

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(4)1244/14-15

(These minutes have been seen  
by the Administration)

Ref : CB4/PL/ED

**Panel on Education**

**Minutes of meeting**  
**held on Monday, 13 April 2015, 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 Albert HO Chun-yan  
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung  
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP  
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP  
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP  
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, BBS, MH  
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan, JP  
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, JP  
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP  
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che  
Hon IP Kwok-him, GBS, JP  
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP  
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung  
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP  
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin  
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  
Hon Dennis KWOK  
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung  
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan  
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, JP
- Member absent** : Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP

**Public Officers** : Agenda item IV  
**attending**

Mr Eddie NG, SBS, JP  
Secretary for Education

Dr Catherine CHAN Ka-ki  
Deputy Secretary for Education (5)

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

Agenda item V

Mr Kevin YEUNG, JP  
Under Secretary for Education

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

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

Agenda item VI

The Administration

Mr Kevin YEUNG, JP  
Under Secretary for Education

Mr Wallace LAU  
Principal Assistant Secretary (Higher Education)  
Education Bureau

Ms Eva YAM Ya-ling  
Deputy Secretary-General (1)  
University Grants Committee Secretariat

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Professor Michael HUI  
Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President

Professor FUNG Tung  
Associate Vice-President

Mr FUNG Siu-man  
Director of Campus Development

Agenda item VII

Mr Kevin YEUNG, JP  
Under Secretary for Education

Mrs Angelina CHEUNG  
Deputy Secretary for Education (6)

Mr WONG See-man  
Senior Deputy Controller  
Student Finance Office  
Working Family and Student  
Financial Assistance Agency

**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

---

Action

**I. Confirmation of minutes**

(LC Paper No. CB(4)731/14-15 -- Minutes of policy briefing  
on 16 January 2015

LC Paper No. CB(4)733/14-15 -- Minutes of meeting on  
9 February 2015)

Action

The minutes of policy briefing held on 16 January 2015 and the meeting held on 9 February 2015 were confirmed.

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

(LC Paper No. CB(4)662/14-15(01) -- Referral from the Public Complaints Office of the Legislative Council Secretariat regarding matters relating to the review of Codes of Aid

LC Paper No. CB(4)735/14-15(01) -- Letter dated 2 March 2015 from Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung concerning the appraisal mechanism of University Grants Committee-funded institutions

LC Paper No. CB(4)735/14-15(02) -- Administration's written response dated 1 April 2015 to the letter dated 2 March 2015 from Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung concerning the appraisal mechanism of University Grants Committee-funded institutions)

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)748/14-15 -- List of outstanding items for discussion

Appendix II to LC Paper No. CB(4)748/14-15 -- List of follow-up actions)

3. The Chairman informed members that the Administration had proposed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting to be held on 11 May 2015 at 4:30 pm –

(a) Pilot scheme on promoting interflow between the Hong Kong-Mainland sister schools; and

- Action
- (b) Capital works projects for schools –
- (i) A 12-classroom special school for children with mild intellectual disability near Hoi Lai Estate, Sham Shui Po; and
  - (ii) Two 24-classroom primary schools at ex-Tanner Road Police Married Quarters site at Pak Fuk Road, North Point, Hong Kong.

4. The Chairman said that he would finalize with the Deputy Chairman the items to be discussed at the next regular meeting with reference to the Panel's "List of outstanding items for discussion", and members would be notified accordingly. Members agreed with the arrangements as advised by the Chairman.

*(Post-meeting note: Upon finalization by the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman, the agenda for the meeting to be held on 11 May 2015 was issued to members vide LC Paper CB(4)856/14-15 on 27 April 2015.)*

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.

6. Referring to agenda item VI to be discussed later at the meeting, Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that since he could not join the discussion, he would like to state at this juncture that he and Members of the Liberal Party supported the proposed capital works project for The Chinese University of Hong Kong ("CUHK"). He would also confirm his stance in writing. He also declared that he was a member of the Council of CUHK.

#### **IV. Policy on the teaching of the Chinese Language subject in Putonghua**

(LC Paper No. CB(4)748/14-15(01) -- Paper provided by the Administration)

##### Briefing by the Administration

7. At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for Education ("SED") briefed members on the latest developments of using Putonghua as the medium of instruction for teaching the Chinese Language subject ("PMIC") in primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong, as set out in the Administration's paper [LC

Action Paper No. CB(4)748/14-15(01)].

## Discussion

### *Implementation of PMIC in schools*

8. Mr WONG Kwok-hing supported PMIC and considered it a move in the right direction. He also highlighted the successful experience of two schools in the Eastern District in implementing PMIC. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan also expressed support for implementing PMIC and enhancing students' Putonghua proficiency.

9. Mr Michael TIEN said that according to his knowledge, most students used Cantonese instead of Putonghua in the oral and listening assessments in the Territory-wide System Assessment ("TSA") of Chinese Language subject at Primary 3 ("P3") and P6. As such, it was a common practice among primary schools to adopt PMIC at P1 and P4 levels only, while using Cantonese to teach the Chinese Language subject at other levels so as to better prepare students for TSA. He was concerned that the frequent switches between Putonghua and Cantonese as the instructional language for the Chinese Language subject at different primary levels would not be conducive to raising students' standard of Putonghua.

10. Deputy Secretary for Education (5) ("DS(Ed)5") advised that the current language education policy was to enhance the biliteracy and trilingualism of students. Schools could select Cantonese and/or Putonghua as the medium of instruction for teaching the Chinese Language subject according to their own circumstances. Their students might also choose either Cantonese or Putonghua in TSA. In this regard, DS(Ed)5 further said that a steering committee had been set up to review the Basic Competency Assessment of TSA holistically.

11. Ms Cyd HO considered that the learning of Chinese involved not only the linguistic, but also the cultural, aspect. Cantonese was unique and characteristic of the "Lingnan culture" (嶺南文化). If Putonghua was used as the medium of instruction for the Chinese Language subject, students might not be able to appreciate the literary and artistic aspects of the "Lingnan culture". Ms HO was concerned that as a result of PMIC, too much emphasis would be placed on Putonghua proficiency at the expense of the learning of Chinese language and literature. As most local teachers were Cantonese-speaking, she was also concerned whether there were sufficient teachers who were qualified to teach the Chinese Language subject in Putonghua.

12. Mr Gary FAN was of the view that learning Putonghua and learning Chinese language were two separate matters. He doubted whether there was concrete evidence that implementing PMIC could enhance students' proficiency

Action

of the Chinese language. Given that Cantonese was used by over 90% of the local population, Mr FAN was concerned whether the Administration had taken any measures to enhance the Cantonese proficiency of students.

13. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen supported the promotion of biliteracy and trilingualism among students, but opposed the implementation of PMIC. He considered that the standard of Putonghua of students could be enhanced by other means, such as increasing the lesson time for the Putonghua subject. Mr CHAN referred to his past experience in teaching Applied Learning courses on hosting and production of radio programmes, and highlighted his concern about students' declining Cantonese proficiency, in particular the mispronunciation of Cantonese words. He said that it might be necessary for the Education Bureau ("EDB") to take measures to enhance the Cantonese proficiency of teachers and students before promoting their Putonghua proficiency.

14. Dr Helena WONG said that Members of the Democratic Party supported the policy to enhance the biliteracy and trilingualism of students, as well as mother-tongue teaching, but opposed the implementation of PMIC. She considered that implementing PMIC would undermine the use of Cantonese.

15. Noting members' concerns, SED reiterated that under the existing language education policy, the Government was committed to promoting students' proficiency in written English and Chinese, as well as nurturing students' ability to communicate effectively in English, Cantonese and Putonghua. Meanwhile, individual schools could decide whether Cantonese or Putonghua should be used to teach the Chinese Language subject having regard to their own circumstances, such as readiness of teachers, the language standard of students and curriculum planning etc. SED did not consider that the implementation of PMIC would reduce the use and importance of Cantonese.

16. Ms Starry LEE said that Members of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong supported the implementation of PMIC, which was well received by parents. She opined that in selecting the medium of instruction for the Chinese Language subject, whether the medium could bring about improvement in students' Chinese language standard should not be the sole consideration. Ms LEE considered that the Administration should provide the Panel with relevant information on the implementation of PMIC in Hong Kong, such as the number of primary and secondary schools as well as the number of classes using PMIC, the number of Chinese Language teachers who were qualified to use Putonghua to teach the subject, the timetable, if any, to further promote the implementation of PMIC, etc. To facilitate the implementation of PMIC, Ms LEE asked whether EDB would consider requiring all Chinese Language teachers to possess the capability of teaching the subject in Putonghua.

Action 17. DS(Ed)5 advised that currently, there was no additional qualification requirement on Chinese Language teachers in schools which implemented PMIC. A number of support measures had been provided to enhance the capability of teachers in teaching Chinese Language subject in Putonghua. While EDB had not  
Admin collected information on the implementation of PMIC in all schools, it would provide the information requested by Ms Starry LEE as far as practicable.

18. Mrs Regina IP said that she did not subscribe to the view that students' Cantonese proficiency would be undermined as a result of the implementation PMIC in schools. She referred to the successful experience of a number of renowned schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme ("DSS") in implementing PMIC and the favourable feedbacks of parents, and enquired whether the Administration had drawn any useful reference from the implementation experience of these schools.

19. SED said that as observed from those schools which had successfully implemented PMIC, their teachers possessed good qualifications in using Putonghua as the language of instruction. The schools also provided the necessary language environment for students to communicate in Putonghua. As reflected in the experience of the schools concerned, PMIC could be implemented more effectively in those schools with greater readiness in terms of teaching support and language environment.

20. Mr MA Fung-kwok sought EDB's view on the grade levels most suitable for implementing PMIC and asked whether such a view was evidence-based. In response, SED said that early exposure to Putonghua would be beneficial to students. In fact, some kindergartens provided Putonghua learning activities to their young students with regard to their own circumstances. For greater learning effectiveness, it would be appropriate for schools to consider implementing PMIC at primary levels. SED further said that at an international convention on language development held in Shanghai, some experts from around the world, including the Mainland, held similar views.

*Review of the "Scheme to Support Schools in using Putonghua to teach the Chinese Language Subject" ("the Support Scheme")*

21. Mr IP Kwok-him concurred with the need to promote the biliteracy and trilingualism of students. Noting that the Support Scheme launched by the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research ("SCOLAR") on a pilot basis was completed in August 2014, he considered it necessary to conduct a review on the Support Scheme. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan enquired whether the Administration had evaluated the efficacy of the implementation of PMIC under the Support Scheme.



Action

22. The Deputy Chairman highlighted that learning Putonghua and implementing PMIC were two different matters, and that there was no conclusive evidence on the effectiveness of PMIC in enhancing the proficiency of students in Putonghua and Chinese language. He considered it necessary for the Administration to review the implementation of PMIC under the Support Scheme, as well as to examine whether the use of Putonghua or Cantonese as the language of instruction would be more effective in raising the standards of Putonghua and Chinese language among primary and secondary students. Mr Gary FAN pointed out that as some \$180 million had been spent on providing support measures to schools under the Support Scheme, the Administration should review the cost-effectiveness of the Support Scheme.

23. In this regard, SED advised that the Support Scheme was carried out in four phases starting from the 2008-2009 school year, providing support to 40 schools in each phase. Among about 1 000 primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong, a total of 160 schools had implemented PMIC on a pilot basis under the Support Scheme since the 2008-2009 school year. The implementation of PMIC in individual primary/secondary schools was subject to their own circumstances, such as the readiness of teachers, the standards of students and their home language environment. Under the Support Scheme, schools could adopt different modes in implementing PMIC. Some might implement PMIC at one or more grade levels, or in one or more classes of the same grade level. A local tertiary institution had been commissioned to conduct a longitudinal study on the implementation of PMIC under the Support Scheme. According to the initial findings, there was improvement in students' written Chinese, as shown in the reduced use of slangs. It was also important to extend learning beyond the classroom, such as by arranging Putonghua extra-curricular activities. He further said that although the Support Scheme had been completed, EDB would continue to provide relevant support to schools, such as through the Mainland-Hong Kong Teachers Exchange and Collaboration Programme.

24. DS(Ed)5 supplemented that the longitudinal study had also revealed the need to provide appropriate support and training to school teachers to build up their confidence and competence in teaching in Putonghua. Moreover, a solid foundation of Putonghua proficiency among primary students would facilitate the implementation of PMIC at junior secondary levels when these students progressed to secondary studies. On some members' request to make available the report of the study conducted by the university, DS(Ed)5 said that EDB would submit the said report to a committee under SCOLAR for consideration next month. The findings of the report would be published in due course.

25. Mr MA Fung-kwok enquired whether the Administration had also collected feedbacks from schools participating in the Support Scheme. SED said that as reflected by some schools, the standard of Putonghua of their students had

Action improved. DS(Ed)5 added that the experience gained by individual schools varied as they had implemented PMIC having regard to their own circumstances.

*PMIC as long-term target of the Chinese Language curriculum*

26. Mr WONG Kwok-hing noted from paragraph 6 of the Administration's paper that PMIC was a long-term target of the Chinese Language curriculum. He sought information on the number of schools that implemented PMIC and the timetable, if any, to meet the long-term target.

27. SED explained that according to the findings of the surveys conducted by EDB, from the 2008-2009 to 2012-2013 school year, the percentages of primary schools and secondary schools implementing PMIC had increased from 55% to 70% and from 31% to 37% respectively. SED nevertheless pointed out that individual schools had adopted different modes to implement PMIC according to their needs.

28. Dr Helena WONG and Mr Albert HO were gravely concerned that setting PMIC as a long-term target of the Chinese Language curriculum might have been based on political consideration to tie in with the language policy of the Mainland, rather than on any solid evidence of the pedagogical value of PMIC. Dr WONG was of the view that the Government should conduct public consultation and in-depth study before promulgating PMIC as a long-term and developmental target of the Chinese Language curriculum. Mr Albert HO opined that the proficiency of Putonghua of students could be enhanced by many other measures instead of relying solely on PMIC.

29. In this connection, SED and DS(Ed)5 stated that setting PMIC as a long-term and developmental target of the Chinese Language curriculum was not based on any political consideration. They added that SCOLAR had recommended in 2003 that before formulating a firm policy and implementation timetable for all schools to adopt Putonghua as the medium of instruction for the Chinese Language subject, the Government needed to better understand the conditions necessary for schools to make a successful switch to Putonghua. The Administration would study the implementation experience gained from the Support Scheme before deciding on the way forward.

Other issues

30. Mr Gary FAN referred to a letter he wrote to the Chairman last week and suggested to arrange a public hearing to receive views on the implementation of PMIC. The Chairman said that he had noted Mr FAN's letter and would consider the matter under the agenda item of "Any other business" or at a future meeting.

Action

31. Dr Helena WONG drew members' attention to the wording of a motion which she had submitted to the Chairman at this juncture. The Chairman noted that although the meeting had not gone beyond the appointed ending time, discussion of this agenda item had ended. Meanwhile, the public officers attending for the next agenda item were joining the meeting. In view of the above, the Chairman said that he would deal with the proposed motion under the agenda item of "Any other business" if time allowed.

## **V. Standard of school premises and upgrading of facilities of special schools**

(LC Paper No. CB(4)748/14-15(02) -- Paper provided by the Administration)

32. Members noted a submission from Ms LO Yuen-ching [LC Paper No. CB(4)780/14-15(01)] which was tabled at the meeting.

### Briefing by the Administration

33. At the invitation of the Chairman, Under Secretary for Education ("US(Ed)") briefed members on the facilities of school premises of special schools and efforts made on their upgrading, as set out in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)748/14-15(02)].

### Discussion

#### *Provision and upgrading of facilities of special schools*

34. Dr Fernando CHEUNG noted that the school facilities to be provided to each newly constructed special school would be subject to the approval of the Property Vetting Committee ("PVC") on a project basis. He questioned the efficacy of PVC as the approving authority as some of its members, such as representatives from the Government Property Agency and the Treasury Branch of the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, might not be familiar with the operational needs of special schools. He referred to the redevelopment of the Hong Kong Christian Service Pui Oi School which had failed to provide sufficient barrier-free access and facilities to cater for students with physical disabilities. Dr CHEUNG considered it necessary to review the existing mechanism for approving the provision of facilities for special schools.

35. US(Ed) explained that PVC was tasked, amongst others, to approve the provision of facilities in public sector schools, including ordinary and special schools. For aided special schools, the facilities to be provided would be prepared

Action by EDB on a case by case basis having regard to the specific needs of individual special schools and then approved by PVC on a project basis. The standard provision of facilities in ordinary secondary and primary school premises also required the approval of PVC.

36. Dr Fernando CHEUNG referred to the addition and upgrading of facilities of special schools to cope with the implementation of the New Senior Secondary Academic Structure starting from the 2009-2010 school year and the extension of years of study for students of special schools since the 2010-2011 school year, and enquired about the progress of the relevant works.

37. In response, US(Ed) advised that as at March 2015, conversion works for 14 special schools had been completed. Similar works for another 13 special schools were underway. More than 10 special schools were planned for conversion works in the pipeline.

38. Dr Kenneth CHAN noted that some special schools were unable to benefit from the School Improvement Programme ("SIP") because the proposed works was neither feasible nor cost-effective. In this regard, he sought information on these schools and the alternative measures, if any, provided to improve their facilities.

39. US(Ed) informed members that out of the 60 aided special schools, 43 special schools had enhanced their teaching and learning environment under SIP, as listed in Annex A of the Administration's paper. The Administration would provide information on the remaining 17 special schools for members' reference after the meeting.

*(Post meeting note: The Administration's written responses were issued to members vide LC paper No. CB(4)1015/14-15(01) on 18 May 2015.)*

40. Noting that many students with special educational needs ("SEN students") were studying in ordinary schools, Dr Kenneth CHAN expressed concern about the provision of barrier-free access and facilities in ordinary schools. He recalled that according to the Administration's written reply to a question raised by him at a Council meeting in June 2013, EDB did not keep statistics on the barrier-free facilities of individual schools. In this connection, Dr CHAN enquired about EDB's measures, if any, to ensure that school facilities were in compliance with the latest standards, and whether it would actively consider collecting relevant information on barrier-free facilities of schools.

41. US(Ed) said that where technically feasible, EDB would arrange for school improvement works, such as installation of passenger lifts, to upgrade the facilities of schools so that the needs of various types of SEN students could be catered for in ordinary schools.

Action

42. The Chairman informed members that he had received the wording of a motion proposed to be moved by Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che, and said that he would deal with the motion after members' deliberations. On the instruction of the Chairman, the wording of the motion was tabled at the meeting.

43. Mr Albert HO expressed concern that some special schools had not been provided with appropriate facilities to cater for the specific needs of their students. He referred to the wording of Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che's motion and considered that the "Social Responsibility Support Mode" should be the basis for designing the premises of and providing facilities for special schools. He considered it necessary to put in place a consultation mechanism in the planning and design of special schools. Dr Helena WONG said that Members of the Democratic Party supported the engagement of stakeholders in the design and planning of special schools so that the facilities to be provided could meet the needs of students.

44. In response, US(Ed) advised that it had been the established practice for EDB to engage the relevant school sponsoring bodies in the design of new special schools and in the provision of necessary facilities. Special schools were encouraged to gauge the views of stakeholders in the planning and design process. US(Ed) further said that the facilities of newly constructed special schools were usually well received by parents. However, in the case of some special schools, due to technical constraints, it might not be feasible to install certain facilities.

*Redevelopment and reprovisioning ("R&R") of special schools*

45. In response to Dr Helena WONG's enquiry about the progress of R&R of special schools, US(Ed) advised that from 2000 to 2014, EDB had completed R&R of 11 special schools. Reprovisioning projects for another four special schools were in the pipeline. EDB would continue to work closely with relevant bureaux and departments to identify and reserve sites for R&R where necessary.

46. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung referred to the unsatisfactory school facilities at SAHK Ko Fook Iu Memorial School ("Ko Fook Iu School"), a special school built in 1970s, and sought information on the progress in reprovisioning the school. US(Ed) informed members that Ko Fook Iu School had been allocated with an adjacent vacant school premises which could provide more space for teaching/learning activities and accommodate the provision of additional facilities to support its students. At this stage, EDB would not recommend the reprovisioning of the school to new premises.

47. Ms Cyd HO was gravely concerned that many special schools were constructed a few decades ago and their facilities fell short of present-day standards. She was of the view that many special schools required R&R instead of merely improvement works. She cited the unsatisfactory conditions in Chi Yun

Action

School, Hong Chi Morninglight School and Hong Chi Morninghill School as some examples. Ms HO opined that to expedite the process, the allocation of sites for reprovisioning of special schools should be considered separately from that of ordinary schools. The Chairman also considered that special schools and ordinary schools in need of reprovisioning should not be placed in the same pool for the purpose of sites/premises allocation. Dr Fernando CHEUNG pointed out that the special schools referred to by Ms HO were in urgent need of R&R.

48. In this regard, US(Ed) advised that EDB conducted regular review on the R&R needs of special schools. A number of factors such as the physical conditions of the special schools and the supply of and demand for special school places would be taken into consideration in deciding whether a special school required R&R. Unlike ordinary schools which were required to apply for school sites/premises under the school allocation exercise, recommendation for direct allocation of the sites/premises to the school sponsoring bodies of special schools would be submitted by EDB to the School Allocation Committee for consideration when suitable sites/premises were available. Nevertheless, US(Ed) stressed that whether a site would be allocated for constructing or reprovisioning a special school would still be subject to the consideration of factors such as the optimal use of limited land resources.

49. Mr Dennis KWOK said that the Administration should carefully study the views set out in the submission tabled at the meeting from Ms LO Yuen-ching, a former school principal of special school. Mr KWOK was of the view that the Administration should identify more sites for constructing special schools so as to increase the number of special school places. Mr KWOK was also concerned about the relatively remote location of some special schools and whether they were conveniently served by public transport.

50. US(Ed) advised that the provision of special school places was mainly planned on a regional basis with reference to the projected student population, the projected number of students in need of various types of special school places, as well as the existing supply of and demand for such places. The Administration was committed to identifying suitable sites for building new special schools and reprovisioning existing special schools that could not benefit from improvement works.

Motion

51. The Chairman concluded the discussion, and said that he would proceed to deal with the motion proposed by Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che without further debate as the Panel had thoroughly discussed the matters concerned. Members agreed.

Action

52. In explaining his motion, Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che highlighted that the Administration should, amongst others, adopt the "Social Responsibility Support Mode" as the basis for designing the premises of and providing facilities for special schools. In addition, appropriate assistance and support should be provided to students to facilitate their integration into the community.

53. At the invitation of the Chairman, US(Ed) reiterated that where technically feasible, the Government would strive to provide special schools with the necessary facilities according to the prevailing standards in order to cater for the learning needs of students with disabilities and SEN. The Administration would continue to take on board the views of stakeholders, including schools and parents, when planning for the provision and improvement of school facilities and premises.

54. The Chairman put the motion to vote. Nine members voted for the motion, no member voted against and no member abstained. The Chairman declared that the motion was passed (wording of motion at **Appendix**).

## **VI. Student hostels on northern campus (Blocks A3 and A4), The Chinese University of Hong Kong**

(LC Paper No. CB(4)748/14-15(03) -- Paper provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(4)748/14-15(04) -- Background brief entitled "Issues related to the provision of hostels for post-secondary students" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat)

55. Members noted the background brief on the subject prepared by the Secretariat [LC Paper No. CB(4)748/14-15(04)].

### Briefing by the Administration

56. At the invitation of the Chairman, US(Ed) briefed members on the proposed capital works project for CUHK to construct two new blocks of student hostels within its northern campus, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)748/14-15(03)]. Subject to members' views, the Administration planned to submit the proposal to the Public Works Subcommittee ("PWSC") and the Finance Committee for approval in mid-2015. Prof FUNG Tung, Associate Vice-President of CUHK, gave a PowerPoint presentation on details of the project.

Action (Post-meeting note: A set of the PowerPoint presentation material [LC Paper No. CB(4)781/14-15(02)] was circulated to members by e-mail on 14 April 2015.)

## Discussion

### *Provision of student hostel places at CUHK*

57. Noting that CUHK would be responsible for 25% of the construction cost of the proposed hostels at some \$155 million, Mr Charles MOK was concerned whether the expenditure would be transferred to the undergraduates through tuition increases. Prof FUNG of CUHK advised that CUHK would secure private sources of funding for its contribution and the project would have no impact on tuition fees. In accordance with established practice, CUHK would operate the student hostels through moderate charges levied on hostel places.

58. In reply to Mr Charles MOK, Prof FUNG of CUHK confirmed that the two new hostels would be for research postgraduate ("RPg") students. Mr MOK considered it necessary to balance the needs of undergraduate and RPg students, as well as those of local and non-local students, and to avoid any cross-subsidy. In this regard, Prof FUNG said that currently, non-local RPg students outnumbered local RPg students at CUHK. It was a widely accepted policy that admission to university programmes was based on merits rather than the place of origin of the students.

59. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung enquired about the measures taken to address the shortfall of some 1 270 publicly-funded hostel places at CUHK. In response, US(Ed) advised that while the two proposed hostels would provide 676 places, the Administration would continue to work closely with CUHK in meeting the remaining shortfall of some 600 places. He added that the shortfall had taken into account the hostel places needed to support promulgated policy initiatives such as student exchange activities.

60. Prof FUNG of CUHK informed members that in addition to the two new blocks of student hostels, CUHK was working closely with the University Grants Committee ("UGC") on a number of new hostel blocks. US(Ed) and Principal Assistant Secretary (Higher Education) advised that currently, the new hostel blocks were under different stages of planning. The relevant funding proposals would be submitted to the Legislative Council once ready. US(Ed) said that the Administration would consider whether any substantive information on these projects could be made available for members' reference.

61. Dr Kenneth CHAN urged for early provision of sufficient student hostel places to meet students' lodging needs. He remarked that there was plenty of land



Action supply at CUHK, and sought information on the improvement, if any, brought about by the two hostels in meeting the lodging needs of students. Mrs Regina IP also enquired about the proportion of non-local students who would be provided with hostel places.

62. In response, Prof FUNG advised that currently, about 50% of undergraduates at CUHK were provided with hostel places, both publicly-funded and privately-funded. The criterion that all undergraduate students should be given the opportunity of staying in hostels for at least one year of their programme could be met. Meanwhile, hostel places were available for only some 40% of RPg students and the percentage would be raised to about 66% upon completion of the two proposed hostels. He said however that whether to apply to live in a hostel was a decision of the RPg student concerned.

63. Dr Kenneth CHAN sought information on the accommodation arrangement for non-local RPg students coming to CUHK with their families. Prof FUNG of CUHK informed members that a small number of hostel places for married RPg students were available at some hostels in CUHK.

64. In response to Mr Charles MOK's enquiry about the accessibility of the proposed hostels located within the northern campus of CUHK, Prof FUNG said that CUHK would strengthen its school bus services, the costs of which were borne by CUHK.

#### *Local and non-local students*

65. Ms Cyd HO noted that non-local RPg students were predominantly the Mainland and saw a need to internationalize the RPg community. To ensure greater fairness in the deployment of public resources for local and non-local students, she considered that the Administration should provide adequate hostel places to enable the institutions to also meet the lodging needs of local students. Mr Charles MOK also expressed concern about possible unfairness caused to local students as hostel places were mostly allocated to non-local students.

66. Regarding concerns that local universities were more inclined to admit non-local RPg students, Mrs Regina IP made her observation that very often, local graduates would prefer to pursue RPg studies overseas, and that it was a common practice among universities to select RPg candidates on the basis of their merits rather than their place of origin. She also considered it necessary to take steps to promote integration among local and non-local students in hostel life.

67. Prof Michael HUI, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President of CUHK, referred to CUHK's selection of PhD candidates, which was based on the candidates' academic ability and motivation. He said that due to various reasons,

Action

not many local candidates were sufficiently motivated to undertake PhD studies. While many non-local RPg students were from the Mainland, CUHK had taken steps to attract high caliber candidates from around the world to pursue RPg programmes.

*The funding proposal*

68. The Chairman referred members to a letter received from Mr Tommy CHEUNG stating that he and Members of the Liberal Party supported the proposed project. He also drew members' attention to Mr CHEUNG's declaration that he was a member of the Council of CUHK.

*(Post-meeting note: Mr Tommy CHEUNG's letter was circulated to members on 14 April 2015 vide LC Paper No. CB(4)781/14-15(01).)*

69. Summing up, the Chairman said that members had no objection to the Administration's submission of the proposed capital works project to PWSC for consideration in mid-2015.

70. Whilst indicating no objection to the project proposal, Dr Kenneth CHAN requested the Administration to provide written information, before the relevant meeting of PWSC, on the availability and shortfall of publicly-funded student hostel places in the UGC-funded sector, as well as an explanation on the timetable, if any, of meeting the shortfall. The Administration took note of Dr CHAN's request.

*(Post meeting note: The Administration's written responses were issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)810/14-15(01) on 17 April 2015.)*

## **VII. Student financial assistance for post-secondary students**

(LC Paper No. CB(4)748/14-15(05) - Paper provided by the Administration)

### Briefing by the Administration

71. At the invitation of the Chairman, US(Ed) briefed members on the financial assistance provided for post-secondary students by the Government through different means, as set out in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)748/14-15(05)].

### Discussion

#### *Interest on student loans*

Action

72. Mr WONG Kwok-hing was concerned about the financial burden of student loan borrowers and considered that the interest of all student loans should only start to accrue after graduation. Dr Kenneth CHAN and Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung were also of the view that to relieve the financial burden of loan borrowers, the Administration should consider charging interest on all student loans after completion of studies.

73. In response, US(Ed) explained that students could apply for assistance under the means-tested or non-means-tested schemes according to their needs and circumstances. For loans under the two means-tested assistance schemes, the interest at 1% per annum was charged from the commencement of the repayment period after graduation. The Non-means-tested Loan Schemes ("NLS") operated on a full-cost recovery basis. Interest was charged at a no-gain-no-loss rate (currently at 1.395% per annum) once the loan was drawn down and throughout the repayment period until the loan was fully repaid. The Administration considered the existing arrangements appropriate and consistent with the principle of prudent use of public resources while catering for students in need of financial assistance.

74. Deputy Secretary for Education (6) ("DS(Ed)6") supplemented that eligible students lacking financial means could apply for assistance under the means-tested assistance schemes. Regarding NLS, loan applicants were not required to pass any means test. If no interest on the loans was charged throughout the study period, students might be under a greater propensity to take out loans from the Government, potentially leading to unnecessary or excessive borrowing. To ensure the proper use of public funds, the prevailing arrangement of charging interest on loans under NLS was appropriate.

*Loan repayment arrangement*

75. Mr WONG Kwok-hing opined that the Administration should consider allowing a longer period for deferment of loan repayment so that the student loan borrowers would have more time to find a job after graduation. Dr Helena WONG enquired whether loan repayment could be deferred until the borrower had found a job.

76. DS(Ed)6 advised that to ease the financial burden of loan borrowers and to allow them more time to seek a stable job after graduation, loan borrowers were given the option of starting loan repayment one year after completion of their studies. In addition, borrowers might apply for interest-free deferment of loan repayment and extension of the loan repayment period on grounds of financial hardship, further full-time studies or serious illness, subject to a maximum of two years.

Action

77. In response to Mr WONG Kwok-hing's enquiry on the interval of loan repayment, DS(Ed)6 said that the loan repayment interval had been gradually revised from quarterly to monthly intervals starting from the 2013-2014 academic year in order to facilitate better financial management of the borrowers.

78. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che noted that when computing the amount of assistance payable to a recipient under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA") Scheme, the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") would partially disregard the monthly earnings of the recipient from employment up to a maximum of \$2,500 per month. He was concerned that this ceiling of disregarded earnings had not taken into account the need of post-secondary graduates of CSSA families to repay their loans from their employment earnings. Mr CHEUNG urged the Education Bureau/Student Finance Office ("SFO") of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency to discuss with SWD the feasibility of raising the ceiling of disregarded earnings under CSSA to include the amount of monthly loan repayment, so that the borrowers would be able to repay their loans while maintaining the entitlement of their families for CSSA.

79. In response, DS(Ed)6 advised that SFO had put in place arrangement to expedite the processing of applications from post-secondary students of CSSA families. In addition, in the past, members of a CSSA family who were post-secondary students were excluded from the calculation of rent allowance payable to the CSSA family. Starting from April 2014, the amount of rent allowance payable to CSSA families would not be affected even if there were family members receiving post-secondary education.

*Default of student loans*

80. Dr Kenneth CHAN questioned whether it was cost-effective for the Administration to take legal proceedings to recover defaulted student loans. On the default situation, DS(Ed)6 informed members that currently, there were about 13 000 default cases out of nearly 170 000 student loan repayment accounts. About 100 officers from SFO and the Department of Justice were involved in the work of recovering outstanding loans from defaulters.

81. The Deputy Chairman enquired about the measures, if any, to be taken by SFO to follow up the findings and recommendations of The Ombudsman regarding the procedures for approval of loan applications and recovery of debts under NLS.

82. US(Ed) advised that in recent years, SFO had stepped up measures to tackle the default problem and to recover outstanding student loans from the defaulters and their indemnifiers. The number of default cases and the default rate had both dropped. While the Government welcomed the recommendation of The

Action Ombudsman to strengthen the deterrent effect on defaulters, it also took note of the concerns of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data ("PCPD") on The Ombudsman's proposal to provide negative credit data of the more serious defaulters to a credit reference agency. The Government would continue to exchange views with PCPD on the recommendation of The Ombudsman.

*Other assistance for post-secondary students*

83. The Deputy Chairman observed that it was quite common for students pursuing self-financing post-secondary programmes to borrow a relatively large amount of loans under NLS to pay for the high tuition fees. He said that instead of relying heavily on NLS which would in turn result in a heavy repayment burden on students, the Administration should consider other means of providing financial support to students pursuing self-financing post-secondary programmes.

84. Dr Helena WONG said that Members of the Democratic Party shared similar concerns. In her opinion, the Administration should consider providing subsidy to students pursuing self-financing post-secondary programmes rather than stepping up measures to recover defaulted loans. She also urged the Administration to consider the feasibility of issuing education vouchers to students to defray the tuition fees for self-financing programmes.

85. US(Ed) advised that it was the Government's policy to support the parallel development of publicly-funded and self-financing post-secondary education. Students intending to pursue self-financing post-secondary programmes should take into consideration their financial situation, including their ability to repay student loans. Besides taking loans under NLS, students from needy families pursuing publicly-funded and self-financing post-secondary programmes could apply for grants and means-tested loans to meet tuition fees, academic expenses and living expenses.

### **VIII. Any other business**

Proposal on an overseas duty visit

(LC Paper No. CB(4)771/14-15(01) -- Letter dated 11 April 2015 from Hon IP Kin-yuen on the proposal to conduct an overseas duty visit to study vocational education in Germany and Switzerland)

86. In view of insufficient time and the presence of only a few members at this juncture, the Chairman suggested and members agreed to defer consideration of this item to the next meeting to be held on 11 May 2015.

Action 87. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:44 pm.

Council Business Division 4  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
29 June 2015

教育事務委員會  
Panel on Education

就議程項目"特殊學校的校舍標準及設施的改善"通過的議案  
Motion passed under the agenda item "Standard of school premises  
and upgrading of facilities of special schools"

**議案措辭**

本委員會要求教育局局長從速翻新或重建老化的特殊學校校舍，促使所有特殊學校校舍達到最新標準，並在特殊學校校舍及宿舍設計和設施的提供應以「社會責任支援模式」為本，例如：校舍選址必須考慮學生的學習及住宿生活流程等，按學生的不同需要提供適切的支援，及協助其參與學習和生活的各個部份，以讓殘疾學生真正融入社區。

(張國柱議員動議，何秀蘭議員及張超雄議員和議)

**Wording of the Motion**

(Translation)

That this Panel requests the Secretary for Education to expeditiously refurbish or redevelop aging special school premises so that all special school premises can meet the latest standards, while the "Social Responsibility Support Mode" should be adopted as the basis for designing the premises and hostels of and providing facilities for special schools, for example, the selection of sites for the construction of school premises must take into account the learning and boarding life of students, etc.; appropriate support should be offered to students to cater for their diverse needs; and assistance should be given to students to facilitate their participation in various learning and living aspects so as to facilitate the genuine integration of students with disabilities into the community.

(Moved by Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che and seconded by Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan and Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung)