

**立法會**  
***Legislative Council***

LC Paper No. CB(4)543/13-14  
(The minutes have been seen  
by the Administration)

Ref : CB4/PL/ED

**Panel on Education**

**Minutes of meeting**  
**held on Monday, 10 February 2014, at 4:30 pm**  
**in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex**

**Members present** : Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai, SBS, JP (Chairman)  
Hon IP Kin-yuen (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung  
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, 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-yee, 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  
Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT, JP

Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP  
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen

**Member attending** : Hon Gary FAN Kwok-wai

**Members absent** : Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP  
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP

**Public Officers attending** : Agenda item IV

Mr Eddie NG, SBS, JP  
Secretary for Education

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

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

Agenda item V

Mr Kevin YEUNG, JP  
Under Secretary for Education

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

Dr Richard ARMOUR  
Secretary-General,  
University Grants Committee

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

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

Ms Sandy HAU  
Legislative Assistant (4) 3

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Action

**I. Confirmation of minutes**

(LC Paper No. CB(4)363/13-14 -- Minutes of meeting on 9 December 2013)

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2013 were confirmed.

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

(LC Paper No. CB(4)350/13-14(01) -- Information paper provided by the Education Bureau concerning the progress of the School-based Professional Support Programmes financed by the Education Development Fund in the 2012-2013 school year

LC Paper Nos. CB(4)377/13-14(01) -- Letters dated 9 January 2014 from Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok and 14 January 2014 from Hon IP Kin-yuen respectively concerning the campus of International Montessori School and provision of international school places in Hong Kong  
(Chinese version only)

LC Paper No. CB(4)377/13-14(03) -- Administration's written response to the letters dated 9 January 2014 from Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok and 14 January 2014 from Hon IP Kin-yuen respectively concerning the campus of International Montessori School and provision of international school places in Hong Kong)

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

### **III. Items for discussion at the next meeting**

(Appendix I to LC Paper No. CB(4)362/13-14 -- List of outstanding items for discussion

Appendix II to LC Paper No. CB(4)362/13-14 -- List of follow-up actions)

3. The Chairman informed members that the Administration had not proposed any discussion item for the next regular meeting to be held on 18 March 2014 at 2:30 pm. He said that after discussion with the Deputy Chairman, he would propose the following two items for discussion at the next meeting –

- (a) issues related to the governance and regulation of the self-financing post-secondary sector; and
- (b) measures to address issues arising from the drop in secondary student population.

Members noted that the aforesaid items were listed as items 3 and 4 respectively on the Panel's "List of outstanding items for discussion". They had no objection to the proposal.

4. The Deputy Chairman and Dr Helena WONG suggested that related deputations should be invited to attend the meeting in connection with the agenda item on "issues related to the governance and regulation of the

self-financing post-secondary sector". The Chairman said that he would consider the deputations to be invited and would inform members accordingly.

*(Post-meeting note: A proposed list of related deputations to be invited to attend the meeting on 18 March 2014 was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)389/13-14 on 17 February 2014.)*

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. Progress of work of the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education**

(LC Paper No. CB(4)362/13-14(01) -- Paper provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(4)362/13-14(02) -- Background brief entitled "Issues related to the kindergarten sector and the provision of 15-year free education" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat)

6. Members noted the background brief prepared by the Secretariat on the subject [LC Paper No. CB(4)362/13-14(02)].

7. The Chairman informed members that the Panel had also invited the Chairman of the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education ("the Committee") through the Administration to attend the meeting. As advised by the Administration, the Chairman of the Committee would not be able to attend this meeting as he was not in Hong Kong.

### Briefing by the Administration

8. At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for Education ("SED") briefed members on the progress of work of the Committee as set out in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)362/13-14(01)]. He highlighted that since their establishment in April 2013, the Committee and its five subcommittees had held nearly 30 meetings to deliberate on various issues relating to free kindergarten education. The Committee had submitted a progress report to the Education Bureau ("EDB") in December 2013. After careful consideration, the Administration accepted the Committee's recommendations to implement various short-term support measures so as to provide immediate assistance to the kindergarten sector ahead of the formulation of the long-term policy on free kindergarten education. SED said that as announced in the 2014 Policy Address, the Administration planned to increase the voucher subsidy of the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme ("PEVS") by \$2,500 per year in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years, and to lift the fee remission ceilings under the Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme. EDB was also actively consulting different stakeholders of the kindergarten sector for improving the arrangements for admission to kindergartens in the 2015-2016 school year.

### Discussion

#### *Progress of work of the Committee*

9. Noting that the Chairman of the Committee would not be able to attend this meeting, the Deputy Chairman considered that other members of the Committee should also attend the meeting. In this regard, SED said that although the Chairman of the Committee was unable to attend this meeting since he was not in Hong Kong, he attached great importance to the work of the Committee.

10. While welcoming the Committee's recommendations to implement various short-term measures, Mr WONG Kwok-hing enquired about the timetable for implementing free kindergarten education. SED advised that the Committee was expected to complete its study and submit its final report to EDB in 2015. The Administration would need to carefully consider the Committee's recommendations and conduct consultation to gauge views on relevant issues. The Administration was aware of calls in the community for early implementation of free kindergarten education by 2017. SED assured members that the Administration was working in this direction and would spare no effort to take forward various stages of its work in a timely manner.

11. Dr Kenneth CHAN enquired whether a funding mode similar to the one currently adopted for public-sector primary and secondary schools would be used in providing free kindergarten education. In response, SED said that one of the subcommittees under the Committee was tasked to study feasible funding modes for kindergarten education.

12. Noting from the progress report that the Committee and its subcommittee would continue to study in detail various issues, Ms Cyd HO expressed serious concern about the lack of progress in the work of the Committee. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered that in its progress report, the Committee should inform the Panel of the details of its deliberations, including issues examined but not yet addressed, so as to facilitate monitoring by the Panel.

13. SED noted members' views, and advised that due to the intricacy of the issues involved, the Committee would need time for careful deliberation. Pending completion of its review and publication of its final report, the Committee had submitted a progress report to EDB which also proposed the implementation of a number of short-term measures to provide immediate relief to the kindergarten sector.

14. The Deputy Chairman said that he supported the suggestion of some stakeholders including parents and kindergartens to set up a subcommittee under the Panel to monitor the progress of work of the Committee and the implementation of free kindergarten education. Mr Gary FAN shared the Deputy Chairman's view.

*Providing additional subsidy for kindergartens*

15. In reply to Mr Paul TSE's enquiry about the adjustment in the voucher value under PEVS, SED confirmed that the Administration had accepted the Committee's recommendation and proposed to significantly increase the voucher value in the coming two school years (i.e. 2014-2015 and 2015-2016).

16. Dr Helena WONG observed that many working parents relied heavily on the services provided by whole-day kindergartens, particularly those kindergartens operating long hours ("long whole-day kindergartens"). The manpower and resources requirements of these long whole-day kindergartens differed from those of half-day kindergartens. In this regard, Dr WONG enquired about the Administration's policy stance on long whole-day kindergartens in the context of free kindergarten education and the plan, if any, to provide additional resources to them.

17. SED said that currently, about 30% of kindergarten students were studying in whole-day or long whole-day kindergartens. The Committee and two of its subcommittees were aware of their operational needs and had been carefully examining various issues related to the operation and services of these kindergartens, such as child care services, teaching, working hours of teachers and manpower requirements. He further said that long whole-day kindergartens were in receipt of recurrent subvention from the Government including rental reimbursement. They could also benefit from the short-term support measures to be introduced.

18. Noting that the rates of voucher subsidy for half-day kindergartens and whole-day/long whole-day kindergartens were the same under PEVS, Dr Kenneth CHAN pointed out that the latter type of kindergartens were in need of additional support in their operation. He enquired whether the Administration would implement special short-term measures to improve the subsidy for whole-day kindergartens and long whole-day kindergartens. Ms Cyd HO also saw a pressing need to address the issue of voucher subsidy rate for half-day kindergartens and long whole-day kindergartens.

19. SED took note of members' views and said that the Committee would examine the services provided by half-day kindergartens, whole-day kindergartens and long whole-day kindergartens in catering for the needs of parents and children.

20. Mr Gary FAN said that according to his understanding, there were about 246 long whole-day kindergartens in Hong Kong. He enquired about the financial implications if attendance at these kindergartens was to be fully subsidized. The Deputy Chairman was concerned about the Administration's policy stance on long whole-day kindergartens and the provision of short-term support to them.

21. DS(Ed)3 said that three subcommittees under the Committee were examining issues related to long whole-day kindergartens. Their findings would be holistically examined by the Committee. SED noted that long whole-day kindergartens played a unique role and their services were highly useful for certain groups of parents and children. The Committee and its subcommittees would need to examine relevant issues systematically and holistically before formulating the way forward. Regarding short-term measures to assist long whole-day kindergartens, SED recalled that in the 2013-2014 school year, each kindergarten under PEVS had been provided with a One-off School Development Grant in an amount up to \$250,000. Meanwhile, long whole-day kindergartens could also benefit from the increase in voucher subsidy under PEVS.



22. Dr Fernando CHEUNG shared members' concern about the operating difficulties faced by long whole-day kindergartens. He pointed out that currently, PEVS kindergartens and child care centres which had admitted students with special educational needs ("SEN students") were not provided with any additional resources and support by the Government. He noted with concern that neither the progress report of the Committee nor the short-term support measures had addressed the need for supporting kindergartens which had admitted SEN students.

23. SED said that the Committee aimed at formulating recommendations that could address the needs of different types of kindergartens. He informed members that one of the subcommittees was studying issues on additional support for specific groups of kindergarten students including SEN students.

24. Mr Dennis KWOK noted that currently, the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") was responsible for providing services to kindergarten students between the age of three to six identified to have SEN, while kindergarten education was under the policy purview of EDB. He was concerned that this arrangement might not be conducive to effective coordination of services and provision of support to SEN students and their parents. He also enquired whether consideration would be given to providing additional subsidy to enable kindergartens to create an in-house SEN coordinator post tasked to oversee and coordinate the provision of support for SEN students.

25. DS(Ed)3 said that the Administration was well aware of the importance of early identification of students with SEN and early intervention. Relevant government bureaux and departments, including EDB and SWD, had their respective responsibilities in the provision of services for SEN students and their families. She also confirmed that relevant issues would be studied by one of the subcommittees.

#### *Improving the kindergarten admission arrangements*

26. Mr WONG Kwok-hing noted that measures to ensure that each child would only hold one kindergarten place instead of multiple places ("one-child-one-place measure") would be implemented in kindergartens under PEVS. He was nevertheless concerned about the possible hoarding of places in non-PEVS kindergartens, and enquired about measures to enhance the kindergarten admission arrangement. Mr Tony TSE shared similar concern and enquired about the number of students covered by PEVS.

27. DS(Ed)3 said that about 80% of kindergarten students were studying in kindergartens which had participated in PEVS. To implement the one-child-one-place measure, applicants for admission to PEVS kindergartens would be required to use the "Certificate of Eligibility for PEVS" ("the voucher") to confirm the acceptance of offer of school place. For non-PEVS kindergartens, EDB would encourage them to participate in the measure and to use the registration letter issued by EDB, where applicable, for parents to confirm the acceptance of places. EDB would seek non-PEVS kindergartens' views on joining the one-child-one-place measure and discuss with them the administrative procedures.

28. In response to Mr Tony TSE's enquiry about details of arrangements for distributing application forms, especially for popular kindergartens, SED advised that the Administration would encourage the distribution of application forms through the Internet which had been adopted by a number of kindergartens. This arrangement was well received by parents and kindergartens as it could enhance the efficiency of distribution and save parents the trouble of queuing for long hours.

*Subsidy on rental expenses*

29. Noting that under the prevailing policy, not all kindergartens could benefit from rental reimbursement, Mr Paul TSE enquired whether the Administration would introduce any short-term measures to assist kindergartens which did not have rental reimbursement. Ms Cyd HO also saw a pressing need to look into the issue.

30. SED explained that currently, long whole-day kindergartens were provided with rental reimbursement. In considering whether similar subsidy should also be provided for all half-day kindergartens, it was necessary to take into account the diversity among half-day kindergartens, particularly in terms of the ownership and tenancy arrangements of their premises.

31. Referring to one of the concerns raised in the progress report that if the Government fully subsidized rental expenses of all kindergartens, it might induce an increase of rent inadvertently, Mr CHAN Chi-chuen asked whether consideration would be given to setting a ceiling on the level of rental subsidy, if this was to be introduced.

32. DS(Ed)3 said that it was necessary to consider the possible effect on the rental market if full rental subsidy was provided for all kindergartens.

The subcommittee tasked to examine the feasible funding modes for kindergartens would examine various issues including the provision of rental subsidy. Some of the factors that needed to be taken into consideration included the size of kindergarten premises, the location of the kindergartens and the variation in rental levels among districts.

33. Mr Michael TIEN noted that whilst the premises for public-sector primary and secondary schools were provided by the Government, kindergartens had to acquire their own premises. He suggested that the Administration might consider the option of purchasing the existing premises of kindergartens for letting to sponsoring bodies to operate kindergartens.

34. In this regard, SED highlighted the complications and practical difficulties involved as there were considerable variations among kindergartens in their ownership and tenancy arrangements. He further said that given the decline in student population in primary and secondary schools, the Administration was exploring whether it was feasible for kindergartens to share school premises with some primary and secondary schools.

#### *The kindergarten teaching profession*

35. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung enquired whether steps would be taken to establish a salary scale for kindergarten teachers ahead of the completion of the study by the Committee. Ms Cyd HO concurred that the Administration should formulate without delay a qualification framework and salary scale for kindergarten teachers.

36. SED confirmed that the Committee would examine various issues related to qualifications of kindergarten teachers, as well as the manpower requirement of kindergartens of different operating scales and modes, and would put forward recommendations in due course.

37. Mr Paul TSE was concerned about measures to ensure that all teachers and principals of kindergartens would attain the requisite qualifications. In this regard, SED said that the provision of training subsidy for PEVS kindergarten teachers had been extended to the 2013-2014 school year.

*Miscellaneous fees*

38. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen noted that some kindergartens under PEVS charged parents high miscellaneous fees on top of the tuition fees. He was concerned about measures to enhance the transparency of the miscellaneous fees collected by kindergartens.

39. DS(Ed)3 responded that kindergartens under PEVS were required to disclose the miscellaneous fees to be charged in the Kindergarten Profile and their own websites. Kindergartens had also been reminded that there should not be any compulsory purchase of school items or acceptance of services for which miscellaneous fees would be charged.

**V. Admission of students under the non-Joint University Programmes Admission System and of non-local students to publicly-funded postgraduate programmes**

(LC Paper No. CB(4)362/13-14(03) -- Paper provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(4)362/13-14(04) -- Letter dated 17 January 2014 from Hon IP Kin-yuen to the Chairman of Panel on Education  
(Chinese version only)

LC Paper No. CB(4)376/13-14(01) -- Administration's written response dated 7 February 2014 to the letter dated 17 January 2014 from Hon IP Kin-yuen to the Chairman of Panel on Education)

40. Members noted a letter from Mr IP Kin-yuen dated 17 January 2014 [LC Paper No. CB(4)362/13-14(04)] and the Administration's supplementary information [LC Paper No. CB(4)376/13-14(01)].

Briefing by the Administration

41. At the invitation of the Chairman, Under Secretary for Education ("US(Ed)") briefed members on student admission to University Grants

Committee ("UGC")-funded undergraduate and research postgraduate programmes by highlighting the salient points in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)362/13-14(03)]. He said that UGC-funded institutions enjoyed a high degree of autonomy in student admission following the principles of fairness and merit-based selection. Local students applying through the Joint University Programmes Admission System ("JUPAS") and non-JUPAS routes had equal opportunities to be considered for admission to UGC-funded undergraduate programmes. Since non-local students were primarily admitted by over-enrolment on top of the approved student number, they would not compete directly with local students for admission to UGC-funded undergraduate programmes. Regarding publicly-funded research postgraduate programmes, UGC-funded institutions admitted students on a merit basis, taking into account the students' academic results and research capacity, regardless of their place of origin. This practice was in line with the common practice of the international academic community.

## Discussion

### *Admission through the non-JUPAS route*

42. Referring to the statistical information in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)376/13-14(01)] provided shortly before the meeting, the Deputy Chairman noted with concern that a high proportion of local students with overseas qualifications had been admitted through the non-JUPAS route to certain popular undergraduate programmes. He enquired about measures, if any, to ensure that local students applying for admission to these popular programmes through the JUPAS route would not be disadvantaged.

43. US(Ed) said that individual UGC-funded institutions administered their own admission policy and selected candidates on a merit basis with a view to identifying the most deserving and suitable candidates. This approach was in line with the common practice of the international academic community. He did not see any reason for institutions to give preference to applications through the non-JUPAS route. He further said that the majority of non-JUPAS applicants were in fact local students holding overseas qualifications or sub-degree qualifications.

44. Notwithstanding the Administration's explanation, the Deputy Chairman considered it undesirable that students admitted through the non-JUPAS route to certain undergraduate programmes accounted for some 30% of the student intake. He saw a need for the institutions

concerned to look into the matter and find out the reasons. US(Ed) agreed to convey his view to the institutions for reference.

*Admission of non-local students to UGC-funded undergraduate programmes*

45. Dr Kenneth CHAN noted that as a result of the policy on internationalization implemented in the tertiary education sector, there had been an increase in the number of non-local students admitted to undergraduate programmes. However, given that the vast majority of non-local undergraduates were from the Mainland rather than from overseas countries, Dr CHAN considered it necessary to critically review whether the intended objective of internationalization could be achieved.

46. DS(Ed)1 said that admission of non-local students by local tertiary institutions was conducive to intellectual and cultural exchanges between local students and their non-local counterparts, and both sides could benefit. In some institutions, the number of non-local students from the Mainland and that from other countries were in comparable proportions. Currently, non-local postgraduate students in UGC-funded institutions came from over 70 countries.

47. Dr Kenneth CHAN noted that UGC-funded institutions were currently allowed to admit non-local students to their undergraduate programmes up to a level not exceeding 20% of the approved student number. This 20% comprised up to 4% within the UGC-funded number and up to 16% outside the UGC-funded number. Dr CHAN was of the view that the prevailing arrangement should be revised so that the 4% in question should be reserved for admission of local students only.

48. In this connection, US(Ed) advised that in actual practice, nearly all the approved number of UGC-funded undergraduate places in the past few years had been taken up by local students and the admission of non-local students by UGC-funded institutions was on top of their respective approved student number. The Administration was in the course of examining whether to continue the current arrangement of allowing institutions to use up to 4% of their respective approved student number to admit non-local students to their undergraduate programmes. He added that non-local students admitted within the 4% of UGC-funded places were required to pay a higher level of tuition fees applicable to all non-local students.

49. Dr Kenneth CHAN noted that although the total number of non-local students admitted by each UGC-funded institution was within the 20% upper limit, the percentage of non-local students enrolled to certain undergraduate programmes could be as high as 30% to 50%. Dr CHAN was of the view that the 20% upper limit should also apply to the intake of non-local students for individual undergraduate programmes. Both Dr CHAN and Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered that the objectives of internationalization could also be achieved through the promotion of student exchange programmes.

50. US(Ed) took note of members' views. Regarding the upper limit on the admission of non-local students, he said that under the prevailing policy, the 20% upper limit was applicable to the total student intake of each institution as long as such admission by over-enrolment would not cause any difficulty to the operation of the institution concerned.

*Admission of non-local students to UGC-funded postgraduate programmes*

51. Referring to the statistics set out in Annex B to the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)362/13-14(03)], Dr Helena WONG noted that over 77% of research postgraduate students were non-local students. She was gravely concerned that the nurturing of local researchers and the development of local research activities would be seriously disadvantaged. In Dr WONG's view, institutions should recruit more research professors to strengthen their research capability so that academic staff would not need to rely on postgraduate students to take up teaching/tutoring duties. She also called on the Administration to consider setting an upper limit on the number of non-local students admitted to UGC-funded postgraduate programmes.

52. Whilst noting the benefits brought about by the admission of non-local postgraduate students, Dr Fernando CHEUNG was concerned about the high proportion of such students. He doubted whether the perceived benefits of internationalization could be achieved as the vast majority of non-local postgraduate students came from the Mainland. Dr CHEUNG further observed that nowadays, academic staff tended to focus on publishing papers and conducting researches, and entrusted teaching/tutoring duties to postgraduate students. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung saw the need to maintain a more balanced mix of international student composition.

53. US(Ed) advised that UGC-funded institutions enjoyed a high degree of autonomy in student admission. With a view to boosting the research capability in Hong Kong through attracting high quality talents from around the world, the institutions currently admitted research postgraduate students on a merit basis. To impose restrictions on the number of non-local research postgraduate students would only pose hindrance to the academic development of the local higher education sector and result in the loss of talents to other places. US(Ed) further said that the admission of non-local postgraduate students had not displaced local students as the estimated number of local applicants was well short of the number of UGC-funded postgraduate places available, leaving room for institutions to tap on more non-local talents.

54. In this regard, DS(Ed)1 informed members that in the 1990s, the number of non-local students admitted to the postgraduate programmes of UGC-funded universities could not exceed 20% and later 33% of the total number of postgraduate students. In 2002, the Administration accepted the recommendations of UGC to remove the aforesaid admission ceiling on non-local postgraduate students. The UGC's recommendation, which was formulated after public consultation, was conducive to attracting the best talents worldwide to enhance the quality of research in Hong Kong and was in line with international practice.

55. DS(Ed)1 further advised that in recent years, there had been a growing presence of students from the Mainland pursuing postgraduate studies not only in Hong Kong but also in many overseas universities. On the chance of admission of local students, she pointed out that in the 2012-2013 academic year, about 26% of the applications for admission to UGC-funded postgraduate programmes by local students were successful, while the success rate for applications from non-local students was only about 10%.

56. Dr Priscilla LEUNG declared that she taught law courses at the City University of Hong Kong. Noting some members' concerns about the admission of a growing number of postgraduate students from the Mainland, Dr LEUNG said that admission to postgraduate programmes was based on merits regardless of the place of origin of the applicants and Mainland applicants should not be targeted at. She did not subscribe to the view that a ceiling should be set on admission of non-local students or students from a particular place. Referring to her experience, Dr LEUNG opined that non-local students, including those from the Mainland, had contributed to teaching, learning and research activities in local tertiary institutions.



57. Mr Paul TSE and the Deputy Chairman sought information, if any, on the admission policy and percentage of intake of non-local students to postgraduate programmes in neighbouring countries such as Singapore, Taiwan, Japan and Korea. The Deputy Chairman made his observation that unlike the case of Taiwan where a high proportion of university graduates pursued postgraduate studies locally, the majority of university graduates in Hong Kong chose to pursue further studies overseas.

58. In this regard, DS(Ed)1 advised that the Administration was not aware of any overseas universities which set a ceiling on the admission of non-local students to their postgraduate programmes, as it was a common practice of the international academic community to admit their students on a merit basis rather than according to the place of origin. Overseas universities also endeavoured to attract global talents through different means such as offering studentships with full subsidy. Regarding information on the intake of non-local students to postgraduate programmes by universities in neighbouring countries, the Chairman requested the Administration to provide the information where practicable after the meeting.

Admin

*Participation of local graduates in UGC-funded postgraduate programmes*

59. The Chairman noted from paragraph 17 of the Administration's paper that in the 2012-2013 academic year, only 531 out of around 1 020 local applicants had been admitted to UGC-funded research postgraduate programmes. He asked whether the Administration had examined the reasons for the relatively low intake. He also sought information on the intake of local students in the past few years.

60. SG/UGC said that he was not aware of any systematic sector-wide analysis for the low proportion of local postgraduate students. As he understood, some of the local applicants for postgraduate programmes had withdrawn their applications or declined admission offers because they had better offers to pursue other opportunities locally or overseas.

61. Mr WU Chi-wai sought information on the respective number of local graduates who pursued further studies abroad and locally. To encourage local graduates to pursue local research postgraduate programmes so as to build up the research capability of local universities, Mr WU considered that suitable incentives should be offered.

62. The Deputy Chairman said that according to his understanding, among the students pursuing research postgraduate programmes in Hong Kong, the percentage of local students had dropped from 41% in the 2008-2009 academic year to 24% in the 2012-2013 academic year. He considered it necessary for the Administration and UGC to look into the reasons for this downward trend. He shared Mr WU Chi-wai's view that consideration should be given to providing incentives to attract local talents to pursue postgraduate studies in local universities.

63. DS(Ed)1 informed members that the Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme had been launched to attract outstanding students locally and worldwide to pursue PhD programmes in UGC-funded institutions. Regarding the information on local students pursuing postgraduate studies abroad and locally and the percentage of local students taking UGC-funded research postgraduate programmes in the past few years as requested by members, the Administration would endeavour to provide the requested information where practicable after the meeting.

Admin

64. Dr Priscilla LEUNG said that it was understandable for graduates from Hong Kong and from the Mainland to aspire to obtain postgraduate qualifications from overseas universities. She remarked that the future career prospect was an important factor when graduates considered whether to pursue postgraduate studies locally or overseas. In Dr LEUNG's view, strengthening the research capabilities of local universities was more important than merely boosting the number or proportion of local postgraduate students.

65. Mr Paul TSE was concerned about the intended objectives to be achieved through the development of postgraduate education in Hong Kong. In this regard, US(Ed) advised that all along, the Government and UGC were committed to supporting the research work of institutions, which was crucial to higher education development and enhancing the competitiveness of the economy. Currently, UGC-funded institutions admitted postgraduate students on a merit basis regardless of their place of origin. This would help ensure that the best candidates were engaged to boost the level of research and contribute to the teaching and learning as well as knowledge transfer in institutions.

66. To allow sufficient time for discussion, the Chairman extended the meeting for 15 minutes to 6:45 pm.

*(The Chairman left the meeting at this juncture and the Deputy Chairman took over the chair.)*

*Tuition fees and costs of UGC-funded programmes*

67. Mr WU Chi-wai and Dr Helena WONG noted that it was a common practice for overseas universities to charge a higher level of tuition fees on non-local postgraduate students. Dr WONG was concerned about the extent to which non-local students undertaking UGC-funded postgraduate programmes were subsidized, and whether such resources should be utilized in providing more subsidized undergraduate places instead. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung enquired about the level of tuition fees paid by non-local undergraduates in UGC-funded institutions.

68. US(Ed) said that the provision of resources for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes should be considered separately. DS(Ed)1 advised that the tuition fees for non-local undergraduate students ranged from \$100,000 to \$135,000 per annum. This level of tuition fee was at least sufficient to recover all additional direct costs. She supplemented that the average unit cost per annum of an undergraduate place was about \$200,000. The annual tuition fee for local students was \$42,100. Needy students might apply for financial assistance from the Student Financial Assistance Agency.

69. Noting the Administration's information, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung queried how the current level of tuition fees paid by non-local undergraduate students could recover the costs involved.

70. In response, US(Ed) explained that the costs of publicly-funded programmes comprised fixed and variable components. The tuition fees charged on non-local students were at least sufficient to recover all additional costs. As regards fixed costs (such as those for operating academic buildings and teaching facilities), they were incurred irrespective of whether non-local students were admitted. At the Deputy Chairman's request, the Administration would provide further explanation on the cost structure of UGC-funded programmes in writing after the meeting.

Admin

**VI. Any other business**

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