

立法會

Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(4)885/12-13

Ref : CB4/PL/ED

Report of the Panel on Education for submission to the Legislative Council

Purpose

This report gives an account of the work of the Panel on Education for the 2012-2013 session. It will be tabled at the meeting of the Legislative Council on 17 July 2013 in accordance with Rule 77(14) of the Rules of Procedure of the Council.

The Panel

2. The Panel was formed by a resolution passed by the Council on 8 July 1998 and as amended on 20 December 2000, 9 October 2002, 11 July 2007 and 2 July 2008 for the purpose of monitoring and examining Government policies and issues of public concern relating to education matters. The terms of reference of the Panel are in **Appendix I**.

3. The Panel comprises 23 members, with Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai and Hon IP Kin-yuen elected as its Chairman and Deputy Chairman respectively. The membership list of the Panel is in **Appendix II**.

Major work

Implementation of the New Senior Secondary curriculum and assessment

The review

4. The Panel had been briefed on the progress of the review on the implementation of the New Senior Secondary ("NSS") curriculum and assessment jointly conducted by the Education Bureau ("EDB"), the Curriculum Development Council and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority ("HKEAA") since mid-2012. In response to members' enquiry on whether key issues such as the class size and teacher-to-class ratio under the New Academic Structure ("NAS") would be

reviewed, the Administration explained that the first stage of the review (up to March 2013) would aim at formulating short-term recommendations to address the practical concerns of schools and students, to be followed by examination of other medium- and longer-term issues on a continuous and developmental basis. Members were assured that issues related to teacher manpower and the future resources for schools would be examined.

The subject of Liberal Studies

5. The new subject of Liberal Studies ("LS") was one of the four core mandatory subjects under the NSS curriculum. Whilst noting the objectives of LS to widen students' horizons and develop their thinking skills and multiple perspectives in tackling contemporary issues, members had expressed different views for the Administration's consideration.

6. There was concern about the breadth and depth of the LS subject and insufficiency of lesson time. Noting the cessation of the one-off LS Curriculum Support Grant ("LS Grant") to individual schools starting from the 2013-2014 school year, some members were gravely concerned about the lack of resources for implementing the subject. Notwithstanding the Administration's view that schools could flexibly use the Senior Secondary Curriculum Support Grant ("SSCSG"), members asked the Administration to re-consider the matter. In a motion passed by the Panel, members considered that the Administration should, amongst others, continue to disburse to schools on an annual basis an amount of not less than \$160,000 as LS Grant.

7. Some members were of the view that in the absence of a structured and balanced curriculum, the teaching of LS had often merely focused on discussions of local politics. They were concerned about the lack of objectivity in the assessment of the subject in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education ("HKDSE") Examination, in particular when the views expressed by individual candidates differed from those of the examination script markers. Members also appreciated the difficulties faced by students with special educational needs ("SEN students") in studying the LS subject, and considered that the Administration should enhance the adaptation measures for these students in the HKDSE Examination.

Other subjects

8. The new NSS subject of Business, Accounting and Financial Studies ("BAFS") was of concern to the Panel due to its heavy course contents combining and replacing several different subjects under the past curriculum. The Administration was urged to give priority to reviewing the BAFS subject in the first stage of the review. As reported by EDB, one of the

recommendations to be implemented in the 2013-2014 school year was the trimming of the curriculum contents of BAFS by about 15%. School-based assessment would also not be implemented starting from the 2013 HKDSE Examination. As undertaken by the Administration, it would keep the implementation of BAFS and other NSS subjects under ongoing review.

9. Some members drew the Administration's attention to the drop by some 30% in the number of students taking the Visual Arts subject under the NSS curriculum, and whether the development of the creative industry in Hong Kong would be affected. Some members also expressed grave concern that secondary students were no longer knowledgeable in Chinese history or world history, as History subjects were not compulsory subjects. The Administration took note of members' views.

Decline in secondary student population

10. The impact of the decline in secondary student population on the development and stability of the education sector and the teaching force was of great concern to the Panel. Two special meetings were held to discuss the matter with EDB and some 120 deputations, mostly school principals.

11. Noting that the number of Secondary 1 ("S1") students would continue to decline from 64 900 in the 2012-2013 school year to 54 000 in the 2016-2017 school year, the Panel was seriously concerned that under-enrolment in secondary schools might lead to reduction in classes and ultimately, the closure of schools. The Administration assured members that there was no consolidation policy for secondary schools. On the contrary, EDB had been taking targeted measures to sustain the stability of the secondary school sector and the teaching force, such as reducing progressively the number of students allocated to each S1 class to the prevailing 34 students, relaxing the criterion for approving S1 classes to 25 students per class and the Voluntary Optimization of Class Structure Scheme. According to EDB, the decline in S1 student population was temporary and the number would rebound steadily from the 2017-2018 school year onwards. Hence, timely and proportionate measures rather than structural changes should be implemented.

12. Most of the deputations submitting views to the Panel advocated a "3-2-1 proposal" under which starting from the 2013-2014 school year, the number of students allocated to each S1 class in public-sector schools (i.e. 34 students) would be reduced across-the-board by 3, 2 and 1 progressively over three years. The Panel asked EDB to maintain dialogue with stakeholders and to seriously consider the "3-2-1 proposal"; while taking into account the supply and demand of S1 places in different districts and some parents' worry that the proposed across-the-board reduction would lower the chance for their

children to get admitted to schools of their preference.

13. Some members and deputations called on the Administration to seize the opportunity of the decline in secondary student population to extend small class teaching ("SCT") to secondary schools. According to EDB, implementation of SCT in secondary schools was not a government policy. In addition to resources implications, the effectiveness of SCT in secondary education was yet to be concluded from international studies. At its meeting on 12 November 2012, the Panel passed a motion by a vote of nine to four urging the Administration to, amongst others, immediately reduce the class size of secondary schools to 30 students, and to implement progressively SCT with a class size of 25 students in secondary schools across the territory.

14. The Panel noted that in late November 2012, EDB announced that a flexible, district- and school-based approach would be adopted, underpinned by the principle of reverting to the prevailing S1 class size upon rebound of the S1 student population. For three years starting from the 2013-2014 school year, the number of students allocated to each S1 class would be reduced by one student each year under the "1-1-1 option"; while schools in districts with more acute under-enrolment might opt for the "2-1-1 option".

15. Some members considered that the aforesaid approach had failed to respond to the motion passed in November 2012. At a subsequent meeting in April 2013, members passed another motion by a vote of nine to seven urging the Administration to, amongst others, uphold their pledges of sustaining schools, retaining teachers and preserving strength. The Administration reiterated that the flexible approach was adopted after balancing the needs and interests of different stakeholders. Its basket of targeted measures had been implemented for the purpose of sustaining schools and the teaching force during the temporary decline in S1 student population. The Panel would continue to monitor further developments.

Primary 1 school places in the North District

16. The Panel had deliberated on the shortfall in Primary 1 ("P1") places in the North District in the 2013-2014 school year arising from the upsurge of cross-boundary students choosing to attend schools in the district.

17. One of members' main concerns was local children residing in the North District not being allocated P1 places in their home district. Question was raised as to whether, as a matter of policy, students should be able to attend schools in their home districts if they so wished. According to EDB, under the prevailing Primary One Admission System ("POA System") where a certain number of P1 places were available for the choice of parents irrespective of school nets, it was not practicable to implement "schooling

within the home district" for all P1 students.

18. The Panel had sought information from the Administration on the extent of the shortfall of P1 places in the North District and the proposed measures to provide sufficient places. To address members' concern that appropriate assistance should be rendered, the Administration confirmed that special measures would be implemented after the release of the POA results in June 2013 to assist students who were residing and had chosen a school net in the North District during their POA applications and who would want to give up their allocated P1 places in Tai Po and study in their home districts instead. The Panel noted EDB's announcement in late May 2013 of details of a "re-allocation mechanism" to put into effect the aforesaid arrangements for the 2013-2014 school year.

19. Members stressed the need for longer-term planning, including the designation of a school net for cross-boundary students. The Administration confirmed that an inter-departmental committee had been set up to study in a holistic manner how to address the impact of the increase in cross-boundary students. It also took note of members' views for consideration.

Provision of 15-year free education

20. The provision of three years' free kindergarten education in addition to the current 12 years of free primary and secondary education was a major focus of the Panel. Following the Chief Executive ("CE")'s announcement in the 2013 Policy Address to set up a committee to examine the feasibility of free kindergarten education and to recommend specific proposals to enable all children to have access to quality kindergarten education, the Panel held two special meetings and received views from over 130 deputations. Members noted their broad consensus to implement 15-year free education without further delay.

21. Some members questioned whether the establishment of a committee was in fact a tactic to delay or even shelve the implementation of free kindergarten education. EDB assured members that providing practicable 15-year free education and better quality kindergarten education was one of the priorities of the current-term Government. However, owing to the huge diversity among more than 970 kindergartens and the different views and expectations of stakeholders, the Administration considered it prudent to set up a committee to examine the matter.

22. Panel members put forward a number of views and suggestions for the consideration of the Administration, including the formulation of a salary scale and professional development framework for kindergarten teachers, different levels of subsidy for attendance at half-day kindergartens and

whole-day kindergartens, reducing the current teacher-to-student ratio, and strengthening teaching and administrative support for kindergarten teachers. They were of the view that the committee should expedite its work to bring about early reforms. In the light of these concerns, the Administration had confirmed that the committee would be underpinned by five subcommittees each tasked to examine specific issues. Where certain initiatives were found worth-pursuing, consideration might be given to implementing them on a pilot basis.

23. The Panel had been consulted on the Administration's proposal to provide kindergartens which had joined the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme with an additional one-off grant starting from the 2013-2014 school year for a period of three years to improve school premises, facilities and learning resources. Members were keen to ensure that the proposed grant would not operate as a stop-gap measure for not taking forward the implementation of free kindergarten education expeditiously in the next three years or so.

24. The Committee on Free Kindergarten Education comprising 20 members was set up on 8 April 2013. The Panel received a briefing on the progress of work of the Committee at the meeting held on 9 July 2013, and would continue to monitor further developments.

Issues related to the teaching force

25. The Panel attached great importance to maintaining a professional and stable teaching force, which was a prerequisite to quality education. It had listened to views from stakeholders including school principals and frontline teachers on the class-to-teacher ratio in secondary schools, as well as other issues related to teaching manpower resources.

26. Some members and deputations were dissatisfied with the practice that an increasing number of teachers were employed on contract terms instead of on regular establishment because schools were often provided with one-off cash grants but not regular teaching posts. Many contract teacher/teaching assistant posts would lapse upon expiry of time-limited grants such as LS Grant and the grants under the Enhanced English Scheme and Refined Enhanced English Scheme. There was grave concern about the lack of job security and motivation for young people to join the teaching profession, as well as the succession problem.

27. As explained by EDB, most of the cash grants, such as the Capacity Enhancement Grant, Learning Support Grant and SSCSG, were recurrent. The provision of one-off grants in addition to the provision of regular teachers would enable schools to exercise greater flexibility in deploying

their resources to meet their needs in implementing educational initiatives and school development. EDB considered the current apportionment of regular teachers (around 90%) and contract teachers appropriate. Moreover, about 2 000 teacher vacancies arose from natural wastage each year and the employment rate of graduates from the largest teacher education provider exceeded 90%. Many members remained concerned and urged the Administration to take timely action to sustain the teaching force.

28. The Panel shared the deputations' concern about the heavy workload and pressure on teachers under NAS and the NSS curriculum. The prevailing class-to-teacher ratios of 1.7 teachers per junior secondary class (S1 to S3) and 2.0 teachers per senior secondary class (S4 to S6) were considered grossly insufficient, given the implementation of new subjects like LS and BAFS, the wide range of elective subjects, changes in pedagogy and assessment such as Independent Enquiry Study and School-based Assessment. Greater learner diversity among students in a senior secondary class than under the old system, implementation of integrated education, the relatively high number of teaching periods per week and non-teaching duties had added to the burden of teachers.

29. On account of the many challenges confronting teachers under NAS, some members supported the deputations' suggestion that an independent review should be conducted on the class-to-teacher ratio and the teaching staff establishment. Two motions were passed by the Panel urging the Administration to, amongst others, expeditiously review how to improve the teaching establishment and to revert to the Panel. Whilst explaining that the prevailing class-to-teacher ratios had been worked out after extensive consultations with the education sector prior to the implementation of NAS, the Administration would forward members' views to the Education Commission for consideration.

Provision of international school places

30. The Panel followed up with the Administration the findings of the consultancy study commissioned to stock-take the existing provision of international school places and project future demand and supply. Members noted with concern the projection that the demand for school places would increase to 32 648 at primary level and 24 554 at secondary level in the coming five years, resulting in a shortfall of 4 203 primary places in 2016-2017. Members were concerned that the shortage of international school places would have a negative impact on the incentive of overseas professionals and corporations coming to Hong Kong, and urged the Administration to take steps to address the problem.

31. According to EDB, some international schools had launched schemes under which a certain number of school places could be reserved for employees of multinational corporations or members of chambers of commerce. A number of facilitation measures including the allocation of Greenfield sites and vacant school premises had also been implemented to facilitate the development of international schools. EDB had no plans to lower the proportion of local students (up to 50% of the student body) that could be admitted by international schools. To satisfy the demand for international curricula, some members asked the Administration to consider the suggestion of encouraging more local secondary schools to offer other curricular choices such as the International Baccalaureate curriculum in addition to the local curriculum.

32. Some Panel members drew the Administration to the issuance of expensive debentures by some international schools and their high school fees, making attendance at these schools less affordable by ordinary middle-class expatriate families, but increasingly a privilege of the affluent.

Higher education

Self-financing post-secondary sector

33. During the session, the Panel continued to follow closely the development and regulation of the self-financing post-secondary sector. It had also received views from deputations on issues of concern.

34. Noting the over-enrolment of some self-financing post-secondary programmes in September 2012, members were seriously concerned about the proliferation of self-financing study programmes and the indiscriminate admission of students by individual institutions. Whilst institutional autonomy should be respected, members urged for better regulation of the self-financing post-secondary sector to ensure that individual institutions would not seek to offer courses without due regard to their own readiness in terms of facilities and teaching support. They also urged for the establishment of an independent oversight body comparable to the University Grants Committee ("UGC") for the self-financing sector.

35. Members were concerned about the high tuition fees for self-financing programmes and the financial burden on students. They drew the Administration's attention to the need to enhance transparency of the self-financing sector's financial situation and to explore means to ensure that any surpluses generated by institutions should be used for the benefit of students. Noting members' concerns, the Administration advised that the Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education, which was an advisory body established on 1 April 2012 to oversee the strategic

development of the sector, had been invited to discuss possible measures to promote transparency and good practices and examine related issues holistically.

36. Regarding quality assurance for the large number of self-financing programmes offered by post-secondary institutions, members considered the current co-existence of different quality assurance or accreditation bodies highly unsatisfactory. Notwithstanding that the Administration had implemented incremental steps to enhance the quality assurance mechanism, members urged for the establishment of a single quality assurance body for the entire post-secondary system as recommended by UGC in its review report in 2010.

37. In some members' view, the crux of the problem was inadequate publicly-funded post-secondary places for students who met the general admission requirements. Given the huge demand for study places and pursuant to a market-driven approach, self-financing post-secondary programmes had been offered by institutions in great numbers. Members considered that the Administration should review the existing policy on self-financing post-secondary education, and passed a motion urging for, amongst other, a significant increase in publicly-funded university places and a better regulatory regime over the quality and governance of self-financing programmes. The Administration advised that it was following up relevant issues, and would update the Panel of further progress in due course.

Relevant funding proposals

38. The Panel was consulted on the Administration's proposal to provide a Start-up Loan of \$800 million to cover the development costs of campus and student hostels for the operation of full-time locally accredited degree programmes by Hang Seng Management College. Whilst indicating support, members were keen to ensure that the College would not charge high tuition fees on students in order to repay the loan. Some members also asked the Administration to consider providing grants, instead of loans, in order to provide more solid support for the development of the self-financing sector.

39. The Panel gave views on the Administration's proposal to inject \$20 million each into the HKSAR Government Scholarship Fund and Self-financing Post-secondary Education Fund to set up scholarships and awards for giving recognition to deserving post-secondary students with special educational needs ("SEN students"). While members did not object to the proposed scholarships, they stressed that such initiatives were no substitute for providing holistic support to ensure equal learning opportunities for SEN students under the existing education system.

Issues arising from the Public Policy Research Funding Scheme

40. The Public Policy Research Funding Scheme ("PPRFS") was funded by an annual provision of \$20 million allocated to the Research Grants Council ("RGC") of UGC by the Central Policy Unit ("CPU") initially for three years starting from 2005. Applications under PPRFS were only open to the eight UGC-funded institutions. Funding had also been secured to continue supporting PPRFS up to 30 July 2015.

41. Some members noted with grave concern that starting from 2013-2014, CPU would take over from RGC the day-to-day administration of PPRFS, including the identification of research directions and topics, invitation of applications, assessment and monitoring. The academics and concern groups submitting views to the Panel did not support the revised mode of operation of PPRFS for fear that public policy researches would henceforth be manipulated by the Government at the expense of academic freedom. Members enquired on the reasons for the change and the future operation of PPRFS, as well as ways to uphold academic freedom. Concern was also expressed about the lack of prior consultation on the change. The Panel passed a motion urging CPU to withdraw its decision to take over the funding authority from RGC, and UGC to safeguard steadfastly academic autonomy and freedom. In its response, CPU re-affirmed that academic freedom would not be affected and that it would welcome views from different sectors. The Administration had been asked to revert to the Panel after implementation of the revised arrangements under PPRFS in 2013-2014.

Use of land for education purposes

42. The Panel had deliberated on the existing policy on the allocation of land for education purposes, with reference to the Administration's proposal to re-zone the southern portion of the former campus of the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Lee Wai Lee) ("ex-IVE(LWL) site") to residential use instead of allocating it to the Hong Kong Baptist University ("HKBU") for the development of a Chinese medicine teaching hospital. According to EDB, since HKBU had been allocated with the northern portion of the ex-IVE(LWL) site, its requirements for academic space and student hostels would be fully met under the prevailing policy. The southern portion of the site was therefore surrendered to the Government for alternative uses.

43. The Panel had received submissions from HKBU stating its case for the proposed use of the southern portion of the ex-IVE(LWL) site, whilst noting from the Food and Health Bureau ("FHB") that currently, there was no established policy to provide government land for the development of a private Chinese medicine hospital. Notwithstanding the differences of views between HKBU and FHB, some Panel members shared the view that

EDB should adopt a proactive and forward-looking approach in procuring land resources for educational developments, instead of merely satisfying the requirements of the higher education sector under the existing policy. The Panel passed a motion to oppose the proposed re-zoning and to urge the Government to retain the ex-IVE(LWL) site for educational use.

44. Members noted the latest developments that the Town Planning Board would consider the representations received on the re-zoning proposal as well as the comments on such representations. The Panel would keep in view further developments.

Education support for non-Chinese speaking students

45. The Panel had followed up with the Administration the education support measures provided to non-Chinese speaking ("NCS") students. One of the major concerns was the difficulties encountered by NCS students in learning Chinese under the existing education system. The Panel had called on the Administration to develop an alternative Chinese curriculum or a Chinese as a Second Language curriculum and related assessment for NCS students. There was also concern about the provision of resources to schools in supporting NCS students as currently, only "designated schools" which had a relatively high intake of NCS students were provided with an additional recurrent grant.

46. Upon review, the Administration had decided to revise the current mode of support with effect from the 2013-2014 school year by providing an additional grant ranging from \$300,000 to \$600,000 a year to schools admitting 10 or more NCS students. Schools in receipt of the grant would be required to adopt the "Chinese Language Assessment Tools" tailor-made for NCS students to set learning targets and develop teaching strategies for their NCS students. The Administration confirmed that its curriculum policy was in support of equal opportunity, social and economic integration for all students in Hong Kong. On concerns that NCS students' standard and ability in Chinese Language varied due to their individual migration status and family background, EDB advised that it was collecting evidence and considering the development of a more systematic Chinese Language curriculum framework. Members reiterated the need for an alternative Chinese curriculum, and passed a motion urging the Administration to, amongst others, actively consider formulating as soon as possible a Chinese as a Second Language curriculum and assessment criteria for implementation in primary and secondary schools.

Integrated education

47. The Panel attached great importance to the policy and support measures for providing equal learning opportunities for SEN students in mainstream schools. At the meeting held on 11 December 2012, the Panel agreed to set up a subcommittee on integrated education ("the Subcommittee"). Under the chairmanship of Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG, as at early July 2013, the Subcommittee held a total of six meetings, including four thematic meetings with over 150 deputations/individuals on the difficulties in implementing integrated education with respect to students with different types of SEN. It had also paid visits to two secondary schools to gain first-hand understanding on the implementation of integrated education. The Subcommittee would continue its work in the coming session.

Financial and legislative proposals

48. During the session, the Panel had examined a number of other financial proposals relating to education matters, including the proposed extension of the Examination Fee Remission Scheme for needy NCS students, the proposed creation of a Chief Maintenance Surveyor post to oversee school maintenance and renovation projects, development of the International Culinary College of the Vocational Training Council and the redevelopment and reprovisioning of several schools. It had also given views on the Education (Amendment) Bill 2013 and the review of the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap. 320) and Post Secondary Colleges Regulations (Cap. 320A).

Meetings and visit

49. From October 2012 to early July 2013, the Panel held a total of 18 meetings, including seven extended special meetings to receive views from 320 deputations/individuals on subjects of concern. The Panel had also paid a visit to HKEAA to receive updates on the marking system for the HKDSE Examination.

Legislative Council

Panel on Education

Terms of Reference

1. To monitor and examine Government policies and issues of public concern relating to education.
2. To provide a forum for the exchange and dissemination of views on the above policy matters.
3. To receive briefings and to formulate views on any major legislative or financial proposals in respect of the above policy area prior to their formal introduction to the Council or Finance Committee.
4. To monitor and examine, to the extent it considers necessary, the above policy matters referred to it by a member of the Panel or by the House Committee.
5. To make reports to the Council or to the House Committee as required by the Rules of Procedure.

Panel on Education

Membership list for 2012-2013 session

Chairman	Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai, SBS, JP
Deputy Chairman	Hon IP Kin-yuen
Members	Hon Albert HO Chun-yan Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP (up to 18 October 2012) Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, 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, SBS, JP Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che Hon IP Kwok-him, GBS, JP Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, 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 Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP (Total : 23 Members)
Clerk	Miss Polly YEUNG
Legal Adviser	Miss Carrie WONG
Date	2 July 2013