

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(4)960/12-13
(The minutes have been seen by the
Administration)

Ref : CB4/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Thursday, 30 May 2013, at 8:30 am
in Conference Room 2 of the Legislative Council Complex

- Members present** :
- Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai, SBS, JP (Chairman)
 - Hon IP Kin-yuen (Deputy Chairman)
 - Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
 - 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 Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee, GBS, JP
 - Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
 - Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
 - 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 Helena WONG Pik-wan
 - Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP
- Member attending** :
- Hon CHAN Yuen-han, SBS, JP
- Members absent** :
- Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
 - Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP
 - Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung

Public Officers : Agenda item IV
attending

Mr Kevin YEUNG
Acting Secretary for Education

Dr K K CHAN
Deputy Secretary for Education (5)

Mr Stephen Y W YIP
Principal Assistant Secretary
(Curriculum Development)

Dr C S TONG
Secretary General
Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

Mrs Christina LEE
Acting Director – Public Examinations
Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

Agenda item V

Mr Kevin YEUNG
Acting Secretary for Education

Ms Pecvin YONG Pui-wan
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education
(Further Education)

Prof Gilbert FONG Chee-fun
Acting President
Hang Seng Management College/Hang Seng School
of Commerce

Ms Suzanne CHAN
Vice-Chair, Finance Committee
Hang Seng Management College

Mr Martin TAM
Chairman, Campus Steering Committee,
Hang Seng Management College

Prof Raymond SO
Dean, School of Business,
Hang Seng Management College

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

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

Ms Sandy HAU
Legislative Assistant (4)3

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I. Confirmation of minutes

(LC Paper No. CB(4)651/12-13 -- Minutes of meeting on
7 February 2013)

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2013 were confirmed.

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

(LC Paper No. CB(4)611/12-13(01) -- Administration's response to the concerns raised by Members as set out in a referral memo from the Public Complaints Office regarding School-based After-School Learning and Support Programmes

LC Paper No. CB(4)648/12-13(01) -- Letter dated 18 April 2013 from Dr Hon Helena WONG concerning the University Grants Committee-funded research postgraduate programmes

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- LC Paper No. CB(4)648/12-13(02) -- Administration's written response to letter from Dr Hon Helena WONG concerning the University Grants Committee-funded research postgraduate programmes
- LC Paper No. CB(4)671/12-13(01) -- Letter dated 2 May 2013 from Dr Hon Helena WONG concerning the formulation of policy statement on sexual harassment in schools
- LC Paper No. CB(4)671/12-13(02) -- Administration's written response to letter from Dr Hon Helena WONG concerning the formulation of policy statement on sexual harassment in schools
- LC Paper No. CB(4)684/12-13(01) -- Letter dated 20 May 2013 from Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che regarding the progress of work of the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education
- LC Paper No. CB(4)700/12-13(01) -- Letter dated 7 May 2013 from Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN concerning the prices of school textbooks (Chinese version only)
- LC Paper No. CB(4)700/12-13(02) -- Administration's written response to the letter dated 7 May 2013 from Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN concerning the prices of school textbooks)

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2. Members noted the above papers issued since the last meeting.

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

(Appendix I to LC Paper No. -- List of outstanding items
CB(4)685/12-13 for discussion

Appendix II to LC Paper No. -- List of follow-up actions)
CB(4)685/12-13

3. The Chairman informed members that the Administration had proposed to discuss two items at the next regular meeting scheduled for 10 June 2013, namely "One-off School Development Grant for Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme-kindergartens/kindergartens-cum-child care centres", and "Proposed scholarships for post-secondary students with special educational needs". The Chairman said that after discussion with the Deputy Chairman, two additional items on "Update on the proposed use of the southern portion of the former campus site of the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Lee Wai Lee)", and "Teachers employed on contract terms in primary and secondary schools" would be included on the agenda of the next meeting. Members noted and raised no objection.

4. The Chairman suggested and members agreed that the regular meeting for July 2013 originally scheduled for 8 July 2013 would be re-scheduled to be held on Tuesday, 9 July 2013, from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm for the purpose of allowing more time for the Panel to deliberate on outstanding items before the end of this session. The Chairman advised that one of the agenda items would be the progress of work of the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education.

5. Dr Helena WONG referred members to two of the papers listed under agenda item II which were her letter stating her concerns about the enrolment of non-local students to the University Grants Committee-funded research postgraduate programmes and the Administration's response thereto. She considered that the Administration's written reply had not fully addressed her concerns and that the Panel should follow up. The Chairman requested Dr WONG to set out in writing the issues that required further clarification and he would request the Administration to provide further written response. In response to Dr WONG's suggestion to include the item on "formulation of policy

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statement on sexual harassment in schools" on the Panel's "List of items for discussion", the Chairman said that he and the Deputy Chairman would consider the matter.

(Post-meeting note: On the instruction of the Chairman, Dr WONG's letter dated 31 May 2013 was forwarded to the Administration for further written response.)

6. Before proceeding to the discussion items, the Chairman drew members' attention to Rule 83A of the Rules of Procedure which provided that a Member shall 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. He reminded members to declare interests, if any, in the matter under discussion.

IV. Review of New Senior Secondary Curriculum and Assessment

(LC Paper No. CB(4)685/12-13(01) -- Paper provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(4)685/12-13(02) -- Background brief entitled "Issues related to the review of the implementation of the new senior secondary curriculum and assessment" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat

LC Paper No. CB(4)685/12-13(03) -- Letter dated 11 March 2013 from Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun to the Chairman of Panel on Education

LC Paper No. CB(4)708/12-13(01) -- Submission from BAFS Concern Group addressed to the Panel on Education dated 28 May 2013)

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7. Members noted the background brief on the subject prepared by the Secretariat, a letter from Dr Priscilla LEUNG and a submission from BAFS Concern Group [LC Paper Nos. CB(4)685/12-13(02) & (03), and CB(4)708/12-13(01)].

Briefing by the Administration

8. At the invitation of the Chairman, Acting Secretary for Education ("Acting SED") briefed members on the progress of the New Academic Structure ("NAS") review by highlighting the salient points in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)685/12-13(01)]. He recapitulated that the Education Bureau ("EDB"), the Curriculum Development Council ("CDC") and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority ("HKEAA") had jointly launched a review of the New Senior Secondary ("NSS") curriculum and assessment since mid-2012. The review adopted a strategic approach with multiple stages to address the practical concerns of schools and students in the short-term while allowing time to formulate and discuss medium- and long-term recommendations.

9. Acting SED said that a progress report containing the short-term recommendations for fine-tuning the NSS curriculum and assessment for teaching at Secondary 4 ("S4") in the 2013-2014 school year leading to the 2016 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education ("HKDSE") Examination had been released on 19 April 2013. The main improvements covered the following: (a) the curriculum content of a number of subjects would be updated, revised or trimmed, and the total lesson time would be reduced; (b) School-based Assessment ("SBA") for some subjects would be deferred, streamlined or not be implemented; and (c) the assessment design of some subjects would be improved and the examination time would be adjusted. Regarding the medium- and long-term review, a total of 10 working groups would be set up to review SBA and nine NSS subjects.

Discussion

The Scope and process of review

10. While appreciating the Administration's effort to come up with the short-term recommendations, Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che asked whether the Administration had consulted parents, in particular the parents of students with special educational needs ("SEN students"), in the process of the review. Secretary General, HKEAA advised that various stakeholders

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including parents' associations had been engaged in the review. Focus group discussions had also been conducted with students.

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11. In response to Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che's enquiry about the concerns expressed by stakeholders, Secretary General, HKEAA said that a summary of their concerns had been given in the progress report, which included concerns about lesson time, teaching manpower, the breadth and depth of the curriculum, SBA etc. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che requested the Administration to set out the issues of concern raised by each specific group of stakeholders such as parents, students, teachers, etc., in the review of the NSS curriculum and assessment.

12. The Deputy Chairman commented that the review had not addressed issues related to the provision of teacher manpower in schools. He considered that the decline in secondary student population would eventually lead to a reduction in the number of classes, teachers and elective subjects offered by schools. Hence, it was necessary for the Administration to examine how the teacher manpower in schools could be deployed to ensure the smooth implementation of the NSS curriculum and assessment.

13. Acting SED said that in its review, the Administration had attached equal importance to teacher manpower and to curriculum and assessment. The short-term recommendations for fine-tuning curriculum and assessment, which aimed at addressing practical concerns and sharing of good practices among schools, would be implemented in the 2013-2014 school year. Meanwhile, issues related to the overall workload of teachers and students would be monitored on an ongoing basis.

14. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that the crux of the matter was the highly selective education system and the inadequate provision of publicly-funded undergraduate places. If the assessment results of the mandatory and elective subjects under the NSS curriculum were not considerations for university admission, the controversy and public concern about the choice of subjects and arrangements for assessment would not arise. Mr LEUNG considered that the only way out was to increase public spending on education, in particular the provision of sufficient publicly-funded undergraduate places for eligible students.

15. Dr Priscilla LEUNG expressed regret that some stakeholders were reluctant to listen to the views of Members of the Legislative Council on the NSS curriculum and assessment. She remarked that since the Fourth Legislative Council, the Panel on Education had deliberated on issues

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related to the NSS curriculum and assessment, including the Liberal Studies ("LS") subject. Dr LEUNG suggested that a separate meeting should be arranged for the purpose of allowing sufficient time for reviewing with the Administration all relevant issues raised by Panel members on the NSS curriculum and assessment. The Chairman noted the suggestion.

16. Regarding the review on NSS elective subjects, Mr Charles MOK remarked that the Business, Accounting and Financial Studies ("BAFS") subject appeared to have received most attention. He commented that the review should be conducted holistically rather than placing emphasis on certain subjects only.

17. Noting one of the recommendations at the system/school level to reduce the total lesson time for the NSS curriculum, the Deputy Chairman was of the view that consideration should also be given to trimming the curriculum content in the light of the reduction in lesson time.

Uptake of elective subjects

18. Some members including Dr Kenneth CHAN, Dr Helena WONG, Mr MA Fung-kiok and Mr Charles MOK noted that it was common for students to drop some of their elective subjects at S5 and/or S6. They were gravely concerned about the significant drop-out rate at S5/S6 for certain elective subjects, such as Chinese History, Visual Arts and Information and Communication Technology ("ICT"). Referring to Chinese History as an example, Dr Kenneth CHAN said that as he understood, the number of students taking the subject dropped from over 10 000 in S4 to about 7000 in S6. Dr Priscilla LEUNG remarked that since there were already four mandatory subjects in the NSS curriculum, students might not be keen on taking more elective subjects than the basic requirement.

19. Deputy Secretary for Education (5) ("DS(Ed)5") explained that unlike the past curriculum, the offer and combination of elective subjects under the NSS curriculum were numerous. Students could take elective subjects across two or more Key Learning Areas rather than following the traditional practice of streaming into arts, science and commerce classes. In addition to 20 elective subjects, the NSS curriculum also offered 35 Applied Learning courses so that students could choose those elective subjects that best suited their interests and ability.

20. Regarding concerns about the drop-out rate of students for certain NSS subjects, Secretary General, HKEAA explained that under the NSS

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curriculum, students were encouraged to broaden their choices by taking more than two elective subjects at S4. They would then decide, having regard to their interests and aptitude, to take two elective subjects in the HKDSE Examination. Hence, it could reasonably be expected that student enrolment for certain elective subjects would drop at S5 and S6 levels. Nevertheless, he informed members that the total number of students taking Visual Arts in the HKDSE Examination was about 4 000, compared with about 300 candidates in Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination.

21. Mr Christopher CHUNG declared that his wife was a former secondary school teacher. He asked why vocational training was not offered at senior secondary levels so that students who did not wish to pursue studies in the academic curriculum could avail themselves of more options.

22. In reply, Acting SED said that pursuant to the implementation of the NAS and the NSS curriculum, students at senior secondary levels were offered the choice of a variety of Applied Learning courses in addition to the mainstream academic subjects. DS(Ed)5 further advised that with the assistance of tertiary institutes, a survey had been conducted on the first cohort of HKDSE students who were pursuing post-secondary education. In general, their feedbacks on the NSS curriculum were positive. The findings of the survey would be published on EDB's website once available.

Issues related to the subject of Liberal Studies

23. Dr Priscilla LEUNG declared that her two sons were secondary school students who were required to take the LS subject. She expressed her concern about the curriculum breadth of the LS subject and the insufficiency of lesson time for completion of the six modules. Noting that students were required to answer questions on local politics in the two HKDSE Examinations on LS held in 2012 and 2013, Dr LEUNG was gravely concerned that the LS subject had been confined to topics in local politics. She queried the lack of objectivity in assessment, and reiterated her view that LS should not be a mandatory subject for admission to local undergraduate programmes.

24. Mrs Regina IP also expressed concern about the lack of a structured curriculum of the LS subject. Regarding the assessment of the subject, Mrs IP suggested to adopt a simplified grading scheme comprising only a "pass" or "fail" grade.

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25. In response, Secretary General, HKEAA advised that the assessment design for individual subjects had followed the Curriculum and Assessment Guide. The assessment of the LS subject covered all the modules of the subject instead of focusing on a particular module only.

26. Regarding concerns about the objectivity in assessment of the LS subject, the Deputy Chairman said that according to his own experience in marking scripts of public examinations, HKEAA had put in place a mechanism to ensure fairness and impartiality in the assessment process.

27. Dr Helena WONG did not object to LS being a mandatory subject, as it could help equip students with analytical and critical thinking skills. Since LS was a relatively new subject, more time should be given to monitor its implementation and consolidate the experience. Dr WONG said that although she was not in favour of introducing drastic changes to the subject at the present stage, she considered it necessary to review the curriculum content of the LS subject because the currently allocated lesson time was insufficient for teaching the subject.

28. Ms Claudia MO did not envisage any problem for including controversial issues of local politics in the teaching materials of the LS subject. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that he did not have any strong view that LS should be made a mandatory subject. However, he considered it appropriate to include local politics in the LS subject.

29. Noting that the LS subject aimed at developing students' critical thinking skills, Mrs Regina IP pointed out that she did not agree with EDB's Chinese translation of the expression "critical thinking" as "批判性思考". In response, DS(Ed)5 said that since "critical thinking" comprised a range of abilities and skills, the Administration had no longer adopted the expression "批判性思考" as the Chinese rendition of the term "critical thinking", but had used a more elaborate description in Chinese for the term.

30. Regarding the Administration's decision to cease the LS Curriculum Support Grant ("LSCSG") in the 2013-2014 school year, Dr Helena WONG did not subscribe to the Administration's response to her question raised in connection with the examination of the Estimates of Expenditure for 2013-2014. The Chairman shared similar concern and asked whether consideration would be given to continuing the provision of LSCSG.

31. Acting SED explained that when LSCSG was launched in the 2010-2011 school year, the Administration had clearly stated that LSCSG

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was a time-limited one-off grant. Since the 2008-2009 school year, schools had been provided with the Senior Secondary Curriculum Support Grant which could be used flexibly to support the ongoing implementation of the NSS curriculum, including the LS subject. As such, there was no plan to extend the provision of LSCSG. Whilst noting the explanation of Acting SED, the Chairman said that the Administration should re-consider the matter.

32. Dr Kenneth CHAN declared that he had participated in the assessment work of HKEAA. He pointed out that SEN students had encountered great difficulty in studying the LS subject, which had become an impediment to their pursuit of higher education. Dr CHAN enquired whether HKEAA would introduce specific measures or alternative assessment for SEN students taking the LS subject. Dr Helena WONG shared Dr CHAN's view. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che asked whether the adaptation measures for SEN students in the NSS assessment would be enhanced.

33. In response, Secretary General, HKEAA said that advice had been sought from educational psychologists on the necessary adaptation measures for SEN students in the HKDSE Examination, such as extending the examination time, exemption of students with hearing impairment from the listening assessment etc. HKEAA was also exploring the feasibility of allowing SEN students to use assistive software (such as speech-to-text conversion software).

34. Ms Claudia MO stated her view that in launching the NSS curriculum, there was inadequate planning on the part of the Administration regarding the necessary measures to support SEN students. Acting SED referred to various resources and professional support to facilitate schools in implementing the NSS curriculum. Training activities were arranged to equip teachers with appropriate teaching methods. DS(Ed)5 supplemented that a Web-based Resource Platform for LS had been set up for the use of LS teachers.

Chinese History and History subjects

35. Mr Albert HO remarked that although it had been over 15 years since the handover in 1997, young people were still unfamiliar with the Motherland and many of them questioned their identity as a Chinese national. This was ample proof that education on history needed to be beefed up. Dr Helena WONG and Dr Kenneth CHAN were concerned about the reduced interest in history subjects among secondary students.

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36. Noting that history was a compulsory school subject in the United States, Mrs Regina IP was concerned about the situation in Hong Kong where the number of students taking Chinese History and History subjects had dropped. As a result, students were knowledgeable in neither Chinese history nor world history. She suggested that consideration should be given to making Chinese History a compulsory subject. She also considered that the language proficiency of students should be enhanced. Mr MA Fung-kwok shared the members' views on history subjects.

37. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung remarked that history subjects should cover not merely historical events but also different historical perspectives. Mr Christopher CHUNG questioned why Chinese History was not made a compulsory subject in junior secondary levels.

38. Acting SED advised that according to a survey, in the 2012-2013 school year, about 90% of secondary schools offered Chinese History at S4 to S6 levels. Out of more than 20 elective subjects at S4 to S6 levels, Chinese History ranked as the eighth most popular elective subject in terms of student enrolment.

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39. DS(Ed)5 supplemented that about 85% of secondary schools offered Chinese History as an independent and compulsory subject at junior secondary levels. She said that the Administration would provide written proof that Chinese History was not a compulsory subject in the past, but from 2000 onwards, it had been recommended to schools to make Chinese History a mandatory subject in the junior secondary curriculum.

Other subjects

40. Mr Albert HO was of the view that Chinese Language should not be taught in the same way as English Language which focused on grammatical correctness. He considered that Chinese Language could not be learnt effectively outside the context of Chinese history, philosophy and culture. Studying classical literature and set texts would provide students with a solid foundation in learning Chinese Language.

41. In response, Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum Development) advised that the prevailing pedagogy of the Chinese Language subject aimed to develop students' listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities rather than knowledge on grammar. A working group had been set up and was exploring the feasibility of including classical set texts and related assessments in the curriculum in order to enhance the

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proficiency of students in Chinese language.

42. Dr Kenneth CHAN reflected a view that the breadth and depth of the curriculum content of the BAFS subject was overloaded to the extent that it resembled a miniature undergraduate course in Business Administration. In response, Acting SED said that one of the short-term recommendations arising from the review was the reduction of the content of the BAFS curriculum by 15%. Communication with stakeholders would continue for the purpose of further improving this subject in the medium- and long-term review.

43. Referring to the assessment of the Visual Arts subject, Mr MA Fung-kwok noted that students were assessed for their ability in "Art Appreciation and Criticism". However, both teachers and students had found it difficult to prepare for the assessment because no clear guidelines had been provided to them. Mr MA said that in the past, an independent group of experts would serve as markers in the assessment of the Visual Arts subject. However, there was no similar arrangement in the HKDSE Examination and the assessment was only done by teachers of the subject. Mr MA further said that many students had decided to drop the Visual Arts subject due to difficulty in attaining high grades.

44. In response, Secretary General, HKEAA said that similar views on the Visual Arts subject had been received during the review. However, according to the findings of the survey conducted on teachers during the review, teachers agreed that the assessment on "Art Appreciation and Criticism" should be maintained. He further clarified that as subject teachers were most familiar with the requirements of the curriculum and assessment, it had been an established practice for subject teachers to serve as markers of the subject in public examinations. This was not a new arrangement specific to the HKDSE Examination.

45. Mr Charles MOK said that teachers of the ICT subject had urged for changes to the subject. According to the education sector, there were articulation problems for the curricula of computer and information technology subjects from primary to secondary levels. In this regard, DS(Ed)5 said that under the NSS curriculum, Applied Learning courses also comprised many technology-related subjects. She informed members that EDB was reviewing technology education in primary and secondary levels as well as the Information Technology in Education Strategy. It was expected that the outcomes of the review would be announced by the end of 2013.

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46. Dr Helena WONG expressed her support for the recommendation of not implementing SBA for three subjects from the 2013 HKDSE Examination onwards. Regarding the recommendation to defer SBA for nine other subjects until the 2019 HKDSE Examination, Dr WONG urged the Administration to re-examine the need for SBA in respect of these subjects.

47. Ms Claudia MO referred to the SBA of the Chinese Language subject which required the preparation of reading reports by students. She was concerned that under the current NSS assessment, reading had become a tool for fulfilling the requirement of SBA, rather than a means to help nurture students' interest in and appreciation of language and literature.

V. Start-up loan for post-secondary education provider

(LC Paper No. CB(4)685/12-13(04) -- Paper provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(4)685/12-13(05) -- Background brief entitled "Issues related to the Start-up Loan Scheme for post-secondary education providers" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat)

48. Members noted the background brief on the subject prepared by the Secretariat [LC Paper No. CB(4)685/12-13(05)].

Briefing by the Administration

49. At the invitation of the Chairman, Acting Secretary for Education ("Acting SED") briefed members on the Administration's proposal to provide a loan of \$800 million to Hang Seng School of Commerce ("HSSC") to cover the development costs of campus and student hostels for the operation of full-time locally accredited post-secondary programmes by Hang Seng Management College ("HSMC"), details of which were set out in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)685/12-13(04)]. Subject to members' views, the Administration planned to submit the proposal to the Finance Committee ("FC") for approval on 21 June 2013.

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50. With the aid of PowerPoint presentation, Prof Gilbert FONG, Acting President of HSSC/HSMC, briefed members on the campus development project of HSMC. The start-up loan of \$800 million would fund part of the development of a purpose-built academic and administrative building, a sports and amenities centre and three blocks of student hostels. He said that the development would enable HSMC to enhance the quality of teaching and learning and promote the all-round development of students.

(Post-meeting note: A set of the PowerPoint presentation material was circulated to members by email on 30 May 2013.)

Discussion

The provision and repayment of the start-up loans

51. Whilst expressing support for the proposed start-up loan of \$800 million, Dr Kenneth CHAN was concerned that HSMC might charge high tuition fees on students to cover loan repayment. Noting that HSMC was required to repay a total of over \$1 billion of start-up loans in the next 10 years or so, the Deputy Chairman was gravely concerned that the financial burden would fall squarely on students through payment of high tuition fees. Mr Tommy CHEUNG also sought information on the arrangements for loan repayment.

52. In response, Prof Gilbert FONG advised that the prevailing tuition fees payable by Year 1 students of HSMC was \$65,000 per annum, which was comparable to, if not lower than, that of other self-financing post-secondary institutions. He confirmed that the income from tuition fees would be used mainly to meet operating expenses, while repayment of the start-up loans would be met by HSMC's fund-raising initiatives and the income generated from its reserve. The Deputy Chairman stressed the need to strike a proper balance between relying on fund-raising by the institution, subsidy from the Government and income from tuition fees in order not to impose an undue financial burden on students.

53. Referring to the "List of Loans Approved under Start-up Loan Scheme (as at 30 April 2013)" at Annex C of the Administration's paper, Dr Kenneth CHAN requested the Administration to provide updated information on the repayment of loans by individual institutions, including extension of the repayment period, if any. Acting SED agreed to provide the information after the meeting. In reply to Dr CHAN, he said that there had been no case of default in repayment.

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(*Post-meeting note:* The Administration's written response was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)761/12-13(01) on 7 June 2013.)

54. Whilst opining that a longer repayment period should be allowed for the start-up loans, Ms Cyd HO took the view that instead of loans, grants should be provided to the self-financing institutions so that funds spent on loan repayment could otherwise be deployed for educational purposes. She considered it unfair for students to share the financial burden of the institutions in repaying loans, which would add to the financial hardship of needy students and their families, and worsen the poverty problem at large.

55. Acting SED advised that it was the Government's policy to support the parallel development of the publicly-funded and self-financing post-secondary education sectors to provide greater diversity and choices for higher education. He took note of Ms Cyd HO's view that the Administration should critically review its investment in education.

56. Ms Claudia MO said that she was impressed by HSMC's students and indicated her strong support for the funding proposal. Referring to the heavy financial commitments for projects such as the Hong Kong section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and the West Kowloon Cultural District, Ms MO considered that to support the post-secondary education sector, the \$800 million in question should be provided to HSMC as a grant instead of a loan.

Corporate governance, operation and future development of HSMC

57. Referring to the review conducted by the Audit Commission on the Government's regulatory control over private hospitals, Mr Paul TSE asked whether self-financing post-secondary institutions in receipt of government support would be subject to reviews by the Audit Commission. In response, Acting SED advised that since the use of public resources was involved, the Audit Commission could conduct value-for-money studies on these institutions where it deemed necessary.

58. Ms Suzanne CHAN, Vice-Chair, Finance Committee of HSMC supplemented that HSMC adopted high standards in corporate governance. In addition to internal and external audits, HSMC had set up a number of committees, such as Audit Committee and Finance Committee, which were chaired by relevant professionals, to ensure greater accountability for

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the use of financial resources.

59. In response to Mrs Regina IP's enquiry on the level of remuneration for the staff of HSMC, Prof FONG said that HSMC was fully aware that a competitive remuneration package was necessary in order to attract quality staff to join the College. Currently, the salary of the staff at HSMC was some 10% to 15% less than that of their counterparts in UGC-funded institutions. About 60% of the academic staff at HSMC had a Ph.D degree and some were former staff of UGC-funded institutions. Global recruitment was also conducted in the selection of key staff.

60. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that as he was the Chairman of FC, he would refrain from stating his position on the funding proposal. Referring to the renowned private university sector in the United States, Mr CHEUNG expressed concern about the competitiveness and future development of private universities in Hong Kong. In this regard, Prof FONG said that HSMC was able to attract high-calibre students and many of them had attained good results in public examinations.

61. Dr Priscilla LEUNG declared that she was teaching at an UGC-funded institution. She noted that in places such as the United States, many of the top universities were privately run. Dr LEUNG referred to her experience in interacting with graduates from HSSC and remarked that in addition to high academic performance, she would expect university education to foster the all-rounded development of students.

62. In response, Prof FONG confirmed that HSMC, being a post-secondary institution registered under the Post-secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap. 320), would not adopt a commercialized approach in delivering education. In fact, HSMC was embarking on a long-term development plan with the objective of becoming the leading private university recognized for excellence in teaching, learning and research. It was HSMC's aspiration to be the first choice, and not a second chance, for students.

63. Ms Claudia MO enquired on the timetable, if any, for HSMC to acquire the status of a private university. In response, Prof FONG advised that according to its strategic plan, HSMC would submit its degree programmes for re-validation in 2015. Subject to approval being obtained, HSMC would apply for Programme Area Accreditation ("PAA"). After gaining PAA in three programme areas, HSMC could then seek acquisition of university title. Prof FONG anticipated that HSMC would be able to acquire university status in 2016-2017.

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64. Mr Paul TSE enquired whether HSMC had any plan to become an UGC-funded institution. In response, Prof FONG said that HSMC did not have any immediate plan to do so, but would not rule out the possibility of considering the matter in future.

65. Regarding the academic programmes to be offered by HSMC in future, Prof FONG noted Mr Tommy CHEUNG's view that HSMC should consider offering programmes on catering management. In reply to Mr MA Fung-kwok, Prof FONG said that HSMC was contemplating to offer programmes on "cultural management" and "culture as an industry".

66. Noting that the start-up loan of \$800 million would fund part of the latest development of the campus and student hostels of HSMC, Dr Helena WONG asked whether other self-financing institutions had comparable hostel and amenities facilities. In reply, Acting SED said that student hostels were available at the Hong Kong Shue Yan University. He further advised that as a matter of policy, the Government would support the provision of hostel and amenities facilities by self-financing post-secondary institutions if they were viable and of benefit to students. The allocation of sites and assessment of individual applications for start-up loans would have to be considered by the independent Vetting Committee.

67. On the level of hostel fee, Prof FONG of HSMC informed members that the prevailing hostel fee payable by students of HSMC was \$850 per month. The fee was expected to be raised to \$950 per month upon completion of the new hostel blocks.

Issues related to the regulation of the self-financing post-secondary sector

68. Dr Kenneth CHAN referred to public concerns arising from problems related to self-financing post-secondary programmes, such as over-enrolment and under-admission of students. He was also concerned about the intake of a large number of overseas students, mainly Mainland students, by local institutions. In this connection, Prof FONG advised that in 2012, which was a double-cohort year, there was a 27% over-enrolment of students at HSMC. With a classroom utilization rate of about 63% and over-capacity of the teaching staff, HSMC was able to cope with the situation.

69. Recalling that UGC had recommended in its Report on Higher Education Review 2010 that a single quality assurance body for the entire

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post-secondary sector should be set up, Mrs Regina IP asked whether this recommendation would be taken forward. Dr Helena WONG considered that the Administration should expedite the establishment of this body.

70. In response, Acting SED advised that while the Government would explore the possibility of eventually setting up a single quality assurance body, it had taken incremental steps to enhance the quality assurance mechanism. For example, the Government had transformed the Tripartite Liaison Committee (comprising EDB, the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications ("HKCAAVQ") and the Joint Quality Review Committee) and formed the Liaison Committee on Quality Assurance by engaging the Quality Assurance Council.

71. Ms Starry LEE supported the funding proposal. However, she considered that the post-secondary education sector was highly polarized in terms of subsidy because on one hand, students of UGC-funded institutions were fully subsidized; while on the other hand, students at self-financing post-secondary institutions were required to bear the construction cost and related expenses of these institutions. She enquired about the role, if any, of the Administration in setting the tuition fee levels and planning for the post-secondary study programmes to be offered with regard to the manpower needs of Hong Kong. In this regard, Acting SED remarked that the self-financing sector served to broaden the choice and opportunities for higher education. The proportion of publicly-funded versus self-financed programmes to be provided was an issue which would require careful study.

72. Whilst expressing support for the funding proposal, Mr Christopher CHUNG commented that government support appeared to be tilted in favour of those self-financing institutions under the aegis of UGC-funded institutions, such as the University of Hong Kong School of Professional and Continuing Education ("HKU SPACE"). Acting SED explained that any applications from HKU SPACE under the Land Grant Scheme or Start-up Loan Scheme would also be subject to consideration by the independent Vetting Committee. Programmes offered by HKU SPACE were self-accredited while those offered by HSMC were subject to accreditation by HKCAAVQ.

73. Mr MA Fung-kwok asked whether the Administration would take steps to ensure that self-financing post-secondary institutions in receipt of government funding/support would enhance its governance and transparency of operations. In response, Acting SED advised that the

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Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education would examine relevant issues, and was expected to submit its recommendations to the Administration by the end of 2013.

Concluding remarks

74. Summing up the discussion, the Chairman concluded that the Panel was supportive of the funding proposal.

VI. Class-to-teacher ratio in secondary schools

(LC Paper No. CB(4)685/12-13(06) -- Paper provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(4)685/12-13(07) -- Letter dated 13 May 2013 from Joint Committee of the Secondary School Councils and the Secondary School Heads Association of 18 Districts)

75. Due to insufficient time, the Chairman suggested and members agreed to defer the discussion of agenda item VI to another meeting. The Deputy Chairman proposed to arrange a special meeting in June 2013 to receive views from deputations and stakeholders on the subject of class-to-teacher ratio in secondary schools. Referring to the two papers prepared by the Deputy Chairman tabled at the meeting [LC Paper Nos. CB(4)717/12-13(01) and (02)], Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che said that the Administration should be asked to provide its written response to the issues raised by the Deputy Chairman before the special meeting. The Chairman advised that he and the Deputy Chairman would, with the assistance of the Secretariat, work out on the appropriate arrangements for the special meeting.

(Post-meeting note: On the instruction of the Chairman, a special meeting was scheduled to be held on 22 June 2013 at 9:00 am to receive deputations on the subject of class-to-teacher ratio in secondary schools.)

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VII. Any other business

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

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
29 August 2013