

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(4)962/12-13
(The minutes have been seen by the
Administration)

Ref : CB4/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 10 June 2013, at 4:30 pm
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 Albert HO Chun-yan
 - 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 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 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 Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
 - Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
 - Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP
- Member attending** :
- Hon KWOK Wai-keung
- Members absent** :
- Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP

**Public Officers : Agenda item IV
attending**

Mr Kevin YEUNG
Under Secretary for Education

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

Miss Hera CHUM
Principal Assistant Secretary
(Special Education and Kindergarten Education)
Education Bureau

Agenda item V

Mr Kevin YEUNG
Under Secretary for Education

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

Agenda item VI

Mr Kevin YEUNG
Under Secretary for Education

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

Mr Thomas CHAN Chung-ching, JP
Deputy Secretary for Development (Planning &
Lands)¹
Development Bureau

Miss Janice TSE Siu-wa, JP
Deputy Secretary for Food & Health (Health)¹
Food and Health Bureau

Agenda item VII

Mr Eddie NG, SBS, JP
Secretary for Education

Mrs Michelle WONG
Deputy Secretary for Education (4)

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)732/12-13 -- Minutes of special meeting
on 25 January 2013

LC Paper No. CB(4)734/12-13 -- Minutes of meeting on
11 March 2013)

The minutes of the meetings held on 25 January and 11 March 2013
were confirmed.

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

(LC Paper No. CB(4)754/12-13(01) -- Referral from the Public
Complaints Office of the
Legislative Council
Secretariat regarding
issues relating to provision
of assistance for needy
students
(*Restricted to members
only*)

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LC Paper No. CB(4)755/12-13(01) -- Letter dated 31 May 2013 from Dr Hon Helena WONG regarding the University Grants Committee-funded research postgraduate programmes)

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

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

(Appendix I to LC Paper No. CB(4)756/12-13 -- List of outstanding items for discussion

Appendix II to LC Paper No. CB(4)756/12-13 -- List of follow-up actions)

3. The Chairman informed members that the Administration had proposed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting to be held on 9 July 2013 at 10:00 am –

- (a) Progress of work of the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education;
- (b) Review on the subvention arrangements for the English Schools Foundation; and
- (c) Implementation of education support measures for non-Chinese speaking students.

4. The Chairman informed members that the next meeting would be the last regular meeting of the Panel for the current session and its duration would be extended to three hours. As such, he would discuss with the Deputy Chairman to include some other outstanding items on the agenda of the next meeting. Members noted and raised no objection.

5. Dr Helena WONG referred members to the paper listed under agenda item II which was her letter stating her concerns about the enrolment of non-local students to the University Grants Committee("UGC")-funded research postgraduate programmes. The Chairman advised that to facilitate consideration of how the matter would be followed up, he had instructed the

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Secretariat to request the Administration to provide further written response.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's further written response to Dr WONG's letter was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)814/12-13(01) on 20 June 2013.)

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. One-off School Development Grant for Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme-kindergartens/kindergartens-cum-child care centres

(LC Paper No. CB(4)756/12-13(01) -- Paper provided by the Administration)

Briefing by the Administration

7. At the invitation of the Chairman, Under Secretary for Education ("US(Ed)") briefed members on the Administration's proposal to provide kindergartens ("KGs") under the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme ("PEVS") with an additional one-off grant to help them further enhance the quality of KG education, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)756/12-13(01)]. Each KG under the PEVS in the 2013-2014 school year would be given a One-off School Development Grant ("One-off Grant") in an amount ranging from \$150,000 to \$250,000 to improve school premises, facilities and learning resources. The total amount involved for the disbursement of the One-off Grant would be about \$165 million. Each kindergarten could spend the One-off Grant over a span of three school years and any unspent amount at the end of the 2015-2016 school year would need to be returned to the Government. Subject to the view of the Panel and approval of the Finance Committee ("FC"), the Administration would inform KGs of the relevant details and arrangements in August 2013 and proceed to disburse the One-off Grant to PEVS KGs at the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year.

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Discussion

Utilization of the grant

8. Noting the findings of Report No. 60 of the Director of Audit ("Audit Report") regarding PEVS, Mr WONG Yuk-man asked whether the One-off Grant could help alleviate the pressure on KGs to charge high school fees and miscellaneous fees. While indicating his support for the proposed One-off Grant, Dr Fernando CHEUNG shared Mr WONG's concern. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung doubted whether this additional grant to KGs would make KGs less inclined to increase their fees.

9. US(Ed) said that as reflected by the KG sector in the course of recent dialogue with the Administration, financial resources were required to enhance their premises, facilities and teaching resources so as to meet the parents' rising expectations. After consideration, the Administration agreed that KGs should be provided with the One-off Grant for their flexible deployment and as a short-term measure to address concerns that the costs for carrying out the improvements might be passed onto parents in the form of school fee increases.

10. Noting that some KGs had to pay high rent for their school premises which were in fact owned by the school sponsoring bodies concerned, Dr Fernando CHEUNG considered that the Administration should require KGs to enhance the transparency of their financial reports so as to ensure the proper use of the One-off Grant.

11. In response, US(Ed) confirmed that the One-off Grant could not be used for payment of rent. KGs would be required to account for the use of the grant separately. The income and expenditure should be recorded under a separate ledger account and properly reflected in their audited accounts submitted to the Education Bureau.

12. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that Members of the Liberal Party had reservation on the proposed One-off Grant. Noting that KGs provided with the One-off Grant could spend the amount over a period of three years, Mr CHEUNG enquired about the relevant arrangements, if any, for dealing with situations in which the KG concerned ceased operation, or withdrew from PEVS in less than three years after receipt of the grant.

13. US(Ed) advised that notwithstanding its withdrawal from PEVS, the KG concerned had to continue to abide by the relevant requirements and arrangements under PEVS in respect of those students who had been

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admitted at the time when the KG had joined PEVS. Those KGs who had received the One-off Grant but which had subsequently withdrawn from PEVS or ceased operation would be required to return any unspent portion of the grant to the Government.

14. Noting that the One-off Grant was capped at \$250,000, Dr Kenneth CHAN was concerned that the amount might be insufficient for improving school premises, facilities and learning resources. Deputy Secretary for Education (3) advised that the grant was intended to enable KGs to carry out minor works to repair or renovate the school premises, purchase teaching materials, or engage temporary staff to develop teaching materials.

15. The Deputy Chairman welcomed the Administration's proposal although he considered the initiative only a small favour for the KG sector. The Deputy Chairman expressed his concern that children below three years of age enrolled in whole-day KGs or KG-cum-child care centres would not be considered as "eligible pupil" and would be excluded from the calculation of the top-up amount of the grant. He asked whether any fine-tuning to the proposal could be made so that KGs enrolling children below three years of age could also benefit. In reply, US(Ed) said that the proposed One-off Grant, comprising the basic grant and the top-up amount, would be provided to KGs under PEVS. For the time being, the Administration had no plan to revise the proposed arrangements.

Implementation of free kindergarten education and related issues

16. Noting that the One-off Grant could be used by KGs over a period of three years, Mr Albert HO was concerned that the introduction of the grant would serve as a stop-gap measure and a form of delaying tactic for not taking forward the implementation of free KG education expeditiously in the next three years or so. The Deputy Chairman and Dr Kenneth CHAN shared similar view. While free KG education was yet to be implemented, Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung urged the Administration to introduce appropriate measures to enhance KG education in the interim.

17. US(Ed) said that the One-off Grant to KGs and the implementation of free KG education were two separate issues. Since KGs might need time to plan for effective use of the grant, the three-year period as proposed was to provide flexibility for KGs to deploy the funding to meet their needs. US(Ed) added that while it was expected that the Committee on Free KG Education ("the Committee") would come up with recommendations in two years' time, the Committee would explore and propose to the Administration appropriate short-term measures to be taken for the benefit of the KG sector.

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18. In response to the Chairman's enquiry, US(Ed) confirmed that the membership of the subcommittees under the Committee had been finalized.

19. Noting that over the years, the value of the voucher under PEVS had been adjusted to cover the cost of inflation, salary increment and qualification enhancement, Dr Helena WONG questioned why the latest adjustment of the voucher value was solely based on the rate of inflation.

20. In reply, Deputy Secretary for Education (3) explained that when PEVS was introduced in 2007, the voucher value had been pre-set for five school years up to the 2011-2012 school year based on three factors, namely the rate of inflation, increase in teachers' salary, and enhancement of teachers' qualifications. After a review conducted in 2010, it was proposed by the Administration and endorsed by FC of LegCo that reference should be made to the rate of inflation for adjusting the voucher value for the 2012-2013 school year and onwards.

21. Noting that the One-off Grant was not intended for improving teachers' salary and qualifications, Dr Helena WONG considered it necessary for the Administration to introduce measures to address the problem of high wastage of KG teachers. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung shared her view.

Concluding remarks

22. Summing up the discussion, the Chairman concluded that the Panel supported the Administration's submission of the current proposal to FC for consideration.

V. Proposed scholarships for post-secondary students with special educational needs

(LC Paper No. CB(4)756/12-13(02) -- Paper provided by the Administration)

Briefing by the Administration

23. At the invitation of the Chairman, Under Secretary for Education ("US(Ed)") briefed members on the Administration's proposal to inject \$20 million each into the HKSAR Government Scholarship Fund ("GSF") and Self-financing Post-secondary Education Fund ("SPEF") to set up

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scholarships and awards for giving recognition to deserving post-secondary students with special educational needs ("SEN students"), as set out in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)756/12-13(02)]. The Administration planned to award scholarships and awards to about 100 SEN students every year and the proposed scholarship amount would be pitched at \$10,000 each in the 2013-2014 academic year. Subject to members' views, the Administration planned to submit the proposal to FC for approval in July 2013.

Discussion

Scholarships for SEN students

24. Noting the high costs of books at post-secondary level and the assistive devices/services used by some SEN students, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung commented that the amount of the scholarship could hardly provide adequate assistance to SEN students in pursuing their studies. In response to Mr LEUNG's enquiry on the basis for pitching the scholarships at \$10,000 each, US(Ed) advised that the Administration had made reference to the amount of other scholarships and awards under GSF and the Self-financing Post-secondary Scholarship Scheme (SPSS) under SPEF.

25. Dr Helena WONG enquired on the reasons for providing dedicated scholarship for SEN students, and whether the award of scholarships to SEN students would be subject to a set of criteria which was different from those applicable to other scholarships. Ms Claudia MO asked whether it was for individual post-secondary institutions to decide on the award of scholarships to individual SEN students enrolled by them.

26. US(Ed) explained that the proposed injection of \$20 million each into GSF and SPEF to set up scholarships and awards aimed to give recognition to deserving SEN students. Post-secondary institutions would be invited to nominate SEN students for these scholarships and awards. The details of the scheme including the nomination and vetting mechanism would be worked out in consultation with the relevant Steering Committees of GSF and SPSS upon the approval of the proposal by FC. In addition to the proposed scholarships and awards, eligible SEN students could also apply for other scholarships and awards for post-secondary students.

27. Ms Cyd HO said that she would not object to the current proposal. However, she pointed out that the arduous efforts made by SEN students in surmounting all the difficulties to pursue post-secondary education deserved recognition and award of scholarships. Given the relatively small number of

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SEN student undertaking post-secondary studies, Ms HO considered that instead of awarding scholarships to 100 SEN students based on a selection process, all SEN students studying post-secondary programmes deserved to be awarded scholarships.

28. US(Ed) advised that the number of SEN students enrolled in post-secondary institutions was expected to rise. The proposed scholarships aimed at giving recognition to SEN students; while other forms of assistance and support were available for SEN students.

29. In response to Ms Claudia MO's enquiry, Principal Assistant Secretary (Further Education) informed members that according to the information provided by institutions, in the 2012-2013 school year, out of 376 SEN students enrolled in full-time locally-accredited publicly-funded sub-degree and undergraduate programmes, 19 were non-local students. In the self-financing sector, two out of 252 SEN students enrolled in full-time locally-accredited self-financing sub-degree and undergraduate programmes were non-local students.

30. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that Members of the Liberal Party had no objection to the proposal. In response to Mr CHEUNG's enquiry on whether the proposed scholarships and awards would render the SEN students ineligible to apply for other financial assistance or scholarships/awards, US(Ed) confirmed that the proposed scholarships and awards would not affect the eligibility of SEN students to apply for other financial assistance or scholarship.

Education support measures for SEN students

31. Dr Fernando CHEUNG drew the Administration's attention to a research conducted by Ms Louisa Mitchell for Civic Exchange on how universities in Hong Kong recruited, admitted and supported students with disabilities. Dr CHEUNG pointed out that as revealed in the findings, there was a lack of policy in local universities regarding the admission of and support for students with disabilities. He considered it necessary to put in place a policy to ensure equal opportunities for SEN students to receive education, including higher education.

32. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that he would not oppose the proposed scholarships, but considered that the Administration had failed to focus on the crux of the problem as the current proposal could hardly address the more immediate needs such as the improvement of facilities at institutions and enhancement in training of teachers. Ms Cyd HO shared a similar view

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and pointed out that at present, what SEN students needed was support rather than awards. Ms HO was concerned that some SEN students had to drop out from post-secondary study due to the lack of learning support available at the institutions.

33. In response, US(Ed) said that the Administration had already proposed in the 2013-2014 Budget to allocate \$12 million to the Vocational Training Council each year for the purchase of equipment and learning aids to support SEN students, providing them with counselling services, and enhancing the support for teaching and learning. Individual post-secondary institutions would also provide necessary support and services in the light of the specific needs of the SEN students admitted.

34. Dr Kenneth CHAN considered that providing a scholarship of \$10,000 to a SEN student was of limited use. Instead, the Administration should take concrete action to provide effective support to SEN students and to ensure the effective implementation of integrated education. The Deputy Chairman indicated that it was difficult not to support the proposal. However, to better prioritize the use of resources, he questioned why the Administration would not deploy the \$40 million to provide other targeted support measures for SEN students. The Deputy Chairman also asked whether the Administration had consulted the community or stakeholders before coming up with this proposal.

35. In response, US(Ed) advised that the setting up of the proposed scholarships was not an attempt to resolve all the problems confronted by SEN students. The Administration would continue to work closely with the Subcommittee on Integrated Education set up under the Panel in this regard. The proposed scholarships were for giving recognition to meritorious SEN students, and would be in addition to other support measures available to SEN students. Regarding consultation, US(Ed) said that while the Administration had not conducted consultation specifically on this proposal, it had maintained ongoing dialogue with stakeholders to understand their views and needs.

36. Ms Claudia MO recalled that at a recent meeting of the Subcommittee on Integrated Education, some deputations had expressed concerns that SEN students encountered tremendous difficulties with the subject of Liberal Studies ("LS") and its assessment requirements under the New Senior Secondary ("NSS") curriculum. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung shared the view that SEN students were disadvantaged under the NSS curriculum since the LS subject and language subjects placed heavy emphasis on students' language competency. Ms MO and Mr LEUNG urged the

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Administration to deploy more resources to assist SEN students in primary and secondary schools so as to build up their capability for pursuing higher education.

37. Dr Helena WONG concurred that SEN students encountered great difficulties in studying LS subject as they were relatively weak in critical and analytical ability and lacked multiple perspectives in thinking. Dr WONG said that the Administration should expedite its review on the assessment of LS subject in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination.

38. US(Ed) noted members' views and reiterated that the proposed scholarships and awards were to give recognition to deserving SEN students pursuing post-secondary studies, and would complement other forms of financial assistance and support measures. The Chairman also asked the Administration to consider ways to enhance the support provided to SEN students.

Concluding remarks

39. Summing up the discussion, the Chairman concluded that the Panel supported the Administration's submission of the funding proposal to FC.

VI. 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)

(LC Paper No. CB(4)756/12-13(03) -- Paper provided by the Administration)

Other papers previously issued in connection with the meeting on 11 March 2013

(LC Paper No. CB(4)460/12-13(01) -- Paper provided by the Administration)

LC Paper No. CB(4)460/12-13(02) -- Submission from Hong Kong Baptist University

LC Paper No. CB(4)514/12-13(01) -- Letter dated 19 March 2013 from the Food and Health Bureau

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LC Paper No. CB(4)537/12-13(01) -- Letter dated 28 March 2013 from Hong Kong Baptist University

LC Paper No. CB(4)538/12-13(01) -- Administration's response to the motion passed by the Panel under agenda item IV of the meeting held on 11 March 2013)

Briefing by the Administration

40. At the invitation of the Chairman, Under Secretary for Education ("US(Ed)") briefed members on the latest progress on the proposed use of the southern portion of the former campus site of the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Lee Wai Lee) ("ex-IVE(LWL) site") by highlighting the salient points in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)756/12-13(03)]. He advised members that the northern portion of the ex-IVE(LWL) site had been reserved to meet the development needs of the Hong Kong Baptist University ("HKBU"). The southern portion of the site was proposed for rezoning from "Government, Institution or Community" ("GIC") to residential use to meeting housing needs. The relevant draft Kowloon Tong Outline Zoning Plan had been exhibited for public inspection from 15 February to 15 April 2013. Upon the expiry of the public inspection period, the Town Planning Board ("TPB") had received a total of 25 884 representations. These representations were published for public comments until 11 June 2013. Taking into account the representations and comments received, TPB would proceed with making a decision on the rezoning proposal in accordance with the Town Planning Ordinance ("TPO") (Cap.131).

Discussion

Campus development of tertiary institutions

41. Noting a letter from HKBU dated 7 June 2013 expressing its objection to the proposed rezoning of the site in question, Mrs Regina IP sought the Education Bureau("EDB")'s view on HKBU's request for additional land for providing, at its own cost, about 300 hostel places for students pursuing self-financing programmes. Mrs IP remarked that allocating the southern portion of the ex-IVE(LWL) site to HKBU would facilitate its long term planning of campus development.

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(*Post-meeting note:* HKBU's letter was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)770/12-13(01) on 11 June 2013.)

42. US(Ed) advised that under the prevailing policy applicable to all UGC-funded institutions, the development of student hostels for self-financing programmes was not entitled to public funding and the Government had no obligation to provide land for this purpose. However, UGC-funded institutions could consider building student hostels for their self-financing programmes on existing land within their campus as long as the facilities for UGC-funded programmes were not adversely affected.

43. In response to Mrs Regina IP's enquiry about the proportion of students that could be allocated student hostels at HKBU, US(Ed) said that upon the completion of the planned hostels in the northern portion of the ex-IVE(LWL) site, HKBU would have sufficient hostel places to satisfy student hostel demand under UGC's existing policies, including living in hostel for at least one year during the four years of study at HKBU.

44. Mr MA Fung-kwok declared that he was a Council member of HKBU. Mr MA commented that EDB should retain the site in question for education purpose even though there was no immediate need to allocate the site to any specific institution. Consideration should also be given to reserving the site in question for HKBU in exchange for another site currently in use by HKBU that was far from its Kowloon Tong campus.

45. US(Ed) said that the Government had reserved the northern portion of the ex-IVE(LWL) site for use by HKBU while the southern portion was beyond HKBU's requirement under the existing policies. After careful assessment, EDB was of the view that the site in question could be surrendered to the Government for other uses in the community.

Development of Chinese medicine teaching hospital

46. Dr Fernando CHEUNG declared that he was an alumnus of HKBU. Noting that HKBU had submitted its proposal on a Chinese medicine teaching hospital and the site in question was surrounded by the campus of HKBU, he considered it reasonable to reserve the entire ex-IVE(LWL) site for use by HKBU.

47. Ms Claudia MO declared that she was teaching journalism at HKBU on a part-time basis. She was of the view that EDB had the responsibility to provide land resources for education purpose. She asked whether the

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Administration would earmark the site in question for the development of a Chinese medicine teaching hospital if TPB decided against rezoning the southern portion of the ex-IVE(LWL) site to residential use.

48. US(Ed) explained that under the prevailing policies and calculation criteria, the Government had reserved the northern portion of the ex-IVE(LWL) site for use by HKBU so that its publicly-funded academic space and student hostel entitlements up to the 2014-2015 academic year could be fully met. The Chinese medicine hospital proposed by HKBU was a self-financed project not eligible for UGC funding. Hence, the Government had no policy to provide land for its development. In considering the allocation of land for educational use, EDB would have to take into account the needs of the entire education sector.

49. Deputy Secretary for Food & Health (Health)1 ("DSFH(H)1") advised that the Administration supported the development of Chinese medicine and Chinese medicine hospitals in Hong Kong. The issue of Chinese medicine in-patient service was being studied by the Chinese Medicine development Committee.

50. On the future use of the southern portion of the ex-IVE(LWL) site, Deputy Secretary for Development (Planning & Lands)1 ("DSDEV(P&L)1") informed members that TPB had yet to consider the representations and comments on the rezoning proposal and complete the statutory process.

51. Noting that UGC-funded programmes on Chinese medicine had been offered for many years, Mr MA Fung-kwok remarked that the Food and Health Bureau should have studied the issue of provision of a Chinese medicine teaching hospital much earlier. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered that a Chinese medicine teaching hospital should be put in place to dovetail with the development of local Chinese medicine programmes.

52. US(Ed) said that currently, the clinical training of local Chinese medicine programmes could be arranged at Chinese medicine hospitals in the Mainland. DSFH(H)1 clarified that the local Chinese medicine sector had all along been providing out-patient service. However, as the development of a Chinese medicine hospital would involve the provision of in-patient service, the subject would require further study by the Chinese Medicine Development Committee.

53. Noting the Administration's explanation, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung questioned whether the development of local Chinese medicine programmes would need to rely heavily on the support of the Mainland in the long run.

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US(Ed) advised that the development of undergraduate programmes comprised different modules or activities such as teaching, research and practical training. Clinical training and internship would only form part of the programmes.

Planning-related issues

54. Ms Claudia MO and Dr Fernando CHEUNG were gravely concerned that the Administration had included the southern portion of the ex-IVE(LWL) site in the land sale programme before the TPB had made a decision on the rezoning of the site.

55. DSDEV(P&L)1 advised that it was the established practice of the Government to include in the land sale programme those sites that were not immediately available pending completion of various processes and town planning procedures, but were anticipated to be available within the year. He reaffirmed that including the southern portion of the ex-IVE(LWL) site in the land sale programme was in line with the established practice.

56. Noting that TPB had received a total of over 25,000 representations and over 99% of these representations opposed the proposed rezoning of the site in question, Dr Helena WONG enquired about the Administration's stance in the light of these representations.

57. The Chairman declared that he was a Court member of HKBU. He remarked that the proposed rezoning, if approved by TPB, would be detrimental to the education sector. He further asked whether the Development Bureau would withdraw its rezoning proposal and return the site in question to EDB; and whether EDB would strive to secure the site for educational use.

58. DSDEV(P&L)1 explained that TPB, being an independent statutory body established under TPO, would perform its functions in accordance with relevant provisions in TPO. TPB had published the representations received for public comments until 11 June 2013; and would consider the representations and comments received on the rezoning proposal prior to making a decision. On whether the rezoning proposal would be withdrawn, DSDEV(P&L)1 reiterated that after careful assessment, the Government had come to the view that the southern portion of the ex-IVE(LWL) site was not required to be reserved for higher education purpose or other GIC uses, and had therefore submitted a proposal to TPB to rezone the southern portion of the site for residential use. Currently there was no plan to return the site to EDB.

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59. US(Ed) said that EDB was aware that over 25 000 representations had been received opposing the proposed rezoning of the site to residential use. However, it was yet to be ascertained whether the representations had made a common call for reserving the site for educational use. US(Ed) confirmed that the site in question was returned to the Government after careful assessment on the need of the higher education sector. At this juncture, EDB had no plan to seek the site for educational use.

60. The Deputy Chairman remarked that as revealed in the vast majority of representations received by TPB, the community's view was very clear. He considered that in proposing to rezone the southern portion of the ex-IVE(LWL) site, the Administration had failed to accurately gauge the prevailing public opinions on the matter.

61. Dr Kenneth CHAN declared that he was an associate professor of the Department of Government and International Studies at HKBU. Dr CHAN was concerned about the Administration's stance that the demolition of the existing building on the ex-IVE(LWL) site should only commence after the future use of the whole ex-IVE(LWL) site had been decided. He considered that this approach would impede HKBU's planning and preparation for its future development including fund-raising for the construction of new buildings and hostels. The Chairman shared similar concern and remarked that given the fluctuation in prices during the interim period, it would be difficult for HKBU to prepare the budget and control the cost if demolition works could not commence shortly.

62. In reply, US(Ed) explained that the existing building on the site was a single block straddling both the northern and southern portions and demolition of the whole building would be required before either portion of the site was to be redeveloped. It would be prudent to embark upon demolishing the building after the long-term plan on the future use of the whole site had been decided. In the interim, HKBU could continue with its planning and discussion with UGC on the details of its development plan; while the Administration would provide appropriate assistance to ensure the disbursement of funding in due course.

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VII. Teachers employed on contract terms in primary and secondary schools

(LC Paper No. CB(4)756/12-13(04) -- Paper provided by the Administration)

Briefing by the Administration

63. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Secretary for Education ("SED") gave a brief account on the provision of teaching staff in primary and secondary schools and the current situation of teachers with different terms of employment, as set out in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)756/12-13(04)]. Under the existing policy and practices, teachers in public sector schools were provided through regular teacher establishment computed mainly according to the number of classes and class-to-teacher ratios, and through different cash grants for meeting specific policy objectives. He said that most of the cash grants were provided on a recurrent basis and schools were able to deploy these resources flexibly to meet their needs. According to the information reported by schools, out of the 42 000 teachers employed in public sector schools in the 2012-2013 school year, around 4 000 teachers were employed using cash grants or other funding. He advised that the teaching experience accumulated by a contract teacher would be duly recognized when the teacher took up a regular post later.

Discussion

Teacher establishment and employment situation

64. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung was concerned that both existing contract teachers and graduates of the Hong Kong Institute of Education would look for regular teaching posts. Given the decline in secondary student population in the next few years, EDB should take the opportunity to review and expand the regular teacher establishment so as to absorb the existing teaching staff employed on contract terms.

65. SED said that the Administration was committed to maintaining a stable teaching force and had all along monitored closely the manpower situation of schools. Schools were encouraged to fill the vacancies of regular teaching posts, if any, as soon as possible. SED further said that according to the information on major recruitment websites, the number of vacancies of teaching staff for April, May and the first week of June 2013 were 222, 785 and 1 050 respectively.

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66. Deputy Secretary for Education (4) ("DS(Ed)4") supplemented that an additional 1 200 teaching posts had been provided for supporting schools admitting a large number of Band 3 students or adopting Chinese as the medium of instruction.

67. The Deputy Chairman said that he was surprised to note the number of vacancies mentioned by SED. He sought further details on the number of vacancies in terms of the nature of the posts and terms of employment in primary and secondary schools. In reply, SED said that the vacancies in secondary and primary schools were 563 and 481 respectively.

68. Referring to the 1 050 vacancies for the first week of June 2013, the Chairman requested the Administration to provide a breakdown on the number of vacancies of teaching posts within and outside the approved establishment and teaching assistants in primary and secondary schools.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's written response was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)873/12-13(01) on 5 July 2013.)

69. The Deputy Chairman was concerned that no vacancy of teaching posts would arise from natural wastage because schools might have reduced the number of classes under the Voluntary Optimization of Class Structure Scheme or as a result of the decline in Secondary One student population. Noting that thousands of regular teachers were employed under fixed-term contracts or by using cash grants, the Deputy Chairman commented that the Administration should formulate a long-term plan on the sustainable development of teaching force.

70. DS(Ed)4 clarified that the teachers employed under defined contract period ("DCP") were actually regular teachers who were entitled to the same benefits, such as contributing to the Grant / Subsidized Schools Provident Fund, as other regular teachers. EDB had been monitoring schools which employed regular teachers on DCP. For those persistent cases where schools, without valid reason, had employed a high percentage of regular teachers on DCP terms or employed DCP teachers for a prolonged period, schools would be required to submit a feasible plan and a timetable for rectifying the problem.

71. Dr Fernando CHEUNG was concerned that since the number of contract teachers mentioned in the Administration's paper had not included the teaching assistants and teachers in Direct Subsidy Scheme ("DSS") schools, the actual proportion of teaching staff employed under contract

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terms in the education sector could be as high as 20%. Dr CHEUNG drew the Administration's attention to the experience of the social welfare sector where the practice of employing staff on short-term contracts had resulted in high turnover and wastage of staff.

72. Referring to the 4 000 teachers in public sector schools who were employed using cash grants as stated in paragraph 8 of the Administration's paper, Dr Fernando CHEUNG asked the Administration to provide information on the percentage of wastage of these teachers and the corresponding percentage of wastage of teachers employed under regular terms.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's written response was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)873/12-13(01) on 5 July 2013.)

73. Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Dr Helena WONG considered that the Administration should review the regular teacher establishment. Ms Cyd HO said that under existing arrangements, it appeared that only DSS schools were in a position to deploy their resources more flexibly and employ more teachers to improve the student-to-teacher ratio while public sector schools could not do so. This policy would eventually encourage more aided/subsidized schools to apply to join DSS, and thereafter charge high school fees.

74. In reply, SED advised that the student-to-teacher ratio in secondary schools had been improved from 18:1 in the 2005-2006 school year to 14.5:1 in the 2012-2013 school year. The ratio in primary school had also been improved from 18.4:1 in the 2005-2006 school year to 14.4:1 in the 2012-2013 school year. In this connection, Dr Fernando CHEUNG considered that the improved ratios were not a real achievement, but merely a consequence of the declining student population during the period in question.

75. Referring to the typical timetable of a secondary school teacher in the paper provided by the Deputy Chairman [LC Paper No. CB(4)717/12-13(01)], Ms Cyd HO expressed her concern about the heavy workload of secondary school teachers. She considered that the Administration should conduct a comprehensive review on the teacher establishment of public sector schools, increase the regular teacher establishment and reduce the number of teaching sessions for teachers.

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76. SED assured members that their concern about the workload of teachers was well noted and the Administration was studying the matter. In the review on the New Senior Secondary curriculum and assessment, recommendations had been made to reduce the total teaching time and adjust the way of assessment for certain subjects having regard to the workload of teachers.

The use of cash grants

77. Dr Kenneth CHAN criticized the growing practice of teachers being employed on contract basis, as this would affect staff morale and commitment. He considered that to maintain the stability of the teaching force, EDB should monitor how schools had made use of the various cash grants to employ teachers, and should collect information on the employment terms and duration of service of these teachers.

78. DS(Ed)4 explained that the provision of cash grants would allow greater flexibility for individual schools to make use of the grants to employ teaching/ancillary staff and/or to acquire appropriate services to meet the specific needs of their students.

79. Whilst noting the provision of the Learning Support Grant ("LSG") to ordinary schools for supporting SEN students, Dr Helena WONG considered that instead of the mere provision of a grant, the Administration should formulate an appropriate class-to-teacher ratio and regular teacher establishment by taking into account the support required by SEN students. Dr Fernando CHEUNG concurred that the mere provision of grants like LSG could hardly address the difficulties faced by schools in supporting SEN students.

80. In this connection, SED said that additional resources were provided to schools which had admitted SEN students, Band 3 students and non-Chinese speaking students. DS(Ed)4 added that in addition to the cash grants, other support measures in the form of additional teaching posts was provided to schools which had admitted SEN students and/or Band 3 students.

81. Dr Helena WONG was concerned that the discontinuation of the Liberal Studies Curriculum Support Grant ("LSCSG") with effect from the 2013-2014 school year might lead to the termination of those teaching staff employed by using the grant. The Deputy Chairman shared similar concern and pointed out that apart from LSCSG, the English Enhancement Scheme would cease very shortly, resulting in the lapse of even more temporary

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teaching posts. He cautioned that as hundreds of young teachers might have to leave the teaching profession upon the lapse of temporary posts, the Administration should take steps to address the succession gap that would arise.

82. DS(Ed)4 explained that LSCSG had been introduced as a time-limited one-off grant to facilitate the implementation of the Liberal Studies curriculum at the initial stage. In addition, schools were provided with the Senior Secondary Curriculum Support Grant ("SSCSG") on a recurrent basis to support the implementation of the New Senior Secondary curriculum. The amount of SSCSG was equivalent to 0.1 teacher per class and a school operating 15 senior secondary classes would be entitled to an amount of SSCSG equivalent to the provision of 1.5 teachers. EDB would encourage schools to plan and flexibly deploy SSCSG to meet their specific needs, including employing additional teaching staff.

Career prospect of contract teachers

83. Dr Helena WONG commented that the uncertainty and instability of the career prospect of contract teachers would adversely affect the quality of teaching and eventually the quality of education. She said that EDB should also look into the problems related to the employment of contract staff in the post-secondary sector.

84. Dr Kenneth CHAN shared his concern about the lack of job security for contract teachers. He enquired whether the contract teachers, upon taking up employment, had been duly informed that they might not be offered a regular post upon expiry of their fixed-term contract. SED said that the contract teachers should have been well aware of the terms of employment and the job responsibilities of the posts they applied for. The performance and teaching experience of contract teachers would also be considered when they applied for regular teacher posts. He added that the teaching/ancillary staff employed on contract basis or using cash grants were also encouraged to participate in professional development programmes.

85. To allow sufficient time for discussion, the Chairman extended the meeting for 15 minutes.

86. The Deputy Chairman said that teachers might work in a different school or teach a different subject for each contract. The uncertainty over the teaching duties involved in each contract was not conducive to sustaining the teachers' morale and building up relevant experience. The

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Deputy Chairman was gravely concerned that under such circumstances, a succession gap would emerge in the teaching profession in about 10 years' time.

87. In connection with the special meeting to be held on 22 June 2013 to discuss class-to-teacher ratio in secondary schools, the Deputy Chairman asked the Administration to provide information on the profile of teachers employed on regular terms at government and aided primary and secondary schools by years of service.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's written response was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)873/12-13(01) on 5 July 2013.)

VIII. Any other business

88. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:45 pm.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
29 August 2013