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Legislative Council

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Panel on Education

**Minutes of special meeting
held on Thursday, 2 July 2009, at 5:30 pm
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

- Members present** : Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan (Chairman)
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, 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 Tanya CHAN
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon WONG Yuk-man
Dr Hon Samson TAM Wai-ho, JP
- Member attending** : Hon James TO Kun-sun
- Members absent** : Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee, GBS, JP
- Public Officers attending** : Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Mrs Betty IP
Deputy Secretary for Education (3), Education Bureau

Mr David WONG
Principal Assistant Secretary (Narcotics), Security
Bureau

Mr Peter George Else
Chief Superintendent (Narcotics Bureau), Hong Kong
Police Force

Mr FUNG Man-lok
Assistant Director (Youth and Corrections), Social
Welfare Department

Dr Tina MOK
Principal Medical Officer, Department of Health

Ms Margaret TAY
Chief Manager (Integrated Care Programs), Hospital
Authority

**Attendance by
invitation** : Young Civics

Mr Leo YAU
Exco Member

Christian Zheng Sheng Association

Mr LAM Hay-sing
Chief Executive Officer

Mr CHAN Siu-cheuk
Executive Director

North District Secondary Schools Principals'
Association

Mr YUEN Pong-yiu
Chairman

Mr YIM Chi-shing
Vice-Chairman

Family Dynamics Network

Mr Matthew MAK
Secretary

Federation of Parent-Teacher Association of Yau, Tsim
& Mongkok Districts

Mrs Leticia LAU LEE See-yin
President

Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union

Mr WONG Hak-lim
Vice-President

Civic Party

Mr Ken TSANG
Exco Member, NTE Branch

Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of
Hong Kong

Mr CHENG Wing-shun
Deputy Spokesperson of Education Policy

The Hong Kong Council of Social Service

Mr Moses MUI
Chief Officer (Family & Community Service)

Mr Ken CHAN
Chief Officer (Children & Youth Service)

Schooling Right Concern Group

Mr LAU Wai-lap
Social Worker

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

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

Ms Judy TING
Council Secretary (2)3

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

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Before proceeding to the agenda item, the Chairman invited members' views on holding a further special meeting either in July or September 2009 on the subject of educational services, one of the six economic areas proposed by the Task Force on Economic Challenges (TFEC).

2. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the development of the six economic areas was only at the preliminary stage of study. Since concrete plans had yet to be formulated, and given the large number of special meetings scheduled for July 2009, he proposed discussing the subject in the next Legislative Council (LegCo) session.

3. The Chairman pointed out that TFEC had held its last meeting on 22 June 2009 and had completed its work. One of the development directions of education services was the establishment of self-financing degree-awarding institutions through the provision of land. Should the matter develop expeditiously, she would convene a special meeting to discuss the subject. The Chairman further said that the subject of self-financing degree-awarding institutions would be followed up in the next LegCo session.

I. Support measures for rehabilitation of students abusing drug
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)2058/08-09(01) and IN12/08-09]

Oral presentation by deputations

Young Civics
[LC Paper No. CB(2) 2112/08-09(01)]

4. Mr Leo YAU presented the views of Young Civics as detailed in its submission.

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*Christian Zheng Sheng Association
[LC Paper No. CB(2)2058/08-09(02)]*

5. Mr LAM Hay-sing lodged three complaints against the Education Bureau (EDB). He said that EDB had failed to fulfil its role in providing free education to student drug abusers who were receiving drug rehabilitative treatment. The problem of youth drug abuse prevailed in schools, but EDB had failed to stem it. Mr LAM emphasized that while EDB had expressed support for the relocation of Christian Zheng Sheng Association (CZSA) to the former New Territories Heung Yee Kuk Southern District Secondary School (SDSS), it was important for EDB to recognize the right of student drug abusers to free education. Mr LAM was of the opinion that EDB was not transparent in its handling of drug abuse in schools, and urged the Administration to provide information on the number of students who had dropped out from schools on account of emotional, behavioural and drug abuse problems, as well as the number of such students who had resumed normal schooling subsequently. He was given to understand that EDB had not followed up such cases.

6. Mr LAM further said that EDB had failed to recognize that student drug abusers should receive formal education. The Secretary of Education had said at the LegCo meeting on 25 June 2009 that student drug abusers would normally be sent to drug rehabilitation centres to receive treatment and education concurrently. Mr LAM pointed out that the education provided in these centres was not mainstream in nature, and the youngsters were deprived of their right to formal education.

North District Secondary Schools Principals' Association

7. Mr YUEN Pong-yiu said that it was important to provide assistance to student drug abusers from three directions. First, it was necessary to channel these students to the right institutions for follow-up services. They should be categorized into three types according to their drug abuse behaviour. For students with light drug abuse, school social workers (SSWs) and school personnel should be able to provide assistance to them on the condition that sufficient resources and support were available. As regards students with medium drug abuse, they should receive treatment at the treatment and rehabilitation centres operated by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) while continuing formal education at schools. As for students with serious drug abuse, Mr YUEN suggested that they should receive treatment at residential drug treatment and rehabilitation centres (DTRCs), and after treatment and rehabilitation, these students should resume education at schools.

8. Mr YUEN further said that there should be division of labour among the many NGOs in tackling the problem of youth drug abuse given their different roles in providing support to schools for handling student drug abusers. A central referral mechanism should be established for handling placement of

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student drug abusers to different treatment and rehabilitation centres. At present, treatment and rehabilitation services were inadequate owing to the lack of resources to NGOs. Student drug abusers referred by schools normally had to wait for about two years before receiving services from NGOs.

Family Dynamics Network

9. Mr Matthew MAK said that although compulsory drug testing was controversial, it was important to identify at-risk students. The Network agreed that a pilot scheme of school-based voluntary drug testing should be conducted at some schools. For the scheme to succeed, the Administration should ensure the adequacy of downstream support measures and provide training to teachers and parents to facilitate their understanding of the drug abuse problem, the changing nature of youth drug abuse and the availability of resources. Schools should designate teachers tasked with the duty of handling student drug abuse cases. Seminars and conferences should be organized regularly across districts to facilitate exchange of views and experiences among stakeholders. Protocols should be provided to parents explaining the procedures for rehabilitated students to return to normal schooling. Furthermore, the Administration should acknowledge the success of CZSA by incorporating educational programmes into drug treatment and rehabilitation services.

Federation of Parent-Teacher Association of Yau, Tsim & Mongkok Districts

10. Mrs Leticia LAU LEE said that the Federation was concerned about the capacity of the existing five Substance Abuse Clinics (SACs) in meeting the demand of young drug abusers for rehabilitation services. She was given to understand that some SACs did not accept cross-district cases, thus delaying the delivery of timely support to needy students. The Federation welcomed the increase of the number of SACs from five to seven. Mrs LAU suggested enhancing the manpower of SSWs in order to implement the Healthy School Policy and extending the coverage of SSWs to primary schools to equip younger students with the knowledge of preventing drug abuse. Protocols should be provided to Parent-Teachers Associations (PTAs) to help them identify students with drug abuse behaviour. As for school-based voluntary drug testing, the Federation stressed the need not to divulge the names of students found to be abusing drugs in order to enhance the confidence of parents and students in drug testing. Mrs LAU also opined that the number of parent resource kits provided for PTAs was not adequate. Many parents due to work commitment were not aware or capable of educating their children of youth drug abuse problem. Some of them did not have the knowledge of accessing the Internet for youth drug abuse information. It was therefore important for the Administration to allocate more resources to the Federation, PTAs and schools to promote parental education.

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*Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union
[LC Paper No. CB(2)2112/08-09(02)]*

11. Mr WONG Hak-lim presented the views of Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union as detailed in its submission.

Civic Party

12. Mr Ken TSANG said that currently, when schools suspected students to be drug abusers, they were advised to inform the parents concerned, consult Police School Liaison Officers for assistance, and refer the case to the SSWs and the student guidance personnel for follow-up services. In the absence of clear guidelines for handling student drug abusing cases, schools used their own ways to deal with such cases. Suspected students would normally be segregated from other students by having lessons in the library on their own or suspended from school for a period of time. These arbitrary measures would drive student drug abusers to leave schools and continue with their drug abuse behaviour. Civic Party recommended that the Administration should carry out a comprehensive review on the existing mechanism pertaining to rehabilitation services for student drug abusers.

13. Mr TSANG suggested reinforcing the manpower of SSWs and increasing complementary services. Although the Administration had opened two new Counselling Centres for Psychotropic Substance Abusers (CCPSAs), student drug abusers would not voluntarily seek such services. They would instead rely on the complementary support of District Youth Outreaching Social Work Teams, Overnight Outreaching Service for Youth Night Drifters, as well as SSWs for referring them to the appropriate institutions. Being a district youth outreaching social worker, Mr TSANG noted that student drug abusers normally sought advice from social workers because of the mutual trust established. Lastly, Mr TSANG proposed to establish short-term treatment and rehabilitation services to cater for the need of occasional youth drug abusers, such as weekend and party drug abusers.

*Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong
[LC Paper No. CB(2)2298/08-09(01)]*

14. Mr CHENG Wing-shun presented the views of Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong as detailed in its submission.

The Hong Kong Council of Social Service

15. Referring to the Report of the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse (the Report), Mr Moses MUI said that many social workers supported its recommendation of early identification and intervention. He stressed the importance of support measures following the identification of student drug

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abusers, and pointed out that improvement in support measures would motivate them to receive treatment and rehabilitation. Presently, student drug abusers needed to wait for about one to two months before being admitted into CCPSAs. Mr MUI also highlighted the importance of medical support for student drug abusers. SACs provided medical treatment to drug abusers with psychiatric problems. However, many youth drug abusers had other health concerns including liver and kidney problems. To continue with the work of the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse (Task Force) towards combating youth drug abuse, a high level and inter-departmental summit should be established to implement the relevant policies and to coordinate the provision of support measures for youth drug abusers.

Schooling Right Concern Group

16. Mr LAU Wai-lap said that although EDB had provided guidelines and protocols to schools for handling student drug abusers, schools used their own ways to deal with students found to be abusing drugs, such as segregating the students concerned from other students, not indicating whether the students concerned would be promoted to the next level, and suspending the students concerned from class for a period of time for reasons such as improper attire. Eventually, these students had to leave schools because of insufficient attendance. Mr LAU raised concern about the small number of referral cases by schools to District Youth Outreaching Social Work Teams. He considered it important to implement appropriate measures to facilitate rehabilitated student drug abusers to return to normal schooling. Some students of CZSA had experienced difficulties in resuming normal schooling following their rehabilitation at the centre. He was concerned that the Non-Attendance Team of EDB was overwhelmed with the heavy workload and only a limited number of schools offered places for those rehabilitated students who wished to resume normal schooling, such as the Holy Carpenter Secondary School.

The Administration's response

17. Under Secretary for Education (US(Ed)) said that the Administration would take into consideration the views of the deputations when implementing support measures for rehabilitation of students abusing drugs. EDB would collaborate with various departments and organizations with a view to strengthening and enhancing the drug rehabilitation services.

18. US(Ed) then briefed members on the main points of the current services on treatment and rehabilitation of youth drug abusers which could be grouped into five categories, namely, CCPSAs, SACs, methadone treatment programme, DTRCs as well as compulsory drug treatment programme at drug addiction treatment centres (DATCs). US(Ed) elaborated that student drug abusers were generally divided into three types and received different treatment and rehabilitation services. Students who had not formed the habit of regular drug

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abusing could continue their education in their original schools while receiving drug treatment and rehabilitation services in CCPSAs. Students with regular drug abusing habit, either referred by parents, social workers or probation officers, would be sent to DTRCs for treatment and rehabilitation. The drug treatment programmes in DTRCs usually lasted for about six to 12 months. Since 1995, non-profit making voluntary agencies running DTRCs could apply for subvention from EDB to operate education programmes, i.e., Chinese, English and Mathematics, plus other complementary education activities, for young drug abusers aged 18 or below, preparing them for continuation of schooling or employment upon full rehabilitation. EDB and DTRCs would provide appropriate support to students who wished to resume schooling in mainstream schools or pursue other programmes. Students aged 14 or above who had committed drug-related offences would receive education at DATCs operated by the Correctional Services Department.

19. US(Ed) pointed out that with the increasing awareness of parents and schools on the youth drug abuse problem, the Administration had acted promptly to expand the existing rehabilitation support measures for student drug abusers. The Report, released in November 2008, had recommended a treatment and rehabilitation strategy which focused on the enhancement of downstream programmes in terms of capacity and sophistication, subject to the availability of resources.

20. US(Ed) further elaborated that the Fifth Three Year Plan on Treatment and Rehabilitation Services in Hong Kong (2009-2011) released in April 2009 had recommended development and advancement of new or proven service models that would better address the needs due to the changing drug scene. CZSA was an example of one suggestion to develop more complementary services comprising drug treatment and rehabilitation programmes as well as education programmes to school-aged youngsters. Another suggestion was to provide short-term treatment and rehabilitation programmes for young psychotropic substance abusers which might cause less disruption to their work or schooling, help break the vicious cycle of those experimenting early with drugs, and could better motivate them to seek assistance. He stressed that EDB would continue to provide subvention to NGOs running DTRCs to operate education programmes for young drug abusers aged 18 or below. EDB and Social Welfare Department (SWD) would take into account the special educational needs of students rehabilitating from drug problems when they assessed the service demand and planned the enhancement of Schools for Social Development. Regional Education Offices and Non-Attendance Team of EDB would continue to help rehabilitated students return to normal schooling.

21. Principal Assistant Secretary (Narcotics) Security Bureau (PAS(N)/SB) supplemented that the Report had recommended to enhance downstream support measures. Additional resources had been allocated to increase the respective numbers of CCPSAs and SACs from five to seven to extend the coverage of

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service, strengthen the manpower of the existing 16 District Youth Outreaching Social Work Teams and 18 teams of Overnight Outreaching Service for Young Night Drifters, as well as provide an additional 101 places in DTRCs. Since 2009-2010, there was additional provision for on-site basic medical support at CCPSAs, including body check-up, motivational interviews and voluntary drug testing. Furthermore, the Hospital Authority (HA) would increase the number of doctor sessions at the seven SACs offering assistance to psychotropic substance abusers.

22. PAS(N)/SB pointed out that another priority was the enhancement of probation service. Preparation was underway to carry out a two-year pilot scheme on enhanced probation service to provide more focused, structured and intensive treatment programmes for convicted young drug offenders at two Magistracies starting from October 2009. This would enhance the assistance in a focused manner to young drug abusers caught by the law.

23. PAS(N)SB echoed the views of US(Ed) that the Report had put strong emphasis on downstream support measures in terms of capacity and sophistication. One of the examples was the recently released resource kit for parents. The resource kit facilitated PTAs and NGOs to organize anti-drug programmes for parents. The kit was available on the website of Narcotics Division (ND) for public viewing.

24. PAS(N)/SB added that the resource kit for the school sector in modular form would be available in the 2009-2010 school year for different units of the school personnel, namely, school management, guidance and discipline teachers, and SSWs, as well as class and subject teachers, with a view to building an integral network of support in schools, and preventing student drug abuse. While school management could make use of the kit to implement the Healthy School Policy, guidance and discipline teachers and SSWs could utilize the protocols of the kit to identify and help students with drug abuse problems. Also, class and subject teachers could make use of the kit to deliver drug education and identify at-risk students. He pointed out that the Administration would continue to consult the stakeholders on the contents of the kit, such as proper handling of the identity of a student found to have drug abusing problem.

25. PAS(N)/SB stressed that in addition to the provision of resources to NGOs, the Beat Drugs Funds (BDF) gave priority to NGOs and sponsored them to launch different programmes to step up the anti-drug work. A total of some \$33 million had been allocated to fund different anti-drug projects in the community by BDF in the last financial year.

26. The Chairman requested PAS(N)/SB to provide the information which he had just elaborated in writing, and enquired whether the information on the resource kits was available on the website of ND. PAS(N)/SB replied that the Administration would shortly provide a progress report on the motion debate on

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the subject. Information on the parent resource kit had been made available on the website of ND while the three-modular school resource kit would be introduced in the next school year. He added that the Administration was fully appreciative of the importance of downstream support measures associated with school-based voluntary drug testing. The Administration would carefully study the support services on treatment and rehabilitation before the launch of the pilot project. School-based drug testing would help prevent students from abusing drugs, thus relieving the demand for downstream support services.

27. Assistant Director (Youth and Corrections) Social Welfare Department said that the expenditure spent on curbing the problem of drug abuse in service areas including school social work units, day and overnight outreaching services, community support service and CCPSAs for the past three years had increased by around 20%, from \$334 million in 2006-2007 to \$402 million in 2008-2009 with the bulk of the resources allocated to the enhancement of social workers. To meet with the upsurge of service demand, SWD would continue to work closely with ND with a view to better deploying resources to help young drug abusers.

28. In response to the Chairman's enquiry with regard to medical services offered to psychotropic substance abusers and at risk youth, Chief Manager (Integrated Care Programs), Hospital Authority said that HA would increase doctor sessions at SACs from October 2009 following the recruitment exercise of doctors in July 2009.

Discussion

Christian Zheng Sheng Association

29. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong welcomed EDB's recognition of CZSA being a service model comprising drug treatment and rehabilitation programmes as well as educational programmes for school-aged drug abusers. He noted that CZSA had responded to the sincere invitation of Heung Yee Kuk (HYK) to consider other available sites of rural schools. As these rural schools did not have sufficient facilities for both teaching and boarding, SDSS remained the best option for CZSA's relocation. He asked whether the Administration had formulated the relevant procedures and time-table associated with the relocation of CZSA and would provide appropriate resources to CZSA for refurbishing SDSS and subvention to CZSA students.

30. Mr CHEUNG was given to understand by different sources that Mui Wo School was in urgent need for improvement of school facilities. Although there were only about 50 P6 students requiring secondary school places, he considered it important to respond to the petition of Mui Wo parents for more public sector school places in the area and cater to the needs of both CZSA and Mui Wo School to achieve a win-win situation. He sought information on the

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improvement of school facilities and the provision of public sector school places in Mui Wo.

31. In response, US(Ed) said that so far, the Administration had not received any request from Mui Wo School for improving its school facilities, and EDB would discuss with the School in this regard if necessary. US(Ed) added that EDB would discuss with CZSA with regard to its requirements for refurbishing the new site as well as subvention for CZSA students.

32. PAS(N)/SB expressed gratitude to HYK for proposing different locations for CZSA relocation. He said that staff of ND had visited the various sites to see whether they were suitable for the operational needs of CZSA. The next step of work was to consult HYK and Islands District Council to address the relevant issues of CZSA relocation. In reply to Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's enquiry about the time-table for CZSA relocation, PAS(N)/SB pointed out that it was difficult to provide a time-table at this stage. He stressed that the Administration had accorded top priority to relocating CZSA and would adopt a balanced approach to achieving its relocation.

33. Noting that the Administration supported CZSA relocating to SDSS and operating as a drug treatment and rehabilitation centre and that CZSA was currently operating with a private school licence, Mr James TO sought clarification on whether the Administration supported the operation of CZSA as a school or a drug treatment and rehabilitation centre in SDSS.

34. US(Ed) responded that the Fifth Three-Year Plan had recommended the development and advancement of new or proven service models that would better address the needs of the changing drug scene. Being the only rehabilitation centre-cum-school, CZSA was one suggestion to develop more complementary services comprising drug treatment and rehabilitation programmes as well as education programmes to school-aged youngsters. The Administration fully supported CZSA's relocation together with its existing private school registration.

35. Mr James TO welcomed US(Ed)'s clarification. He asked whether there would be provision of resources to facilitate CZSA's relocation. In reply, US(Ed) said that there were currently no policies or prescribed procedures regarding the provision of resources to rehabilitation centre-cum-schools such as CZSA. While the Administration attached great importance to the successful relocation of CZSA, it had to examine its relocation plan as well as its future mode of operation in deciding how it should be assisted. US(Ed) further explained that the Administration had all along provided subvention for NGOs running DTRCs to operate education programmes for young drug abusers under 18 or below, and CZSA had obtained similar subvention for its operation in the past. Since rehabilitation centre-cum-school was a new model, it was important to consider the matter from a holistic and integrated manner. EDB would start discussion

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with CZSA as soon as practicable.

36. PAS(N)/SB added that the BDF had all along provided subvention to DTRCs associated with relocation, redevelopment and refurbishment projects, and CZSA had obtained similar subvention for relocating one of its units. There were also one-off assistance offered by charitable funds for similar purposes.

37. Mr WONG Yuk-man said that the original school places of CZSA were 30, but its existing number of students had reached 120. Its classroom facilities were below acceptable standard and student expenditure was being funded by Comprehensive Social Security Assistance. He was disappointed with the Administration's inaction in providing appropriate assistance to CZSA. In his view, the present approach and mindset adopted by the Administration in combating youth drug abuse was ineffective. He called on the Administration to formulate new philosophies and policies to meet the changing scene of youth drug abuse. One noteworthy point was the supply of drug from the Mainland, and this problem had to be addressed at root. Another problem was the stigmatization of students found to have drug abuse behaviour, and this had not been resolved so far.

38. Miss Tanya CHAN was concerned about the communication initiated by EDB with CZSA concerning its relocation, future mode of operation and subvention for its students. She said that she had recently attended a sharing session at CZSA, and considered that the Administration should have a better understanding of CZSA and should not regard the provision of education therein transient in nature. Professor Patrick LAU shared the view on the necessity to provide education programmes to student drug abusers while they received treatment and rehabilitation services.

39. US(Ed) replied that EDB had been in contact with CZSA to gain a better understanding of its operation. Policies were in place to offer subvention to DTRCs to provide education programmes for student drug abusers. Since CZSA was a rehabilitation centre-cum-school, the Administration would need to work out policies to cater to its unique mode of operation.

40. Mr LAM Hay-sing said that staff of EDB had visited CZSA for school inspection purpose. CZSA had tried unsuccessfully to discuss with senior officials of EDB on other relevant issues.

41. The Chairman opined that the crux of the issue was whether EDB would regard CZSA as a subvented school and not a drug treatment and rehabilitation centre.

42. Ms Audrey EU expressed disappointment that EDB had not communicated with CZSA on its relocation and future planning. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung was also disappointed that the Administration had failed to offer

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assistance to CZSA related to its relocation, future mode of operation and subvention for CZSA students. US(Ed) reiterated that the Administration would discuss with CZSA concerning its relocation and future mode of operation.

Resource kits for parents and schools

43. Mr WONG Sing-chi was given to understand that some students were recently expelled from a school in the New Territories after they had been caught smoking in the school campus. He requested the Administration to look into the case. In his view, it took time to acquire the knowledge of handling drug abuse, a resource kit on the subject would not be sufficient for the purpose. He enquired about the assistance provided to schools and parents to facilitate their effective use of the resource kits. This was important with the proposal to introduce school-based voluntary drug testing as parents and teachers might need to provide preliminary counselling to students identified to have taken drug. Mr WONG considered it necessary to enhance downstream support measures for drug abuse youngsters. Referring to the 20% increase of recourses to combating youth drug abuse by SWD, he pointed out that the problem remained prevalent despite the substantial resources injected for the purpose. These resources were either insufficient or were not directed to the right targets.

44. US(Ed) responded that the parent resource kit had been developed to facilitate various PTAs to organize anti-drug programmes for parents to help them better understand the problem of youth drug abuse. In addition to the guidelines and protocols for school personnel, EDB would take the lead in arranging workshops for teachers. He stressed that EDB would endeavour to arrange as many as practicable training programmes in the summer vacation and could provide relevant information later.

45. PAS(N)/SB supplemented that the general public had shown great interest in the issue of youth drug abuse. To facilitate PTAs to effectively use the parent resource kit, the Administration had commissioned training programmes for them. The website version of the resource kit would be updated at least for the first year after launch taking into consideration the changing scene of youth drug abuse. In terms of downstream support measures, the Commission for Narcotics had been working on coordinating policies and measures across different disciplines.

School-based voluntary drug testing

46. Mr WONG Yuk-man said that he had indicated objection to school-based drug testing at the meeting of the Panel on Security on 5 May 2009, as drug testing would create polarization between students and the community as a whole. Given the disappointing performance and the lack of vision on the part of the Administration, he showed scepticism of its ability to carry out the proposed drug testing, be it voluntary or compulsory. Noting the number of

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reported drug abusers between the ages of 12 to 17 reaching 1 580 in 2007, he was worried that there was a much larger group of non-reported cases being overlooked by the Administration.

47. PAS(N)/SB said that the Administration had always endeavoured to improve its work in prevention of drugs and downstream support measures. In his view, combating youth drug abuse was a long-term battle and it required the concerted effort of the community to succeed. Public awareness of youth drug abuse had been greatly enhanced as a result of the work of the Task Force.

48. Miss Tanya CHAN remarked that it had become a normal practice for the Administration to set up special agencies or task forces to address an issue of public concern. The Administration might contemplate to establish a special agency to co-ordinate the work relevant to youth drug abuse. Referring to the pilot scheme of school-based voluntary drug testing, Miss CHAN pointed out that many deputations, parents and social workers remained sceptical about the effectiveness of the scheme.

Enhanced probation system

49. Miss Tanya CHAN sought information on the pilot scheme of the enhanced probation system.

50. PAS(N)/SB said that the Administration aimed to carry out a two-year pilot scheme of enhanced probation system at two Magistracies with a view to providing comprehensive supervision and focused assistance to young drug abusers caught by the law. During the probation period, Probation Officers would pay close attention to the performance of the offenders and review whether they had breached any rules pertaining to probation. While the length of probation period normally lasted for 15 months, it could either be shortened or lengthened depending upon the performance of the offenders. Non-compliance with the rules might result in intensified judicial supervision or alternative court disposal. PAS(N)/SB stressed that overseas experiences in drug courts had proved successful in preventing young drug abusers from relapsing into drug abuse habit. The Administration would closely monitor the outcomes of the pilot scheme. Should the scheme prove to be successful, consideration might be given to expanding the coverage to other young drug abusers subject to availability of resources.

Allocation of resources

51. Mr WONG Yuk-man and Ms Audrey EU considered it important to understand the severity of youth drug abuse in order to allocate appropriate resources as well as to plan for the way forward. Ms EU sought information on the resources designated for combating youth drug abuse, the number of different types of young drug abusers receiving treatment and rehabilitation

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services, as well as the number of rehabilitated students returning to mainstream schooling. She expressed concern on whether training programmes would be arranged for teachers and SSWs in relation to the proposed school-based voluntary drug testing, and asked for information on resources set aside for drug testing.

52. PAS(N)/SB explained that the Administration regularly conducted surveys on drug abuse among secondary school students. The last survey was done in 2004 and the results of the latest survey carried out in 2008 would be released in late 2009. In the latest survey, students were asked whether they had abused drug in their lives thus far, whether they had abused drug in the past year and in the past month. The latest survey had been extended to cover upper-level primary and university students in order to understand whether the problem of drug abuse was prevalent in other age groups. He added that the survey would be conducted in a shorter interval, once every three years, in future.

53. Ms Audrey EU opined that an interval of every three years could not be regarded as frequent. In response to the Ms EU's enquiry about the resources allocated to combating youth drug abuse, for example strengthening the manpower of SSWs to one-school-two-SSWs, PAS(N)/SB said some \$230 million per annum was required to maintain the establishment of one-school-one-SSW. Whether the establishment should be increased or a dedicated but smaller team of SSWs should be established to deal with youth drug abuse had to be further examined.

Rehabilitated students returning to normal schooling

54. Ms Audrey EU requested written information on the number of students referred for drug treatment and rehabilitation services through the central referral mechanism. The Chairman also sought information on the number of rehabilitated students resumed mainstream schooling, the number of students being forced to leave school after they had been found taking drugs, as well as information on schools not following the guidelines in handling student drug abusers.

55. DS(Ed)3 explained that under the existing mechanism, schools were required to report to EDB any students leaving school with reasons. However, some schools might not indicate that the reasons were drug related. Regional Education Offices and Non-Attendance Team of EDB would follow up every case of student aged below 15 leaving school and would ensure that the student concerned would return to normal schooling. In recent years, follow-up service to students aged 15 or above had been stepped up. Some cases did not require immediate follow-up if students left school because of the commission of offences. Nevertheless, follow-up service would be provided to those who were ready for schooling after having served the penalties. Respective NGOs would first help the students concerned address their personal and psychological issues

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and assess their education and/or vocational training needs. Depending on the needs of the dropout, the respective NGO would provide assistance to facilitate their return to normal schooling, their choices of vocational training or opportunity for employment. For those returning to schools, additional help would be offered to students by the NGO during the first few months to help them re-integrate into school life. EDB would continue to monitor the situation and would step up the support in this regard if necessary. In response to the Chairman's request, the Administration agreed to provide the statistics on student dropouts in writing.

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Practical schools

56. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered it inadequate to classify student drug abusers in terms of their drug addiction behaviour and to focus on downstream support measures only. In his view, it was important to focus on upstream effort in identifying at-risk students. To offer appropriate assistance to at-risk students, Mr LEUNG suggested reinstating the operation of practical schools which had been closed down by the Administration in 2002. He pointed out that some at-risk students did not cope well with mainstream schooling and required the special education and boarding service offered by practical schools. The Chairman added that the services of practical school could meet the special needs of at-risk students.

57. US(Ed) responded that anti-drug education would be included and emphasized in the New Senior Secondary Curriculum to educate students on the danger of drug abuse. School activities would also be arranged to institutionalize an anti-drug culture in support of the Healthy School Policy.

58. DS(Ed)3 explained that the Administration had aligned the curriculum and academic structure of practical schools with the mainstream schools. However, practical schools maintained its referral mechanism and the related manpower of SSWs were also transferred to the respective NGO designated by the school concerned. Also, these schools continued to maintain a smaller class size and offer boarding service to needy students. She stressed that although the practical schools had turned mainstreamed, its specific role of catering for at-risk students still remained.

59. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung and the Chairman reiterated their suggestion of reinstating practical schools. They stressed that many at-risk students found the mainstream curriculum overwhelming and did not cope well with it. The Chairman added that the manpower of SSWs and boarding service at practical schools had been reduced.

60. In reply, DS(Ed)3 said that while the curriculum of practical schools had been aligned with the mainstream curriculum, it had maintained its practical nature. In addition, the resources allocated for practical schools had been

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increased after mainstreaming. She cautioned that practical schools, in its previous mode of operation, were stigmatized and grossly under-enrolled. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung responded that the Administration should work on improving the image as well as the operation of practical schools.

61. The Chairman proposed that the Panel might consider visiting special schools, such as practical schools and Schools for Social Development, in the next LegCo session.

62. Mr TAM Yiu-chung said that as the adverse effect of drug abuse on youngsters was profound, the Administration should increase its efforts in tackling the problem. In his view, drug testing was a viable means to deter youngsters from abusing drugs. While it was difficult to stop the influx of drugs into Hong Kong on account of its various boundary control points, it was important to reinforce the detector dog services and enhance security to curb the import of drugs. The Administration should address trafficking of drugs in schools. He agreed with the need to categorize student drug abusers into different types according to their drug abusing behaviour in order to provide the appropriate treatment and rehabilitation services. He considered it important to put across the message to school personnel and parents that the problem of youth drug abuse had to be addressed and should not be covered up. Professional training programmes should be accorded to PTAs in order to enhance the awareness of parents on the problem of youth drug abuse.

63. Professor Patrick LAU said that the deputations were in the frontline tackling the problem of youth drug abuse and the Administration should listen to their views and take appropriate actions. He asked whether there would be a comprehensive report following up the recommendations put forward by the Task Force. Prof LAU further remarked that as youth drug abuse problem was found to be more serious in some regions, the Administration should focus its anti-drug work in these regions.

64. The Chairman reminded that the Hong Kong Council of Social Service had suggested establishing a high-level and inter-departmental summit to monitor the follow up work.

65. PAS(N)/SB reiterated that the Administration had always attached importance to the problem of youth drug abuse. In view of its prevalence, the Secretary for Justice led the Task Force and put forward a number of recommendations in the Report. The recommendations also included the promotion of a community culture of care for young people. Policies and resources had been put in place to follow up on the recommendations. PAS(N)/SB pointed out that a progress report on anti-drug work had been submitted to the Panel on Security at its meeting on 5 May 2009. The Administration had also briefed members at the special meetings of the Panel on Education on 25 May and 17 June 2009. Furthermore, a progress report on the

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motion debate on the subject would be forwarded to Members shortly.

[*Post-meeting note* : the progress report was issued to LegCo on 7 July 2009.]

66. Professor Patrick LAU remarked that the Secretary for Justice had expressed to him that the work of the Task Force had been completed and it was for the Administration to follow up on the recommendations of the Report. He stressed the need to have a comprehensive report on how the recommendations would be followed up.

67. The Chairman enquired with the North District Secondary Schools Principals' Association about the way in defining and categorizing student drug abusers and whether it had any information on the number of students in the North District falling within the different categories.

68. Mr YUEN Pong-yiu replied that no research on the number of student drug abusers falling within the different categories had been carried out. There was also no exchange of information among schools in that regard. Mr YUEN further said that there were currently no objective criteria in classifying student drug abusers. In his view, whether they were first-time or habitual drug abusers could be the yardstick. Schools, NGOs and social workers would find the formulation of objective criteria useful for according support services.

69. The Chairman further asked whether the Association found the training programmes provided for teachers adequate. Mr YUEN Pong-yiu said that since his school had little experience of arranging such training programmes, he was not in a position to offer information. He noted that the Cheer Lutheran Centre had been arranging training programmes for teachers and was overwhelmed with a large number of requests from schools.

70. In conclusion, the Chairman reminded the Administration to provide the information requested by members in writing.

71. The meeting ended at 7:40 pm.