

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(4)363/13-14
(The minutes have been seen by
the Administration)

Ref : CB4/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 9 December 2013, at 4:30 pm
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 LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, BBS, MH
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 Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin
Hon WU Chi-wai, MH
Hon MA Fung-kwok, SBS, JP
Hon Charles Peter MOK
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok
Hon Dennis KWOK
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan

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Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT, JP
Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP

**Members
absent** : Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen

**Public Officers
attending** : Agenda item IV

The Administration

Mr Kevin YEUNG, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Miss Wendy CHUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary (Infrastructure &
Research Support)
Education Bureau

Mr LEUNG Kam-pui
Chief Technical Advisor/Subvented Projects
Architectural Services Department

Ying Wa Girls' School

Professor Rebecca CHIU
Chairperson, School Redevelopment Steering
Committee

Consultant Firm

P&T Architects and Engineers

Mr Joel CHAN
Director (Architectural – Design)

Quantity Surveyors and Construction Cost
Consultants

WT Partnership (HK) Limited

Mr Ringo LUI
Director

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Agenda item V

Mr Eddie NG, SBS, JP
Secretary for Education

Dr K K CHAN
Deputy Secretary for Education(5)

Ms Jenny CHAN
Principal Assistant Secretary (Education
Infrastructure)
Education Bureau

Agenda item VI

Mr Eddie NG, SBS, JP
Secretary for Education

Dr K K CHAN
Deputy Secretary for Education(5)

Ms Jenny CHAN
Principal Assistant Secretary (Education
Infrastructure)
Education Bureau

Mr SHE Mang
Chief Curriculum Development Officer (Information
Technology in Education)
Education Bureau

Mr FOK Kam-hung
Chief Systems Manager (Information Technology
Management)
Education Bureau

Agenda item VII

Mr Eddie NG, SBS, JP
Secretary for Education

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Dr K K CHAN
Deputy Secretary for Education(5)

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

Ms Catherine LEUNG
Director-Corporate Services
Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

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

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

Mr Ian CHOW
Council Secretary (4) 4

Ms Sandy HAU
Legislative Assistant (4) 3

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I. Confirmation of minutes

(LC Paper No. CB(4)197/13-14 -- Minutes of meeting on
11 November 2013)

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2013 were confirmed.

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

2. Members noted that no information paper had been issued since the last meeting.

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III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

(Appendix I to LC Paper No. CB(4)198/13-14 -- List of outstanding items for discussion

Appendix II to LC Paper No. CB(4)198/13-14 -- List of follow-up actions)

3. The Chairman informed members that having regard to the Administration's proposal and in consultation with the Deputy Chairman, the following items would be discussed at the next regular meeting to be held on 13 January 2014 at 4:30 pm –

- (a) Start-up loan for post-secondary education providers;
- (b) Review on the policy of Direct Subsidy Scheme schools; and
- (c) Review on the implementation of Territory-wide System Assessment.

4. The Chairman further informed members that a special meeting had been scheduled for 27 January 2014 at 4:30 pm to receive a briefing by the Secretary for Education ("SED") on the Chief Executive's 2014 Policy Address in respect of the policy initiatives on education. Members would be notified of the meeting arrangements in due course. Members had no objection to the aforesaid meeting arrangements.

5. 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. Redevelopment of Ying Wa Girls' School at Robinson Road, Hong Kong

(LC Paper No. CB(4)198/13-14(01) -- Paper provided by the Administration

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LC Paper No. CB(4)198/13-14(02) -- Background brief entitled "Issues related to the redevelopment of Ying Wa Girls' School at Robinson Road" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat)

6. Members noted the background brief on the subject prepared by the Secretariat [LC Paper No. CB(4)198/13-14(02)].

Briefing by the Administration

7. At the invitation of the Chairman, Under Secretary for Education ("US(Ed)") briefed members on the background of and justifications for the proposal to increase the approved project estimate ("APE") for the approved capital works project – Redevelopment of Ying Wa Girls' School ("the School") at Robinson Road, Hong Kong ("the Redevelopment Project") by \$220.7 million to cover additional construction cost as set out in LC Paper No. CB(4)198/13-14(01). US(Ed) supplemented that the two main teaching blocks of the School were constructed around 50 years ago. From an educational perspective, the School had strong needs for redevelopment. Furthermore, most of the students of the School resided on Hong Kong Island but had to commute daily to the former Tack Ching Girls' Secondary School in Sham Shui Po pending redevelopment of the School. Members noted that the Administration planned to submit the proposal to the Public Works Subcommittee ("PWSC") for consideration on 22 January 2014.

(Post-meeting note: The proposal was subsequently scheduled for discussion at the meeting of PWSC on 29 January 2014.)

Discussion

Justifications for the increase in APE

8. Mr WONG Yuk-man remarked that in the interest of the students of the School, members had no choice but to support the proposal to enable the project to continue to proceed. However, he expressed grave concern over the huge increase of about 55% in APE from some \$430 million in 2012 to over \$650 million in "money-of-the-day" prices. Mr WONG also queried the Administration for failing to make a realistic estimate on the project cost when seeking the approval of PWSC and the Finance Committee ("FC") in May/June 2012.

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9. Whilst expressing support for the Redevelopment Project, the Deputy Chairman queried the great discrepancy between the original estimate and the revised estimate. Mr TAM Yiu-chung considered the proposed increase in APE excessive. Noting that one of the reasons for the increase in construction cost was site difficulty and that it was the usual practice to conduct prior feasibility studies for similar projects, he asked whether the project cost had been under-estimated at the very outset.

10. Chief Technical Advisor/Subvented Projects, Architectural Services Department ("CTA/SP of ASD") informed members that the relevant feasibility study for the Redevelopment Project had been conducted by the consultant engaged by the School. Mr Joel CHAN, Director (Architectural – Design) of P & T Architects and Engineers, advised that the original estimate had been prepared according to relevant data available two years ago; whereas the revised estimate was based on the tender prices returned by the tenderers, which were the price levels at which the tenderers would be willing to undertake the Redevelopment Project. The upsurge in project cost was consistent with the trend of rising costs for projects in both the public and private sectors in the past two years amidst the construction market boom. Mr CHAN further said that the higher piling cost for the Redevelopment Project was likely attributable to the difficult topography profile. In recent years, there had also been an increase in the cost for similar piling works across the industry.

11. Dr Fernando CHEUNG indicated support for the proposal only for the sake of the well-being of students of the School. He considered the proposed increase of APE from \$432.7 million to \$653.4 million unjustified as financial provision up to about 30% of the original APE had already been earmarked for contingencies and price adjustment in June 2012.

12. In response, CTA/SP of ASD explained that the increased construction cost was believed to be mainly due to higher-than-normal allowances for preliminaries priced by the tenderers due to perceived site difficulty, volatile market situation and the tenderers' risk assessment of the works which could not be reasonably quantified at the time when the original APE was prepared.

13. Mr WONG Yuk-man and the Deputy Chairman asked whether the proposed increase in APE to \$653.4 million would be sufficient to cover the project cost. US(Ed) said that the Administration believed that the additional funding, if approved by FC, would be sufficient as the revised APE was based on the returned tender prices and was not merely a cost projection.

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Mr Joel CHAN also concurred that it was unlikely that additional funding would need to be sought.

Need for additional information

14. Whilst supporting the redevelopment of the School, Ms Cyd HO noted with grave concern the increase of some \$100 million in piling cost. Noting Mr Joel CHAN's earlier advice that there had been a rise in piling cost across the industry, Ms HO sought information on similar examples. As \$31.5 million and \$70.9 million had been provided for contingencies and price adjustment respectively in the original APE approved in June 2012, Ms HO queried why instead of deploying the said financial provision to meet the increase in construction cost, the Administration would need to seek additional funding in which the financial provision earmarked for the above two purposes had also been raised.

15. CTA/SP of ASD advised that according to information provided by the Quantity Surveyors and Construction Cost Consultants commissioned by the School, there had been an almost two-fold increase in the cost for piling works carried out on sloped sites in the past two years. The projects handled by ASD also revealed an average 50% increase in the piling cost for levelled sites in the past two to three years, while the relevant cost in certain projects had risen by 100%. According to the information of the Census and Statistics Department, there had been an increase of about 49% in the gross value of piling and foundation works from 2011 to 2012.

16. The Chairman advised that members could pursue with the Administration the costing and technical aspects of the proposal at the PWSC meeting. Ms Cyd HO requested the Administration to provide detailed justification in its submission to PWSC for the proposed increase in piling cost from \$43.4 million in the original APE to \$141.9 million in the revised estimate.

17. Noting that the "provision for price adjustment" had been increased by about \$30 million to \$107.6 million under the revised APE to meet inflation and cost increases, Mr Michael TIEN questioned the need to increase in parallel the estimated cost for other items such as "building", "drainage" and "remuneration of resident site staff".

18. In response, CTA/SP of ASD explained that as a result of the increase in construction cost, it was necessary to increase the estimated cost for "remuneration of resident site staff" as additional staff had to be engaged to supervise the works. Mr Michael TIEN requested the Administration to

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provide detailed justification for the increases in estimated cost for the aforesaid items in its submission to PWSC.

19. Ms Starry LEE said that Members of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong supported the redevelopment of the School. She referred to her experience in auditing project costs, and noted that there might be genuine reasons for increasing the costs for foundation works. However, Ms LEE said that she had not been convinced by the explanation given by the Administration and the consultant, and urged for more detailed justification to be provided in the submission to PWSC, instead of just highlighting site difficulty, which was a pre-existing condition, as the main reason.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration had submitted a paper PWSC(2013-14)34 for consideration at the meeting of PWSC on 29 January 2014.)

The Administration's scrutiny over the Redevelopment Project

20. Dr Fernando CHEUNG questioned the Government's monitoring role over public works expenditure, and whether there had been failure on the part of any public officers in discharging their duties.

21. Dr Helena WONG sought the Administration's response on whether additional funding was required because it had made a mistake in estimating the cost for the Redevelopment Project. She also questioned whether any party would need to be penalized for the gross under-estimation of construction cost.

22. Ms Claudia MO commented that it was hard for members not to support the proposal. Concurring with some members' concern about the significant increase in APE, she asked whether any parties or public officers should be held accountable.

23. In response, US(Ed) said that that whilst it was true that the original estimate in 2012 could not reflect the current market situation, the original APE was the best estimate that could be made at that time based on prevailing data and circumstances. He pointed out that there were subsequent changes and factors which could not reasonably be foreseen at the time of preparing the original estimate and he had not spotted any omission or failure on the part of the Administration or the consultant as far as the original APE was concerned.

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Summing up

24. Concluding the discussion, the Chairman said that the Panel would support the Administration's submission of the proposal to PWSC where technical and costing issues could be further deliberated if necessary.

V. Injection into the Language Fund

(LC Paper No. CB(4)198/13-14(03) -- Paper provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(4)198/13-14(04) -- Background brief entitled "Issues related to the injection into the Language Fund" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat)

25. Members noted the background brief on the subject prepared by the Secretariat [LC Paper No. CB(4)198/13-14(04)].

Briefing by the Administration

26. At the invitation of the Chairman, SED briefed members on the Administration's proposal to inject a sum of \$5 billion into the Language Fund in the 2013-2014 financial year for introducing and strengthening various learner-centred initiatives to further enhance the language proficiency of students and the workforce, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)198/13-14(03)]. The proposed one-off injection, which would be in the form of seed capital, would provide a stable stream of investment income to facilitate the longer term strategic planning and development of language education. The Administration would explore placing it with the Hong Kong Monetary Authority to earn investment return that was linked to the performance of the Hong Kong Exchange Fund. Subject to members' views, the Administration would submit the proposal to FC for approval.

Discussion

Funding arrangements

27. While expressing support for the proposed injection, Mr WONG Kwok-hing was concerned about the stability of the investment

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returns to fund the initiatives and the deployment of funding. He noted that in the past decade, the annual rate of return of the Hong Kong Exchange Fund had remained in the range of 1.8% to 4.9%. However, the Administration had assumed a rate of return at 5% per annum in the current proposal. Mr WONG enquired about the contingency plan, if any, when the annual rate of return fell far below 5% or when the \$5 billion had been fully committed.

28. Deputy Secretary for Education (5) ("DS(Ed)5") said that the proposed initiatives under the Language Fund would be funded by the investment returns on the funding injection. In times of market volatilities, the Administration might have to adjust the relevant expenditure in the light of the reduced investment income or use a small part of the principal to finance the programmes under very exceptional circumstances.

29. In response to Mr WONG Kwok-hing's enquiry whether ongoing programmes would need to be suspended due to a lack of funding, SED said that under such circumstances, some programmes might be scaled down or deferred for implementation.

30. Dr Helena WONG expressed her reservation on the proposed injection of \$5 billion into the Language Fund. She was concerned that if FC gave a blanket approval for the one-off injection, it would mean that in future, funding for individual projects would only be decided by the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research ("SCOLAR") without the oversight by the Legislative Council ("LegCo"). Dr WONG said that according to her understanding, only four members of SCOLAR came from the education sector while the majority of other members came from the business-related sectors. She sought information on the allocation of funding under the Language Fund, and considered that LegCo should have a role in approving funding proposals on individual initiatives.

31. Mr WU Chi-wai remarked that there appeared to be greater emphasis on the initiatives under key areas related to language education in kindergartens and primary schools. He enquired whether the membership of SCOLAR would be suitably adjusted to reflect its emphasis on these areas of work.

32. DS(Ed)5 advised that there were more than four members from the education sector serving on SCOLAR, including school principals of primary and secondary schools, kindergarten teachers and academics from universities. She further said that members from different backgrounds could contribute to the work of various subcommittees formed under SCOLAR for different purposes, such as Subcommittee on Language Education Research

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and Subcommittee on Promotion of Chinese Language Learning. At members' request, the Administration would provide the up-to-date membership of SCOLAR after the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's written information was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)266/13-14(01) on 24 December 2013.)

33. Regarding the allocation of funding, DS(Ed)5 said that as set out in paragraph 22 of the Administration's paper, the estimated \$250 million of annual investment return would be roughly allocated to various areas, including providing support to schools and teachers (55%), conducting research and development projects (20%), implementing language education community projects (15%) and serving as contingency (10%).

Proposed initiatives to be supported by the Language Fund

34. Mr Michael TIEN declared that he was the former Chairman of SCOLAR. He said that the programmes funded by the Language Fund could supplement the existing language curriculum and help arouse the interest of children at their early ages in learning English. Mr TIEN expressed support in principle for the funding proposal.

35. Mr Michael TIEN was of the view that with the injection of \$5 billion into the Language Fund, more resources should be allocated for conducting language programmes outside the regular school curriculum, and that additional English language teachers should be provided to primary schools to conduct these programmes. SCOLAR should consider supporting the development of relevant multi-media teaching materials with appropriate English subtitles. He also urged for early implementation of small class teaching for English language lessons with a maximum class size of 25 students.

36. SED said that small class teaching had already been implemented in primary schools. Regarding the language programmes suggested by Mr TIEN, SED advised that the initiatives under the key area on creating and nurturing a facilitating language learning environment for students in and beyond school settings were geared to achieving a similar effect.

37. Mr TAM Yiu-chung said that according to some parents of ethnic minorities ("EM") students, opportunities should be given to their children to learn Putonghua alongside Cantonese. In this regard, SED said that existing programmes under the bi-literate and tri-lingual language education policy applied to all students including EM students.

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38. Ms Claudia MO expressed her regret that none of the proposed initiatives had revealed any commitment on the part of the Administration to develop a "Chinese Language as a Second Language" curriculum for non-Chinese speaking ("NCS") students, contrary to the pledge of the Chief Executive in his election manifesto. She was also concerned that the practice of using Putonghua to teach Chinese Language subjects in schools would undermine the importance of Cantonese.

39. DS(Ed)5 said that the Administration was in the course of consolidating the experience collected from schools regarding the teaching of the Chinese Language subject for NCS students. SED re-affirmed the Government's policy to support NCS students in learning the Chinese language. NCS students were encouraged to participate in community-based programmes to reinforce the learning of Chinese. The proposed injection would include supporting schools in developing their school-based language curriculum. On the development of a "Chinese Language as a Second Language" curriculum, SED said that the Administration was actively pursuing the matter in this direction.

40. On the use of Putonghua to teach Chinese Language subjects in schools, SED said that this practice was in line with the bi-literate (in written Chinese and English) and tri-lingual (in Cantonese, Putonghua and spoken English) language education policy. DS(Ed)5 supplemented that the schools which used Putonghua to teach Chinese Language also taught some other subjects in Cantonese. Hence, equal importance was accorded to the use of Putonghua and Cantonese.

41. Noting from paragraph 22 of the Administration's paper that 20% of the \$250 million funding would be allocated for conducting research and development projects, Ms Cyd HO was of the view that the funding should be administered by the Research Grants Council to support researches conducted by universities. She was concerned that since the majority of members of SCOLAR were not academics, the impartiality of the approval and allocation of funding for research projects was highly questionable.

42. In this regard, DS(Ed)5 advised that the research projects to be funded would include both practical and theoretical studies, such as longitudinal studies to track children's language learning and development at different stages of education to better inform planning and practice, and research studies on the language proficiency of the workforce in response to the changing needs of the workplace.

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Capacity for schools to implement the proposed initiatives

43. The Deputy Chairman referred to a paper prepared by him setting out his comments on the subject [LC Paper No. CB(4)227/13-14(01) tabled at the meeting] and considered that the Administration had overlooked the need to strengthen the capacity of schools without which the proposed initiatives could not be effectively carried out. He was particularly concerned about the increased workload on serving teachers resulting from the implementation of various proposed initiatives. The Deputy Chairman stressed that strengthening the overall capacity of language education in schools should be included as one of the key areas and be accorded priority in the deployment of resources.

44. Dr Kenneth CHAN was of the view that the Administration should demonstrate its commitment to provide schools with the necessary manpower and resources to tie in with the implementation of various initiatives that required the participation of schools. Referring to the key area on strengthening support of language learning in Chinese and English in very early years, Dr CHAN enquired whether all kindergartens could benefit from the initiatives, irrespective of whether they had joined the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme ("PEVS").

45. In this connection, SED pointed out that up to 55% of the available funding derived from the annual investment return of the one-off injection would be allocated to the provision of support to schools and teachers, which could help relieve the workload of teachers. The proposed initiatives aimed at providing support to schools in teaching languages and enhancing the language proficiency of students.

46. DS(Ed)5 supplemented in conducting programmes beyond the school settings, teachers could work in collaboration with community organizations instead of preparing learning and teaching materials entirely on their own. Arrangements such as staff secondment might be made to facilitate schools to implement the initiatives. DS(ED)5 further said that teachers working in PEVS kindergartens and non-PEVS kindergartens alike could benefit from the professional development programmes to be promoted.

47. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered it necessary to provide schools with adequate manpower to tie in with the implementation of various proposed initiatives under the key areas of creating a facilitating language learning environment for students and catering for learning diversity among students.

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48. In this regard, SED said that arrangement might be made under funded programmes for students in local schools to attend English Language lessons with English-speaking students from international schools. On concerns about learning diversity, SED and DS(Ed)5 recapitulated that despite the drop in student population of junior secondary levels, the teacher establishment had not been reduced. The teacher-to-class ratio in primary schools and the teacher-to-student ratio in secondary schools had been improved. Additional resources were also provided to schools adopting Chinese as the medium of instruction.

49. Mr WU Chi-wai sought clarification on whether schools would be provided with additional resources to recruit additional teachers to facilitate the smooth implementation of the proposed initiatives, and enquired whether there would be other measures to enhance manpower support apart from secondment of teachers to schools.

50. DS(Ed)5 explained that the various initiatives to be funded by the proposed one-off injection would be implemented progressively so as to minimize any immediate impact on the work of teachers. For intensive programmes, secondment of teachers would be arranged. She cited an example that teachers seconded to participate in research and development projects might also work in collaboration with their respective schools in conducting the research. SED gave another example of a partnership programme with stakeholders in the community where the University of Hong Kong deployed some language teachers to teach language subjects in kindergartens.

51. Ms Cyd HO expressed her concern about how schools would be supported through the allocation of some 55% of the available funding. She referred to the proven success in the teaching and learning of languages at the British Council, L'Alliance Française de Hong Kong and the Goethe-Institut Hong Kong where small class teaching was practiced. Ms HO said that she would not support the proposed injection \$5 billion into the Language Fund unless the Administration could assure members that the 55% of funding would be provided to schools for recruiting additional language teachers to cope with the implementation of new initiatives.

52. While appreciating the proposed initiatives under the Language Fund, Dr Fernando CHEUNG shared the concern of other members that the initiatives could hardly be effectively implemented in schools without the provision of sufficient manpower, notably additional language teachers. Mr Charles MOK concurred that grants should be disbursed to schools for recruiting additional language teachers and teaching assistants. He also

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requested the Administration to consider increasing the recurrent funding to schools for strengthening the staff establishment of language teachers.

53. On members' concerns about the need for additional teachers, SED advised that in proposing the initiatives, the Administration had taken into consideration the workload of teachers. He further said that the capability of kindergarten teachers in bi-literate and tri-lingual teaching would be strengthened. In primary schools, partnership programmes and secondment exercises would be arranged. In secondary schools, with the implementation of targeted measures to sustain the stability and strength of the teaching force in the face of the temporary decline of junior secondary student population, schools could flexibly deploy their surplus teachers to relieve the work of language teachers.

54. SED further highlighted that the current proposal was for the provision of non-recurrent funding from the Language Fund to support proposed initiatives for new strategic directions in language education. On other longer-term issues such as teacher establishment, SED said that the Administration was examining the matter, as well as the feasibility of providing recurrent funding to schools in a holistic manner rather than solely on the provision of language teachers.

55. Noting that the Language Fund had been providing financial support for initiatives aimed at improving the language proficiency of Hong Kong people, Mr TAM Yiu-chung remarked that the estimated \$250 million funding per annum should be deployed to support diversified activities rather than restricted to the recruitment of language teachers and supporting the professional development of teachers.

56. In the light of the views expressed by members at the meeting, the Deputy Chairman suggested that the Administration should withhold its submission of the proposal to FC pending further consultation with members with a view to addressing their concerns. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung was of the view that the injection of \$5 billion could hardly address all the issues raised by members and therefore, he would not support the funding proposal.

57. Noting members' views, SED stressed that the proposed initiatives were conducive to enhancing the language proficiency of students and the workforce in Hong Kong. He further advised that as the Financial Secretary had announced in the 2013-2014 Budget the injection of \$5 billion into the Language Fund, it was necessary to obtain the approval of FC in the 2013-2014 financial year in order that funding could be provided before the expiry of the current financial year to support various proposed projects and activities.

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Summing up

58. Concluding the discussion, the Chairman requested the Administration to seriously consider members' views and concerns before deciding on the way forward.

VI. Supporting schools to adopt e-textbook to facilitate learning and teaching and upgrading of the Web-based School Administration and Management System

(LC Paper No. CB(4)198/13-14(05) -- Paper provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(4)198/13-14(06) -- Updated background brief entitled "Issues related to the development of e-textbooks" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat)

59. Members noted the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)198/13-14(05)] and the updated background brief on the subject prepared by the Secretariat [LC Paper No. CB(4)198/13-14(06)].

Briefing by the Administration

60. At the invitation of the Chairman, Chief Curriculum Development Officer (Information Technology in Education) ("CCDO") gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Administration's proposal to provide funding support to schools to enhance their IT infrastructure to cater for the need of using e-textbook and to upgrade of the Web-based School Administration and Management System ("WebSAMS"). Subject to members' views, the Administration planned to submit the proposal to FC for approval in January 2014.

(Post-meeting note: A set of the PowerPoint presentation materials was circulated to members by email on 10 December 2013.)

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Discussion

Development of e-textbooks

61. Mr MA Fung-kwok enquired about details of the vetting criteria of e-textbooks and ways to ensure that developers that had not participated in the e-Textbook Market Development Scheme ("EMADS") could also participate in the e-textbook market in future.

62. In reply, DS(Ed)5 said that upon the completion of the try-out of the first batch of e-textbooks developed under EMADS in the first quarter of 2014, it was expected that the vetting criteria of e-textbooks would soon be announced. SED said that the Administration had already briefed the textbook publishing sector on the timetable and arrangements for the development of the e-textbook market.

63. Mr Michael TIEN reflected the view of some middle class families that they still had to pay for textbooks although free education was provided. In this regard, Mr TIEN enquired whether the Administration would consider providing e-textbooks to all students free of charge regardless of the financial position of their families.

64. SED advised that the Administration would need to explore with stakeholders on the feasibility of providing free e-textbooks. The Education Bureau had already set up a One-stop Portal for Learning and Teaching Resources where schools could have free access to learning and teaching materials. Since it was not possible to replace all printed textbooks by e-textbooks, the Administration would continue to monitor the development of the overall textbook market, including both e-textbooks and printed textbooks. The practice of some schools to develop school-based or personal teaching materials for some subjects rather than using e-textbooks might have an impact on the demand for e-textbooks. DS(Ed)5 informed members that currently, needy students could apply for financial assistance for purchasing textbooks. Through the School Textbook Assistance Scheme and the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme, Government subsidy to students accounted for about \$1 billion.

Trial scheme to provide one-off grant to schools for enhancing IT infrastructure

65. The Deputy Chairman referred members to a paper prepared by him setting out the results of a survey conducted by him [LC Paper No. CB(4)227/13-14(02) tabled at the meeting]. He highlighted that over 70% of

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the respondent schools were not agreeable to the implementation of a trial scheme participated by only some 100 schools. There was concern that this arrangement would widen the competency gap among schools in implementing e-learning. According to the findings of the survey, the education sector had considered that the need to upgrade their IT infrastructure for adoption of e-textbooks was common among all schools. Hence, the provision of funding under the trial scheme should not be restricted to 100 selected schools. The Deputy Chairman requested the Administration to promulgate the criteria for selecting the 100 schools, and to consider giving priority to those schools that were lagging behind in their IT infrastructure.

66. Mr Charles MOK concurred with the Deputy Chairman's view. He noted that less than 10% of some 1 000 public sector schools were sufficiently equipped with Wi-Fi connectivity in their classrooms to effectively use e-textbooks. This reflected the strong need for the vast majority of schools to upgrade their IT infrastructure to facilitate e-learning and retrieval of online resources. In this regard, Mr MOK urged the Administration to provide subsidies to all schools in the next three years to improve their IT infrastructure and to enhance teachers' knowledge and skills in e-learning.

67. Ms Claudia MO was concerned that under the trial scheme, those schools with relatively high IT-readiness would be provided with further funding, whereas schools lagging behind in their IT capacity would not receive additional support. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung was of the view that consideration should be given to increasing the amount of funding so as to allow more schools to participate in the trial scheme. Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Mrs Regina IP expressed concern about the selection criteria and considered that the Administration should provide in due course a list of the schools participating in the trial scheme.

68. Dr Elizabeth QUAT informed members that she had conducted a survey on schools during the period from 20 to 27 November 2013. Of the 99 schools that had responded, 32 schools had been equipped with Wi-Fi connectivity. Out of the remaining 67 schools, 90% of them expected to have Wi-Fi access very soon and 45% of them had indicated that Wi-Fi connectivity would be effected within one year. In this connection, Dr QUAT enquired whether the Administration would open the trial scheme to more than 100 schools if there was overwhelming interest from schools to join the scheme.

69. In response, SED explained that the 100 schools would be selected for participating in the trial scheme with regard to their readiness to adopt

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e-textbooks in class. The number of schools (i.e. 100) to be selected had been estimated on the basis that about 80 Partner Schools which had joined the try-out under EMADS were interested in adopting e-textbooks. Noting members' views, SED said that about 20 participating schools would be selected from schools that were lagging behind in IT infrastructure so that the experience to be consolidated from the trial scheme could cover different school settings. The Administration would work in the direction of facilitating all schools to adopt e-textbooks and e-learning.

70. DS(Ed)5 said that the Steering Committee on Strategic Development of Information Technology in Education would formulate the selection criteria for the trial scheme and members' views would be taken into account. The actual amount of grant to be disbursed to individual schools in the trial scheme would vary according to their existing IT infrastructure and operational needs. She assured members that the principles of transparency and impartiality would be adhered to in the selection of the 100 schools to participate in the trial scheme.

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71. In response to the Chairman's enquiry, DS(Ed)5 advised that the selection process for the trial scheme had yet to start. The Administration was requested to provide the list of schools selected to participate in the trial scheme as well as the selection criteria to the Panel once the information was available.

72. Mr WONG Kwok-hing expressed his support for the adoption of e-textbooks. Noting that the proposed trial scheme would last for three years, he was concerned about the timetable for territory-wide adoption of e-textbooks. Dr Fernando CHEUNG noted that the e-textbooks developed under EMADS were expected to be launched in 2014, and considered it necessary for the Administration to expedite its work in helping schools upgrade their IT infrastructure.

73. Dr Elizabeth QUAT was of the view that all public sector schools should be equipped with Wi-Fi access within the next three years, and indicated that she would move a motion to this effect. The Chairman enquired whether the Administration could achieve full implementation of Wi-Fi campus for adoption of e-textbooks among all schools in the coming three years.

74. In response, SED advised that as set out in the consultation document on 2014 Digital 21 Strategy, the Administration had proposed to equip every Government and aided school with Wi-Fi service to facilitate constant and stable access to the Internet. Details of implementation would be given in the

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4th Information Technology in Education Strategy to be launched in January 2014. It was expected that the IT infrastructure with Wi-Fi access in all schools could be enhanced within the next three to five years. However, SED indicated that it might not be feasible to specify a firm timetable for territory-wide adoption of e-textbooks in teaching as it was necessary to give individual schools more flexibility with regard to their pedagogical and operational needs.

Other supporting measures for schools to adopt e-textbooks

75. Noting the proposed arrangement that two to three students would share a device for using e-textbooks in class, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered that each student should be provided with a device. In his view, the interaction between the teacher and students was more important than peer interaction in class. Additional manpower should be provided to facilitate the adoption of e-textbooks because one teacher could hardly assist different groups or individual students at the same time. SED remarked that the sharing of a device by two to three students in groups was more a pedagogical matter than a question of resources. This arrangement was conducive to enhancing peer interaction and rapport in class.

76. Mr Charles MOK supported the proposal of developing an online integrated service platform by the Hong Kong Education City. In tandem with this development, Mr MOK called for the creation of the posts of "IT Coordinator" and "Technical Support Services Officer" in schools. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung also considered it necessary to establish a dedicated IT specialist post in schools to provide assistance to other teachers.

77. SED said that currently, schools equipped with IT infrastructure and software would subscribe for e-learning services offered by different service providers. The proposed development of an integrated services platform would facilitate teachers in accessing e-learning services. Regarding staff establishment, SED advised that schools would manage their own IT infrastructure with the assistance of relevant subject teachers. Schools could flexibly deploy their resources to procure services to meet their needs. DS(Ed)5 referred to the Composite Information Technology Grant aimed at providing schools with greater flexibility in managing their own resources in accordance with their operational needs in IT education, such as engaging technical support personnel and procurement of equipment and services.

78. Mrs Regina IP expressed her concern that students might have made use of the IT facilities in schools for their own purposes such as playing online games. She enquired whether any preventive measures would be put

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in place in this regard. In reply, SED advised that the proposed integrated services platform designated for education purpose could regulate students' access to other websites or online resources. In addition, the arrangement of sharing one device by two to three students could facilitate peer monitoring over on-line activities. Relevant training would be provided for teachers and parents on issues such as cyber-bullying.

79. Ms Claudia MO was of the view that with the adoption of e-textbooks and wider use of IT technology in learning, students might become more interested in pursuing e-learning activities, at the expense of learning languages which was relatively less dynamic. In this regard, DS(Ed)5 advised that as a result of their professional training, teachers would be in a position to plan their teaching activities in class and outside classrooms in a balanced and structured manner. SED further said that the use of IT technology could help arouse the interest of students in learning languages.

WebSAMS

80. Dr Elizabeth QUAT noted with concern that the Administration had only proposed to upgrade WebSAMS when the service provider could no longer provide support service starting from July 2015. Dr QUAT considered that the current funding proposal to upgrade WebSAMS was no more than a remedial measure. She remarked that the Administration should work in collaboration with the education and IT sectors and have adequate planning on IT facilities and services for schools, taking into account latest developments such as cloud-based and module-based services. Mr Charles MOK expressed his support for the upgrading of the WebSAMS.

Motions

81. The Chairman informed members that he had received the wording of two motions. The first motion was proposed by Mr Charles MOK and the second one was proposed by Dr Elizabeth QUAT. With the agreement of members, the Chairman said that he would proceed to deal with the motions without further debate as the Panel had thoroughly discussed the matters concerned. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Charles MOK said that his views as set out in the motion had been expressed during the discussion.

82. The Chairman put the motion moved by Mr Charles MOK to vote. Fourteen members voted for the motion, no member voted against and no member abstained. The Chairman declared that the motion was passed (wording of motion at **Appendix I**).

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83. Speaking on the motion moved by her, Dr Elizabeth QUAT urged the Administration to provide training workshops for teachers to enhance the effectiveness of e-teaching and to formulate policy objectives and a timetable for the active and full implementation of teaching with e-textbooks. She also called on the Administration to make reference to the plan of the South Korean government to replace traditional textbooks with e-textbooks.

84. In response, SED advised that the South Korean government's plan to replace traditional textbooks with e-textbooks would only apply to certain school subjects. Nevertheless, he agreed with the need to provide training workshops for teachers and to enable students to bring their own devices to schools.

85. The Chairman put to vote Dr QUAT's motion. Eleven members voted for the motion, no member voted against and two members abstained. The Chairman declared that the motion was passed (wording of motion at **Appendix II**).

Admin

(Post-meeting note: A letter was sent to the Administration on 11 December 2013 requesting for written responses to the motions passed at the meeting.)

VII. Award of bonus to staff by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

(LC Paper No. CB(4)120/13-14(05) -- Paper provided by the Administration)

For reference

Administration's reply to a written question raised by Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che at the Council meeting of 23 October 2013

Administration's reply to a written question raised by Hon CHAN Chi-chuen at the Council meeting of 23 October 2013

Briefing by the Administration

86. At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary General, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority ("SG/HKEAA") briefed members on the background on and arrangements for the "special one-off

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performance-based incentive" ("special incentive") of HKEAA awarded to staff in 2012-2013, details of which were set out in HKEAA's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)120/13-14(05)].

Discussion

Special incentive to employees of HKEAA

87. Mr TAM Yiu-chung noted that although the award of the special incentive to employees of HKEAA was a one-off arrangement, an amount totalling \$7 million had been awarded to about 400 staff. He asked whether the award of this special incentive had achieved the intended objectives of reducing the staff turnover rate and boosting the morale of employees.

88. SG/HKEAA advised that the award of the special incentive was considered effective since the staff turnover rate had dropped from 13.3% in 2011 to 9.9% in 2012. In the first nine months of 2013, it had further dropped to 8.1%. Regarding the increase in the number of staff awarded with performance-based incentive in the past two years, SG/HKEAA said that this was mainly because 1 September 2011 was the date for the completion of the transfer of existing employees of HKEAA from the civil service pay structure to the Annual Guarantee Cash structure and become entitled to the payment of performance-based incentive.

89. Noting from paragraph 13 of HKEAA's paper that about 90% of the HKEAA employees had received a special incentive of about half a month's salary on average, Mrs Regina IP enquired about the amount received by the remaining 10% of employees. She also asked whether another one-off special incentive would be awarded in future, and sought information on the benchmarks for appraising staff performance under the performance-based incentive scheme.

90. In reply, SG/HKEAA advised that under the AGC structure, staff performance was appraised with reference to an ascending six-band ratings. A performance-based incentive would normally be awarded to employees with performance at the top two levels of the six-band ratings. However, on this occasion, the special one-off incentive was awarded to employees with performance at the top four levels, with the highest incentive awarded at about 70% of the monthly salary. In response to Mrs IP's enquiry, SG/HKEAA said that he was awarded with an incentive of about 55% of his monthly salary.

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91. Noting that the Strategic Development Committee of HKEAA had been tasked to review the decision of awarding the special incentive before submission to the Council of HKEAA for its approval, Mrs Regina IP sought information on the membership of the Strategic Development Committee. SG/HKEAA agreed to provide the requested information after the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: HKEAA's written information was circulated to the members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)299/13-14(01) on 10 January 2014.)

92. Given that employees in the private sector with good performance might not necessarily be awarded bonus, Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung was of the view that it was not appropriate for a public statutory body to award the special incentive to its employees. He asked whether HKEAA would consider taking any remedial measures in this regard.

93. SG/HKEAA explained that the consultant commissioned by HKEAA in 2005 to study the pay structure of HKEAA had studied more than 10 non-profit-driven organizations that required similar expertise or provided similar professional services. The AGC structure recommended by the consultant and adopted by HKEAA consisted of two components, i.e. general pay adjustment and performance-based incentive. To enhance market competitiveness in salary in order to attract staff of the right caliber, the remuneration for staff was a form of variable pay based on performance. All along, the award of performance-based incentive had been handled in a prudent manner with regard to the performance appraisals of individual employees. Nevertheless, in the light of present-day circumstances, HKEAA would engage a consultant to conduct a comprehensive review on the operation of HKEAA, including its staff establishment, remuneration packages and allocation of resources etc.

94. The Chairman was concerned whether the morale of HKEAA employees would be affected if the special incentive in question would not be offered in future, and whether HKEAA had considered other non-monetary measures to boost staff morale and reduce staff turnover. Noting from the Annex of HKEAA's paper that four staff members of the Management Grade had left HKEAA in 2012, the Chairman asked whether their departure had any adverse impact on the work of HKEAA.

95. In response, SG/HKEAA confirmed that HKEAA had implemented a number of measures to promote staff morale and retain talents such as long term strategies on training/development and career planning, including leadership development programmes. He further advised that the four

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employees of the Management Grade had left HKEAA for personal reasons in August 2012, which was after the peak period to implement the two large-scale public examinations.

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

Funding for conducting public examinations

97. Dr Fernando CHEUNG noted that HKEAA was a public body responsible for the conduct of public examinations in Hong Kong operating on a self-financing basis. He was keen to ensure that HKEAA would not focus on efforts to generate income, at the expense of performing its primary role of administering local public examinations. In his view, the Administration should provide recurrent subvention to HKEAA for the purpose of sustaining its stable and smooth operation, thereby relieving the pressure on HKEAA to increase public examination fees.

98. DS(Ed)5 said that the Government attached great importance to the role of HKEAA as the only statutory body responsible for administering public examinations in Hong Kong. Where there were sound justifications, the Government had provided non-recurrent grants to support HKEAA for launching special and non-recurrent initiatives related to the public examinations. SG/HKEAA supplemented that the Examination Fee Remission Scheme administered by the Student Financial Assistance Agency would provide assistance to eligible students with financial needs.

99. Dr Kenneth CHAN declared that he had participated in the assessment work of HKEAA from 1998 to the summer of 2013. Dr CHAN was concerned that in the absence of any recurrent government subvention, HKEAA might need to boost its income by conducting more international and professional examinations in Hong Kong since the fees charged on candidates taking local public examinations could not be increased without the approval of the Government. In his opinion, the Administration should ensure that HKEAA had sufficient resources to administer public examinations for local candidates. Noting that the decline in secondary student population would eventually lead to a drop in income from public examination fees, Dr CHAN enquired whether the Administration would consider providing recurrent subvention to HKEAA so that its operations could be sustained and the fees of public examinations would not be increased. He also considered that HKEAA would need to work in collaboration with the Administration and stakeholders on how best to improve its services in response to changing needs, such as provision of support services to students with special educational needs ("SEN students").

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100. The Deputy Chairman was of the view that there should be sufficient funding for HKEAA to conduct local public examinations which was its core business. In anticipation that there would be an increasing number of SEN students taking public examinations, HKEAA should plan in advance for providing the necessary support services. He also remarked that in the long run, HKEAA might consider adopting a business model to administer overseas examinations as a specialized and professional service in Hong Kong.

101. Mr TAM Yiu-chung considered that it was in order for HKEAA to conduct international and professional examinations in Hong Kong which could be attended by local and Mainland students. This would be conducive to promoting Hong Kong as a regional hub in education and examination services.

102. SED said that examinations such as TOEFL and the Chartered Financial Analyst Examinations currently administered by HKEAA were popular examinations attended by local candidates. In conducting these examinations locally in collaboration with the respective overseas examination bodies, HKEAA was rendering a useful service as local candidates would not be required to go abroad for sitting these examinations.

103. SG/HKEAA assured members that HKEAA was fully aware of its role as the only statutory body responsible for administering public examinations in Hong Kong. Its foremost concern was the performance of this core task rather than the generation of income from other sources. He said that members' views would be conveyed to the consultant for consideration in its overall review.

104. Mrs Regina IP sought information on the international and professional examinations administered by HKEAA, including those that were attended by non-local candidates in Hong Kong. HKEAA agreed to provide the information after the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: HKEAA's written information was circulated to the members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)299/13-14(01) on 10 January 2014.)

105. The Chairman enquired about HKEAA's workload related to the administering of international and professional examinations in Hong Kong. He was concerned about the impact, if any, on HKEAA's income and whether any staff redundancy would result if HKEAA were to cease to conduct such examinations in Hong Kong.

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106. In response, SG/HKEAA advised that the International and Professional Examinations Division ("IPED") of HKEAA was responsible for the conduct of some 200 international and professional examinations. IPED's staff establishment was based on the manpower requirement in administering these examinations. Local public examinations were conducted by other divisions within HKEAA. Since there was a clear division of work, the manpower and workload of the divisions responsible for conducting local public examinations would not be affected by the amount of work for administering other international and professional examinations.

VIII. Any other business

107. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 7:12 pm.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
7 February 2014

**就議程項目"支援學校採用電子教科書以便利教與學
及提升網上學校行政及管理系統"通過的議案**
**Motion passed under the agenda item "Supporting schools to adopt
e-textbook to facilitate learning and teaching and upgrading of the
Web-based School Administration and Management System"**

議案措辭

教育局於 1998 年推出第一個資訊科技教育策略，至今已整整 15 年，可是仍然未能向全港所有學校提供資訊科技基礎建設，一直缺乏電子學習的「全面計劃」。就此，本會促請政府：

(一) 於緊接的 3 年內在全港所有學校落實資助，改善每所學校資訊科技基礎設施和教師能力；

(二) 當局必須於是次計劃，公開甄選準則，及先給予弱勢或「資源嚴重不足」的學校發放津貼；及

(三) 當局應在津貼推行全校 wifi 無線上網服務費用、網絡硬件或流動電腦裝置外，增加編制「資訊科技統籌員」及「技術支援服務人員」。

(莫乃光議員動議)

Wording of the Motion

(Translation)

That it has been 15 years since the Education Bureau (“EDB”) launched the first Information Technology (“IT”) in Education Strategy in 1998; however, EDB is still unable to provide IT infrastructure to all schools over the territory, and a "comprehensive plan" on electronic learning has always been lacking; in this connection, this Panel urges the Government to:

- (1) effect the provision of subsidies to all schools over the territory in the next three years to improve the IT infrastructure of every school and enhance teachers' capability;
- (2) make public the selection criteria under this scheme and accord priority to schools which are disadvantaged or "seriously lacking in resources" in the disbursement of subsidies; and
- (3) increase the staff establishment by creating the posts of "IT Coordinator" and "Technical Support Services Officer" in addition to providing subsidies to schools for the provision of Wi-Fi access to the Internet within their entire campuses and for the procurement of network hardware or mobile computer devices.

(Moved by Hon Charles MOK)

**就議程項目"支援學校採用電子教科書以便利教與學
及提升網上學校行政及管理系統"通過的議案**
**Motion passed under the agenda item "Supporting schools to adopt
e-textbook to facilitate learning and teaching and upgrading of the
Web-based School Administration and Management System"**

議案措辭

鑒於利用電子教科書對於落實推行電子教學尤為重要，南韓政府更計劃於 2015 年全面以電子教科書取代傳統課本及實行「一人一電腦」。就此，本會促請政府：

1. 落實在未來 3 年內分階段於全港落實全面 Wi-Fi 校園；
2. 為老師舉辦電子教學工作坊，以提升電子教學成效；及
3. 訂定政策目標及時間表，積極在未來幾年內全面推行電子教科書教學，實現學生「自攜裝置」(BYOD)/ 攜帶電子書包上課。

(葛珮帆議員動議)

Wording of the Motion

(Translation)

That, given that the use of e-textbooks is of particular importance to the implementation of e-teaching, and the South Korean government even plans to replace traditional textbooks with e-textbooks across the board and adopt the "one student one computer" practice in 2015, this Panel urges the Government to:

- (1) fully implement Wi-Fi campus by phases all over the territory in the coming three years;
- (2) organize e-teaching workshops for teachers to enhance the effectiveness of e-teaching; and
- (3) formulate policy objectives and a timetable for the active and full implementation of teaching with e-textbooks in the coming few years to enable students to "bring your own device" (BYOD)/bring their e-schoolbags to school.

(Moved by Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT)