

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(4)319/14-15
(The minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB4/PL/ED

Panel on Education

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

- Members present** :
- Hon IP Kin-yuen (Deputy Chairman)
 - Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
 - Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
 - Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
 - Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP
 - Hon WONG Kwok-hing, BBS, MH
 - Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan, JP
 - Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, JP
 - Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
 - Hon IP Kwok-him, GBS, JP
 - Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
 - Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
 - Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
 - Hon Gary FAN Kwok-wai
 - Hon MA Fung-kwok, SBS, JP
 - Hon Charles Peter MOK, JP
 - Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
 - Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok
 - Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
 - Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
 - Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, JP
 - Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP
- Members attending** :
- Hon WONG Yuk-man
 - Hon Claudia MO

Members absent : Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai, SBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin
Hon Dennis KWOK

Public Officers attending : Agenda item IV

Mr Eddie NG, SBS, JP
Secretary for Education

Mr Stephen YIP
Principal Assistant Secretary
(Curriculum Development)
Education Bureau

Mr Benjamin YUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary
(Professional Development and Training)
Education Bureau

Mr Joe LEUNG
Chief Curriculum Development Officer
(Native-speaking English Teacher)
Education Bureau

Agenda item V

Mr Eddie NG, SBS, JP
Secretary for Education

Mr LO Sai-hung, Brian
Deputy Secretary for Education (1)

Ms Pecvin YONG
Principal Assistant Secretary
(Further Education)
Education Bureau

Agenda item VI

The Administration

Mr Kevin YEUNG, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Mr LO Sai-hung, Brian
Deputy Secretary for Education (1)

Ms Pecvin YONG
Principal Assistant Secretary
(Further Education)
Education Bureau

Chu Hai College of Higher Education

Professor CHANG Chung-nan
President

Mr K K KWOK
Advisor, New Campus Project Steering Committee

Mr Paul CHU
Head of the Department of Architecture

Agenda item VII

Mr Kevin YEUNG, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Mrs Michelle WONG
Deputy Secretary for Education (3)

Mr Tony TANG
Deputy Secretary for Education (4)

Mr Stephen YIP
Principal Assistant Secretary
(Curriculum Development)
Education Bureau

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)4

Miss Emma LAM
Clerical Assistant (4)3

The Deputy Chairman took over the chair as the Chairman was not able to attend the meeting.

I. Confirmation of minutes

(LC Paper No. CB(4)103/14-15 -- Minutes of meeting on 9 October 2014)

2. The minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2014 were confirmed.

II. Information paper(s) issued since the last regular meeting on 16 July 2014

(LC Paper No. CB(4)972/13-14(01) -- Letter dated 7 July 2014 from Hon Claudia MO concerning the issues related to the Hong Kong Academy of School Managers' letter to its members regarding the "Occupy Central" movement

Action

- LC Paper No. CB(4)972/13-14(02) -- Administration's written response dated 25 July 2014 to the letter dated 7 July 2014 from Hon Claudia MO concerning the issues related to the Hong Kong Academy of School Managers' letter to its members regarding the "Occupy Central" movement
- LC Paper No. CB(4)981/13-14(01) -- Letter dated 15 July 2014 from Hon IP Kin-yuen concerning the overall situation of public sector secondary schools upon release of 2014 Secondary One allocation results
- LC Paper No. CB(4)981/13-14(02) -- Administration's written response dated 30 July 2014 to the letter dated 15 July 2014 from Hon IP Kin-yuen concerning the overall situation of public sector secondary schools upon release of 2014 Secondary One allocation results
- LC Paper No. CB(4)1054/13-14(01) -- Letter dated 20 August 2014 from Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG to the Panel Chairman concerning the increase in tuition fees of self-financing programmes offered by the Open University of Hong Kong

Action

LC Paper No. CB(4)1054/13-14(02) -- Copy of a letter dated 20 August 2014 from Dr Hon Helena WONG to the Secretary for Education concerning the increase in tuition fees of self-financing programmes offered by the Open University of Hong Kong

LC Paper No. CB(4)1054/13-14(03) -- Administration's consolidated response dated 3 September 2014 to letters dated 20 August 2014 from Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG and Dr Hon Helena WONG concerning the increase in tuition fees of self-financing programmes offered by the Open University of Hong Kong)

3. 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)116/14-15 -- List of outstanding items for discussion

Appendix II to LC Paper No. CB(4)116/14-15 -- List of follow-up actions)

4. The Deputy Chairman informed members that the Administration had proposed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting to be held on 8 December 2014 at 4:30 pm –

- (a) Funding support for research work conducted by the post-secondary education sector; and

Action

- (b) Registration for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination of various subjects.

Ms Starry LEE said that she would propose to discuss issues related to the Chinese History subject under the New Senior Secondary curriculum, including whether it should be made a compulsory subject and the trend of students taking or dropping the subject. The Deputy Chairman remarked that item (b) above might include some of the issues referred to by Ms LEE. Ms Starry LEE then suggested that the Administration should be requested to address the issues raised by her in the information paper to be prepared for this agenda item. Members raised no objection.

5. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan considered that the Panel should discuss issues related to vocational education. She recalled that the Chief Executive had announced in the 2014 Policy Address to establish a Qualifications Framework ("QF") Fund of \$1 billion to provide long-term support to the development and implementation of QF. She suggested that the Administration should update members on the latest progress of this matter. The Deputy Chairman noted her suggestion.

(Post-meeting note: The Panel on Manpower was consulted earlier this year on the Administration's proposal to set up the QF Fund, as issues related to the policy and development of QF were under the purview of the Panel on Manpower. Members interested in pursuing the subject might follow up with the Panel on Manpower.)

6. Mr Michael TIEN urged for early discussion of the review on the implementation of Territory-wide System Assessment, as well as on the subject of parent education (i.e. items 14 and 25 on the Panel's "List of outstanding items for discussion"). On the feasibility of establishing publicly-funded schools in Shenzhen offering the Hong Kong curriculum for children born in Hong Kong but residing in Shenzhen (i.e. item 12 on the "List of outstanding items for discussion"), he considered that the Administration should brief members as early as possible on its decision, if any.

7. The Deputy Chairman took note of members' suggestions and views, and said that he would finalize with the Chairman the items to be discussed at the next regular meeting. Members would be notified accordingly in due course.

(Post-meeting note: Upon finalization by the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman, the agenda for the meeting to be held on 8

Action

December 2014 was issued to members vide LC Paper CB(4)180/14-15 on 20 November 2014.)

8. Before proceeding to the discussion items, the Deputy 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. Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme

(LC Paper No. CB(4)116/14-15(01) -- Paper provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(4)116/14-15(02) -- Background brief entitled "Issues related to the Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat)

9. Members noted the background brief prepared by the Secretariat [LC Paper No. CB(4)116/14-15(02)]. They also noted a paper dated 10 November 2014 prepared by the Deputy Chairman [subsequently issued vide LC Paper No. CB(4)146/14-15(01)] tabled at the meeting.

Briefing by the Administration

10. At the invitation of the Deputy Chairman, Secretary for Education ("SED") briefed members on the latest development of the Native-speaking English Teacher ("NET") Scheme, as set out in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)116/14-15(01)].

Discussion

Implementation and effectiveness of the NET Scheme

11. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung noted from the Administration's paper that according to the annual NET Deployment Survey conducted at the secondary level in the 2013-2014 school year, most English panel chair

Action

respondents had commented favourably on the role of NETs in enriching the English language environment and students' language exposure in their schools. He considered it necessary to quantify the effectiveness of the NET Scheme. Ms Cyd HO enquired whether the NET Scheme had brought about any improvement in the English proficiency of students as reflected in the results of the Territory-wide System Assessment ("TSA").

12. On students' performance in TSA, Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum Development) ("PAS(CD)") advised that in 2004, 75.9% of Primary 3 students had achieved basic competency in the English language subject. The corresponding percentage had risen to 80.4% in 2013.

Admin

13. Mr Michael TIEN requested the Administration to provide information on the performance of Primary 3 and Primary 6 students in attaining basic competency in the English Language subject in TSA in the past three years. The Administration agreed to provide the requested information after the meeting.

14. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung enquired whether the Administration had identified the difficulties, if any, encountered by schools in implementing the NET Scheme, and taken appropriate measures to address such difficulties. Dr Fernando CHEUNG commented that currently, there was no platform in place for NETs from different schools to share their experience. The Deputy Chairman said that according to the findings of a survey recently conducted by him, as set out in his paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)146/14-15(01)] tabled at the meeting, the NET Scheme was well received among the principals and English panel teachers of secondary and primary schools. He was of the view that the Administration should consider taking measures to enhance the NET Scheme.

15. In this regard, SED advised that the Administration had been monitoring the progress and effectiveness of the implementation of the NET Scheme and had conducted several evaluation studies. According to the findings of the studies, NETs were able to fulfil their role as a resource teacher, and provide more opportunities for students to use English as a tool for classroom learning and daily communication. Through the professional exchange and collaboration with NETs, the capacity of local English teachers to raise students' language proficiency had been enhanced. SED further said that the NET Scheme was monitored by the Education Bureau("EDB") on a regular basis. The Administration also commissioned evaluation studies with a view to introducing improvements to the Scheme.

Action

16. Noting that currently, each primary school was provided with only one NET who would serve the entire school, Mr Michael TIEN was concerned whether this level of provision would suffice in meeting the needs of schools to create an authentic English language environment and nurture students' interest in learning English. Mrs Regina IP was of the view that schools should be provided with additional NETs, in particular for Primary 1, in order that students could have a good exposure to the English language at an early age. Mr Albert HO opined that the Administration should examine whether more resources should be deployed to provide additional NETs to schools.

17. Ms Cyd HO and Dr Fernando CHEUNG considered that the Administration should evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the NET Scheme. Dr CHEUNG was also concerned whether the NET Scheme was meant to be a long-term policy, or to be implemented as a short-term measure while the capacity of local English teachers would be strengthened.

18. In this regard, SED said that the idea of providing an additional NET to each primary school would be included on the agenda of the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research ("SCOLAR"). On whether NETs should be deployed to teach Primary 1 classes, PAS(CD) advised that according to the feedback collected from all primary schools, only one school had indicated support for deploying NETs to teach only Primary 1 classes.

19. Ms Starry LEE was of the view that the objectives of creating an appropriate language learning environment and raising the standard of students' English language proficiency could not be achieved solely by implementing the NET Scheme. She enquired about the initiatives taken by SCOLAR to enrich the language learning environment for students, and sought information on schools which used English as the medium of communication on a day-to-day basis outside classroom. The Administration agreed to provide the requested information after the meeting.

Admin

20. In this connection, PAS(CD) explained that a combination of factors would contribute to an effective English language learning environment and the role played by NETs was only one of such factors. Under the NET Scheme, NETs collaborated with local teachers to enhance the strategies for curriculum development, language instruction and assessment. According to the findings of EDB's surveys and commissioned evaluation studies, a majority of local English teachers had found this form of professional collaboration useful.

Action

Employment of NETs by schools

21. Noting from the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)116/14-15(01)] that over 800 NETs were engaged in the 2014-2015 school year, Mr WONG Kwok-hing sought information on the places of origin and nationality of these NETs. Principal Assistant Secretary (Professional Development and Training) ("PAS(PDT)") informed members that, as per the 2013-2014 school year, the NETs came from different countries including Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and South Africa, etc. The Administration would provide the requested information after the meeting.

Admin

22. Given the diverse places of origin of NETs, Mrs Regina IP was concerned about the accent of individual teachers in their spoken English, and enquired about the requirement, if any, in this regard. PAS(CD) said that there was no specific requirement or restriction on accent in the recruitment of NETs.

23. Dr Fernando CHEUNG enquired about the reasons for not providing NETs to special schools which admitted students with mild intellectual disability. PAS(CD) advised that the hearing of the judicial review against the non-provision of a NET for a special school for children with intellectual disability had been adjourned to March 2015. Pending the outcome of the judicial review, it would not be appropriate for the Administration to comment on this matter.

24. Ms Claudia MO and Mr CHAN Chi-chuen were concerned that some NETs had encountered considerable difficulties in adapting to their schools and the local education system. Mr CHAN enquired whether schools would be given greater flexibility in engaging NETs.

25. SED advised that the NET Administration Team and the NET Section of EDB had established contacts with schools and NETs. The Administration would provide appropriate support to NETs to facilitate their integration into their schools and life in Hong Kong. It would also provide assistance to schools on the recruitment of NETs. He further informed members that the wastage of NETs had dropped from over 20% in recent years to the prevailing 12% to 16%.

26. In response to the enquiries by the Deputy Chairman and Mr WONG Kwok-hing about the remuneration package of NETs, PAS(PDT) informed the Panel that NETs were remunerated according to the same salary scale of local teachers. As NETs were also eligible for certain

Action

allowances payable to overseas employees, their total remuneration package could be higher than that of local teachers. For example, the starting monthly salary of a Graduate Master teaching in a secondary school was \$24,450 (i.e. Master Pay Scale 15). For a NET, the basic salary together with allowances and gratuity might amount to around \$47,000 per month. The total remuneration package of a NET on the top point of the relevant pay scale might reach about \$90,000 per month. PAS(PDT) further said that the financial provision of some \$700 million per annum for implementing the NET Scheme in public sector primary and secondary schools included the expenses for recruitment of NETs.

27. Noting that the remuneration package of NETs compared much more favourably than that for local teachers, Ms Claudia MO raised concern about the cost-effectiveness of the NET Scheme. She considered that the Administration should critically re-examine whether the provision for the NET Scheme could better achieve the intended purpose if it was deployed to strengthen training for local English teachers. In this regard, SED reiterated that NETs played a complementary role as resource teachers and collaborated with local teachers in enriching the English language learning environment in schools and in developing and enhancing the pedagogy and learning of English. It was not intended that NETs would take up the role of classroom teachers in lieu of local teachers.

V. Enhancing the transparency and quality of the self-financing post-secondary sector

(LC Paper No. CB(4)116/14-15(03) -- Paper provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(4)116/14-15(04) -- Updated background brief entitled "Issues related to the governance and regulation of the self-financing post-secondary education sector " prepared by the LegCo Secretariat)

28. Members noted the updated background brief prepared by the Secretariat [LC Paper No. CB(4)116/14-15(04)].

Action

Briefing by the Administration

29. At the invitation of the Deputy Chairman, SED briefed members on the latest development of the initiatives and measures to enhance the transparency and quality of the self-financing post-secondary education sector, as set out in LC Paper No. CB(4)116/14-15(03).

Discussion

Quality assurance

30. Dr Helena WONG expressed grave concern about the timetable for setting up a single quality assurance ("QA") body for the entire post-secondary education sector as recommended in the University Grants Committee ("UGC")'s Report on Higher Education Review published in 2010 ("UGC's Report"). Ms Cyd HO urged for the early establishment of the single QA body.

31. In this regard, SED and Deputy Secretary for Education(1) ("DS(Ed)1") advised that the Administration was open-minded on the idea of a single QA body, and incremental measures were implemented to enhance the QA mechanism. The Government had replaced the Tripartite Liaison Committee (comprising EDB, the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualification ("HKCAAVQ") and the Joint Quality Review Committee) with the Liaison Committee on Quality Assurance by engaging the Quality Assurance Council.

Concerns about the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap. 320)

32. Ms Starry LEE noted that according to the self-financing post-secondary education sector, institutions registered under the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance ("PSCO") (Cap. 320) were subject to more stringent regulation than their counterparts under the aegis of UGC. She considered that there should be a level playing field for all institutions in the sector. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan said that the Administration should take steps to enhance the regulation and governance of the sector with a view to preventing it from excessive commercialization.

33. Mr Albert HO considered that the Administration should provide adequate support and put in place effective legislation to facilitate the development of the self-financing post-secondary education sector. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed concern about the commercialization of the self-financing post-secondary sector, and considered this the result of

Action

inadequate provision of publicly-funded undergraduate places. He pointed out that the incremental measures to enhance QA and governance of the sector were too piecemeal. Dr CHEUNG opined that the policy and legislation related to self-financing post-secondary education should be comprehensively reviewed. Dr Helena WONG was concerned about the legislative timetable for introducing amendments to PSCO. The Deputy Chairman highlighted that it was important to enhance the transparency and accountability of self-financing post-secondary institutions.

34. SED recalled that in January 2013, the Administration had consulted the Panel on the proposed amendments to PSCO. He recapitulated some members' views that before introducing the amendment bill in question, the Administration should first advise the Panel how it would take forward UGC's recommendation to set up a single QA body for the whole post-secondary sector and address concerns about effective regulation and governance of the sector. Pending the introduction of legislative amendments, the Administration had implemented a number of initiatives to enhance the transparency of the self-financing sector while being mindful not to interfere with the internal affairs of the institutions.

Consultancy study commissioned by the Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education ("CSPE")

35. Dr Helena WONG noted that CSPE had commissioned a consultancy study on "Local and International Good Practices in the Governance and Quality Assurance of the Self-financing Post-secondary Education Sector". The Report on the Consultancy Study ("the Report") was published in August 2014. Dr WONG considered that the Administration should provide the Report in full to the Panel, and that a special meeting should be convened to receive views from deputations. Ms Cyd HO concurred with Dr WONG's suggestion to hold a special meeting. Noting that individual institutions had benefited from the Start-up Loan Scheme and Land Grant Scheme set up by the Government, Ms HO considered it necessary to enhance the regulation and accountability of the self-financing post-secondary sector. Mr Albert HO supported the suggestion to arrange a special meeting to receive views from deputations. Ms Starry LEE remarked that the Panel might wish to allocate more time to discuss issues arising from the Report, but it might not be necessary to arrange a special meeting solely for discussion of this subject.

36. Noting members' views and suggestion of holding a special meeting, the Deputy Chairman said that he would discuss the matter with the Chairman.

Action

37. SED advised that based on the findings of the Report published in August 2014, CSPE had planned to further advance the work on promoting good governance. A sharing session would be organized with the self-financing post-secondary institutions. In consultation with relevant stakeholders, CSPE would work on the recommendations of the Report and would compile a code of good practices on governance and quality assurance for voluntary adoption by the institutions. At the request of members, the Administration agreed to provide the full version of the Report for members' reference.

(Post-meeting note: The Report was circulated to members by e-mail vide LC Paper No. CB(4)154/14-15(01) on 12 November 2014.)

Employability of graduates of self-financing post-secondary programmes

38. Mr WONG Kwok-hing enquired about the measures, if any, to enhance the employability of graduates of self-financing post-secondary programmes and to encourage the institutions to offer programmes that would meet the needs for trained manpower. Mr MA Fung-kwok sought information on the assistance, if any, rendered to institutions to build up rapport with relevant sectors/industries so as to broaden the opportunities for students to take up practical training or internships.

39. In response, SED advised that apart from obtaining accreditation by HKCAAVQ, institutions were encouraged to arrange audits/evaluation of their programmes to enhance the recognition of qualifications attained by their graduates. Institutions were also encouraged to work closely with the relevant sectors so that their programmes could be better oriented to meet the needs of the market. SED further said that the Administration had recently launched the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors, which aimed to subsidize up to 1 000 students per cohort in pursuing selected self-financing undergraduate programmes, to nurture the talents for industries in keen demand for labour, as well as to encourage the self-financing sector to take into account the economic and social development needs in their programme development. The Vocational Training Council ("VTC") had also launched the Pilot Training and Support Scheme to integrate structured apprenticeship training programmes with clear career progression pathways for specific industries with a shortage of skilled labour.

40. With reference to the experience of VTC, Mr MA Fung-kwok said that the self-financing post-secondary institutions were also in need of

Action

networking with employers. He asked whether the Administration would take a more active role in co-ordinating between institutions and the employers. In this regard, SED confirmed that the Administration had all along attached great importance to the communication and liaison between the education sector and professional bodies and organizations.

41. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan enquired whether the Administration had conducted any tracking study on the employability and career development of the graduates of self-financing post-secondary programmes. In response, SED advised that currently, surveys on graduates were conducted by quite a number of self-financing post-secondary institutions. Many institutions also published information on the employment or articulation to higher studies of their graduates on their official websites.

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

(LC Paper No. CB(4)116/14-15(05) -- Paper provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(4)116/14-15(06) -- Updated background brief entitled "Issues related to the Start-up Loan Scheme" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat)

42. Members noted the updated background brief on the subject prepared by the Secretariat [LC Paper No. CB(4)116/14-15(06)].

43. Due to time constraint, members agreed that it would not be necessary for the Administration/Chu Hai College of Higher Education ("Chu Hai College") to brief the Panel on the proposal to provide a further start-up loan of \$250 million to Chu Hai College to fund part of the development costs of a purpose-built campus and student hostels for the operation of full-time locally accredited degree programmes, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)116/14-15(05)]. Members noted that the Administration planned to submit the proposal to the Finance Committee ("FC") for approval in December 2014.

44. Mr TAM Yiu-chung supported the submission of the financial proposal to FC.

Action

45. Mr MA Fung-kwok was concerned about the impact of the repayment of the start-up loan on the level of tuition fees payable by students of Chu Hai College. In response, Professor CHANG Chung-nan, President of Chu Hai College, advised that consideration of the level of tuition fees would not be affected by the development costs of the proposal or the repayment of the start-up loan, and that any adjustment to tuition fees was to keep pace with inflationary changes. On account of the explanation of Professor CHANG, Mr MA Fung-kwok said that he would support the proposed start-up loan.

46. Dr Helena WONG supported the submission of the financial proposal to FC as the proposed start-up loan would enhance the provision of higher education places in Hong Kong. She also stressed the need to strengthen the quality assurance and governance of the self-financing post-secondary sector through appropriate amendments to PSCO. Dr WONG reiterated her earlier suggestion to hold a special meeting to receive deputations' views on regulatory and governance issues arising from the Report of the Consultancy Study on "Local and International Good Practices in the Governance and Quality Assurance of the Self-financing Post-secondary Education Sector".

47. In this connection, Under Secretary for Education("US(Ed)") assured members that the Administration would make reference to the recommendations of the Report of the Consultancy Study and consider ways to enhance the regulation of the self-financing post-secondary sector.

48. Summing up, the Deputy Chairman concluded that the Panel supported the submission of the financial proposal to FC.

VII. Education Bureau's guidelines governing the teaching profession and school activities

(LC Paper No. CB(4)116/14-15(07) -- Paper provided by the Administration)

Briefing by the Administration

49. At the invitation of the Deputy Chairman, US(Ed) briefed members on EDB's guidelines on teacher professionalism and school activities, as set out in LC Paper No. CB(4)116/14-15(07).

Action

Discussion

Concerns about curriculum and teaching activities

50. Dr Helena WONG said that in the light of the massive turnout of students in the recent public assemblies and occupation of roads, there was a suggestion from some Executive Council and Legislative Council Members to reduce the contents of the Liberal Studies ("LS") subject which related to local politics, or to change the LS subject from a compulsory subject into an elective subject. In this regard, she enquired about the Administration's stance on the matter.

51. US(Ed) advised that currently, the New Academic Structure Mid-term Review ("the Mid-term Review") was in progress. The first batch of medium-term recommendations as well as the fine-tuning measures for the implementation of the New Senior Secondary ("NSS") curriculum and assessment had been announced in April 2014. The second batch of recommendations would be formulated according to student-centred and professional principles. He stressed that the Mid-term Review aimed at fine-tuning the NSS curriculum and assessment and was in no way related to the recent political incidents.

52. Mr MA Fung-kwok said that according to news reports and complaints from some parents, some teachers had adopted a biased, instead of an objective, viewpoint when discussing controversial issues with students. He was gravely concerned that as recently reported in the media, a kindergarten teacher had described Police officers as "bad guys" to the children. In this regard, the Deputy Chairman said that as he had understood, the allegations were mostly unfounded and the kindergarten teacher concerned had discharged the teaching duties in a professional manner.

53. US(Ed) informed members that in respect of the allegations about inappropriate teaching activities carried out by the teachers in question, EDB had contacted the schools concerned to ascertain the teachers' compliance with relevant guidelines and codes. The Administration would take appropriate follow-up actions, if necessary.

54. On the implementation of the relevant guidelines and codes governing teaching activities, Ms Starry LEE enquired how the Administration could ensure that, when conducting discussion on controversial matters over which public opinion was divided, schools would invite speakers holding different positions to share their views so

Action

that students could acquire a full appraisal of the issues from different perspectives. Dr Kenneth CHAN considered that schools should line up external speakers or relevant parties holding opposite views on controversial issues such as the "Occupy Central" movement so as to encourage more informed discussion among students from multiple perspectives.

55. In response, US(Ed) said that teachers were at liberty to conduct discussion on controversial subjects such as the "Occupy Central" movement in class. The relevant guidelines and codes also required teachers to adopt an objective and open approach when discussing controversial matters with students. However, he pointed out that under the policy framework of school-based management, it was not practicable or appropriate for EDB to keep a close watch on the activities of schools on a day-to-day basis. It would be for individual schools to ensure that their teachers performed their teaching duties properly and in a professional manner. Nevertheless, the Administration paid regular visits to schools to understand their operations and maintained close communication with teachers and parents. Under the existing mechanism, complaints against a teacher would first be handled by the school concerned in accordance with its school-based procedures. If necessary, EDB would follow up with the school which would investigate and report its findings to EDB.

Concerns about school administration

56. Dr Kenneth CHAN enquired whether the Administration was aware of any schools which had put in place rules to prohibit the wearing of yellow ribbons or the display of banners promulgating positions on the "Occupy Central" movement. In response, Deputy Secretary for Education(4) advised that it was a matter for individual schools to formulate their respective school rules and procedures for handling school affairs. US(Ed) further advised that as stated openly by the Government, the "Occupy Central" movement was an unlawful activity. Therefore, EDB would not support or encourage the participation of students in the movement.

Issues related to the teaching profession

57. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung enquired whether any teachers had been penalized for their participation in an earlier strike in response to the appeal of the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union ("HKPTU"). The Deputy Chairman remarked that HKPTU had not called for a strike; it had only appealed to teachers to boycott class in secondary schools. In this regard,

Action

US(Ed) said that as far as the Administration was aware, not a large number of teachers had responded to the call for class boycotts. On the whole, the Administration noted that the teaching force had upheld their professional principles and remained committed to their duties.

58. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen was of the view that teachers should be protected from any form of harassment so that they would not be deterred from conducting discussion on controversial topics such as sexual orientation and religious beliefs. Noting that the Ombudsman had launched an investigation into EDB's refusal to disclose the names and personal details of registered teachers, he was concerned that if the personal information of teachers was easily accessible by members of the public, individual teachers might become the target of harassment by other stakeholders, such as some parents, who upheld a viewpoint or position very different from that of the teacher concerned.

59. US(Ed) said that the existing legislation could provide sufficient protection to teachers and other members of the public from undue harassment. In principle, teachers should not be penalized for holding certain views or position on controversial issues. However, they should also follow the advice as per the Code for the Education Profession of Hong Kong ("the Code") and maintain impartiality and objectivity in the discussion of such issues with students. Regarding the investigation launched by the Ombudsman, EDB would render the necessary cooperation and assistance.

60. Ms Cyd HO expressed her concern that unlike lawyers and medical practitioners, the teaching profession had not attained a self-regulating status. After obtaining the relevant qualifications, a person aspiring to become a teacher was required to register with EDB. The Code was also promulgated by the Administration for observance by teachers. The Deputy Chairman shared similar views and considered that the teaching profession should be empowered to formulate their own code of conduct and administer teacher registration. In this regard, US(Ed) said that the Code, which was a set of self-disciplinary guidelines formulating the standards on ethics and conduct of teachers, had been developed after extensive consultations.

Action

VIII. Any other business

61. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:41 p.m.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
6 January 2015