong

[LC Paper No. RP01/07-08]

Briefing by Research and Library Services Division

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71. By way of powerpoint presentation, Head (Research and Library Services) briefed members on the research report on academic freedom and institutional autonomy of higher education in the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Hong Kong (the Report).

Invitation of views on the Report

72. The Chairman said that the Report had incorporated members' views and suggestions raised at the informal closed meeting on 29 October 2007. He invited members' further views on the Report.

73. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the Report should be made available to the public to promote discussions on the subject of academic freedom and institutional autonomy in the higher education sector and the community as a whole. To achieve this purpose, he suggested that a notice be posted in the LegCo website to invite written views on the Report from members of the public, and letters be sent to invite interested parties in the higher education sector to submit views on the Report. The Administration and the UGC should be requested to provide separate responses to the Report. Thereafter, the Panel should schedule a meeting to discuss the subject. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed support for Mr CHEUNG's suggestions.

Role of UGC

74. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed concern about the role and functions of UGC in Hong Kong in the light of the findings of the research that the United Kingdom and New Zealand had established a statutory body to oversee the development of higher education. He considered that the Panel should discuss with the Administration and UGC the need to review the role and functions of UGC and to establish a statutory body to oversee the development of higher education in Hong Kong.

Staff employment terms

75. Dr Fernando CHEUNG noted the differences in the terms and conditions of employment for staff of the higher education sector between Hong Kong and the two selected places, and among the eight UGC-funded institutions. As institutions should enjoy autonomy in staff management matters, he considered it more appropriate for members to exchange views with the UGC-funded institutions on the matter at a future meeting.

Role of Government

76. The Chairman said that according to the research findings, the Government of the United Kingdom and New Zealand had not interfered with

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the administration of the higher education institutions to the same extent as in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, the Chief Executive was the Chancellor of the UGC-funded institutions and appointed a large percentage of members of their governing bodies.

77. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong added that it had been the policy of the former colonial government to appoint a high proportion of members of the governing bodies of the UGC-funded institutions in order to maintain its influence. Even then, the proportion of members appointed by the Government varied greatly among institutions. Given the change in the social and political circumstances, it was high time for the Administration to review the policy in this respect.

Follow-up

78. Members agreed to accept the Report, forward a copy of it to the Administration and UGC for separate written responses, and post a notice onto the LegCo website to invite public views. Members also agreed that the Panel should schedule a meeting to receive views on the subject in January or February 2008, and the Administration and UGC should be invited to attend the meeting.

[Post-meeting note : On 16 November 2007, a notice was posted onto the website of the LegCo to invite views on the Report. On 19 November 2007, letters were sent to organizations and persons who had given views on the subject of academic freedom and institutional autonomy of higher education to the Panel.]

IX. Any other business

79. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:43 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
7 December 2007