

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(4)732/12-13
(The minutes have been seen by the
Administration)

Ref : CB4/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of special meeting
held on Friday, 25 January 2013, at 8:30 am
in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex

- Members present** :
- Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai, SBS, JP (Chairman)
 - Hon IP Kin-yuen (Deputy Chairman)
 - Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
 - Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP
 - Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
 - 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 WONG Yuk-man
 - Hon Claudia MO
 - 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
- Members attending** :
- Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
 - Hon TANG Ka-piu
 - Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, BBS, MH, JP
- Members absent** :
- Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
 - Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
 - Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP
 - Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
 - Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
 - Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP

Public Officers : Agenda item I
attending

Mr Eddie NG, SBS, JP
Secretary for Education

Mrs Cherry TSE, JP
Permanent Secretary for Education

Mr Kevin YEUNG
Under Secretary for Education

Ms Michelle LI, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education (1)

Ms Jessie WONG
Deputy Secretary for Education (2)

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

Mrs Michelle WONG
Deputy Secretary for Education (4)

Dr K K CHAN
Deputy Secretary for Education (5)

Mrs Angelina CHEUNG
Deputy Secretary for Education (6)

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

Staff in : Mr KWONG Kam-fai
attendance Senior Council Secretary (4)4

Ms Sandy HAU
Legislative Assistant (4)3

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I. Briefing by the Secretary for Education on the Chief Executive's 2013 Policy Address

(LC Paper No. CB(4)318/12-13(01) -- Paper entitled "2013 Policy Address: Policy Initiatives of Education Bureau" provided by the Administration)

Other relevant document

Address by the Chief Executive at the Legislative Council meeting on 16 January 2013 -- "Seek Change, Maintain Stability, Serve the People with Pragmatism"

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Secretary for Education ("SED") briefed members on the initiatives on education in the 2013 Policy Address and highlighted the following points –

- (a) A series of reforms in education had been carried out successfully since 2000. The Administration considered that it was time to consolidate existing policies and to introduce further improvements in accordance with such policies.
- (b) With a view to examining how 15-year free education could be taken forward in a practicable manner, the Education Bureau ("EDB") would set up a committee to study various aspects of free kindergarten ("KG") education in Hong Kong and make practicable proposals to take this forward.
- (c) Additional resources would be provided to help ordinary schools which had admitted a larger number of students with special educational needs ("SEN students") enhance their support for these students. The Administration would continue to keep in view the implementation of integrated education and listen to the views of the Subcommittee on Integrated Education set up under the Panel.
- (d) To strengthen support for non-Chinese speaking ("NCS") students, EDB would refine the Summer Bridging Programme for NCS primary students and would plan to launch an incentive grant scheme to enhance the professional competencies of Chinese Language teachers in teaching NCS

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students.

Overall policy direction

2. The Deputy Chairman expressed his disappointment at the Policy Address as he considered that education had not been accorded due importance. Ms Cyd HO said that although education accounted for about one fifth of the Government's total expenditure, this level of expenditure was low when compared to Hong Kong's GDP. As many issues were yet to be addressed, Ms HO was very dissatisfied that the Administration was not prepared to make drastic changes to the existing education system.

3. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed his disappointment as the Policy Address had not satisfactorily addressed long-standing concerns, including the implementation of free KG education, the development of a separate curriculum for Chinese as a second language for NCS students, shortage of health care staff at special schools to cater for students with severe intellectual disability and the need to increase publicly-funded local undergraduate places.

The use of land for educational purpose

4. Dr Kenneth CHAN declared that he taught at the Hong Kong Baptist University ("HKBU"). He was gravely concerned about the proposed use of the site of the former campus of Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Lee Wai Lee) ("ex-IVE(LWL) site"), and stressed that sites originally earmarked for educational purpose should not be diverted to other uses.

5. In response, SED advised that the northern portion of the ex-IVE(LWL) site had already been reserved for use by HKBU. If fully utilized, the northern portion of the site could meet HKBU's requirements for student hostels and academic space under the prevailing policy. After assessment, the Government had taken the view that it was not necessary to reserve the southern portion of the site for higher education or other "Government, Institution and Community" ("GIC") uses. It was for the Town Planning Board ("TPB") to decide on the future use of the southern portion of the ex-IVE(LWL) site. The Permanent Secretary for Education ("PS(Ed)") supplemented that upon completion of the hostels and other development plans, HKBU would be one of the two University Grants Committee ("UGC")-funded institutions whose needs for student hostel and academic space would be fully met under the prevailing policy.

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Free kindergarten education

6. Noting that EDB would set up a committee to study the feasibility of implementing free KG education, the Deputy Chairman and Dr Kenneth CHAN queried whether this was a tactic to delay or even shelve the implementation of free KG education. The Deputy Chairman relayed the disappointment of the KG sector and asked whether the work of the committee could be expedited. Mr WONG Kwok-hing was concerned about the timetable for implementing free KG education, given that this initiative had been included in the Chief Executive's Election Manifesto. Ms Claudio MO questioned whether this term of Government would put in place free KG education.

7. In response, SED confirmed that providing practicable 15-year free education and better quality KG education was one of the priorities of the current-term Government. He advised that since July 2012, he had over 20 meetings with various stakeholders of KG education, and visited KGs of different operating modes and scales. Owing to the diverse views and expectations of the stakeholders and the huge diversity among KGs numbering more than 970, the Administration considered it prudent to set up a committee to examine the matter to ensure that the related measures would not affect the flexibility of the KG sector and its provision of diversified services for parents. A consultancy firm had been appointed to collate and compile the views obtained from the meetings for reference by the committee scheduled to be set up before mid 2013.

8. On the work of the committee, SED advised that the committee would be underpinned by a number of working groups each tasked to review key issues including the mode of funding for KGs, salary structure and professional development for teachers etc. Where certain initiatives were found worth-pursuing and should be implemented ahead of the conclusion of the review, the Administration might consider implementing them on a pilot basis. SED said that the current assessment was that the committee would complete its study in two years. Various stakeholders would be engaged in the process.

9. The Deputy Chairman enquired about the interim measures, if any, to assist whole-day KGs, and whether the value of the vouchers under the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme ("PEVS") would be raised to relieve the financial burdens on parents. Mr Tommy CHEUNG was of the view that PEVS should also cover private independent KGs.

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10. In response, SED referred to the proposed one-off grant to be provided to KGs which had joined PEVS for improving their learning and teaching resources/environment through improvement works and procurement of furniture, teaching/learning materials, etc. The Deputy Secretary for Education(3) ("DS(Ed)3") advised that at present, the Administration had no plan to introduce any fundamental changes to PEVS, including the adjustment mechanism of the voucher value, pending the review by the committee. She recapitulated that with the approval of the Finance Committee ("FC") on the adjustment mechanism, the value of the voucher would be raised from \$16,800 in the 2012-2013 school year to \$17,510 in the 2013-2014 school year with reference to the year-on-year change in the Composite Consumer Price Index. For needy students attending whole-day KGs, their parents might apply for financial assistance under the Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme ("KCFRS"). The fee remission ceilings for KCFRS were adjusted in accordance with the weighted average school fees of non-profit-making KGs.

Primary school places in the North District

11. Mr TAM Yiu-chung considered that generally speaking, students should be able to attend schools in their home districts. He enquired how the Administration would propose to deal with the shortfall in primary school places in the North District. Mr TAM said that consideration might be given to diverting cross-boundary students to attend schools in other school nets. For example, if the students entered Hong Kong through Shenzhen Bay, they could attend schools in Tuen Mun or Yuen Long.

12. In response, PS(Ed) said that the prevailing Primary One Admission ("POA") System was applicable to all 18 districts in Hong Kong, including the North District. Cross-boundary students could choose one of the eight school nets in Yuen Long, Tuen Mun, Tai Po and the North District as their school net for POA. In explaining the operation of the POA System, PS(Ed) highlighted that about 50% of the Primary One ("P1") places in each school net were for "Discretionary Places Admission" under which parents could apply for P1 places in any district. The remaining 50% of the school places were for Central Allocation, of which 90% were for allocation within the same school net while 10% were for allocation to any school net. Due to the demographic changes over time and the differences in the demand and supply of P1 places, it was impossible to achieve full equilibrium in the supply and demand in any particular district. The Administration was therefore not in a position to guarantee that all students would be allocated P1 places in their home districts. As the number of

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children born in Hong Kong to parents who were not Hong Kong residents had dropped significantly since July 2012, the current shortfall in P1 places was a short-term problem. PS(Ed) added that EDB had held discussions with school principals in the North District, and they had agreed in principle to increase the number of classes and the class size, subject to certain concerns being addressed.

13. In reply to Dr Fernando CHEUNG's enquiry on the shortfall of P1 places in the Sheung Shui school net of the North District, the Deputy Secretary for Education(2) ("DS(Ed)2") said that the North District comprised three school nets and it was difficult to provide an accurate estimate at this stage as parents had just submitted their choices of schools on 19 and 20 January for the Central Allocation stage of the POA System. PS(Ed) pointed out that owing to the complexity and dynamics in the choice of schools exercise under the POA System, more time was needed to ascertain the extent of the shortfall. A preliminary count of applications for places in the North District at the Central Allocation stage showed that the shortfall of P1 places in the district was about 1 400.

14. Mr Tommy CHEUNG asked whether it was the existing policy that students should be able to attend schools in the districts where they resided; and whether the Administration had assessed the number of children born in Hong Kong to non-Hong Kong resident parents but who would study in Hong Kong. Dr Fernando CHEUNG considered that as a matter of policy, students should be able to attend schools in their home district. If this objective could not be achieved under the prevailing system, changes to the system should be made. Dr Helena WONG concurred that the existing system should be reviewed if it could not ensure that students could attend schools in their home districts.

15. In response, PS(Ed) reiterated that under the prevailing POA System where a certain number of P1 places were available for the choice by parents irrespective of the school net of their children, it was not practicable to impose the requirement of "schooling within the home district" on all P1 students. EDB would explore all possible measures, such as borrowing places from nearby school nets, increasing the number of classes and the student intake per class, to meet the demand of P1 places in the North District.

Development of e-Textbooks and e-Learning resources

16. Mr Charles MOK noted from the Administration's paper that EDB would continue to carry out the three-year Pilot Scheme on e-Learning in

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Schools which commenced in the 2010-2011 school year. He was concerned that Hong Kong was lagging behind other jurisdictions such as Korea which had plans to fully implement e-learning and abandon the use of printed textbooks very shortly. Mr MOK said that according to a study conducted by a concern group, quite a number of local schools lacked the necessary information technology ("IT") hardware and facilities to support e-learning and teaching. He called on the Administration to provide additional resources to enable schools to put in place or upgrade the necessary IT facilities.

17. In this regard, the Deputy Secretary for Education(5) ("DS(Ed)5") advised that EDB was in the course of reviewing the Pilot Scheme on e-Learning in Schools. As at early 2013, the Steering Committee on Selection, Quality Assurance and Review for the e-Textbook Market Development Scheme ("EMADS") had approved a total of 30 applications for the development of e-textbooks covering the main subjects of primary and junior secondary education. DS(Ed)5 further said that the e-textbooks which had successfully gone through the quality assurance process would be automatically recognized for inclusion into the Recommended e-Textbook List for use by schools in the 2014-2015 school year. Meanwhile, the Administration would also develop a web-based assessment tasks database for use by students and schools.

Integrated education and special education

18. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che drew the Administration's attention to the implementation of integrated education, and said that some ordinary schools were reluctant to admit SEN students, or apply for the Learning Support Grant ("LSG") due to concerns about the labeling effect on the schools. Some parents, on the other hand, expected that their children with SEN would receive all the necessary care at schools on account of the per capita subsidy. He also highlighted the heavy burden on frontline teachers. Mr CHEUNG urged for a timely review of the implementation of integration education.

19. In response, DS(Ed)3 informed members that the implementation of integration education was subject to ongoing review under the Task Force on Integrated Education in Mainstream Schools which comprised representatives from schools, parent groups, healthcare and related professionals. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che remained doubtful about the efficacy of the review by the Task Force.

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20. Ms Cyd HO expressed concern about the sub-standard facilities at some special schools, notably Hong Chi Morninghill School, Hong Chi Morninglight School and Chi Yun School. She considered that the Administration should carry out a stock-taking exercise on the support measures under integrated education and the existing conditions at special schools, and identify suitable sites for the redevelopment of special schools with sub-standard premises. SED took note of Ms HO's view for consideration and indicated that he would pay a visit to Chi Yun School very shortly.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration advised that it would provide information on this matter in due course to the Subcommittee on Integrated Education.)

Mainland exchange opportunities

21. Dr Kenneth CHAN questioned why the Administration would promote exchange opportunities for young people and undergraduates in the Mainland only, instead of reaching out to other overseas territories. He was concerned that these exchange programmes might be a form of brainwashing national education in disguise.

22. PS(Ed) advised that individual institutions were at liberty to organize exchange programmes in the Mainland or in other territories with the funding provided. She said that according to her understanding, many higher education institutions had also arranged exchange programmes for their undergraduates in other overseas territories in addition to the Mainland. The Mainland had been a popular choice mainly due to the relatively lower costs, its proximity to Hong Kong and its growing economy in recent years.

23. Dr Helena WONG noted from the Administration's paper that starting from the 2011-2012 school year, EDB had provided 4 500 additional exchanges places each year with a view to achieving the target of sponsoring students to join at least one Mainland exchange programme during their primary or secondary schooling. She was concerned about the contents of these programmes and the measures, if any, to safeguard against any attempt to brainwash students through these activities.

24. In response, PS(Ed) advised that EDB had issued guidelines to schools regarding the arrangements for exchange programmes/study tours outside Hong Kong. There were requirements that schools must appoint teachers to join the exchange programme to help facilitate discussions with

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a view to providing a multi-perspective learning experience to students. Regarding Dr WONG's concern about the programme contents, PS(Ed) would provide a copy of the circular to schools and the itineraries of recent Mainland exchange programmes for members' reference.

(Post-meeting note: The material provided by the Administration was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)387/12-13(01) on 5 February 2013.)

Self-financing post-secondary programmes

25. Mr Tommy CHEUNG expressed concern about the high level of tuition fees for self-financing sub-degree programmes. In this regard, the Deputy Secretary for Education(1) advised that pursuant to the principle of institutional autonomy, it was for individual post-secondary institutions to determine their level of tuition fees. Nevertheless, the Administration would relay concerns about tuition fees and other regulatory issues to the Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education for further consideration.

Issues related to the New Academic Structure

26. Dr Priscilla LEUNG welcomed the development of the International Culinary College to provide an additional progression pathway for young people. On the New Senior Secondary ("NSS") curriculum under the New Academic Structure ("NAS"), Dr Priscilla LEUNG considered that the subject of Liberal Studies ("LS") lacked clear learning objectives, and quality and structured teaching and learning guides. She was gravely concerned about subjectivity and possible bias in the teaching of the subject, and took the view that LS should not be a mandatory subject for admission to local undergraduate programmes.

27. Dr Helena WONG declared that she taught LS at university. She supported the objectives of LS and considered that the subject should not be scrapped as a compulsory subject merely on account of certain problems encountered in the initial period of implementation. Dr WONG considered that EDB should carry out more extensive consultation with stakeholders, and take steps to address issues such as the curriculum design, school-based assessment and the onerous workload on frontline teachers.

28. Noting that the elective subjects under the NSS curriculum comprised many science and technology-related subjects, Dr LO Wai-kiwok said that one of the difficulties was insufficient qualified

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teachers for these subjects. According to Dr LO, some schools were reluctant to offer these elective subjects for fear of being labeled as inferior in academic achievement. Dr LO said that notwithstanding the recent controversy arising from moral and national education, there was a common view about the importance of Chinese History as a secondary school subject. He asked whether EDB had any plans to implement the structured teaching of Chinese History.

29. Regarding technology-related subjects, DS(Ed)5 said that the number of students taking elective subjects such as Design and Applied Technology and Visual Arts was relatively higher than those taking some other elective subjects. Applied Learning courses also comprised some technical subjects. The Administration would also review the assessment of these subjects in its NSS review and look into any possible labelling effect as mentioned by Dr LO. As regards the subject of Chinese History, DS(Ed)5 advised that most secondary schools taught Chinese History as a separate subject in a chronology-based approach. However, there were also schools which integrated the elements of western history and Chinese History in the same subject to facilitate comparative study.

30. Noting that under the NSS curriculum, students could choose their elective subjects from a range of Applied Learning courses, Mr TANG Ka-piu said that some students attending schools in faraway districts such as Tung Chung were deterred from selecting courses of interest to them because they could not afford the expenses to travel to the teaching venues, such as the Chinese Cuisine Training Institute of the Vocational Training Council in Pokfulam. Mr TANG added that for similar reasons, some schools had limited the choice of Applied Learning courses for students to only those run by institutions in nearby districts. He enquired whether financial assistance could be provided to these students.

31. In response, the Deputy Secretary for Education(6) ("DS(Ed)6") advised that student travel subsidy was provided to needy students for their travel between home and school. In addition, a flat-rate grant under the School Textbook Assistance Scheme was provided to needy students to meet various school-related expenses. In this regard, approval had been obtained from FC to increase the flat-rate grant to \$1,000 per year per student ("pyps") for full-grant students and to \$500 pyps for half-grant students starting from the 2011-2012 school year.

32. Ms Claudia MO remarked that according to some school principals, the date for the release of results of the Hong Kong Diploma for Secondary Education Examination would be advanced from 20 July to 15 July in

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future. Hence, students taking the six Other Languages subjects would have to sit for the relevant examination held in November of the previous year, instead of in June of the year in question. In terms of the time available for preparation and revision, the students and the schools concerned would be disadvantaged.

33. In response, SED informed members that the examinations for the Other Language subjects were administered by an overseas examination body on a worldwide basis. The examination timetable was also set by the overseas body concerned for all candidates including those from Hong Kong.

Support for NCS students in Learning Chinese

34. Ms Claudio MO regretted that the Administration had not given any positive response to the suggestion of developing a curriculum for Chinese Language as a second language to cater for NCS students of ethnic minorities. In response, SED informed members that different stakeholders had raised different expectations on what was to be achieved by implementing a separate curriculum for Chinese Language as a second language. It was therefore necessary for the Administration to first ascertain the relevant teaching and learning objectives before taking the matter forward.

Further education outside Hong Kong

35. Mr MA Fung-kwok was pleased to note from the Administration's paper that a total of 70 higher education institutions in the Mainland would exempt Hong Kong students from taking the requisite entrance examination and admit them based on their local public examination results. To further assist local students aspiring to pursue higher studies in the Mainland, Mr MA considered that the Administration should provide financial assistance to them in the form of grants/loans.

36. Whilst noting Mr MA's concern, PS(Ed) responded that before instituting a policy to provide students pursuing higher education at the 70 Mainland universities with financial assistance similar to their counterparts in Hong Kong, the Administration would need to consider the question of equity to students pursuing education in other Mainland institutions and in other places outside Hong Kong. . Mr MA Fung-kwok did not subscribe to the Administration's explanation and maintained his view that financial assistance should be available to these students as they too had fulfilled the general admission requirements of local universities.

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37. On the qualifications awarded by Mainland higher education institutions, Mr MA Fung-kwok sought information on the number of applications submitted to the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications ("HKCAAVQ") for assessment, and where practicable, details of these assessed qualifications, including the names of the programmes and institutions involved.

38. Whilst agreeing to revert to the Panel on the detailed information requested by Mr MA, PS(Ed) informed members that all the 70 Mainland higher education institutions joining the Scheme for Admission of Hong Kong Students to Mainland Higher Education Institutions in 2013 were included in the list of recognized institutions under the Memorandum of Understanding between the Mainland and Hong Kong on Mutual Recognition of Academic Degrees in Higher Education. Degrees at undergraduate or above levels awarded by these 70 institutions were recognized by local higher education institutions for the purpose of further study.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's written response was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)444/12-13(01) on 25 February 2013. It was explained, amongst others, that holders of non-local qualifications (including those awarded by Mainland institutions) wishing to ascertain the equivalence of their qualifications to local standards would normally seek the assessment of HKCAAVQ which would assess each application on its own merits.)

School lunch subsidy for primary students

39. Mr TANG Ka-piu noted that to be eligible for the school lunch subsidy funded by the Community Care Fund ("CCF"), primary students must be in receipt of full grant under the Student Financial Assistance Schemes. He considered primary students receiving half grant under these Schemes should also be entitled to school lunch subsidy.

40. In this regard, DS(Ed)6 advised that the school lunch subsidy was one of the assistance programmes under CCF implemented on a pilot basis starting from the 2011-2012 school year. Primary students receiving full grant under the Student Financial Assistance Schemes were the target students as they were regarded as most in need of assistance. DS(Ed)6 nevertheless said that the Administration would convey Mr TANG's view to CCF for consideration in its upcoming review.

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II. Any other business

41. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 9:45 am.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
3 June 2013