

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(4)378/12-13
(The minutes have been seen by the
Administration)

Ref : CB4/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Tuesday, 11 December 2012, at 8:30 am
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex

- Members present** :
- Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai, SBS, JP (Chairman)
 - Hon IP Kin-yuen (Deputy Chairman)
 - 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 Starry LEE Wai-king, JP
 - Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, JP
 - Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che
 - Hon IP Kwok-him, GBS, JP
 - Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
 - Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
 - Hon WONG Yuk-man
 - Hon MA Fung-kwok, SBS, JP
 - Hon Charles Peter MOK
 - Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok
 - Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
 - Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
 - Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP
- Members absent** :
- Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
 - Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
 - Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
 - Hon Claudia MO

Public Officers : Agenda item III
attending

Mr Kevin YEUNG
Under Secretary for Education

Mrs Michelle WONG
Deputy Secretary for Education (4)

Agenda item IV

Mr Kevin YEUNG
Under Secretary for Education

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

Clerk in : Miss Polly YEUNG
attendance Chief Council Secretary (4)4

Staff in : Miss Carrie WONG
attendance Assistant Legal Adviser 4
(Agenda item III)

Mr KWONG Kam-fai
Senior Council Secretary (4)4

Ms Esther CHEUNG
Council Secretary (4)4

Ms Sandy HAU
Legislative Assistant (4)3

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

(LC Paper No. CB(4)164/ – Referral from the Public
12-13(01) Complaints Office of the
Legislative Council Secretariat
regarding gambling policy and
assistance provided to gamblers

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- LC Paper No. CB(4)168/12-13(01) – Letter dated 16 November 2012 from Hon IP Kin-yuen addressed to the President of Hong Kong Baptist University regarding the "Blue Book of Hong Kong: Annual Report on Development of Hong Kong (2012)"
- LC Paper Nos. CB(4)174/12-13(01) and (02) – Two submissions from members of the public expressing views on the downsizing of secondary school allocation places ("3-2-1 proposal")
- LC Paper No. CB(4)174/12-13(03) – Submission from a member of the public expressing views on the subvention arrangements for the English Schools Foundation
- LC Paper No. CB(4)211/12-13(01) – Letter from Hon IP Kin-yuen regarding the remuneration system for staff employed by University Grants Committee-funded institutions)

Members noted the above papers issued since the last meeting.

II. Items for discussion at the next meeting

- (Appendix I to LC Paper No. CB(4)207/12-13 – List of outstanding items for discussion
- Appendix II to LC Paper No. CB(4)207/12-13 – List of follow-up actions)

2. The Chairman informed members that the Administration had proposed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting to be held at 4:30 pm on Monday, 14 January 2013 –

- (a) Development of International Culinary College of Vocational Training Council;
- (b) Self-financing post-secondary education, and

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- (c) Review of Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap. 320) and Post Secondary Colleges Regulations (Cap. 320A).

3. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that he had no objection to including the discussion items proposed by the Administration on the agenda. However, he considered that items (b) and (c) were inter-related and should be discussed at the same meeting. Regarding item (b) above, he suggested that deputations should be invited to give views on issues related to self-financing post-secondary education. For the purpose of allowing sufficient time to listen to the views of deputations, a separate meeting should be arranged. Dr Kenneth CHAN and Dr Helena WONG agreed with Dr CHEUNG's suggestion.

4. In response to Dr CHEUNG's suggestion, the Chairman advised that he would work out the necessary arrangements with the Deputy Chairman and the Secretariat for holding a special meeting to receive views from deputations on issues related to self-financing post-secondary education.

(Post-meeting note: With the concurrence of the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, a special meeting was scheduled for 11 January 2013 at 9:30 am to meet with deputations and the Administration on self-financing post-secondary education.)

5. Arising from the recent news reports about the change of approving authority for public policy research funding from the Research Grant Council to the Central Policy Unit ("CPU"), Dr Kenneth CHAN suggested that the Panel should discuss public policy research funding and academic freedom at the next meeting. Since the tertiary education sector was concerned about the subject, the Panel should also listen to the views of stakeholders. In response, the Chairman advised that while academic freedom was within the purview of the Panel, CPU was not one of the Panel's counterpart government departments/agencies. He suggested that Dr CHAN might consider bringing up the issue for discussion at a more appropriate forum, such as the Panel on Constitutional Affairs, where members might consider the role and functions of CPU holistically. Nevertheless, the Chairman said that he would discuss further with Dr CHAN after the meeting regarding his suggestion.

(Post-meeting note: The letter from Dr Kenneth CHAN to the Chairman regarding his proposed agenda item, which was tabled at the meeting, was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)240/12-13 on 12 December 2012.)

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6. The Deputy Chairman said that in addition to the items proposed by the Administration, he would propose to follow up the item of "Measures to address the issues arising from the drop in secondary student population" under the agenda item of "Any other business" at the next meeting. The Chairman directed that the Deputy Chairman's suggestion would be considered under the agenda item of "Any other business" at this meeting.

7. Summing up, the Chairman confirmed that the three items proposed by the Administration would be discussed at the next regular meeting. He further informed members that the Panel would hold a special meeting in January 2013 to receive a briefing by the Secretary for Education ("SED") on the Chief Executive's 2013 Policy Address in respect of the policy initiatives on education. Members would be notified of the meeting arrangements in due course. Members had no objection to the aforesaid meeting arrangements.

(Post-meeting note: The special meeting to receive the policy briefing by SED was scheduled for 25 January 2013 at 8:30 am.)

III. Education (Amendment) Bill 2013

(LC Paper No. CB(4)207/
12-13(01)

-- Paper provided by the
Administration)

Briefing by the Administration

8. At the invitation of the Chairman, Under Secretary for Education ("US(Ed)") briefed members on the Administration's proposal to amend the Education Ordinance ("EO") (Cap. 279) and its subsidiary legislation (i.e. the Grant Schools Provident Fund ("GSPF") Rules (Cap. 279 sub. leg. C) and the Subsidized Schools Provident Fund ("SSPF") Rules (Cap. 279 sub. leg. D)) by highlighting the salient points in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)207/12-13(01)]. He explained that the purpose of the proposed amendments was to effect protection to the provident fund benefits of the GSPF and SSPF contributors against vesting in a trustee-in-bankruptcy so that the contributor might have his/her benefits preserved for retirement. The intended scope of protection would be consistent with those provided under the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Ordinance ("MPFSO") (Cap.485). US(Ed) said that subject to the Panel's comments, the Administration planned to introduce the relevant bill into the Legislative Council in the second half of the 2012-2013

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session.

Discussion

9. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung expressed support for the legislative proposal. He considered it unfair that the protection of retirement benefits of teachers in grant schools/subsidized schools was less favourable than that of teachers in government schools, and urged that the disparity in protection should be removed as early as possible. The Deputy Chairman informed the meeting that some teachers had sought assistance from the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union ("HKPTU") to call on the Administration to amend the existing legislation. He said that HKPTU welcomed the proposed amendments.

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10. Mr MA Fung-kwok considered it necessary for the Administration to review whether, apart from EO, there were other ordinances governing the provident fund schemes in the education sector that had similar situations as GSPF/SSPF; and if yes, the Administration should introduce the necessary legislative amendments in one go. US(Ed) noted the view. While it would not be appropriate to include other schemes in the EO to effect the protection, US(Ed) agreed to convey the concern to relevant parties.

11. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che was of the view that the Administration should also review all the legislation governing the provident fund schemes of public-funded bodies, instead of confining the legislative amendment exercise to the provident fund schemes for grant schools and subsidized schools. He considered that contributors of similar provident fund schemes should enjoy the same level of protection. Mr Paul TSE shared Mr CHEUNG's views. The members considered that if amendments to other ordinances were required, such amendments should be introduced in a single exercise.

12. In response, US(Ed) advised that different provident fund schemes were governed by their respective legislation. The current proposal sought to amend EO and its subsidiary legislation so that the scope of protection for contributors under GSPF and SSPF in the event of bankruptcy would be improved and brought in line with those provided under the Pensions Ordinance (Cap.89) and MPFSO. Ordinances governing other provident fund schemes would fall within the purview of other policy bureaux/public bodies and were outside the scope of the current exercise. Whilst noting members' views, US(Ed) said that he was not in a position to advise on other provident fund-related legislation which was not under the policy

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responsibility of the Education Bureau ("EDB"). Nevertheless, US(Ed) said that he would relay members' views to other policy bureaux.

13. Mr Paul TSE referred to the bankruptcy case concerning a subsidized school teacher (Re. NG Shiu Fan [2008] 4 HKLRD 813) in 2008 as mentioned in paragraph 4 of the Administration's paper, and pointed out that following the ruling of the Court of First Instance, amendments had been made to MPFSO and the relevant amendments had come into operation in May 2011. Mr TSE questioned why the Administration had introduced amendments to EO and its subsidiary legislation in such a belated manner. Mr IP Kwok-him shared Mr TSE's view. He found it inconceivable that EDB only consulted the Panel on its proposed legislative amendments more than 18 months after relevant amendments were made to MPFSO.

14. While welcoming the proposal amendments to EO and its subsidiary legislation, Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che considered that the legislative amendments were long overdue. He sought the Administration's explanation on why it had not initiated the necessary amendments earlier.

15. In reply, US(Ed) explained that over the past few years, EDB had been monitoring the progress of the court case (Re. NG Shiu Fan [2008] 4 HKLRD 813). It was noted that in 2010, leave had been granted for the bankrupt teacher to appeal against the judgement of the Court of Appeal and the appellant had attempted to apply for legal aid in 2010 and 2011, which were subsequently refused. EDB was later informed in August 2012 that legal aid had been granted to the appellant. While awaiting the appellant's further action, the Administration had taken steps to expedite the legislative exercise by commencing the drafting work after reviewing the relevant provisions under GSPF Rules and SSPF Rules. US(Ed) said that the earliest date for introducing the bill would be around February/March 2013.

16. The Deputy Chairman enquired whether the proposed amendments to EO and its subsidiary legislation, if enacted, would have any retrospective effect.

17. In response, US(Ed) advised that as a matter of principle, newly enacted legislation would not normally take retrospective effect. GSPF and SSPF contributors would enjoy the level of protection as currently provided under relevant provisions in MPFSO after the amendments to EO and its subsidiary legislation came into operation. Deputy Secretary for Education (4) further explained that if the teacher-contributor of

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GSPF/SSPF was adjudicated bankrupt after the commencement of relevant amendments to EO and its subsidiary legislation, his GSPF/SSPF benefits would not be vested in the trustee-in-bankruptcy. However, if the bankruptcy order was issued on a date before the legislative amendments came into operation, the existing provisions in the EO and GSPF/SSPF Rules would continue to apply.

18. Given the disparity in the vesting of benefits in the event of bankruptcy between MPFSO and the existing GSPF/SSPF Rules, Mr IP Kwok-him asked the Administration to provide information on:

- (a) the number of GSPF/SSPF contributors adjudicated bankrupt since the relevant amendments to MPFSO came into operation in May 2011; and
- (b) in the past five years, the number of teachers in subsidized schools whose provident fund benefits (including contributions made by the Government/school) were vested in the trustee-in-bankruptcy, and the amount of such benefits.

19. US(Ed) advised that from 2008 to 2011, on average, three teachers in grant schools and subsidized schools were adjudicated bankrupt each year. Since May 2011 when the relevant amendments to MPFSO came into operation, two teachers had been declared bankrupt in 2011. There was no such bankruptcy case in 2012. Regarding the amount of provident fund benefits involved, US(Ed) said that if no privacy issue was involved and the information was available, the Administration would provide the information after the meeting.

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20. Referring to section 13 of the SSPF Rules, Mr IP Kwok-him said that if a teacher ceased to be employed by a subsidized school on account of professional misconduct or being convicted of an offence, the teacher would be entitled to payment of his own contributions and dividends. However, he would not be entitled to receive the contributions from the Government/school to the SSPF scheme. In this regard, Mr IP asked the Administration to provide statistics, if any, on the amount of such forfeited contributions. US(Ed) agreed to provide a reply after the meeting.

Admin

21. US(Ed) called on members to support the proposed amendments to EO and its subsidiary legislation.

22. Concluding the discussion, the Chairman said that in principle, members were supportive of the proposed legislative amendments.

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IV. Scheme for Admission of Hong Kong Students to Mainland Higher Education Institutions

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| (LC Paper No. CB(4)207/
12-13(02)) | -- Paper provided by the
Administration |
| LC Paper No. CB(4)207/
12-13(03)) | -- Background brief on issues
related to the admission of
Hong Kong students to
Mainland higher education
institutions prepared by the
LegCo Secretariat) |

23. Members noted the background brief on the subject prepared by the Secretariat [LC Paper No. CB(4)207/12-13(03)].

Briefing by the Administration

24. At the invitation of the Chairman, US(Ed) briefed members on the implementation of the Scheme for Admission of Hong Kong Students to Mainland Higher Education Institutions ("the Scheme") set out in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)207/12-13(02)]. US(Ed) reported that the Scheme had been well-received. When the application and enrolment process was completed in August 2012, over 4 200 students from about 500 secondary schools had completed the procedures of online application and on-site confirmation, and eventually 971 Hong Kong students were admitted to Mainland institutions under the Scheme. A total of 70 Mainland higher education institutions (as compared to 63 in 2012) would take part in the Scheme in 2013.

25. US(Ed) further highlighted a number of enhancement measures introduced to the Scheme in 2013, including the change from the mechanism of "parallel choices" to "priority choices" for enrolment; and introducing the minimum general entrance requirement of "2,2,1,1" (i.e. attaining Level 2 in Chinese Language and English Language and Level 1 in Mathematics and Liberal Studies in Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education ("HKDSE") Examination) for candidates applying for arts and sports programmes, in addition to the "3,3,2,2" minimum requirement for general admission.

Discussion

Inadequate provision of publicly-funded undergraduate places in Hong Kong

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26. Noting the implementation of the Scheme, Dr Kenneth CHAN made his observation that the crux of the matter was the inadequate provision of local publicly-funded undergraduate places. As a result, many secondary school leavers who met the general entrance requirements could not get admitted to local subsidized university programmes, and had to pay high tuition fees for attending self-financing programmes or pursuing further studies outside Hong Kong. He considered it incumbent upon the Administration to accord priority to increasing local publicly-funded undergraduate places. Whilst agreeing with the implementation of the Scheme to provide an additional choice for secondary school leavers, Mr Charles MOK shared Dr Kenneth CHAN's view about the shortage of local publicly-funded undergraduate places. Dr Fernando CHEUNG also opined that the Administration should take steps to increase the number of publicly-funded undergraduate places to fulfil the needs and aspirations of students to further their studies locally.

27. Noting members' views, US(Ed) said that the Administration had always kept in view the provision of publicly-funded undergraduate places. He further advised that the intended purpose of the Scheme was not to resolve the shortage of local university places, but to provide more choices and study paths for students to continue their studies upon completion of secondary education.

Effectiveness and operation of the Scheme

28. Dr Kenneth CHAN enquired about the total expenditure of the Mainland Higher Education Expo ("the Expo") jointly organized by the Education Bureau ("EDB") and the Ministry of Education in the Mainland ("MoE"), as well as the number of students who were finally admitted to the Mainland higher educational institutions under the Scheme. He queried the effectiveness of the Scheme, which was one of the support measures announced during the visit by Mr LI Keqiang, Vice-Premier of the State Council, and whether there were compelling grounds to continue the Scheme after the 2013 cohort.

29. In response, Principal Assistant Secretary (Higher Education) ("PAS(HE)") informed members that the total expenditure for the Expo held in 2012 was about \$4 million, which included the costs for publicity and the publication of the Handbook on the Scheme for the Admission of Hong Kong Students to Mainland Higher Education Institutions (內地高校免試招收香港學生計劃指南) ("the Handbook"). The participating Mainland institutions paid for their own passage to and accommodation in

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Hong Kong.

30. Mr MA Fung-kwok said that he was pleased to note the implementation of the Scheme, and asked whether the Administration had ascertained the effectiveness or otherwise of the Scheme by comparing the total number of students admitted to Mainland undergraduate programmes before and after the implementation of the Scheme.

31. In reply, US(Ed) said that the Administration did not have statistics on the number of students sitting for the Joint Entrance Examination for Universities in the People's Republic of China for Overseas Chinese, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan Students ("the Joint Entrance Examination") before the launch of the Scheme. The effectiveness or otherwise of the Scheme could be better gauged after it had come into operation for a few years when more data were available. Nevertheless, he referred members to page 6 of the Handbook which stated that since the handover in 1997, a cumulative total of over 60 000 Hong Kong students had been enrolled in Mainland institutions for undergraduate studies. In the 2011-2012 academic year alone, the total number of Hong Kong students attending undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the Mainland reached 11 155.

32. Noting from paragraph 5 of the Administration's paper that a total of 3 433 conditional offers were made by the Mainland institutions in May 2012, Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che enquired about the actual number of students who had been given conditional offers under the Scheme. Mr CHEUNG also expressed concern about the profiteering activities of private organizations providing consultancy services to local students wishing to study at universities in the Mainland, Macao and Taiwan.

33. US(Ed) responded that after the release of the HKDSE Examination results earlier this year, about 1 700 applicants met the "3,3,2,2" general admission requirements specified by the Mainland institutions. Conditional offers were made by the participating institutions to about 1 500 applicants. Among them, 971 accepted the offers and were admitted to these institutions under the Scheme. PAS(HE) supplemented that students in Hong Kong were at liberty to seek admission to Mainland universities by other means, such as sitting for the Joint Entrance Examination.

34. The Deputy Chairman referred to the change in the enrolment mechanism of the Scheme from "parallel choices" to "priority choices", under which the application of a candidate would be forwarded to the chosen Mainland institutions in accordance with the student's priority of

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choices. He remarked that from the administrative point of view, the change was an improvement. However, students might have difficulty in acquiring sufficient information on individual Mainland institutions within a short time-frame for determining their priorities of choices. The Deputy Chairman stressed the need to strengthen the provision of guidance and support to students to help them make informed choices. In response, US(Ed) said that the change in the enrolment mechanism would optimize the allocation of Mainland higher education places. He said that EDB was fully aware of the need to provide sufficient information to students and parents, such as through the Expo.

35. In reply to Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung's enquiry, US(Ed) confirmed that the Scheme was initiated in the previous term of government. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung queried the rationale for the involvement of the Administration in the Scheme. He was of the view that the Administration should refrain from any official participation and that the Scheme should be discontinued. Dr Fernando CHEUNG concurred with Mr LEUNG that the Scheme should be discontinued, and considered that the Government should not play any role in promoting the Scheme.

36. Mr Tommy CHEUNG expressed support for the Scheme, and asked the Administration to explore with the Mainland universities the feasibility of offering two-year top-up courses for graduates of local associate degree programmes so as to provide an additional articulation pathway. US(Ed) noted the suggestion for further consideration.

37. Mr Christopher CHUNG disagreed with some members that the Scheme should cease. He saw no reason why the Scheme should be discontinued as it could provide an additional avenue to local students, in particular when certain arts or sports programmes were not available locally for interested students.

38. The Deputy Chairman said that careers and guidance teachers of individual secondary schools had all along played a very important role in providing guidance and counselling to students aspiring for further studies locally and outside Hong Kong. He asked if the Administration had involved the careers and guidance teachers in the implementation of the Scheme.

39. In reply, PAS(HE) advised that the Administration had solicited the assistance of a number of supporting organizations to promote the Scheme, and the Hong Kong Association of Careers Masters and Guidance Masters was one of the major supporting organizations with which the

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Administration had worked closely. Talks on the Scheme had also been arranged for the careers and guidance teachers.

40. Noting that Hok Yau Club was one of the many supporting organizations which had assisted in the implementation of the Scheme but was the only organization acknowledged on the cover of the Handbook, the Deputy Chairman questioned the role of Hok Yau Club in the Scheme. In response, PAS(HE) advised that apart from being one of the supporting organizations, Hok Yau Club had also been engaged to undertake editorial and design work for the Handbook. Its name was therefore shown on the cover of the Handbook as an acknowledgement.

41. Mr Christopher CHUNG declared that he was a member of Hok Yau Club but had not taken part in the Club's decision-making activities for over 20 years. He said that he was not aware of the Club's involvement in the preparation of the Handbook.

42. Mr Charles MOK asked why the Administration had chosen to organize the Expo and implement the Scheme for Mainland institutions but not for other overseas universities. He was also concerned about the criteria adopted by EDB in deciding to publish the Handbook as in the present case. In reply, US(Ed) advised that to tie in with the launch of the Scheme as announced by MoE, EDB had organized the Expo jointly with MoE and published the Handbook. Overseas academic institutions usually organized promotional activities in Hong Kong in conjunction with their local representative bodies. So far, EDB had not collaborated with other overseas governments in organizing similar activities, but would not rule out such possibility if there was room for cooperation.

Recognition of academic qualifications awarded by Mainland institutions

43. Dr Fernando CHEUNG raised concern about the recognition of academic qualifications awarded by Mainland universities, and pointed out that neither the Handbook nor the official website of the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications ("HKCAAVQ") had published information on the recognition of the academic qualifications awarded by the participating Mainland institutions. Noting that individual students seeking confirmation would need to submit their academic qualifications awarded by the Mainland institutions to HKCAAVQ for assessment at a fee of \$2,160 per request, Dr CHEUNG considered that the Administration should disseminate, in a transparent manner, information on the recognition of Mainland qualifications by the Government and professional bodies in Hong Kong. He stressed that such

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information should be made available to students when they considered applying for admission to Mainland universities.

44. In response, PAS(HE) advised that local degrees awarded by the 17 degree-awarding post-secondary institutions were recognized by the Government for the purpose of considering appointments to the civil service. When a candidate possessing a non-local qualification (including degrees awarded by Mainland higher educational institutions) applied for civil service posts, the Civil Service Bureau would consider the assessment of the non-local qualification by HKCAAVQ. If the qualification was assessed as being comparable in standard to the entry qualifications requirements of the post being applied for, the applicant would be eligible for consideration for appointment. He further informed members that there were cases in which applicants holding degrees awarded by Mainland universities had been appointed to the engineering and executive/administrative grades in the civil service. As for the private sector, PAS(HE) said it would be for individual employers to decide whether to recognize the non-local degrees having regard to the requirements of the posts concerned.

45. Mr MA Fung-kwok opined that the Administration should provide an update on the recognition of academic qualifications awarded by the participating Mainland institutions. The update should list the progress of the qualifications assessment of the programmes offered by individual institutions for ease of reference.

46. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung concurred that arrangements should be made so that students applying for the Mainland universities concerned were able to know well in advance whether the degrees to be awarded by these institutions would be recognized. He suggested that information on the recognition of non-local degrees by the Government and professional bodies could be promulgated in phases, starting with the more popular programmes in the Mainland and overseas. The Chairman echoed Mr LEUNG's view.

47. In response, US(Ed) advised that it would not be practicable to conduct and promulgate the assessment of all non-local degrees. Nevertheless, noting members' concern that there should be more information concerning the recognition of non-local degrees for civil service appointments, he agreed to consider, in consultation with the relevant bureaux, how members' concerns could be addressed, and to revert to the Panel by March/April 2013.

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(*Post-meeting note:* The Administration's response was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)331/12-13(01) on 17 January 2013.)

48. Dr Kenneth CHAN was concerned that given the uncertainty over future recognition of the degrees awarded by Mainland universities, students who had been offered admission by these institutions might ultimately decide to pursue local self-financed sub-degree programmes instead. Dr Fernando CHEUNG cautioned that the Government's involvement in the Scheme could make itself liable, in particular if it turned out that some of the degrees awarded by the Mainland institutions were not recognized.

49. Mr Christopher CHUNG noted that it would take some time for the Government to consolidate the list of Mainland institutions whose qualifications to be awarded were recognized in Hong Kong. He was of the view that this exercise was useful and should be taken forward in phases.

50. Noting that the minimum general entrance requirement for arts and sports programmes offered by the Mainland universities was only the attainment of "2,2,1,1" in HKDSE Examination, which might even fall short of the admission requirements of local sub-degree programmes, the Deputy Chairman was concerned that the academic qualifications attained by these students upon their graduation from the Mainland universities might not be given due recognition in Hong Kong.

51. In response, US(Ed) advised that the Mainland institutions adopted the "2,2,1,1" entrance requirement for candidates applying for arts and sports programmes under the Scheme in order to encourage students with outstanding performance in arts or sports to join the Scheme. He further said that notwithstanding a lower requirement on academic results, such candidates were usually required to demonstrate their achievement in the relevant subjects, such as attainment of the requisite grade in the piano examination.

52. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung commented that due to political reasons, the Administration would not be able to make an assessment and announce that the qualifications awarded by certain Mainland universities were recognized in Hong Kong, while those awarded by some other universities were not.

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53. Noting the exemption arrangements under the Scheme, Dr Kenneth CHAN enquired whether the Administration would consider introducing similar exemption to the Mainland students who were interested in pursuing further studies in Hong Kong. PAS(HE) responded that under the existing arrangements, Mainland students interested in furthering their studies in Hong Kong would apply to local post-secondary institutions directly with their National College Entrance Examination results and hence the question of "similar exemption" would not arise.

Financial assistance to students pursuing higher education outside Hong Kong

54. Mr MA Fung-kwok enquired if the Administration would provide financial assistance to secondary school leavers who were going to pursue further studies in Mainland. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che suggested that the financial assistance could be in the form of interest-free or low-interest loans. The Deputy Chairman shared Mr CHEUNG's view. In response, US(Ed) advised that under the existing policy, government subsidies were only provided to students attending local post-secondary programmes. To extend the scope of financial assistance to cover higher studies outside Hong Kong including the Mainland would have significant policy and financial implications. While the Administration had no plan to change the existing policy, US(Ed) noted members' suggestions and said that their views would be considered in the context of the overall policy on the provision of publicly-funded post-secondary education.

Summing up

55. The Chairman remarked that as Hong Kong had developed into a knowledge-based economy, the provision of sufficient university places was of paramount importance. He urged the Administration to note and consider the views and suggestions raised by members which were pragmatic. The Chairman also considered that the effectiveness or otherwise of the Scheme should be quantified. He enquired about the Administration's proposed timetable for reviewing the Scheme and the criteria to be used in evaluating its effectiveness.

56. In response, US(Ed) advised that the Administration would keep the Scheme under regular review. The operational experience of the Scheme gained after a few years would provide a useful basis for evaluation of its usefulness. US(Ed) added that the usefulness of the Scheme should be considered in the context of whether it could facilitate the admission of those students aspiring to study at higher institutions in the Mainland.

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V. Proposal by Hon IP Kin-yuen to set up a subcommittee to study the class size and teaching staff establishment of secondary schools

(LC Paper No. CB(4)128/12-13(01) -- Letter dated 7 November 2012 from Hon IP Kin-yuen to the Chairman of Panel on Education

LC Paper No. CB(4) 217/12-13(01) -- Letter dated 5 December 2012 from Hon IP Kin-yuen to the Chairman of Panel on Education)

57. The Chairman informed members that having regard to the heavy involvement of members in the work of subcommittees formed under the Panel, the Deputy Chairman had decided to withdraw his proposal to set up a subcommittee to study the class size and teaching staff establishment of secondary schools. Hence, the Panel would only need to consider Dr Fernando CHEUNG's proposal under the next agenda item. The Chairman said that as the Deputy Chairman had withdrawn his proposal, no discussion under this item would be required.

VI. Proposal by Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG to set up a subcommittee to study integrated education

(LC Paper No. CB(4)157/12-13(01) -- Letter dated 5 November 2012 from Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG to the Chairman of Panel on Education)

58. At the invitation of the Chairman, Dr Fernando CHEUNG briefed members on his proposal to set up a subcommittee to study integrated education. Under the current policy on integrated education, mainstream schools were required to admit students with different special education needs ("SEN") and levels and nature of disabilities. He was of the view that a subcommittee should be formed to review the existing policy on integrated education, including the support measures for students with SEN and the strengthening of teaching and administrative support for special schools and schools implementing integrated education, and to make timely recommendations.

Action

59. Mr Christopher CHUNG said that the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong did not find it necessary to appoint the two subcommittees as proposed by the Deputy Chairman and Dr Fernando CHEUNG as the relevant subjects could well be discussed by the Panel. Mr CHUNG remarked that if a subcommittee on integrated education needed to be formed, it should be formed under the House Committee because integrated education straddled the purviews of different panels.

60. In this connection, the Chairman stated that integrated education fell within the purview of this Panel and the subject had been discussed at past Panel meetings. Mr Christopher CHUNG maintained his view that the Panel could hold meetings to discuss issues related to integrated education, and invite representatives from other relevant bureaux/departments to attend such meetings if necessary.

61. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that he did not support Dr Fernando CHEUNG's proposal to appoint a subcommittee under the Panel. Regarding the policy on integrated education, he was of the view that training for teachers and deployment of resources could hardly cater for the diverse needs of SEN students admitted to mainstream schools. The Administration should critically review whether the existing policy on integrated education should be changed, as well as the need to provide more resources to special schools.

62. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung was of the view that while the Government had implemented a policy on integrated education, there were insufficient resources and support to underpin the policy. He supported the proposal to set up a subcommittee to review the matter. He remarked that the subcommittee should aim at accomplishing its study within a short period of time.

63. Dr Helena WONG expressed support for setting up the proposed subcommittee to review the policy on integrated education and the effectiveness of its implementation. She said that according to overseas experience, integrated education might be implemented in different modes. For example, mainstream schools could adopt small group teaching for those students with SEN instead of requiring them to attend classes with ordinary students. It was therefore necessary to review the policy and its implementation for the purpose of proposing improvements.

64. The Deputy Chairman expressed support for Dr CHEUNG's proposal. Referring to the proposed terms of reference, he suggested that in addition

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to teaching and administrative support for schools, financial support should also be included.

65. Regarding his decision to withdraw his proposal to set up a subcommittee, the Deputy Chairman said that while he had given way to Dr Fernando CHEUNG's proposal to set up a subcommittee on integrated education, he hoped that members would re-visit his proposal to set up a subcommittee on secondary school class size after the subcommittee on integrated education had completed its work.

66. Dr Fernando CHEUNG noted that although some members had indicated that they did not support his proposal to set up a subcommittee, they had raised concerns about integrated education. He agreed with the Deputy Chairman's suggestion to fine-tune the proposed terms of reference to also include "financial support" for the schools concerned.

67. Members agreed to the proposal to set up a subcommittee under the Panel to study integrated education and endorsed the proposed terms of reference.

VII. Any other business

68. The Deputy Chairman recapped that following the special meetings held on 2 and 3 November 2012, he had moved a motion at the last regular meeting held on 12 November 2012 urging the Government to, inter alia, immediately reduce the class size of secondary schools and in the long term to implement progressively small class teaching. The motion was voted upon and passed by the Panel. However, he noted that on the very same evening, SED made an announcement after a meeting with school principals that secondary schools would be requested to adopt either the "2-1-1" or "1-1-1" option in the allocation of Secondary One places. The Deputy Chairman was of the view that SED's announcement was tantamount to total disrespect of the motion passed by the Panel. Given that the Administration had neither consulted nor updated the Panel on its latest proposal, he had intended to move another motion at this meeting to condemn SED for his disrespect to the Panel.

69. In this regard, the Chairman stated that he could not allow the moving of a motion as contemplated by the Deputy Chairman, because the proposed motion was not related to any of the items on the agenda of this meeting. Moreover, the Panel had just received the written response to the motion passed on 12 November 2012 from EDB yesterday, and members

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would need more time to study it before deliberating on any further motion related to the subject. The Chairman suggested that the Deputy Chairman might consider moving his intended motion at a future meeting in connection with a related item on the agenda. Noting the Chairman's advice, the Deputy Chairman said that he would propose to include his proposed motion and related follow-up matters under the agenda item of "Any other business" at the next regular meeting.

70. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:30 am.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
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