

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1692/11-12
(The minutes have been seen by the
Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 13 February 2012, at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex

Members present : Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, JP (Chairman)
Hon Tanya CHAN (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
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, GBS, JP
Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
Hon KAM Nai-wai, MH
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon Paul CHAN Mo-po, MH, JP
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, JP
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon WONG Yuk-man

Members absent : Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Samson TAM Wai-ho, JP

Members attending : Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, GBS, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP

Public Officers : Agenda item IV
attending

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Mr Wallace LAU
Principal Assistant Secretary (Higher Education),
Education Bureau

Mrs Dorothy MA CHOW Pui-fun
Deputy Secretary-General (1), University Grants
Committee

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Professor WONG Yuk-shan
Vice-President (Administration and Business)

Mr Mike Hudson
Director of Facilities Management

Hong Kong Baptist University

Mr Andy LEE Shiu-chuen
Vice-President (Administration) and Secretary

Mr LAM Long-chau
Director of Estates

Agenda item V

Mr Kenneth CHEN, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Ms Mable CHAN, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education (2), Education Bureau

Ms Wendy CHUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education
(Infrastructure & Research Support), Education
Bureau

Attendance by invitation : Hong Kong Japanese School

Mr KASHIMURA Fujio
General Manager

Swedish Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong

Mr Ulf Ohrling
Chairman

Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce

Mr David O'Rear
Chief Economist

The American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong

Ms Janet De Silva
Chairman, AmCham Education Group

The British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong

Mr Christopher Hammerbeck
Executive Director

Kiangsu & Chekiang Primary School - International Section

Mrs Jane Daniel
Head Teacher

Australian International School Hong Kong

Mr Tom Corkhill
Board of Chairman, Australian International School
Foundation Limited

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Professor Judy S L TSUI
Vice President (International and Executive Education)

Norwegian Chamber of Commerce

Dr Derek Anthony
Chairman

French International School

Ms Grelon
Exco Chairman

International Montessori School

Ms Karin Ann
Principal

Concordia International School

Dr Darnay S K CHAN
Principal

Hong Kong International School

Mrs Abigail Delessio
Chair, Board of Managers

Mr Justin TSENG Wen-tien

Tsuen Wan District Council Member

Discovery Bay International School

Mr Grant Ramsay
Principal

Sai Kung District Council

Ms Christine FONG Kwok-shan
Member

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong

Mr Andrew Work
Executive Director

Generations Christian Education

Ms Gail Maidment
Executive Director

Clerk in attendance : Ms Amy YU
Chief Council Secretary (2)6

Staff in attendance : Ms Catherina YU
Senior Council Secretary (2)6

Ms Judy TING
Council Secretary (2)6

Miss Meisy KWOK
Legislative Assistant (2)6

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I. Confirmation of minutes
[LC Paper No. CB(2)965/11-12]

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2011 were confirmed.

II. Information paper issued since the last meeting
[(LC Paper No. CB(2)891/11-12(01)]

2. Members noted the submission from Women Affairs Committee of Kowloon Federation of Associations concerning the content of Sharp Daily [LC Paper No. CB(2)891/11-12(01)].

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting
[Appendices I and II to LC Paper Nos. CB(2)968/11-12 and LC Paper No. CB(2)1031/11-12(01)]

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3. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting scheduled for 12 March 2012 at 4:30 pm –

- (a) Mechanism for rechecking/remarking of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination; and
- (b) Arrangements for students affected by relocation of private schools.

4. The Chairman referred members to the letter dated 10 February 2012 from Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong [LC Paper No. CB(2)1031/11-12(01)] proposing that the Panel should discuss the subject of academic freedom of universities.

5. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that some academics had been severely criticized for their views and publications recently. There was also concern that some public opinion surveys had been politicized. Given the wide public concern, the Panel should discuss the subject of academic freedom of universities, including how universities should safeguard academic freedom and the code of ethics of academics. He suggested that the academics concerned, the management of the universities concerned and the University Grants Committee ("UGC") should be invited to give views.

6. The Chairman invited members' views on Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's proposal.

7. Mr Andrew LEUNG said the Panel should discuss policy issues. He did not see any changes in the Government's policies on academic freedom. In his view, the incidents mentioned in Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's letter were not necessarily related to the policies on academic freedom. Academics were free to express their views, so were the people holding different views from them. While not objecting to the Panel's discussion of policies on academic freedom with the Administration, he considered that there was no urgency in the matter and suggested including it in the Panel's list of outstanding items for discussion.

8. Ms Audrey EU said that apart from policy issues, the Panel should also discuss matters involving public interest. She recalled that the Panel had discussed matters arising from the incident of non-renewal of contract of staff of the City University of Hong Kong ("CityU") and disputes between the management and staff of some universities in the past. Given

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the importance of the core values of academic freedom and freedom of speech and the recent series of events, she supported the proposal of discussing the subject of academic freedom at a Panel meeting and inviting the parties concerned to give views.

9. Prof Patrick LAU opined that the incidents mentioned in Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's letter related to freedom of speech rather than academic freedom, and considered it more appropriate for the matter to be discussed by the Panel on Constitutional Affairs. He recalled that subsequent to the discussion of the incident on non-renewal of contract of staff of City U, members considered that the Panel should refrain from discussing individual incidents in universities as far as possible.

10. Ms Cyd HO expressed support for Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's proposal. She considered it necessary to invite the management of the UCG-funded institutions to brief the Panel on how they protected and upheld the academic freedom of their staff. Dr Robert CHUNG Ting-yiu had been severely criticized for the recent public opinion polls conducted by the Public Opinion Programme of The University of Hong Kong. She considered that there was urgency in discussing the matter to ensure that organizations concerned would not be subjected to threats for conducting public opinion surveys and polls. She suggested that a special meeting be held to discuss the matter.

11. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that public opinion polls were academic research, and, as such, they were educational issues and should be discussed by the Panel. He shared the view that the Panel should discuss not only policy issues but also matters of wide public concern. He agreed that the Panel should discuss the matter as soon as possible.

12. Miss Tanya CHAN indicated support for the proposal of discussing the subject of academic freedom as soon as possible.

13. Mr WONG Yuk-man said that there was no dispute on the importance of upholding academic freedom. He agreed that the Panel should discuss the incident concerning the pre-mature release of the public opinion survey conducted by Hong Kong Baptist University given that universities were publicly funded. He was however of the view that the criticisms against Dr Robert CHUNG Ting-yiu, Prof SING Ming and Mr CHOY Chi-keung by some leftist media was a separate matter. In his view, both the scholars concerned and the media had the freedom to express their views and the Panel's discussion of these incidents would not be fruitful.

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14. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the experience of the scholars concerned was an indication of gradual suppression of freedom of speech. Universities had the responsibility to protect the freedom of speech of their scholars. Academic freedom was a core value guaranteed under Article 137 of the Basic Law. At the Panel's request, the Research Division of LegCo conducted a research on academic freedom and institutional autonomy of higher education in overseas places and Hong Kong in 2007. Currently, only The University of Hong Kong ("HKU") and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology ("HKUST") had formulated guidelines on the protection of academic freedom. Members were of the view that the protection of academic freedom should be enshrined in the respective ordinances of the UGC-funded institutions. He stressed that the subject of academic freedom clearly involved policy issues and worthy of discussion by the Panel.

15. At the request of Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, the Chairman put to vote Mr CHEUNG's proposal for discussing the subject of academic freedom of universities at a Panel meeting. The majority of members present supported the proposal.

16. Members agreed that Dr Robert CHUNG, Prof SING Ming, Mr CHOY Chi-keung, Prof ZHAO Xinshu, the management of the UGC-funded institutions and representatives of UGC be invited to attend the relevant Panel meeting. Members also agreed that a general notice be posted on the Legislative Council ("LegCo") website to invite public views. The Chairman suggested that the subject of academic freedom of universities be added to the agenda of the next regular meeting to be held on 12 March 2012 and the duration of the meeting be extended to allow sufficient time for discussion. If such arrangement could not be made, the holding of a special meeting would be considered. Members agreed.

IV. Tseung Kwan O Joint Student Hostel

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)968/11-12(01) and (02)]

17. Members noted the background brief entitled "Provision of hostels for tertiary students" [LC Paper No. CB(2)968/11-12(02)] prepared by the LegCo Secretariat.

18. The Chairman drew members' attention to Rule 83A of the Rules of Procedure ("RoP") concerning personal pecuniary interest to be disclosed which provided that, in the Council or in any committee or subcommittee, a Member should not move any motion or amendment relating to a matter

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in which he had a pecuniary interest, whether direct or indirect, or speak on any such matter, except where he disclosed the nature of that interest. She reminded members to declare interests in the matter under discussion, if any.

19. The Chairman declared that she was a Council member and an alumnus of HKUST. Members raised no objection to the Chairman chairing the meeting in discussing the agenda item.

Briefing by the Administration

20. Under Secretary for Education ("US(Ed)") briefed members on the proposed capital works project for the construction of the Tseung Kwan O Joint Student Hostel ("the joint hostel") for shared use by HKUST and the Hong Kong Baptist University ("HKBU") as detailed in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. 968/11-12(01)].

Briefing by HKUST

21. Prof WONG Yuk-shan, Vice-President (Administration and Business) of HKUST gave a powerpoint presentation on the proposed capital works project. The powerpoint presentation material had been issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1090/11-12(01).

Location of the joint hostel

22. Mr WONG Yuk-man said that both the student hostel of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University ("PolyU") and the joint hostel were located near residential areas and had similar design. He had visited the PolyU student hostel on several occasions and did not find it causing any nuisance to the nearby residents. As such, he gathered that student activities at the joint hostel would not cause too much noise nuisance to the residents in the vicinity. In response, Prof WONG Yuk-shan said that nearby residents had not raised strong concern about possible noise problems caused by the joint hostel.

23. Mr WONG Yuk-man further said that while students of HKBU could get to the joint hostel by MTR, there was no direct bus or public light bus running between the Tseung Kwan O MTR station and HKUST. HKUST students residing in the joint hostel had to take a 10 to 15-minute walk to the Hang Hou MTR station to take a public light bus to HKUST, which would be rather inconvenient for HKUST students.

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24. Prof WONG Yuk-shan responded that HKUST was actively exploring the feasibility of providing shuttle bus service between HKUST and the joint hostel for students during school hours subject to the availability of resources and the operation of such service on a self-financing basis.

Design of student hostels

25. Mr KAM Nai-wai said that for student hostel projects, the glare and noise problems arising from the use of reflective building materials and student activities had all along been a common concern of nearby residents. He recalled that the same concerns had been raised over the construction of a student hostel of HKU a few years ago. In his view, the Administration should draw up policies on the construction and design of student hostels to address such concerns, such as locating the student activities areas away from residential areas and using noise barriers or low-reflective building materials.

26. US(Ed) said that the design of the student hostel concerned had taken into account the terrain of the site and views of the neighbouring community. Measures had also been taken to reduce disturbance to nearby residents. As illustrated in the site plan in Enclosure 1 of the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(2)968/11-12(01)], the three sides of the joint hostel were surrounded by primary and secondary schools and hence there would be minimal noise and light impact on the nearby residents. Noise barriers would be built at the north west of the joint hostel and activity areas would be put in the centre part of the hostel to reduce noise nuisance. It was also expected that since most of the student activities would take place in the campus down town, the off-campus hostel would not create too much disturbance to the residents. Prof WONG Yuk-shan supplemented that multi-purpose function rooms would be located at the centre of the building with a view to minimizing possible noise disturbance to the nearby residents.

27. Prof Patrick LAU said the he was not impressed by the design of the joint hostel at all. The appearance of the hostel was not appealing. It was also awkward to place a washing basin inside each room and separate the toilet from the bathroom. In his view, each double room should have its own bathroom-cum-toilet, instead of two double rooms sharing the use of one. He would not support the current design when the project was submitted to the Public Works Subcommittee ("PWSC") and urged the Administration to improve the design.

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28. Prof WONG Yuk-shan said that there were constraints in terms of floor area and building materials. Locating the washing basin outside the toilet would provide more convenience to the occupants when the toilet was in use. The design of the joint hostel had in fact been greatly improved compared with some older student hostels in which only common toilets, one for male and one for female, were provided on each floor. Mr Andy LEE Shiu-chuen, Vice-President (Administration) and Secretary of HKBU, supplemented that in the student hostels of HKBU, four students shared the use of a toilet and they had no problems with the arrangement.

29. Ms Audrey EU said that it was reported earlier in the media that students of HKBU strongly objected to the conversion of double bedrooms to three-person bedrooms with the use of bunk beds in HKBU's student hostels. She enquired whether the students of HKBU and HKUST had been consulted on the joint hostel project.

30. Mr Andy LEE Shiu-chuen responded that students had been briefed on the proposed joint hostel project on a number of occasions and students generally supported it. Prof WONG Yuk-shan supplemented that there were students representatives on the design committee and students had been consulted on the design of the joint hostel.

Provision of student hostel places

31. Mr WONG Yuk-man expressed concern about the inadequate provision of student hostel places. He said that members had previously suggested that the Administration should consider converting vacant school premises and vacant factory buildings into student hostels to increase the supply of hostel places. However, according to the Administration, most of the vacant school premises were relatively small in size and located in remote areas in the New Territories and hence not suitable for conversion into student hostels. Having regard to the rising trend of the non-local student population and the expected increase in the demand of hostel places, he urged the Administration to locate suitable sites for the construction of student hostels and consider members' suggestion of converting vacant factory buildings into student hostels.

32. US(Ed) responded that the Administration would give careful consideration to members' suggestions.

33. Referring to the information provided by UGC as set out in Appendix II to the background brief prepared by the LegCo Secretariat [LC Paper No CB(2)968/11-12(02)], Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong echoed

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the concern about the serious shortfall in hostel places. He said that the Panel had previously passed a motion urging the Administration to revise the existing policy on the allocation of student places so that local students attending publicly-funded programmes in the UGC-funded institutions would be given the opportunity to stay in student hostels for at least one year, and non-local students should be guaranteed the provision of hostel places only in the first two years of their studies. He enquired whether the revised policy on the allocation of hostel places as proposed by the Panel had been implemented in all the UGC-funded institutions.

34. US(Ed) responded that there were established criteria since 1996 for the calculation of provision of student hostel places for UGC-funded institutions. All local undergraduate students would be given the opportunity to stay at student hostel for at least one year of their studies. All research postgraduate students, non-local students and undergraduate students whose daily travelling time exceeded four hours would also be provided with hostel places. The number of hostel places allocated to local and non-local students by individual institutions would depend on their individual situation.

35. Prof WONG Yuk-shan said that in the case of HKUST, the provision of hostel places was guaranteed for one year for all local students. Starting from the 2011-2012 academic year, HKUST had implemented the policy of guaranteed provision of hostel places for non-local students only in the first two years of their studies. Non-local students would be required to look for private accommodation for the remaining two years of their studies and such an arrangement would facilitate their better understanding of the community.

36. Mr Andy LEE Shiu-chuen said that HKBU had also implemented the policy of providing all local students with hostel places in at least one year of their studies. For non-local students, they would be provided with hostel places within the campus in the first year of their studies and off-campus hostel places leased by HKBU in the second year of their studies.

37. In response to Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and the Chairman, Prof WONG Yuk-shan clarified that the four-hour travelling time criterion for the allocation of hostel places applied only to local students. For HKUST, aside from the travelling time, students' participation in student union activities would also be taken into account when considering applications for hostel places. Active participants would have a higher chance of securing hostel places.

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38. The Chairman sought confirmation on whether all local students, regardless of their daily travelling time, would be guaranteed the provision of hostel places for one year of their studies. Prof WONG Yuk-shan and Mr Andy LEE Shiu-chuen responded in the affirmative.

39. Mr Abraham SHEK declared that he was a Court member of HKUST. He said that he had no choice but to support the proposal reluctantly. In his view, joint hostel was an unsatisfactory arrangement as every university was unique and had its own culture. In his view, the Administration was to be blamed for failing to grant suitable land sites to the universities for building student hostels. Given that hostel life was a pivotal part of higher education, it was incumbent upon the Administration to formulate policies to address the shortfall in hostel places.

40. US(Ed) said that for HKU, The Chinese University of Hong Kong and HKUST, the Administration was confident that suitable sites could be identified within or near their campuses for the development of student hostels. In the case of Lingnan University and the Hong Kong Institute of Education, the supply of student hostel places was adequate. For HKBU, CityU and PolyU which were located at the centre of the urban areas, it was difficult to find suitable sites near their campuses for the construction of student hostels. To address the problem, the Administration had been exploring with the institutions the development of off-campus joint hostels for shared use by institutions, which would also provide students with more choices of different types of hostels.

41. Ms Audrey EU sought information on the respective percentage of places in the joint hostel to be allocated to local and non-local students.

42. Mr Andy LEE Shiu-chuen responded that as the joint hostel was an off-campus hostel, a larger percentage of places would be allocated to non-local students including Mainland students.

43. Noting that HKBU and HKUST still lacked hostel places even with the additional places provided by the joint hostel, Ms Audrey EU enquired whether priority would be accorded to local or non-local students when there were shortage in hostel places and whether there were separate waiting lists for these two groups of students.

44. Mr Andy LEE Shiu-chuen said that due to the shortage in hostel places, non-local students of HKBU would be guaranteed hostel places only in the first two years of their studies but not throughout their studies.

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45. Prof WONG Yuk-shan said that there were different policies for the allocation of hostel places for local and non-local students. In the case of HKUST, local students were guaranteed hostel places for at least one year while non-local students for the first two years of their studies. In the past when there were only a small number of non-local students, they were provided with hostel places throughout their programme. With the significant increase in the number of non-local students in recent years, they could only be guaranteed provision of hostel places in the first two years.

46. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong opined that should there be surplus hostel places after the institutions had fulfilled the basic requirements of providing hostel places to local students for one year and non-local students for two years, priority should be given to providing local students with hostel places for two years of their studies rather than extending the provision of hostel places to non-local students for the remaining two years of their studies.

47. Prof WONG Yuk-shan stressed that the provision of hostel places to local students in one year of their studies was only the minimum requirement which must be complied with. Should more hostel places be available, priority would be accorded to local students in the allocation of hostel places to enable them to stay in hostels for more than one year.

48. The Chairman shared the view that joint hostel was not an ideal arrangement and considered it more desirable to build student hostels near the campus. She supported the proposal only because it could help mitigate the shortfall in student hostel places. Given that HKUST had a relatively spacious campus compared to other universities located in the urban area, she enquired about the reasons for constructing an off-campus joint hostel rather than a hostel in the HKUST campus.

49. US(Ed) responded that two student hostel blocks were under construction in the HKUST campus. The Administration had not ruled out the possibility of building more student hostels in the HKUST campus in future but it took time to formulate the development plans.

50. Prof WONG Yuk-shan supplemented that the construction of the two student hostel blocks in HKUST would be completed in 2013 but the additional supply of hostel places still could not meet the demand. Although the joint hostel was off-campus, it would help a lot to alleviate the shortage of hostel places. Students and staff of HKUST generally

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found the travelling distance between the joint hostel and the campus acceptable. Should the Administration be able to provide a site near HKUST for the construction of student hostels, it would be very much welcomed.

Management of the joint hostel

51. Miss Tanya CHAN expressed concern about the joint management of the hostel by the two universities, having regard to their differences in cultures and timetables for examination and activities, etc. She sought information on the structure and arrangements of the joint management.

52. Prof WONG Yuk-shan responded that a joint committee had been set up to oversee the joint hostel project, and HKBU and HKUST had been working closely and harmoniously on the project. The UGC-funded institutions had experience in joint management of facilities, and the management of the joint sports stadium for the shared use by HKBU, CityU, and PolyU was a successful example. Students of HKBU and HKUST had positive attitude towards the joint hostel as it would help promote interaction among students from different institutions and enrich their hostel lives. He was confident that the joint hostel would be well managed.

53. Mr Andy LEE Shiu-chuen said that HKBU, CityU and PolyU had co-operated well on the management of the joint sports stadium. HKBU had had a pleasant and close co-operation with HKUST in the joint hostel project. Consideration would be given to adopting the management approach of the joint sports stadium with the setting up of a joint committee to manage the joint hostel.

54. Miss Tanya CHAN further enquired whether students would be involved in the management of the joint hostel and whether assistance would be provided to students in this regard. Prof WONG Yuk-shan responded that apart from the warden of the hostel, undergraduates and research postgraduates would serve as hall tutors and participate in the management of the joint hostel.

Conclusion

55. Concluding the discussions, the Chairman said that the Panel supported the submission of the proposal to PWSC and the Finance Committee ("FC") for consideration on 18 April and 11 May 2012 respectively.

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V. Provision of international school places

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)968/11-12(03) to (04) and CB(2)1073/11-12(01)]

56. Members noted the background brief entitled "Provision of international school places" [LC Paper No. CB(2)968/11-12(04)] prepared by the LegCo Secretariat and the supplementary note on the provision of international school places provided by the Administration [LC Paper No. CB(2)1073/11-12(01)] which was tabled at the meeting.

57. The Chairman drew members' attention to RoP 83A concerning personal pecuniary interest to be disclosed which provided that, in the Council or in any committee or subcommittee, a Member should not move any motion or amendment relating to a matter in which he had a pecuniary interest, whether direct or indirect, or speak on any such matter, except where he disclosed the nature of that interest. She reminded members to declare interests in the matter under discussion, if any.

Briefing by the Administration

58. US(Ed) briefed members on the measures taken and progress made in facilitating the development of the international school sector as detailed in the Administration paper [LC Paper No. CB(2)968/11-12(03)].

Oral presentation by deputations/individuals

Hong Kong Japanese School

59. Mr KASHIMURA Fujio said that the Hong Kong Japanese School comprised the Japanese section and the international section. The international section offered the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme with one class at each level with a current student body of 175. There was a high demand for places in the international section, with 260 applicants on the waiting list. Due to limited space, the school found it difficult to add more classes to the international section to meet the demand. At present, the international section was sharing the use of the same building with the primary school of the Japanese section in Tai Po.

60. Mr KASHIMURA Fujio said that in Tokyo, there were 10 major international schools providing education to the children of some 340 000 expatriates in Tokyo. Many expatriates preferred sending their children to

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local public schools for their high standard of education and free school fees. He suggested that the Administration should improve the system of local schools with a view to attracting expatriates to send their children to local schools.

Swedish Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong

61. Mr Ulf Ohrling said that the shortage of international school places was a problem for families of Swedish businessmen and professionals working in Hong Kong. Swedish children had difficulties securing school places in Hong Kong as most international schools had preference for children whose first language was English. Local schools were not an alternative for Swedish children who had to move to different parts of the world with their parents and had to learn in the English Language. He considered that international schools should set aside a certain number of places for those children whose first language was not English. He further said that many Swedish parents also found it difficult to go through the application procedures of international schools, as different schools adopted different systems. He suggested that international schools should work together to establish a centralized application system to facilitate parents applying for school places for their children.

The Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1085/11-12(01)]

62. Mr David O'Rear presented the views of The Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce as detailed in its submission.

The American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong
[LC Paper No. CB(2)968/11-12(05)]

63. Ms Janet De Silva presented the views of The American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong as detailed in its submission.

The British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1085/11-12(02)]

64. Mr Christopher Hammerbeck presented the views of The British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong as detailed in its submission.

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Kiangsu & Chekiang Primary School - International Section
[LC Paper No. CB(2)968/11-12(06)]

65. Mrs Jane Daniel presented the views of Kiangsu & Chekiang Primary School - International Section as detailed in its submission.

[The Chairman left the meeting at this juncture after which the meeting was chaired by the Deputy Chairman.]

Australian International School Hong Kong
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1135/11-12(01)]

66. Mr Tom Corkhill presented the views of Australian International School Hong Kong as detailed in its submission.

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1082/11-12(01)]

67. Prof Judy S L TSUI presented the views of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University as detailed in its submission.

French International School
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1135/11-12(02)]

68. Ms Grelon presented the views of French International School as detailed in its submission.

International Montessori School

69. Ms Karin ANN said that International Montessori School ("IMS") was established in 2002 with an initial enrolment of 60 students. The number of students had now increased to 500. IMS had been seeking a permanent campus site over the past 10 years. Its development had been constrained by a lack of physical space and it had to turn away many students reluctantly.

70. Ms Karin ANN further said that about one year ago, IMS moved into another temporary site with a significantly larger capacity, and IMS had immediately doubled its primary places. Almost all its new places had been taken up by expatriate families moving to Hong Kong, increasing the non-local student population of IMS from 85% to 95%. However, IMS was still in temporary premises which made it impossible for it to plan and invest for the future. It was imperative for IMS to secure a permanent

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school site on the Hong Kong Island as soon as possible for its long-term development.

Concordia International School
[LC Paper No. CB(2)968/11-12(07)]

71. Dr Darnay S K CHAN presented the views of Concordia International School as detailed in its submission.

Hong Kong International School
[LC Paper No. CB(2)968/11-12(08)]

72. Mrs Abigail Dellessio presented the views of Hong Kong International School as detailed in its submission.

Mr Justin TSENG Wen-tien

73. Mr Justin TSENG Wen-tien said that according to a recent research conducted by ICS on international schools, there were currently 5 689 international schools worldwide, which was growing at an annual rate of 9%. Based on such growth rate, the number of international school places in Hong Kong should be increased by 20 000 in the next five years. He opined that the Administration had been slow in tackling the problem of shortage of international school places in Hong Kong. It was not until the end of 2011 that the Administration conducted a review on provision of international school places. He also considered the Administration's plan to increase some 4 000 to 5 000 places in the coming few years far from adequate. He called on the Administration to deal the problem seriously with a view to maintaining the Hong Kong's competitiveness.

74. Mr Justin TSENG Wen-tien further said that the number of international schools in Singapore would increase from 70 to about 100 in the next two years. The Singaporean Government had gradually lifted the ceiling on the percentage of local students in international schools in recent years. In his view, while it was important to ensure adequate provision of international schools places for children of expatriate families, due consideration should also be given to the demand of local students to study in international schools.

Discovery Bay International School
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1082/11-12(02)]

75. Mr Grant Ramsay presented the views of Discovery Bay International School as detailed in its submission.

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Sai Kung District Council
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1082/11-12(03)]

76. Ms Christine FONG Kwok-shan presented the views of Sai Kung District Council as detailed in its submission.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1085/11-12(03)]

77. Mr Andrew Work presented the views of The Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong as detailed in its submission.

Generations Christian Education
[LC Paper No. CB(2)968/11-12(09)]

78. Ms Gail Maidment presented the views of Generations Christian Education as detailed in its submission.

The Administration's response

79. US(Ed) said that the Administration had strived to increase the supply of international school places in the past few years through various measures. He appealed to members to support the interest-free loan applications of three international schools for the construction of new or additional school premises at greenfield sites in Sai Kung, Kowloon Bay and Tuen Mun respectively. Upon the completion of the four international schools on the greenfield sites allocated in 2009, there would be an additional provision of about 3 500 international school places from the 2012-2013 school year onwards. The Administration would make its best effort to find more sites or vacant school premises with a view to increasing the supply of international school places to meet the demand.

Discussions

80. Ms Emily LAU said that she was a member of the Business Facilitation Advisory Committee ("BFAC") set up by the Financial Secretary ("FS"). There had been a lot of discussions by BFAC as well as LegCo on the inadequate provision of international school places. FS had warned about the risk of economic downturn in Hong Kong on many occasions. Expatriates coming to Hong Kong to work or invest would help boost the local economy but the tight supply of international school places had made them reluctant to come to Hong Kong. She stressed the pressing

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need for the Administration to take steps to address the problem of inadequate supply of international school places.

81. Ms Emily LAU further said that different Government departments should coordinate to provide one-stop service to the international school sector on school development matters. She concurred with some deputations' view that a high level steering committee led by the Chief Executive ("CE") comprising representatives from chambers of commerce and international schools should be set up to tackle the problem. She urged the Administration to meet with the international school sector and chambers of commerce to understand their needs and concerns.

82. Noting from the Administration's paper that only 89% of the total number of 37 000 international school places had been enrolled, Ms Emily LAU wondered why there were still so many students waiting for international school places and where the problem lay. She added that the shortage in international school places had been a long-standing problem and Members belonging to the Democratic Party were furious at the Administration's inaction. She sought the views of deputations on whether the additional provision of 3 500 school places from the 2012-2013 school year onwards was adequate to meet the demand.

83. Mr Christopher Hammerbeck of the British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong said that as the additional 3 500 school places were mainly secondary school places, they would be of little help in alleviating the shortage in primary school places. By way of illustration, he said that of the 880 places in the new school of Kellett School Association Limited ("Kellett School") in Kowloon Bay, only 300 were primary school places. Given the long waiting list for primary school places (1 100 students on the waiting list of Kellett School stretching out to 2017 and 4 851 on that of the English Schools Foundation ("ESF") schools), there remained a serious shortfall in primary school places.

84. US(Ed) said that the international schools places available had not been taken up in full mainly because of the mismatch between the demand and supply of international schools places. There were fluctuations in the demand for school places of different grades as the age of overseas children coming to Hong Kong could vary greatly from year to year. When allocating land or vacant school premises for the provision of additional international school places, the Administration would take into account the views of the international school sector which was in the best position to assess the demand for school places. He added that the Administration had commissioned a study in late 2011 to stock-take the existing provision of

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international school places and project future demand and supply to facilitate its review on the support measures for the international sector in the long run.

85. On the collaboration among different Government departments on matters relating to the development of international schools, US(Ed) said that the Education Bureau ("EDB") was the first point of contact in the one-stop service provided by the Administration. In locating suitable sites for the development of international schools, the Administration would work with the relevant departments to obtain support from the local community and the District Councils concerned. The development project of the Hong Kong International School ("HKIS") in the Chai Wan was a case in point.

86. Deputy Secretary for Education (2) ("DS(Ed)2") supplemented that there was greater increase in the supply of primary school places than secondary schools places in the international school sector between 2000 and 2010. Referring to paragraph 3 of the Administration's paper, she said that there were 20 100 primary school places and 16 900 secondary school places in the 2011-2012 school year. Given that most of the overseas families coming to Hong Kong in recent years had small children, there had been a greater demand for lower primary school places, in particular for primary one. She recalled that in the school allocation exercise in 2010, some international schools had expressed their wishes to increase their secondary school places with a view to providing "through train" education services to their primary school students. In the light of their views and given that the number of secondary school places were traditionally less than that of primary school places, the Administration had placed more emphasis on the supply of secondary school places in the allocation exercise in 2010. Aside from the study commissioned by EDB which focused on the long term provision of international school places, the Administration would also strive to identify suitable vacant school premises to meet the immediate needs of some international schools.

87. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that overseas investors and professionals working in Hong Kong had contributed significantly to making Hong Kong an international business and finance centre. He considered the Administration's failure to provide adequate school places for their children totally unacceptable and stressed the need for the Administration to resolve the problem. Given that each international school had its uniqueness and reflected the culture and educational needs of nationals of different countries, the Administration should take account of their individual circumstances and tailor-make short-term and long-term

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measures to tackle the problems faced by different international schools, particularly those with long waiting lists.

88. US(Ed) responded that the Administration had been making tailor-made arrangements for international schools facing serious shortage of school places, having regard to their individual circumstances such as location and expansion plan.

89. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong further said that according to the Administration's reply to a Council question on international school places, some parents had placed their children on the waiting lists of many international schools. This might distort data on the actual demand of school places. The Administration should work with the international school sector to collect more accurate data on the demand of international school places by local and non-local students so that effective measures could be formulated to address the problem.

90. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong added that increasing land supply was essential to tackle the shortage of international school places in the long run. Meanwhile, the Administration should critically consider adjusting the percentages of school places for local and non-local students. When there were inadequate school places to meet the demand of both local and non-local students, he considered that more places should be allocated to the latter with a view to attracting overseas professionals and investors to come to Hong Kong. He suggested that consideration be given to allocating chambers of commerce with a certain proportion of international school places.

91. US(Ed) responded that under the prevailing policy, the number of "target students" (i.e. non-local students) admitted by international schools which had been allocated greenfield sites and vacant school premises should be no less than 70% of their total number of students. Currently, only about 13% of the students in international schools were local students (i.e. those who did not have any foreign passport). As Hong Kong was an international city and many local residents and their children had foreign passports, there was a certain degree of complexity in distinguishing local students from non-local students in international schools. The Administration would strive to complement Hong Kong's economic development by increasing the supply of international school places as far as practicable to meet the demand of overseas families.

92. On Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's suggestion of setting aside a certain percentage of international school places for allocation by chambers of

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commerce, US(Ed) said that it was the Administration's understanding that some international schools had launched schemes under which a certain number of school places could be reserved for the employees of foreign companies or members of chambers of commerce. The Administration welcomed views from members and deputations on Mr CHEUNG's suggestion.

93. Mr Ulf Ohrling of Swedish Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong said that the provision of international school places was a difficult issue as it concerned the needs of both the local and the expatriate communities. He suggested setting aside some places in international schools for students whose first language was not English.

94. Ms Audrey EU said that the crux of the problem lay in the mismatch between the supply and demand of international school places. While there was surplus in terms of the total number of primary and secondary school places available, there was serious shortage in primary school places particularly for primary one. She appreciated the Administration's difficulties in planning for the provision of international school places given that the demand for school places of different grades might vary from year to year, and invited views from the deputations on how to arrive at a more accurate projection of demand in the medium term to facilitate the Administration's planning. She also asked whether it would be feasible for international schools to flexibly deploy school places at different grades to meet the fluctuations in demand.

95. Mr David O'Rear of The Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce said that the problem lay in the fact that local families preferred international schools to local schools as the former were of better standards. Hence, expanding the capacity of international schools could only deal with part of the problem. The shortfall in international school places could not be resolved at root until improvements were made to the local education system. He called on the Administration to deal with the core issues and at the same time take steps to meet the immediate needs for additional international school places in the next school year.

96. Ms Karin Ann of IMS said that while most international schools adopted the conventional mode of structuring the grades according to the age of students, some international schools including IMS allowed multi-age settings where students of a wider age range would be taught in the same class. Such arrangement would allow greater flexibility in the deployment of places within the school.

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97. Ms Audrey EU expressed support for the proposal raised by some deputations for establishing a high-level steering group comprising representatives from international schools and chambers of commerce to tackle the problem of shortage in international school places. As market conditions might change from time to time, the international school sector would be in the best position to provide valuable inputs on the development of international schools. The proposed steering group should meet regularly to solve the specific problems faced by the international schools in their expansion plans. She enquired whether the Administration would consider such proposal.

98. US(Ed) responded that he and officials of EDB had frequent contacts with representatives of chambers of commerce and international schools and their needs were well noted. The International Business Committee ("IBC") chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration ("CS") and the BFAC chaired by a non-official member were committees set up by the Administration to study business facilitation measures, and the two committees had discussed on a number of occasions issues relating to international school places. He assured members that the Administration understood well the needs of the stakeholders and would meet with them on a regular and need basis.

99. DS(Ed)2 supplemented that issues pertaining to supply of international school places were discussed at meetings of IBC on a regular basis. IBC was one of the platforms where the Administration maintained regular dialogue with chambers of commerce and international schools.

100. In response to the Deputy Chairman, DS(Ed)2 said that IBC would hold meetings once every few months. The Administration would attend meetings of IBC to discuss issues relating to international schools or provide information papers for its consideration as necessary. The Deputy Chairman requested the Administration to provide information on IBC's discussions of international school places in the past three years.

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101. Mr Christopher Hammerbeck of The British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong said that IBC had held only two meetings on educational matters in the past three years and CS had given firm direction on the provision of land for international schools after IBC's last meeting held in December 2011.

102. Ms Audrey EU said that according to the Administration's reply to the oral question raised by Ms Emily LAU on international school places at the Council meeting of 16 March 2011, nine international schools had

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applied for using vacant school premises as temporary campuses and seven applications had been approved. Noting from the Administration's paper for the meeting that the number of approved applications remained at seven, she enquired why the remaining two applications were still pending.

103. DS(Ed)2 responded that the Administration had given policy support for the remaining two applications for the use of vacant school premises in Ping Shek Estate in Kowloon East and Yue Wan Estate in Chai Wan respectively. EDB would coordinate the one-stop service provided to international schools and rendered assistance to them in their applications to relevant departments and authorities such as the Lands Department and Town Planning Board when their expansion plans involved changes in land use.

104. Mr Abraham SHEK said that the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development ("SCED") should have attended the meeting to listen to deputations' views. SCED's absence reflected that the Administration did not attach much importance to the problem of shortage of international school places. He enquired about the short term and medium term measures to be taken by the Administration to alleviate the problem and when a site would be allocated to IMS for development of its permanent campus.

105. On the short term measures, US(Ed) responded that subsequent to the last meeting of IBC, CS had instructed EDB to find vacant school premises, one each in Kowloon and on Hong Kong Island, as soon as possible to help ease the tight supply of international school places. Apart from the provision of an additional 3 500 school places on the greenfield sites from the 2012-2013 school year onwards, three international schools had applied for interest-free loans for the construction of new school premises and more school places would be available in the next few years upon completion of the projects.

106. Regarding the medium term measures, US(Ed) said that the Administration was actively pursuing ways to help the in-situ expansion of some international schools such as HKIS. Some of these expansion projects were underway and some were in the pipeline. As regard IMS, its existing temporary premises was not owned by the Government. The securing of the site was a result of the concerted efforts of different parties. The Administration would continue to look for suitable sites and vacant premises, both privately-owned and publicly-owned, as temporary campuses for international schools undergoing in-situ development and for the building of new school premises.

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107. DS(Ed)2 stressed the importance of having in place an open and fair mechanism for the allocation of vacant school premises and greenfield sites for international schools. When suitable vacant school premises or sites were identified, the Administration would launch an Expression of Interest exercise to ascertain the development needs and interests in using the sites or vacant school premises for international school development. The applications would be assessed having regard to the established criteria including the curricula and the quality of education offered by the applicants.

108. Ms Karin Ann said that IMS was appreciative of EDB's assistance to IMS in securing its existing temporary premises. She looked forward to the provision of a permanent campus to IMS so that a long-term development plan for the school could be formulated.

109. In response to Mr Abraham SHEK's enquiry on the respective number of vacant school premises in Kowloon and on Hong Kong Island, DS(Ed)2 said that there was very limited supply of vacant school premises on Hong Kong Island and most of them had already been earmarked or allocated. The Administration hoped to find at least one site each on the Hong Kong Island and in Kowloon for the use of the international school sector. The implementation of small class teaching in primary schools and the development of the higher education sector had also given rise to greater demand for sites and vacant school premises, and it was necessary to cater for different needs in the allocation of sites and vacant school premises.

110. Mr Paul CHAN said that given the limited supply of land on the Hong Kong Island, it would be very difficult to meet the expansion needs of the international schools on the Hong Kong Island where the shortage of international school places was most acute. He shared the view that priority should be accorded to children of expatriates in the provision of international school places so as to attract overseas professionals and investors to come to Hong Kong. He noted that some international schools, such as Hong Kong Japanese School, French International School and German Swiss International School, offered two types of curricula, the international curriculum and the national curriculum. The latter were targeted at nationals of their countries and aimed at facilitating the articulation of the students upon their return to their home countries. He suggested that the Administration should explore with the international schools concerned the feasibility of increasing the percentage of their school places for the national curriculum so that more places would be

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made available to the targeted students.

111. US(Ed) responded that international schools offering national curricula would usually accord priority to their nationals in the enrolment of such programmes. As international schools operated on a self-financing basis, they had autonomy in admission and curriculum design. To his understanding, the schools concerned would adjust the percentage of school places for their international and national curricula taking into account the changes in the demand for different programmes. The Administration was open-minded in this regard.

112. Mr Kashimura Fujio of Hong Kong Japanese School expressed support for the Administration's policy of allowing the operation of both the international curriculum and the national curriculum in international schools.

113. Ms Grelon of the French International School ("FIS") said that FIS provided the international curriculum as well as the French curriculum. Due to the rapid growth of the French community in Hong Kong and the consequent increase in the demand for FIS's French curriculum, the percentage of school places allocated for its international curriculum had been reduced from around 33% to 25%. She said that EDB had been very helpful but there had yet been any progress in FIS's in-situ expansion plan despite its having met all the policy requirements and obtained the Administration's policy support. In her view, a high-level steer from the Administration was necessary to address the problems faced by the international schools in their expansion and development plans.

114. Mr Paul CHAN said that while it was important to respect the autonomy of international schools, the Administration should play a more active role in ensuring the adequate supply of school places for the national curricula in international schools.

115. Mr Justin TSENG Wen-tien said that based on the relevant data in 2011, there was a total shortfall of around 12 000 primary and secondary school places in ESF schools. To make up the shortfall, ESF schools would need to double its capacity. Given the great disparity in the supply and demand of international school places, he considered the mere provision of greenfield sites or vacant school premises inadequate to resolve the problem. EDB should play a more proactive role and work out a plan for the provision of international school places in the next five to 10 years taking into account the demands of both local and non-local students.

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116. Ms Christine FONG Kwok-shan, member of Sai Kung District Council, said that the crux of the problem was the inadequate supply of international school places. The population in the Tseung Kwan O District was around 460 000, including 60 000 in Sai Kung. The new school premises to be constructed by the Hong Kong Academy Educational Foundation Limited in Sai Kung to be completed in mid 2013 would provide only 604 primary and secondary school places, which was far from adequate to meet the needs of residents in the Tseung Kwan O District. To her understanding, a few pieces of lands in Tseung Kwan O were available for construction of schools and she was certain that the local community would support the construction of international schools on those sites. She invited deputations who were interested in building international schools in Tseung Kwan O to contact the offices of the district councillors.

117. Ms Janet De Silva of The American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong ("AmCham") said that according to the research conducted by AmCham, the average international school openings for primary one to primary six on Hong Kong Island were seven openings per year. Unlike the past, expatriates generally stayed in Hong Kong for a longer period now because Hong Kong and China had become the core markets of many businesses. She stressed that the crux of the problem lay in the inadequate supply of school places. AmCham was not in favour of prescribing the percentage of school places for local and non-local students and considered that an open system should be adopted in this regard.

118. Concluding the discussions, the Chairman said that members supported the Administration's submission of the applications for interest-free loan of three international schools to FC within the first half of 2012.

VI. Any other business

119. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 7:43 pm.

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Legislative Council Secretariat
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