

立法會
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Panel on Education

**Minutes of policy briefing
held on Friday, 16 January 2015, at 8:30 am
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 Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP
 - Hon WONG Kwok-hing, BBS, MH
 - Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan, JP
 - Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, JP
 - Hon IP Kwok-him, GBS, JP
 - Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
 - Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
 - Hon Steven HO Chun-yin
 - Hon Gary FAN Kwok-wai
 - Hon Charles Peter MOK, JP
 - 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 CHIANG Lai-wan, JP
 - Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP
- Members attending** :
- Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
 - Hon TANG Ka-piu, JP

Members absent : Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon MA Fung-kwok, SBS, JP

Public Officers attending : Agenda item I

Mr Eddie NG, SBS, JP
Secretary for Education

Mrs Cherry TSE, JP
Permanent Secretary for Education

Mr Kevin YEUNG, JP
Under Secretary for Education

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

Ms Jessie WONG
Deputy Secretary for Education (2)

Mrs Michelle WONG
Deputy Secretary for Education (3)

Mr Tony TANG
Deputy Secretary for Education (4)

Dr K K CHAN
Deputy Secretary for Education (5)

Mrs Angelina CHEUNG
Deputy Secretary for Education (6)

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)4

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I. Briefing by the Secretary for Education on the Chief Executive's 2015 Policy Address

(LC Paper No. CB(4)358/14-15(01) -- Paper entitled "2015 Policy Address: Education Bureau's Policy Initiatives" provided by the Administration)

Other relevant documents

Address by the Chief Executive at the Legislative Council meeting on 14 January 2015 -- "Uphold the Rule of Law, Seize the Opportunities, Make the Right Choices, Pursue Democracy, Boost the Economy, Improve People's Livelihood"

The 2015 Policy Agenda booklet

Briefing by the Administration

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Secretary for Education ("SED") briefed members on the key initiatives on education in the 2015 Policy Address, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(4)358/14-15(01)).

(Post-meeting note: The speaking note of SED tabled at the meeting was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)365/14-15(01) on 16 January 2015.)

Discussion

Kindergarten education

2. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that in some districts, there were insufficient whole-day kindergarten places to meet the keen demand for places from children of working parents. He enquired about the immediate measures, if any, to meet the demand. Noting that one of the issues being studied by the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education ("the KG

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Committee") was whether to offer basic subsidies to all eligible children who were taking half-day places, Dr Fernando CHEUNG sought confirmation on whether a decision had already been made to provide subsidy for half-day kindergarten education only.

3. SED advised that the KG Committee would study ways to encourage kindergartens to provide more full-day services in order to meet the demand, and would submit its report to the Education Bureau ("EDB") in mid-2015. At this juncture, no decision had been made on details of the way of encouragement. SED further said that in the 2015-2016 school year, the voucher value under the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme would be further increased by \$2,500 per student per annum.

4. The Permanent Secretary for Education ("PS(Ed)") supplemented that all along, EDB had been working closely with other relevant bureaux, including the Labour and Welfare Bureau, to provide appropriate assistance to needy families. For example, as announced in the 2015 Policy Address, under the strategy of the Steering Committee on Population Policy to unleash the potential of the local labour force, the Government would, from 2015-2016 onwards, gradually increase the subsidized places of extended hours service provided by child care centres and kindergarten-cum-child care centres to some 6 200.

5. Mr TANG Ka-piu said that Members of the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions were concerned about the implementation of free kindergarten education. He opined that if the provision of free kindergarten education would cover half-day kindergarten services only, the strategy of the Steering Committee on Population Policy to unleash the potential of the local labour force could hardly be realized because many women might be unable to join the labour market due to the lack of whole-day education and care services for their young children. Apart from collecting information on the number of half-day and whole-day kindergarten places, Mr TANG enquired whether the Government had objectively gauged the demand of parents for half-day and whole-day kindergarten places.

6. SED stressed that half-day, whole-day and long whole-day kindergartens had their respective roles in catering for the needs of different families. On the demand for whole-day kindergarten places, the KG Committee had collected views from different stakeholders and would continue to deliberate on relevant issues including the needs of parents. Deputy Secretary for Education (3) ("DS(Ed)3") also advised that the KG Committee had an emerging consensus that free kindergarten education should cover half-day service as basic provision for all eligible children,

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taking into consideration the development needs of the children as well as overseas practices. Nevertheless, it acknowledged that some families might need extra child care services, and would deliberate on ways to provide needy families with subsidized whole-day and long whole-day services, subject to certain eligibility criteria to be met by the children concerned.

Graduate teacher posts in public sector primary schools

7. Mr WONG Kwok-hing noted that starting from the 2015-2016 school year, EDB would progressively increase the ratio of graduate teacher posts in public sector primary schools from the current 50% to 65% in the 2017-2018 school year. Given that in some primary schools, over 50% of teachers already possessed degree qualifications, Mr WONG enquired whether the Administration would allow schools to increase the ratio of graduate teacher posts to 65% at a faster pace.

8. SED advised that the fill-up rate of the graduate teacher posts varied among primary schools. To ensure effective use of public money, the Administration considered it prudent to implement the increase by phases in three years. In this connection, PS(Ed) said that not unusually, the graduate teacher posts in a primary school were regarded as the promotion rank for certificated teachers. Since individual schools might need time to make necessary staffing arrangements and re-distribution of duties among the teaching staff, the progressive increase in the ratio of graduate teacher posts in three years' time was considered appropriate.

Chinese history education

9. Ms Starry LEE reiterated the stance of the Members of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong that Chinese History should be taught as an independent subject at junior secondary level.

10. SED said that currently, the study of Chinese history was compulsory at junior secondary level. About 88% of secondary schools taught Chinese History as an independent subject while the remaining 12% adopted the curriculum mode of linking world history and Chinese history or the integrated curriculum mode. EDB saw merits in allowing schools to select the curriculum mode that best suited their needs. There was no intention to require schools to combine the Chinese History subject with the History subject.

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11. Members noted that the Curriculum Development Council ("CDC") had set up an Ad Hoc Committee in May 2014 to review the junior secondary curriculum of the Chinese History and History subjects. In this regard, Mr TAM Yiu-chung sought further information on this review. Dr Helena WONG enquired about the reasons for the review. Dr Kenneth CHAN considered that if the curriculum of the Chinese History subject was to be renewed, the 1911 Revolution and the June Fourth Incident should be covered more extensively.

12. SED explained that under the prevailing curriculum of the Chinese History subject at junior secondary level, more weighting was put on ancient history than modern history. As there were concerns that modern history was more relevant to students' life experience, the Ad Hoc Committee under CDC was discussing to adjust the ratio of ancient and modern history to equal halves. The Ad Hoc Committee would also explore ways to enliven classroom learning and teaching of Chinese History. The renewed curriculum aimed to enhance students' interest in Chinese history and culture. EDB would provide more learning and teaching resources to enhance students' knowledge and interest in Chinese history and encourage more students to choose the elective subject of Chinese History at the senior secondary level.

Enriching science, technology and mathematics education

13. Mr Charles MOK welcomed the announcement in the 2015 Policy Address that EDB would enrich the curricula and learning activities of Science, Technology and Mathematics. Given that the science-related subjects were commonly grouped as STEM (i.e. Science, technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects, he enquired whether Engineering would also be covered in the renewing of curricula. He was concerned whether the Administration would take measures to encourage more female students to take the science-related subjects.

14. SED clarified that the relevant statement in the Policy Address referred to the curricula of science-related subjects for primary and secondary levels. Hence, reference had not been made to the engineering discipline which was offered at the post-secondary level. Deputy Secretary for Education (5) supplemented that EDB would organize an integrative STEM Education Fair to promote a culture of cross-disciplinary learning in primary and secondary schools, as well as a cross-disciplinary symposium for teachers of Science, Technology and Mathematics Education and those of primary school General Studies. It would enable teachers to understand how to promote STEM education and collaborate among themselves to strengthen the integrative learning and application skills of students. To

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enhance students' interest in the STEM subjects, the curricula of the eight Key Learning Areas at junior secondary levels were under review and a consultation would be conducted. It was expected that the curricula would be updated by the end of this year. It was also noted that under the New Academic Structure, an increasing number of female students took science-related subjects.

Life planning education

15. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan expressed her support for the initiatives to strengthen the provision of life planning education and career guidance services. She opined that life planning education was particularly useful for students at Secondary 5 and 6 and should therefore be strengthened at these two levels. Dr CHIANG was of the view that apart from providing knowledge of different jobs, students should also be provided with information and advice on how to start their own business if they so aspired. Ms Starry LEE enquired about the training and professional development for teachers in connection with the implementation of the enhanced provision of life planning education.

16. PS(Ed) advised that to enhance the capacity of teachers, the number of structured training places on life planning education had been increased from the previous 80 places to 240 places per annum from the 2014-2015 school year onwards. The partnership between schools and business organizations would be strengthened so as to keep teachers abreast of the latest information on career opportunities.

Post-secondary education

17. Mr Gary FAN opined that the Government should increase the number of subsidized undergraduate places for local students. In this regard, SED recapitulated that in 2014, the Government had launched a number of initiatives to broaden the opportunities for local students to receive subsidized higher education.

18. Dr Kenneth CHAN noted from the 2015 Policy Address that the Government would request some of the community colleges of the University Grants Committee-funded institutions that had accumulated large surpluses to consider ways to use their surpluses to benefit their students, such as lowering tuition fees. He recalled that at the last Panel meeting, he had expressed concern about the impact of the expected decline in the number of secondary school leavers on the enrolment of self-financing post-secondary institutions. In his opinion, the Administration should formulate an effective strategy to steer the

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development of community colleges and the self-financing post-secondary sector.

Enhancing support for students with special educational needs ("SEN students")

19. Mr WONG Kwok-hing noted that the Government would invite the Community Care Fund ("CCF") Task Force to consider the provision of a cash grant on a pilot basis for ordinary schools with relatively more SEN students and students with financial needs so that the schools concerned could deploy a designated teacher to co-ordinate matters relating to the support for SEN students ("SENCO teacher"). He opined that this initiative, if implemented, should be extended to all ordinary schools.

20. Dr Fernando CHEUNG welcomed the proposed provision of a cash grant to schools for designating a SENCO teacher, and sought further information on the criteria for selecting the eligible schools and the amount of cash grant to be provided to each school. He also expressed support for the proposed assistance programme to enhance the academic expenses grant for SEN students pursuing post-secondary programmes. In this connection, Dr CHEUNG enquired on the number of SEN students who would benefit from the new support measures announced in the 2015 Policy Address and the resources required to implement them.

21. On the pilot project to provide a cash grant to schools for designating a SENCO teacher, SED advised that the implementation details would be subject to discussion in the CCF Task Force and approval by the Commission on Poverty. Deputy Secretary for Education (6) said that the number of SEN students who would benefit under the pilot project would also depend on the number of participating schools.

22. Dr Fernando CHEUNG noted with concern that the Administration was unable to provide the Panel with details of the two initiatives to enhance support for SEN students as the matter would require consideration by CCF. He enquired on the reason for inviting CCF to launch the initiatives instead of implementing them by EDB.

23. In this regard, SED advised that CCF would be invited to consider launching the two proposed support measures on a pilot basis. If the outcomes were successful, consideration would be given to regularizing the programmes in question. In the light of past experience, launching new initiatives through CCF would facilitate the provision of assistance to target groups in a more flexible and timely manner. PS(Ed) supplemented that the membership of CCF included experts on supporting SEN students.

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24. Ms Starry LEE was concerned about the provision of professional training for SENCO teachers. Mr Dennis KWOK considered that the Administration should deploy additional resources to strengthen training for teachers.

25. DS(Ed)3 advised that structured training courses on catering for SEN students pitched at the Basic, Advanced and Thematic levels were provided for in-service teachers of public sector primary and secondary schools. The Administration had maintained close communication with teacher education institutions ("TEIs") so as to ensure the quality of the relevant training. To help students of TEIs integrate theory with practice, she understood that a TEI had been collaborating with non-government organizations ("NGOs") in the provision of practical training on supporting SEN students.

26. In response to Dr Fernando CHEUNG's enquiry about the estimated number of students with specific learning difficulties and NCS students in secondary schools who could benefit from the proposed work experience programmes, PS(Ed) advised that as envisaged by the Government, about 1 200 students would participate in the proposed programmes. As the Administration would invite tenders from NGOs to launch the programmes, the expenditure to be incurred would be the outturn tender prices of the successful bids. Dr Kenneth CHAN considered that EDB should take up the organization of the proposed work experience programmes instead of commissioning them to NGOs. Dr Fernando CHEUNG concurred that the Government should play a more active role.

27. Mr Dennis KWOK requested the Administration to provide written information on details of the pilot scheme to be launched through the Lotteries Fund for provision of on-site rehabilitation services for children with special needs and the enhanced support for parents of children with special needs, as set out in paragraph 127(ii) and 127(iv) of the 2015 Policy Address respectively, as well as the resources required for implementing these initiatives. The Administration would provide the requested information after the meeting.

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Mainland exchange programmes

28. The Deputy Chairman noted that the Administration planned to subsidize every student to join at least one Mainland exchange programme during each of their primary and secondary school stage. To broaden students' exposure, he considered it more appropriate to subsidize students once for participating in Mainland exchange programmes and on another occasion, for exchange activities in other countries. The Deputy Chairman

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said that according to his understanding, these initiatives were not particularly welcomed by teachers as they were already overloaded with teaching and non-teaching duties. Teachers were gravely concerned about the additional duties arising from various logistical arrangements of organizing such trips. He enquired whether part of the subsidy could be used to provide support to teachers in organizing exchange activities, and whether parents and schools had the choice of not taking part in these exchange activities. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen shared the Deputy Chairman's views and concerns about broadening students' exposure and relieving teachers' additional administrative work arising from these exchange programmes. Dr Fernando CHEUNG highlighted that students should be provided with opportunities to understand different aspects of the Mainland instead of solely its achievements.

29. Mr TAM Yiu-chung remarked that contrary to the Deputy Chairman's observation, he noted that many teachers and school principals welcomed the implementation of Mainland exchange programmes. He pointed out that these exchange activities were highly useful for the teaching and learning of history and geography subjects, as well as accorded with the general expectation on the people of Hong Kong to understand the motherland. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan concurred with Mr TAM's views. She considered that students should not be deprived of the opportunities to participate in exchange programmes due to the lack of means. However, for prudent use of public resources, it was reasonable for the Administration to give priority to subsidizing students to take part in exchange programmes to the Mainland.

30. SED confirmed that Mainland exchange programmes had been implemented over the years. Given the growing interest of schools to participate in these exchange programmes, the Administration decided to strengthen the implementation by adopting a variety of strategies to complement the curricula, in particular the subjects of Chinese History, Geography, Chinese Language, Liberal Studies, etc., and the learning elements in different areas. Students would have opportunities to gain first-hand experience of the Mainland's development in different aspects. Meanwhile, schools were at liberty to use their own funding and resources to organize exchange programmes to other overseas countries. SED stressed that participation of schools and students in exchange programmes was voluntary.

31. PS(Ed) advised that the implementation of Mainland exchange programmes was in line with the objective of education reform to develop students' positive attitude following the direction of "Finding one's niche in Hong Kong, Leveraging on the Mainland and Engaging ourselves

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globally". On the support available to schools for organizing exchange programmes to overseas countries, PS(Ed) said that schools might apply to the Quality Education Fund for funding to organize school-based projects which involved learning activities outside Hong Kong, if such activities would form an integral part of and complementing other elements of the projects in question.

Sister School Scheme

32. On the proposal to provide an annual grant of \$120,000 under a three-year pilot scheme to each public sector or Direct Subsidy Scheme school having formed sister school(s) with the Mainland to support the development of sister school activities, Dr Helena WONG sought information on the objectives and effectiveness of the Sister School Scheme implemented since 2004. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen enquired whether the Administration had assessed the effectiveness of the Sister Schools Scheme before deciding to further promote the scheme.

33. SED advised that as reflected by the education sector, the Sister School Scheme was well received. The Administration had proposed to provide a subsidy on a pilot basis to enhance the Scheme which had all along been implemented as a self-financing initiative. Deputy Secretary for Education (4) ("DS(Ed)4") supplemented that under the Sister School Scheme, sister schools might organize different exchange activities at various levels with the participation of teachers, principals, students and their parents. The scheme could enhance experience sharing among teachers and broaden the student's exposure. DS(Ed)4 advised that the three-year pilot scheme would be launched in the 2015-2016 school year and the experience gained from its implementation would be shared in due course.

34. Dr Helena WONG opined that the proposed annual grant to schools should cover the costs for recruiting additional staff to relieve teachers' additional workload arising from the Sister School Scheme. She was concerned whether participation in the sister school activities was voluntary, and whether the pairing of schools would be handled by a single intermediary or agency that had close connection with the Mainland. In this regard, SED advised that the participation of schools and students in sister school activities was voluntary. The participating schools could make arrangements for the activities on their own and procure the necessary support services through tendering, where necessary. In response to Dr WONG's enquiry on whether the proposed annual grant would also cover the expenses for Mainland students coming to Hong Kong under the Scheme, DS(Ed)4 advised that under the policy framework

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of school-based management, individual schools could make their own arrangements for exchange activities with their sister schools in the Mainland that would enhance professional interflow.

Issues related to the formulation of education policy

35. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung noted with concern the comments in the 2015 Policy Address about the 2014 February issue of "Undergrad", the official magazine of the Hong Kong University Students' Union, and a book published by "Undergrad" in 2013. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung and Mr Gary FAN were concerned whether the proposed initiatives in the Policy Address had taken into account the recent political events including the "Occupy Central" movement. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen cautioned that the Government might revive the shelved implementation of national education through initiatives like strengthening the Mainland exchange programmes and Sister School Scheme. Dr Kenneth CHAN and Dr Fernando CHEUNG considered that SED should clarify whether the formulation of education policy would be driven by the views of the Mainland authorities.

36. In reply, SED said that the initiatives on education announced in the 2015 Policy Address were in no way related to the recent political events. They had been thoroughly considered and planned and had not arisen from any hasty decision.

37. Notwithstanding SED's remarks, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered that the 2015 Policy Address gave an impression that the Government had placed heavy emphasis on strengthening ties with the Mainland. He remarked that as Hong Kong was a metropolitan city, the English proficiency of its students should be enhanced. However, the Policy Address was silent on this aspect. In this connection, SED highlighted that the initiatives on education set out in the Policy Address covered a wide spectrum of areas. Strengthening the implementation of Mainland exchange programmes was only one of the many initiatives.

II. Any other business

38. SED informed members that this was the last Panel meeting attended by Mrs Cherry TSE in her capacity as PS(Ed). He thanked Mrs TSE for her dedication and contributions throughout the years. In this regard, PS(Ed) also expressed her appreciation for members' support for policies and initiatives on education introduced by the Administration. On behalf of the Panel, the Chairman thanked Mrs TSE and wished her all the

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best in her new capacity.

39. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:02 am.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
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