

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)769/08-09
(The minutes have been seen by
the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 12 January 2009, at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

- Members present** : Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan (Chairman)
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, SBS, JP
Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king
Hon Tanya CHAN
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon WONG Yuk-man
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
Dr Hon Samson TAM Wai-ho, JP
- Public Officers attending** : Agenda item IV
- Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education
- Mr Michael WONG, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education (1)
- Mr Michael V Stone
Secretary-General, University Grants Committee

Ms Amy WONG
Principal Assistant Secretary (Higher Education)

Agenda item V

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Ms Mable CHAN
Deputy Secretary for Education (2)

Dr Catherine CHAN Ka-ki
Deputy Secretary for Education (5)

Ms IP Ling-bik
Principal Assistant Secretary (Education Commission &
Planning)

Mr TAM Koon-che
Principal Education Officer (Hong Kong)

Mr CHENG Man-leung
Senior Curriculum Development Officer (Chinese)³

Attendance by invitation : Agenda item IV

The University of Hong Kong

Prof John Malpas
Pro-Vice-Chancellor

Mr Kenneth WONG
Director of Estates

Dr Albert CHAU
Dean of Student Affairs

Mr LAM Wo-hei
Consultant (Director, Wong & Ouyang (HK) Ltd)

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Prof KO Jan-ming
Vice President (Academic Staffing and Resources)

Mr CHAN Shu-keung
Director of Campus Development

Mr Daniel SUEN Chung-keung
Deputy Director Campus Development

Prof Bernard LIM Wan-fung
Consultant (Principal, Architecture Design and
Research Group Ltd)

Mr Daniel CHEUNG Kwok-fan
Consultant (Principal, Architecture Design and
Research Group Ltd)

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Prof Paul C W CHU
President

Prof Roland T CHIN
Vice-President for Academic Affairs/Deputy to the
President

Prof WONG Yuk-shan
Vice-President for Administration and Business

Mr Mike Hudson
Director of Facilities Management

Mr Andrew Nowak-Solinski
Associate Director of Facilities Management

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

Staff in attendance : Mr Stanley MA
Senior Council Secretary (2)8

Ms Ivy LAM
Council Secretary (2)3

Miss Jenny LEE
Legislative Assistant (2)6 (Acting)

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I. Confirmation of minutes

[LC Paper No. CB(2)577/08-09]

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2008 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)579/08-09]

3. Members noted the letter dated 12 January 2009 from Mr Tommy CHEUNG proposing the discussion of Non-means-tested Loan Schemes for Post-secondary Students at the next regular meeting which was tabled at the meeting. Mr CHEUNG said that a number of university graduates had expressed concern to the Liberal Party about the adverse impact of the recent financial crisis on their employment, hence their repayment ability. He considered it a matter of urgency to discuss the subject matter at the next regular meeting. Members agreed. The Chairman said that the Administration should be requested to respond to Mr CHEUNG's proposals in his letter and suggest measures to relieve the financial burden of loan borrowers.

4. In addition to the subject of "Non-means-tested Loan Schemes for Post-secondary Students", members also agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting scheduled for Monday, 9 February 2009, at 4:30 pm -

- (a) capital works project of the University Grants Committee-(UGC) funded institutions - Academic Building and Administration Building, City University of Hong Kong; and
- (b) governance structure and grievances and complaints mechanisms of the UGC-funded institutions.

5. Ms Audrey EU expressed concern about the slow progress in retitling the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIED) as a university. The Chairman

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pointed out that members would have the opportunity to discuss the subject matter in connection with HKIED's capital works project(s) for implementing the new academic structure in future. She added that members might also approach the President of HKIED direct should they wish to keep abreast of the latest developments. She also took the opportunity to appeal to members to attend the briefings/meetings organized by the UGC-funded institutions concerning the new academic structure and other matters of concern to members.

6. As there would be three discussion items for the next regular meeting, members agreed to extend the meeting for half an hour to 7:00 pm.

(Post-meeting note: it was subsequently decided that the Panel should receive views from deputations concerning the item of "Governance structure and grievances and complaints mechanisms of the UGC-funded institutions", and the meeting was extended for one hour.)

7. The Chairman suggested that the Panel should discuss the proposals in the Legislative Council (LegCO) Brief on the provision of hostels for non-local students in international schools and local schools in March 2009, if feasible. Members raised no objection.

IV. Capital works projects of the University Grants Committee-funded institutions

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)579/08-09(01)-(05)]

Declaration of interest

8. Mr Abraham SHEK declared interest as a member of the Court of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) and the Council of Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST). Mr LEE Cheuk-yan and Mrs Regina IP declared interest as members of the Court of HKU. Professor Patrick LAU declared interest as an honorable professor of HKU. Dr Priscilla LEUNG declared interest as a teaching staff member of the City University of Hong Kong (City U).

Development of Centennial Campus, Phases 1 and 2 by HKU

9. With the aid of power-point presentation, Professor John Malpas, Pro-Vice-Chancellor of HKU, briefed members on the major features of the capital works project for the development of the HKU Centennial Campus (the Centennial Campus Development) as detailed in the Administration's paper on the item.

(Post-meeting note: the softcopy of the presentation materials was sent to members by Lotus Notes on 15 January 2009.)

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Capital works projects for the UGC sector

10. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that according to the information available, the original estimates of the capital works projects for the UGC-funded institutions to implement the four-year undergraduate programmes under the new academic structure (the 334 structure) was about \$3.4 billion in 2004-2005 prices and about \$4.9 billion in September 2008 prices. The \$4.9 billion had not included some other capital works projects to meet the existing campus space shortfall of the institutions or the estimated inflation of 4% a year. In his view, the total cost for the 334-related capital works projects for the UGC sector might amount to \$8 billion to \$10 billion in money-of-the-day (MOD) prices. Mr CHEUNG considered it necessary for the Administration to set a ceiling for funding the capital works projects for the UGC sector, and for the institutions to seek private donations to cover expenses in excess of the ceiling. He opined that even if the institutions could raise donations, they should not propose the construction of sumptuous buildings and facilities given the prevailing economic situation.

11. Ms Starry LEE sought information on the criteria for sharing the costs of capital works projects by the Administration and the institutions concerned for implementing the 334 structure and other purposes and how the different purposes could be differentiated.

12. Dr Priscilla LEUNG shared the concerns of Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Ms Starry LEE. She also expressed concern about contract price fluctuation (CPF) for the capital works projects undertaken by the UGC-funded institutions. She asked whether the terms of CPF would be adopted for capital works projects for the UGC sector and how savings arising from a decline in labour and material costs under CPF would be used.

13. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung noted with concern about the 150% increase in construction material prices in 2008 as compared with that in 2005 according to the Architectural Services Department (ASD). Given the large number of capital works projects for the UGC sector to implement the 334 structure in the next few years and the manpower resources of UGC, he queried how UGC could closely monitor these construction works.

14. Under Secretary for Education (USED) explained that the provision of campus space for the UGC-funded institutions was calculated on the basis of student number in accordance with the prescribed accommodation standards. The funding for capital works projects for the UGC-funded institutions was based on the provision of standard facilities as laid down in the established formula. The institutions would be responsible for shouldering the costs for the construction of any additional/enhanced facilities.

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15. Secretary-General, University Grants Committee (SG(UGC)) responded that UGC could not actively monitor the implementation of the capital works projects for the UGC sector. The responsibility rested with the institutions concerned which would appoint a project manager for each project who would oversee to ensure completion within the estimated timeframe. Currently, all capital works projects for the 334 structure were almost ready for tendering. Barring unforeseen problems, these projects would be completed in time to tie in with the implementation of the 334 structure. UGC would receive quarterly progress reports of individual projects and requests for payments. UGC would arrange the payment to the institutions concerned taking account of the progress of the project. As regards the fluctuations in construction material prices, SG(UGC) said that essentially, all capital works projects for the UGC sector were fixed-price contracts that should be completed within the budget. In response to members' concern about possible decline in labour and material costs under the prevailing economic conditions, the Administration had agreed with the institutions to adopt CPF payments for these projects.

16. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered it inadequate to simply appoint a project manager to supervise the implementation of individual projects. He considered that UGC or a third party should be appointed to closely monitor the use of public resources and construction materials for the capital works projects for the UGC sector.

17. USED explained that funding for the capital works projects for the UGC-funded institutions was calculated in accordance with the standard design and construction cost for similar developments. Institutions would be responsible for shouldering the costs for works above these standards. Deputy Secretary for Education (1) (DS(Ed)1) supplemented that the Administration would provide information on the average construction costs per square metre for individual projects and similar developments in the UGC-funded institutions in its funding proposal to the Public Works Subcommittee (PWSC) and the Finance Committee (FC) for consideration.

18. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong was concerned about the party to be responsible for shouldering any additional costs arising from increases in labour and material costs for the capital works projects in the UGC sector.

19. USED explained that the actual costs of individual capital works projects would be determined by the tender prices. The Administration had agreed with the institutions to adopt CPF payments for these projects in anticipation of a decline in labour and material costs in the coming years.

20. The Chairman pointed out that the Administration had previously agreed to report the tender prices for approved projects to the FC. Given the expected trend of decline in labour and material costs, members were concerned that institutions might still use the approved funding for individual projects in full.

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21. DS(Ed)1 explained that the Administration had no obligation to provide additional funding to the institutions to cover the amount in excess of the approved project estimates. However, since the actual project costs were dependent upon the changes in labour and material costs in the market, there were precedents whereby the Administration had proposed and the FC had approved additional provision for the institutions concerned. The purpose of adopting CPF payments for capital works projects in the UGC sector was to ensure cost-effective use of public funds in the light of the prevailing economic downturns. However, in the event of a rapid increase in labour and material costs in future, the actual costs of the capital works projects for implementing the 334 structure might exceed the approved project estimates. In such circumstances, the Administration would propose additional provision for the institutions concerned. Should the additional provision not be approved by FC, the institutions concerned would have to bear the additional costs.

22. Professor Patrick LAU said that the costs of individual capital works projects in the UGC-funded institutions would largely be affected by the foundation works required for the sites concerned. He asked whether extensive site investigations had been conducted before estimating the cost for the capital works projects.

23. SG(UGC) responded that the necessary site investigations should have been conducted and technical problems known at the current stage for the capital works projects under discussion.

Design and facilities of the Centennial Campus

24. Ms Audrey EU considered that the UGC-funded institutions should provide an update on their provision of hostel places for students in their presentations on the capital works proposals for implementing the 334 structure. She expected that being higher education institutions, the UGC-funded institutions should take the lead in adopting green features in their capital works projects. She was also concerned about heritage conservation, and sought information on the possible re-use of the three graded historic buildings which would be affected by the Centennial Campus Development.

25. Professor John Malpas responded that the student hostel in Lung Wah Street was in progress and would provide 1 800 places by 2012. HKU would continue to identify suitable sites for construction of additional hostels. HKU had been taking the lead in adopting sustainability concepts for the Centennial Campus Development. The Centennial Campus Development had incorporated a whole range of conventional and innovative greening and environment protection initiatives including green roofing, green terraces, collection of rain water for irrigation, the use of photovoltaic and wind power, compacting of food waste to produce methane, etc. HKU had appointed a dedicated consultant on

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sustainability and green aspects and conducted two workshops on sustainability with staff and students and with the community. HKU believed it should be a leader in this area and had invested substantially on green architecture. HKU had appointed a sustainability officer to help formulate and develop the greening features and architecture for the Centennial Campus Development. In terms of indicators of measuring green architecture such as the Hong Kong Building Environmental Assessment Method, he believed that the Centennial Campus would perform very well.

26. Professor John Malpas further said that HKU had set up a Working Group on Heritage concerning the preservation of the three graded historic buildings affected by the Centennial Campus Development. According to the latest developments, the three historic buildings would be put to adaptive reuse which would be accessible to staff, students and the community. At this stage of planning, the three historic buildings would likely be converted into a visitor centre for HKU, a museum of HKU and the Western District, and a water supplies museum.

27. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that he had received complaints from staff associations that with about one-third increase in student population, there would be insufficient canteen facilities, examination venues and amenities areas for students in the university campus.

28. Professor John Malpas responded that the new Centennial Campus would provide amenities facilities covering an area of more than 2 000 square metres, and sports facilities such as student recreation rooms and gymnasium to accommodate the needs of an increased student population. In terms of examination venue, the Centennial Campus Development would provide some 8 000 square metres of additional classrooms which could be flexibly set up for examinations. With the changing curriculum for undergraduate programmes, there would be more course assessments and fewer examinations for assessment of students' performance.

29. In response to the Chairman's enquiry about the increase of library facilities to accommodate the needs of an increased student population under the 334 structure, Professor John Malpas responded that apart from the development of a joint library facility, the Centennial Campus Development would provide library and learning commons to facilitate self-learning. With increased availability of electronic access to books and texts, the pressure on the provision of books in libraries had been reduced.

30. Professor Patrick LAU pointed out that the proposal to construct the Centennial Campus had been initiated for years. He expressed concern about the slow progress of the Centennial Campus Development. Noting that the construction works would commence in the third quarter of 2009 for completion in the third quarter of 2012, while the four-year undergraduate programmes

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would start in September 2012, he asked whether the project could be expedited.

31. SG(UGC) responded that institutions were already gearing up to complete within the specified timeframe. Professor John Malpas said that HKU was aware of the site constraints and was planning a series of advanced works for the preparation of the superstructure works. The occupation permit for the new Centennial Campus was expected to be granted by the end of 2011, which would give sufficient time for HKU to prepare for the commencement of the new academic year in September 2012.

32. Mr Abraham SHEK said that the Administration and the UGC-funded institutions should have provided more comprehensive information on the capital works projects in the discussion papers which would have saved some questions from members. He reminded them to provide detailed information in their submissions to PWSC and FC to facilitate members' deliberation of the proposals.

Conclusion

33. Responding to the Chairman, members indicated support for the submission of the funding proposal to PWSC and FC for consideration.

Phase 8 Development by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University

34. With the aid of power-point presentation, Professor KO Jan-ming, Vice President (Academic Staffing and Resources), briefed members on the major features of the capital works project for the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) to implement the Phase 8 Development (the Development) on a site adjacent to the campus in Hung Hom.

Sha Tin - Central Link Development (SCL)

35. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the estimated cost of the Development was around \$1.4 billion which was the highest among the 12 capital works projects for implementing the 334 structure. He considered it unfair to PolyU as it had to provide a required open space of a total area of about 7 850 square metres at various locations from the lower ground to the podium deck for public access, and to reserve space of some 5 140 square metres to accommodate some railway ancillary facilities for the proposed SCL. As such, PolyU had to accommodate some of its facilities underground. As Hong Kong Mass Transit Railway Corporation Limited (the MTRC) was not wholly owned by the Government, he considered it necessary for the Administration to specify the additional costs incurred by PolyU for the construction of the reserved space for SCL and the underground facilities. In his view, the MTRC should reimburse to the Government these additional costs when SCL was constructed.

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36. Mr Abraham SHEK sought information on the estimated cost for reserving space for SCL. He also asked whether green roofing would be adopted for both the High Block and Low Block in the Development.

37. The Chairman shared the concern of Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Mr Abraham SHEK about the costs for reserving space for the development of the SCL ancillary facilities. She considered that the associated costs should not be borne by PolyU and the Administration should provide information on these costs in its submission to PWSC and FC for consideration.

38. USED explained that the construction costs for SCL would be borne by the Government. As public money would be used, it did not matter whether the cost for reserving the space was reflected in the project votes of the Development or the proposed SCL project in future. As regards the sharing of cost between the Government and MTRC, he considered it more appropriate to leave the matter to the Transport and Housing Bureau to liaise with the MTRC later. The Administration would provide the requested information in its submission to PWSC and FC.

39. Professor KO Jan-ming added that the roof of the High Block would mainly be used to house plant rooms. PolyU would consider members' advice and adopt measures to enhance greening on rooftop and building facades.

40. Responding to Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, Professor KO Jan-ming said that the provision of some 5 140 square metres of reserved space for SCL under the Development would require additional costs of about \$34 million and \$64 million respectively for the construction works above and excavation works, making a total of \$98 million.

41. DS(Ed)1 explained that the provision of the reserve area under the Development was proposed for the benefits of both PolyU and the MTRC. He pointed out that the Panel on Transport had discussed the SCL project including the concession funding approach for its implementation. Since SCL would involve a capital investment of more than \$30 billion, an amount of \$98 million was relatively small in comparison. He added that members' concerns would be relayed to the Transport and Housing Bureau.

42. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that the PolyU was more concerned about the completion of the Development on schedule than which party to absorb the additional costs arising from the reservation of 5 140 square metres space for SCL. He enquired about the party to be responsible for the on-going maintenance of the structure and facilities to be constructed on the reserve area. Professor KO Jan-ming replied that PolyU was not responsible for the maintenance of the reserve area that would be used by the MTRC.

43. Mr Abraham SHEK said that the SCL project would be fully funded by

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the Government. He considered that matters relating to SCL in connection with the Development should better be discussed at the relevant PWSC and FC meetings. Ms Starry LEE pointed out that the SCL project was proposed much earlier than the Development and the residents in the districts concerned were looking forward to its early completion. She considered that the present proposed project would benefit the parties concerned.

44. Professor Patrick LAU shared Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's concern. He pointed out the potential danger in locating laboratories underground. He said that the construction of underground facilities was costly and time-consuming. The reservation of space for SCL would not only increase the costs for the project but also require the accommodation of facilities underground. He enquired about the feasibility of increasing the height limit of the Development to provide additional space to accommodate the laboratories. Mr Abraham SHEK also asked whether the building height limit of 60 metres could be relaxed.

45. Professor KO Jan-ming explained that the height limit of 60 metres and 30 metres for the High Block and Low Block of the Development respectively were set by the Town Planning Board. It was necessary to place the laboratory at the basement as some heavy machinery and equipment would be housed.

46. Miss Tanya CHAN asked whether the Development would be linked to SCL and whether students would be affected during the construction of SCL. Professor KO Jan-ming replied that the Development would not be linked with SCL. The reserve area was mainly for the accommodation of some railway ancillary facilities for SCL.

The capital works projects for the UGC sector

47. Dr Priscilla LEUNG requested the Administration to elaborate further on the provision of funding for the capital works projects for implementing the 334 structure and meeting the existing campus space shortfall in the eight UGC-funded institutions.

48. DS(Ed)1 responded that the Administration had set aside sufficient funding for the capital works projects which were required for implementing the 334 structure. Where possible, such projects would be combined with works for meeting the existing space shortfall.

49. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan called on the Administration to expedite the funding approval process for the capital works projects for the UGC sector to facilitate smooth implementation of the 334 structure. He asked whether the four capital works projects discussed at the meeting could be submitted to FC for funding approval ahead the scheduled timetable in April 2009, and whether the proposals for the remaining projects for implementing the 334 structure could be submitted

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to the Panel for discussion as soon as practicable. He pointed out that early commencement of the projects would create employment opportunities and their early completion would allow sufficient time for the institutions to plan their class schedules for the four-year undergraduate programmes.

50. DS(Ed)1 responded that according to the existing schedule, the earliest possible date for submission of the four capital works projects to FC was 24 April 2009. He pointed out that to expedite the commencement of capital works projects, the institutions concerned might apply to the Secretary for Education for approval to start the works-related tendering and selection of consultant procedures after endorsement of the projects by PWSC and before obtaining funding approval by FC. This would expedite the tendering process by four to five weeks. Professor KO Jan-ming added that PolyU was in the process of applying for such approval.

51. The Chairman urged the Administration and UGC to speed up the submission of the capital works project proposals for the implementation of the 334 structure to the Panel for consideration. She suggested that a deadline should be set in this regard.

52. SG(UGC) responded that UGC was working closely with ASD and other departments to finalize the remaining capital works projects for implementing the 334 structure. The Government had in principle approved a large number of capital works projects which would almost fully meet the existing space shortfall of individual institutions and provide additional space for the provision of additional senior year undergraduate places and hostels.

53. DS(Ed)1 supplemented that there were other aspects of consideration such as preservation of heritage and important trees that needed to be tackled before the submission of a project proposal for members' scrutiny. The Administration had been working closely with UGC and relevant departments to expedite the submission of proposals to the Panel for consideration. For example, the proposed project for the construction of a library for the Chinese University of Hong Kong would be ready for submission in the third quarter instead of the fourth quarter of 2009 as originally planned. The Administration considered it inappropriate to set a deadline for the submission of the funding proposals for the 334-related projects.

54. In response to Mr Abraham SHEK's enquiry on the areas in the Development necessary for the implementation of the 334 structure, Professor KO Jan-ming said that the Development was necessary to accommodate the increase of student population under the 334 structure and associate degree graduates who were admitted to senior year undergraduate places. SG(UGC) added that PolyU would provide about 700 articulation places for sub-degree graduates each year and the total number of first-year-first degree places in Poly U was 2 300.

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Conclusion

55. Responding to the Chairman, members expressed support for the submission of the proposal for the Development to PWSC for consideration.

Development of a new academic building and the Institute of Advanced Study by HKUST

56. With the aid of power-point presentation, Professor WONG Yuk-shan, Vice-President for Administration and Business, briefed members on the major features of the capital works projects for the development of a new academic building and the Institute of Advanced Study (IAS).

57. Mr Tommy CHEUNG expressed support for the two capital works projects proposed by HKUST.

58. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed support for the two proposals and appreciation of HKUST for adopting a practical approach in the design and proposed use of the academic building and IAS. He pointed out that HKUST would contribute about \$97.7 million, whereas the Government would only fund about \$195.3 million for the construction of IAS. He remarked that HKUST had set a model for other UGC-funded institutions.

59. Ms Starry LEE said that as a former student of HKUST, she expressed support for the project and the further development of HKUST. She asked how HKUST would tackle the inadequacy of student hostel places to ensure that undergraduates would be provided with a hostel place for at least a year during their study.

60. Professor WONG Yuk-shan, responded that a student hostel with 350 places funded by HKUST would be completed in May 2009. In addition, HKUST was seeking UGC's support for the construction of two more hostels with a total capacity of 700 places. HKUST was also collaborating with other institutions to plan for the development of hostels for joint use. HKUST would aim to provide all undergraduates with a hostel place for at least a year during their study.

61. The Chairman requested the institutions to provide information on the increased provision of amenities, sports and library facilities, etc, in their submissions to PWSC to facilitate members' scrutiny of their proposals.

Conclusion

62. Members supported the submission of the proposals to PWSC for consideration.

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V. Education for non-Chinese speaking students

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)579/08-09(06)-(09) and CB(2)615/08-09(01)]

63. Members noted the background brief prepared by the LegCo Secretariat on education for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students.

Briefing by the Administration

64. USED briefed members on the salient points in the Administration's paper on the subject.

65. Referring to paragraph 23 of the Administration's paper which stated that the relevant information including the comprehensive "NCS Parent Package - your guide to education in Hong Kong" with translation in four major ethnic minority languages was being distributed to parents at Maternal and Child Health Centres, the Chairman said that such proposal was made by her and accepted by the Administration. She considered that for record purpose, the Administration should acknowledge the political party and/or LegCo member who had made any proposal adopted by it.

66. Mr Abraham SHEK expressed support for the efforts made by the Administration and measures provided to assist NCS students in education.

Designated schools for NCS students

67. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that a designated primary school with 31 NCS students and a designated secondary school with 77 NCS students were provided with a special grant of \$400,000 and \$500,000 respectively, while some 22 non-designated schools with more than 30 NCS students were not provided with any special grant. As the Administration had not set a ceiling for the number of designated schools, he asked whether the Administration would proactively approach or encourage non-designated schools meeting the prescribed criteria to become designated schools and be eligible for the special grant.

68. USED responded that in selecting additional designated schools, the Administration would take into account the spread of NCS students in the districts and whether the schools admitting a critical mass of NCS students had the experiences and capability to take care of NCS students and were ready to partner with the Education Bureau (EDB) in the development of reference materials for teaching and learning of NCS students; and share their experience with other schools admitting NCS students. The Administration would continue to liaise with non-designated schools.

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69. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong suggested that for districts where non-designated schools had a small intake of NCS students, the Administration should consider sponsoring non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to operate Chinese Language tutorial classes to support the NCS students in these districts.

70. Deputy Secretary for Education (2) (DS(Ed)2) acknowledged members' concern and pointed out that the Administration had commissioned HKU to operate the Chinese Language Learning Support Centres for provision of after-school classes to further support NCS students in learning the Chinese Language. In the 2008-2009 school year, there were eight such Centres located in different districts. The Administration would enhance the provision of after-school support services, having regard to the NCS student population in different districts. She added that compared with NCS students at primary levels, NCS students at secondary levels were more in need of remedial support learning in Chinese Language.

71. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan shared the concern of Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and considered the criteria and objectives for allocating the special grant unclear. In his view, the special grant should be used mainly to employ additional Chinese Language teachers rather than to develop teaching and learning materials for NCS students.

72. DS(Ed)2 explained that the special grant for designated schools was to identify good practices in supporting the NCS students for sharing among schools admitting NCS students. Individual designated schools should exercise their professional judgment on how to use the grant, such as appointing additional teachers and teaching assistants, procurement of materials, organizing activities, development of reference materials for NCS students at different proficiency levels; etc. to support teaching and learning of NCS students. The special grant was not calculated on a per capita basis. Depending on the number and needs of their NCS students, designated school would use the grant in a way appropriate to their circumstances to the benefit of the NCS students.

73. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan remained of the view that the criteria for selecting designated schools should be more specific. He considered that an objective criterion, such as the admission of a certain number of NCS students, was necessary. He also considered that schools provided with additional resources for the intake of NCS students should as far as possible employ teachers or teaching assistants to assist NCS students in learning Chinese Language.

74. Ms Starry LEE sought further information on the reason for not providing the special grant to schools on the basis of their enrolment of NCS students. She asked whether the Administration would review the criteria for allocation.

75. USED explained that the selection of designated schools was intended to

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provide focused support for schools admitting a critical mass of NCS students. These schools could become resources centres for the development of appropriate strategies and pedagogies on teaching the Chinese Language for NCS students. In collaboration with tertiary institutions, the teaching materials developed and good practices identified would be disseminated to other schools admitting NCS students. For non-designated schools admitting NCS students, the Administration had provided them with various grants including grants for remedial teaching, Capacity Enhancement Grant and Student Guidance Service Grant for meeting students' diverse needs. In addition, all schools with newly-arrived students including NCS students were provided with the School-based Support Scheme Grant to run school-based programmes. Non-designated schools had been able to make flexible use of these grants to support NCS students in learning Chinese Language.

76. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered that similar to the provision of additional resources for schools with intake of students with special educational needs (SEN), schools admitting NCS students should be provided with additional resources on a per capita basis, irrespective of whether they were designated schools. He pointed out that although schools were provided with the various grants to cater for learners' diversity, it would be difficult for non-designated schools to use these grants to support NCS students. Moreover, the teaching materials developed by designated schools might not be suitable for use by other schools. In his view, NCS students were handicapped in terms of their non-proficiency in Chinese language. From the perspective of integrated education, he considered it appropriate to provide additional resources to schools with intake of NCS students on a per capita basis.

77. USED reiterated that the Administration considered it more effective to identify and develop appropriate teaching and learning strategies, pedagogies and materials to enhance the learning effectiveness of NCS students, and hence facilitate their integration into the local community. In this regard, various grants were provided to schools to support NCS students and newly arrived children. He stressed that the support measures put in place for NCS students should be different from those under the integrated education for students with SEN.

78. DS(Ed)2 supplemented that given the resources constraints, the Administration considered it more practical and cost-effective to provide a special grant to designated schools to enable them to serve as anchor points for sharing experience with other schools admitting NCS students. As the Administration had not set a ceiling for designated schools, non-designated schools with a critical mass of NCS students and the necessary experience could consider becoming designated schools. The Administration had all along monitored the use of the special grant by designated schools, and some designated schools had used the additional resources for employing teaching assistants and some for the development of school-based teaching and learning

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materials for dissemination to other schools.

79. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out the downside of the proposed provision of additional resources to schools with intake of NCS students on a per capita basis as schools with a small number of NCS students at each level would have less resources to ensure effective use. He suggested that EDB should sponsor NGOs to provide after-school learning support classes in Chinese Language for NCS students attending these schools. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan expressed support for Mr CHEUNG's suggestion. DS(Ed)2 replied that the Administration would consider the suggestion.

Alternative Chinese Language qualifications(s) for admission to Secondary Six and universities

80. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan noted with concern that only 124 of the 316 NCS students taking the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) in 2008 met the minimum requirement for S6 admission. In his view, education was the key to eliminate poverty, and the provision of equal opportunities in education was essential for NCS students from low-income families to move upward in the social ladder. He pointed out that NCS students were not provided with quality kindergarten education to build up a solid foundation in learning, and the existing Secondary School Place Allocation (SSPA) system was disadvantageous to NCS students as their performance in Chinese Language was mostly graded at Band 3 level and this affected Secondary one (S1) allocation. He asked how the situation could be improved and whether the Administration would consider adopting some positive discrimination measures for NCS students in education.

81. USED explained that while acknowledging allocation of S1 places was primarily based on students' performance, it was the Government's policy to facilitate early integration of NCS students into the local education system and the wider community. The Administration was concerned about the education for NCS students and had provided a wide range of support measures to facilitate the teaching and learning of NCS students in schools. The Administration was aware of the importance of quality pre-school education in preparing NCS students to receive formal education. In this regard, the Administration had reinforced the promotion of education-related information to NCS parents including the distribution of the comprehensive "NCS Parent Package - your guide to Education in Hong Kong" with translation in four major ethnic minority languages at the Maternal and Child Health Centres. He added that subject to the prescribed requirements, schools admitting a critical mass of NCS students were allowed to adopt English as the medium of instruction for teaching NCS students. With all these measures, it was anticipated that the NCS students would better integrate in the local education system.

82. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan considered it discriminatory against NCS students in

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that they were not subsidized for taking the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) (Chinese) examination administered locally by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA), whereas students were subsidized for taking the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) (French) under HKCEE. NCS students had to pay more than \$900 for taking the former examination. In his view, those students taking the latter examination were unlikely in need of a subsidy.

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83. DS(Ed)2 explained that the mentioned IGCSE (French) was by virtue an examination subject under HKCEE as HKEAA had adopted the IGCSE (French) paper in HKCEE (French). As such, the examination fee was in line with those for other subjects in HKCEE. There was no question of subsidy for the IGCSE (French) examination. The Administration noted the concern of NCS parents and students about the examination fee of GCSE (Chinese), an overseas examination. HKEAA had undertaken to consider the matter in its annual review of examination fees. She added that a reduction of fee level for the GCSE (Chinese) examination might be likely when the number of candidates sitting for the examination increased.

84. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that the arrangement for the IGCSE (French) examination should be applied to the GCSE (Chinese) examination alike so that the examination fee for the latter could be reduced. He requested the Administration to coordinate with HKEAA to review the examination fee for the GCSE (Chinese) examination with a view to lowering the fee to assist NCS students in taking the examination.

85. Ms Audrey EU noted that the UGC-funded institutions had agreed to provide further flexibility for the acceptance of alternative Chinese Language qualifications for application under the Joint University Programmes Admissions System (JUPAS) from 2008 onwards. She was concerned whether the institutions did exercise flexibility, and sought information on the institutions and their programmes for which alternative qualifications were accepted. The Chairman added that only six NCS students were enrolled in the programmes under the JUPAS in the 2008-2009 academic year.

86. USED advised that JUPAS applicants were aware of the requirements of the UGC-funded institutions when considering Grade D or above in GCSE (Chinese) examination in applications for admission under the JUPAS. As the arrangement only took effect from the 2008 admission cycle onwards, the Administration would keep in view of the development.

87. Ms Starry LEE asked whether the Administration would consider the suggestion of the Hong Kong Unison Limited (the Unison) to have separate assessment of NCS students in Chinese Language for allocation of S1 places under the SSPA system so that NCS students would have a better chance of being allocated to popular schools of their choice.

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88. DS(Ed)2 pointed out that with different ethnic origins, family expectations and durations of residence of NCS students in Hong Kong the development of an alternative Chinese Language curriculum for separate assessment of NCS students' proficiency in Chinese Language, which would limit the range of learning opportunities of NCS students with different needs, might not be the best approach to support the NCS students. The Administration had aimed to develop different teaching strategies and models for enhancing their motivation to learn Chinese Language in effective ways. The Supplementary Guide to the Chinese Language Curriculum for NCS students (the Guide) provided four different curriculum modes to cater for the diverse needs and aspirations of NCS students as second language learners at different stages of development.

89. Ms Starry LEE noted that the Administration would consider conducting a research study on the academic performance of NCS students and enquired whether the subject of separate assessment for NCS students in Chinese Language would be covered.

90. DS(Ed)5 responded that the Administration had commissioned HKU to conduct a collaborative study on Chinese proficiency of NCS students at primary three (P3) and P6 levels. The study would be completed by the end of the 2008-2009 school year and the results of the study would help develop assessment tools for NCS students. The Administration acknowledged that given their diverse proficiency in Chinese, NCS students might have difficulty in catching up with their local counterparts in learning through Chinese in classes at the initial stage. For this reason, schools with sufficient intake of NCS students and meeting the prescribed requirements were allowed to use English as the medium of instruction. For NCS students who had completed pre-primary and primary education in local kindergarten and schools, the Administration anticipated that with the support measures, NCS students would have a sufficient level of proficiency in Chinese Language for proceeding to secondary education. Ms Starry LEE expressed reservations about the assumption that NCS students should be proficient in Chinese Language after the completion of primary education.

Support measures

91. Mr WONG Sing-chi said that EDB should proactively cooperate with schools to organize teaching and learning activities to provide opportunities for NCS students to learning Chinese Language through interactions with local students and communities outside classroom. He asked whether EDB had formulated a policy direction and allocated resources to support the organization and conduct of after-school activities for NCS students for such purpose.

92. DS(Ed)5 responded that the school-based support services for NCS

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students and their parents provided by schools had covered various interesting programmes outside classroom and school. DS(Ed)2 supplemented that EDB had provided resources for schools to organize a wide variety of after-school activities such as drama and singing contests to help NCS students to integrate into the local communities.

93. Dr Priscilla LEUNG expressed support for the Administration's measures to support schools in the provision of education for NCS students. In her view, NCS students in Hong Kong were proficient in spoken Chinese but had difficulties in writing Chinese. She suggested that for districts with an increasing NCS population in recent years such as Mong Kok, Yaumatei and Tai Kok Tsui, the Administration should encourage the provision of tutorial groups in written Chinese for NCS students. On resources consideration, such a support measure should be implemented by districts on a progressive basis. She also pointed out that many NCS students had emotional problems and should be helped integrate into the local communities.

94. DS(Ed)5 explained that in general, NCS students encountered difficulties in learning the Chinese characters because of the significant difference in writing system from scripts of their mother languages. To overcome the learning hurdles, the Guide provided a range of specific learning and teaching strategies for teaching NCS students to develop their abilities in recognition of and writing the Chinese characters. In addition, EDB had developed a range of resources to assist schools in teaching Chinese characters for NCS students, including a book on fundamental lexical items for learning Chinese with English explanations and software on learning traditional and simplified Chinese characters. These resources would be made available to schools and saleable to wider public through the Government Bookstore. NCS parents could also make reference to these resources while helping their children to learn Chinese.

95. The Chairman suggested that the Administration should make reference to overseas experience and consider providing after-school tutorial classes to NCS students who would revisit the materials learnt in the school class. She also suggested that examination adaptation measures should be provided to NCS students as a transient arrangement, such as reading the examination papers to them and allowing them extra time as in the case of students with specific learning difficulties.

96. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong was of the view that a Grade D and above in GCSE (Chinese) examination was the minimum level of attainment required of NCS students for pursuing further education or seeking employment after completion of education. While NCS students should be provided with support measures in education, they had to be assessed at a reasonable standard that was accepted by the community at large, otherwise their attainment would not be recognized for further study or employment purpose. After all, NCS students

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were not students with SEN who needed special support in learning and assessment. Dr Priscilla LEUNG echoed Mr CHEUNG's view and stressed the importance of recognition of the attainment for further education and employment purposes.

97. DS(Ed)5 responded that schools were encouraged to adopt adaptive measures to assess NCS students, in particular in the early stage of their schooling, with a view to enhancing their learning motivation. However, after a certain period of time, it was necessary to apply the assessment mechanism for local students to NCS students.

Follow-up

98. Ms Audrey EU noted the proposals in the Unison's submission and suggested that the Administration should discuss with the Unison the details. The Chairman informed members that the Administration had a meeting with the Union on 29 December 2008, and suggested that the Administration might invite Panel members to attend its meetings with the Unison in future.

99. DS(Ed)2 responded that the Administration considered the meeting with the Unison and representatives of NCS parents on 29 December 2008 constructive and positive, and would be ready to have similar meetings in future. The Administration would consider the Unison's latest submission and where necessary, meet with the Unison again.

100. Referring to paragraphs 18 to 20 of the Administration's paper, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out the following -

- (a) of the 316 NCS students taking the HKCEE, 84 of the 124 NCS students meeting the minimum requirement for S6 admission studied in S6 classes in the public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools;
- (b) 24 NCS students studying in S7 in public sector and DSS schools had sat for the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination, and six of the 10 NCS students having been offered a place under JUPAS had accepted the offer; and
- (c) over 200 NCS students who had completed S5 or above were studying degree/diploma or certificate courses offered by the Vocational Training Council and the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts.

101. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong suggested that the Administration should conduct a tracking survey to analyse the reasons for those NCS students rejecting the offer to study in S6, S7 and the UGC-funded institutions; and the courses

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attended in paragraph 100 (c) above. The findings of the survey would shed light on mapping out the measures to support NCS students in education and employment in the long term. He stressed the importance of demonstrating the effectiveness of the support measures progressively.

102. USED responded that the Administration would launch a longitudinal study shortly. DS(Ed)2 supplemented that based on the study findings, the Administration would reflect on the strategies and methods for enhancing learning effectiveness of NCS students at different levels.

103. Concluding the discussions, the Chairman urged the Administration to collaborate with NGOs in the provision of support measures for NCS students in education. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan suggested that the Panel should also discuss education for NCS students with SEN. Members agreed.

VI. Any other business

104. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 7:20 pm.

Council Business Division 2
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