

立法會

Legislative Council

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Report of the Panel on Education for submission to the Legislative Council

Purpose

This report gives an account of the work of the Panel on Education for the 2014-2015 session. It will be tabled at the meeting of the Legislative Council on 8 July 2015 in accordance with Rule 77(14) of the Rules of Procedure of the Council.

The Panel

2. The Panel was formed by a resolution passed by the Council on 8 July 1998 and as amended on 20 December 2000, 9 October 2002, 11 July 2007 and 2 July 2008 for the purpose of monitoring and examining Government policies and issues of public concern relating to education matters. The terms of reference of the Panel are in **Appendix I**.

3. The Panel comprises 27 members, with Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai and Hon IP Kin-yuen elected as its Chairman and Deputy Chairman respectively. The membership list of the Panel is in **Appendix II**.

Major work

Higher education

Issues related to University Grants Committee ("UGC")-funded institutions

4. The Panel was briefed on the recurrent funding totaling \$17,105.9 million to be provided to the UGC-funded institutions in the 2015-2016 roll-over year. The UGC clarified in response to members that there was no plan to peg the funding mechanism for the roll-over year and the following triennium to the performance of academic staff of the institutions in the Research Assessment Exercise 2014.

5. Some members had been gravely concerned that the admission of non-local students to UGC-funded programmes might have taken up precious public resources which would otherwise be used on local students. Hence, they welcomed the new policy that starting from the 2016-2017 academic year, all new non-local students would be admitted to undergraduate, sub-degree and taught postgraduate programmes by over-enrolment outside the approved UGC-funded student number targets, meaning that all approved UGC-funded places would be fully utilized to admit local students.

6. The Panel noted that in the 2014-2015 academic year, there were 7 103 students pursuing UGC-funded research postgraduate ("RPg") programmes, comprising 1 427 local and 5 676 non-local students. Regarding some members' concerns about the high proportion of non-local students and whether local students had been disadvantaged, the Administration explained that in line with international practice, the admission of RPg students was merit-based regardless of their place of origin. Based on the number of applications, the chance of admission for local students was more than double of that for non-local students.

7. Noting that the number of UGC-funded first-year-first-degree ("FYFD") places would be maintained at 15 000 per annum in the 2015-2016 academic year whilst the number of secondary school graduates who met the minimum university entry requirements stood at 26 307 in 2014, many members reiterated their call to increase the number of publicly-funded FYFD places. According to the Administration, given the decline in student population and upon full implementation of various measures to increase subsidized higher education opportunities, and assuming the performance of secondary school candidates was comparable to the current level in meeting the minimum entry requirements, there would be sufficient publicly-funded and self-financing FYFD places for these secondary school leavers by the 2016-2017 academic year.

Broadening opportunities for subsidized higher education

8. The Panel continued to monitor the progress of implementation of various initiatives announced in the 2014 Policy Address to broaden the opportunities for local students to receive subsidized higher education.

9. Members were concerned about the articulation of sub-degree holders to the last two years of publicly-funded undergraduate programmes. On the progressive increase of 1 000 UGC-funded senior year undergraduate intake places from the current 4 000 to 5 000 in the 2018-2019 academic year, question was raised as to whether the extent and pace of increase was sufficient. According to the Administration, the number of UGC-funded senior year undergraduate intake places would be increased progressively so

as to allow time for the institutions to recruit teaching staff and enhance the necessary facilities to cope with the increase. After an initial increase of 265 places in the 2015-2016 academic year, the remaining 735 places would be phased-in in the context of the academic planning exercise for the 2016-2017 to 2018-2019 triennium.

10. In principle, the Panel supported the implementation of the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors ("SSSDP") in the 2015-2016 academic year. On whether consideration would be given to extending SSSDP to cover other disciplines such as construction and to increasing the number of subsidized places currently set at 1 000 students per cohort, the Administration advised that SSSDP would be implemented on a pilot basis for three cohorts and then subject to review. The study programmes and number of subsidized places would also be subject to annual review.

Self-financing post-secondary sector

11. During the session, the Panel continued to follow closely the initiatives to enhance transparency and quality of the self-financing post-secondary education sector. It had also met with deputations to hear their views on the Report on the Consultancy Study on Local and International Good Practices in the Governance and Quality Assurance of the Self-financing Post-secondary Education Sector ("Consultancy Report") commissioned by the Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education ("CSPE").

12. The Panel noted CSPE's plan to develop a Code of Good Practices on Governance and Quality Assurance ("the Code") for voluntary adoption by the self-financing institutions. Concerns were raised about the efficacy of the Code which only set out general guidelines instead of specifying requirements for compliance. According to CSPE, it would issue a draft Code for public consultation and take into consideration the views collected before finalizing the contents of the Code. CSPE would also monitor the future implementation of the Code and review its effectiveness in due course.

13. Members noted that whilst the Code received broad support from deputations, there was grave reservation or disagreement from many of the institutions regarding the requirement on them to disclose their financial information at an appropriate level of details. The institutions were gravely concerned about the publication of market-sensitive data and the possibility that certain financial information might be interpreted out-of-context or in a negative light. Some members and deputations however considered it necessary for the institutions to increase their transparency and accountability as many of them had benefited from government support through land grant or start-up loans. The Administration and CSPE assured members that they would take into consideration the views gathered during public consultation

before finalizing the way forward on this issue.

Student financial assistance schemes

14. The Panel deliberated on the means-tested assistance schemes and non-means-tested loan schemes administered by the Student Finance Office ("SFO") of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency.

15. Some members were concerned about the financial burden of student loan borrowers and considered that the interest of all types of student loans should only start to accrue after graduation. As explained by the Administration, low annual interest on loans under the two means-tested assistance schemes was only charged when the repayment period commenced 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 upon draw-down of loans. Since applicants were not required to pass any means test under NLS, if interest was not charged throughout the study period, students might be under a greater propensity to borrow loans from the Government, potentially leading to unnecessary or excessive borrowing.

16. The default of student loan repayment was also a matter of concern. Members noted the recommendation of the Ombudsman to provide negative credit data of the more serious defaulters to a credit reference agency in order to strengthen the deterrent effect on defaulters, and enquired about the Administration's stance. As informed by the Education Bureau ("EDB"), SFO had stepped up measures to tackle the default problem and the number of default cases had dropped. While the Government welcomed the Ombudsman's recommendation, it also took note of the concerns of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data and would continue to exchange views with the Commissioner on the aforesaid recommendation.

Vocational education

17. The Panel had pursued with the Administration the implementation of vocational education in Hong Kong. Given the entrenched bias among some quarters of the community towards traditional academic pursuits, members stressed the need to promote vocational education as an articulation option for secondary school leavers. In this regard, the Administration explained the roles of the Qualifications Framework launched in 2008 to provide a seven-level hierarchy that ordered and supported different qualifications, the provision of career- and vocation-related education at senior secondary level through the Applied Learning ("ApL") courses and Other Learning Experiences, the provision of vocational education and training by statutory bodies including VTC. Members noted the implementation of new initiatives such as the Pilot Training and Support Scheme, as well as the establishment

of the Task Force on Promotion of Vocation Education tasked to map out a strategy to promote vocational education and raise public awareness and recognition towards vocational education.

18. Concern was raised about the difficulty faced by some students with special educational needs ("SEN") in progressing from the Shine Skills Centre to the Youth College or Chinese Cuisine Training Institute run by VTC due to the more stringent admission requirements of the latter. As the Shine Skills Centre was under the purview of the Labour and Welfare Bureau ("LWB"), members urged that the division of policy responsibilities between LWB and EDB should not affect the vocational training opportunities for SEN students. As advised by EDB, it would work closely with VTC and LWB to broaden the articulation pathways for SEN students.

Primary and secondary education

Native-speaking English Teacher ("NET") Scheme

19. The Panel deliberated on the NET Scheme which comprised the Enhanced NET Scheme in Secondary Schools and the NET Scheme in Primary Schools. Members were concerned about the cost-effectiveness of the NET Scheme in improving students' English standard. According to EDB, in the Territory-wide System Assessment ("TSA") of English Language, the territory-wide percentage of Primary ("P")3 students achieving English Language Basic Competency had risen from 75.9% in 2004 to 80.3% in 2014. The corresponding percentages for P6 students had also slightly improved from 70.5% in 2005 to 72.4% in 2013.

20. Noting that currently, each primary school was provided with only one NET to serve the entire school, some members considered that additional NETs should be provided, in particular for P1, in order that children could have early exposure to English language. According to EDB, the idea would be considered by the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research ("SCOLAR"). Some members drew the Administration's attention to the non-provision of NETs for special schools which had admitted students with mild intellectual disability.

21. There was concern that it might be more cost-effective to use the funding for the NET Scheme to strengthen training for local English teachers. Some other members questioned whether NETs could be deployed to teach English. The Administration confirmed that NETs served as resource teachers, and collaborated with local teachers to enhance the strategies for curriculum development, language instruction and assessment. While NETs could contribute to enhancing the English language environment in schools and students' language exposure, it was not intended that they would serve as

classroom teachers in lieu of local teachers.

Chinese history education at secondary levels

22. The Panel had considered the implementation of Chinese history education. In response to members' enquiry, the Administration confirmed that the study of Chinese history was compulsory at the junior secondary level while Chinese History had always been an elective subject at the senior secondary level. The Panel noted that while a majority of secondary schools taught Chinese History as an independent subject at the junior secondary level, some other schools had adopted two other curriculum modes, namely linking Chinese history with world history and organizing the contents of Chinese history with reference to various themes. Some members opined that Chinese History should be taught as an independent subject throughout the junior secondary level while some other members were of the view that reference should be made to world history in the teaching and learning of Chinese history. They had no objection to the current practice of allowing schools to select the curriculum mode that best suited their needs.

23. Members gave views on the short-term recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee under the Curriculum Development Council ("CDC") to adjust the proportion of ancient history and modern history in the junior secondary Chinese History curriculum from two-thirds and one-third respectively to equal halves, in tandem with that for the senior secondary curriculum. There was concern about the readiness of schools in developing the necessary teaching/learning materials if the recommendation was to be implemented in September 2015. As clarified by EDB, whilst this was the target, there had not been a firm decision on implementation details. It took note of members' view that adequate prior consultation with stakeholders was necessary.

Implementation of ApL

24. The Panel noted that under the New Senior Secondary ("NSS") curriculum, a wide range of ApL subjects were offered to Secondary 5 and 6 students as elective subjects in addition to traditional academic elective subjects. Some members were concerned about the drop in enrolment for ApL in various cohorts, the relatively low enrolment of students from special schools and whether the courses offered could meet the needs of the relevant industries. To encourage the uptake of ApL, there was a suggestion that the Administration should explore measures such as subsidizing, freezing or waiving the examination fees for ApL subjects.

25. According to the Administration, the percentage of students taking ApL courses in relation to the student population in various cohorts had remained stable. The EDB was requested to revert to the Panel after

completing its review on the implementation of ApL. It would also take action to facilitate the enrolment of students from special schools where appropriate. Members had been informed that a committee on ApL comprising members from different industries had been set up under CDC and the ApL courses were linked to six broad professional fields relevant to the social and economic development of Hong Kong.

26. Members noted that the Administration would explore the feasibility of introducing one more attainment level for reporting ApL results in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education ("HKDSE") Examination, in addition to the existing two levels of "Attained" and "Attained with Distinction", the latter being equivalent to Level 3 or above in HKDSE for further studies and/or employment. The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority ("HKEAA") would review students' performance in various ApL subjects to ascertain whether one more attainment level should be introduced to reflect students' better performance equivalent to Level 4 or above in HKDSE. In this connection, the Administration was reminded that if the aforesaid arrangement would only apply to some, but not all, ApL subjects, those subjects with only two attainment levels might become less attractive to students.

The Liberal Studies ("LS") subject

27. The implementation of LS under the NSS curriculum received ongoing attention by the Panel. Noting that one of the objectives of LS was to enhance students' critical thinking skills, some members referred to the Administration's use of "明辨性思考" rather than "批判性思考" as the Chinese rendition of "critical thinking", and questioned whether the Administration was trying to downplay the importance of students' ability to criticize inadequate policies and practices. As explained by the Administration, students were not encouraged to criticize for criticism's sake. LS emphasized supporting students' development of higher order thinking skills. Students should grasp the objective facts and evidence, analyze issues using appropriate thinking skills and apply multiple perspectives in making their own judgments and decisions. When stating their views, they were expected to present arguments clearly and demonstrate respect for evidence and open-mindedness.

28. Given that LS was a relatively new subject and EDB currently did not accept the submission of LS textbooks for review, some members were concerned about the lack of learning and teaching resources for the subject, as well as teachers' capability to teach the wide range of issues covered in the curriculum. Due to the open and multidisciplinary nature of the LS subject, EDB had developed the Web-based Resource Platform for Liberal Studies to

which over 2 000 items had been uploaded for teachers' use. It would also publish the Liberal Studies Curriculum Resources Booklet Series providing ready-to-use learning and teaching resources for the six modules in the LS curriculum. EDB indicated that in the long run, it would explore the feasibility of accepting LS textbooks to be submitted for review.

29. The Panel noted that the curriculum and assessment of LS was under review as part of the NAS review jointly conducted by EDB, CDC, HKEAA and related subject committees. It was also noted that EDB had made an appeal to stakeholders not to allow political controversies in society to infuse curriculum development, but to respect the professional spirit and existing mechanism of the curriculum development and assessment in Hong Kong.

30. Some members expressed grave concerns about the stance of the Administration on the implementation of the LS subject, and queried whether it was intended that some topics should be prohibited and controversial political issues should be excluded from discussion by teachers and students altogether. According to EDB, it had made the appeal in response to concerns of the school sector that teaching and learning should be conducted in a professional manner, free from any outside pressure or political interference. The Administration would defer to the professionalism of teachers and schools in conducting their activities. It would also urge for respect for the existing professional mechanism of curriculum development and assessment in Hong Kong. The Panel would continue to follow up the matter in the context of the outcome of the second phase of the medium-term review of NAS.

Using Putonghua as the medium of instruction for the Chinese Language subject ("PMIC")

31. The Panel gave views on the latest development in implementing PMIC in primary and secondary schools. Concerns were expressed by some members on the cost-effectiveness of the Scheme to Support Schools in Using Putonghua to Teach the Chinese Language Subject ("the Support Scheme") launched by SCOLAR on a pilot basis and under which some \$180 million had been spent on various support measures. Members noted that according to the initial findings of a longitudinal study conducted by a local tertiary institution on the implementation of PMIC under the Support Scheme, there was improvement in students' written Chinese and their standard of Putonghua. The longitudinal study also revealed the need to provide appropriate support and training to school teachers in teaching the Chinese Language subject in Putonghua. At members' request, the Administration would provide the findings of the study report in due course.

32. Some members expressed support for PMIC and considered it a move in the right direction. They also referred to the successful experience of some schools in implementing PMIC and enquired on the timetable, if any, to further promote PMIC among schools. According to EDB, schools could decide whether to use Cantonese or Putonghua 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.

33. Some members did not support the implementation of PMIC as they were concerned that too much emphasis would be placed on Putonghua proficiency, at the expense of the learning of Chinese language and literature. Noting that EDB had set PMIC as the long-term and developmental target of the Chinese Language curriculum, some members were gravely concerned that this might have been based on political consideration rather than any solid evidence of the pedagogical value of PMIC. They stressed the need for public consultation and in-depth study before promulgating PMIC as the long-term target.

34. The Administration confirmed that setting PMIC as a long-term and developmental target was not based on political consideration. In fact, 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.

Life planning education

35. The Panel was briefed on key measures to promote life planning education for secondary students. On the objective of implementing life planning education, EDB confirmed that it aimed at enabling students to understand their own career and academic aspirations and make informed decisions in their study and employment.

36. On the provision of the recurrent Career and Life Planning Grant to each public sector school at about \$500,000 per annum to strengthen life planning education, some members were concerned about the cost-effective deployment of the Grant by schools. According to EDB, with the provision of the recurrent Grant, life planning education was expected to form part of a school's strategic planning under which work plans with clear objectives and strategies as well as evaluation mechanism would be put in place. Question had also been raised about the adequacy of structured training places for teachers, which had been increased from the previous 80 to 240 places per

annum. The EDB explained that structured training in career guidance or life planning education had been offered for teachers of the career teams of secondary schools since the 1990s. The current increase in training places would further enhance the professional capabilities of teachers in delivering life planning education.

Pilot scheme on promoting interflow between sister schools in Hong Kong and the Mainland ("the Pilot Scheme")

37. The Panel was consulted on the Pilot Scheme under which each participating public sector or Direct Subsidy Scheme primary and secondary school would be provided a grant of \$120,000 per annum from the 2015-2016 to the 2017-2018 school years. Whilst members did not object to the submission of the funding proposal to the Finance Committee ("FC"), they held different views on the Pilot Scheme.

38. The Panel was aware of frequent exchanges between schools in Hong Kong and in the Mainland and the increase in sister schools from about 20 pairs in 2004 to over 400 pairs at present. In consideration that sister school activities could enhance the breadth and depth of cooperation, as well as promoting professional development and enriching the learning experience of students, some members expressed support for the Pilot Scheme to provide designated funding to enable sister schools to plan their activities systematically and purposefully.

39. Some members however queried that the launch of the Pilot Scheme had been based on political consideration to achieve greater integration with the Mainland. They opined that to widen students' exposure, support for sister school activities should not be limited to schools in the Mainland. There was also serious concern about the additional workload on teachers arising from making applications to join the Pilot Scheme, compiling review reports and making logistical arrangements for sister school activities.

40. The Administration confirmed that participation in the Pilot Scheme was voluntary. The Pilot Scheme aimed to support schools to organize exchange activities with the Mainland on a more regular and better planned basis. As regards concerns about teachers' increased workload, members were informed that individual schools could avail themselves of the professional support provided by the service provider commissioned by EDB. They could also outsource logistical and administrative work in accordance with the procurement procedures stipulated by EDB.

Enhancing Chinese learning and teaching for non-Chinese speaking ("NCS") students

41. Members noted that starting from the 2014-2015 school year, EDB had provided all schools admitting 10 or more NCS students with additional funding ranging from \$800,000 to \$1,500,000 for each school year to facilitate their implementation of the "Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework" ("Learning Framework"). They were concerned about the support available to those schools admitting less than 10 NCS students. According to EDB, these students could benefit from an immersed Chinese language environment, but an additional annual funding of \$50,000 was provided to these schools for organizing after-school support programmes for their NCS students. There was a suggestion that in considering ways to support Chinese learning and teaching for NCS students, EDB should make reference to the practice adopted by many international schools in Hong Kong under which Chinese and Putonghua were taken by students as compulsory subjects.

42. Another major area of concern of members was the need to strengthen the capability and readiness of teachers in implementing the Learning Framework. In this regard, EDB confirmed that it would continue to organize diversified and progressively advanced professional development programmes for teachers. It also referred to the Professional Enhancement Grant Scheme for Chinese Teachers (Teaching Chinese as a Second Language) which was launched in 2014 under the Language Fund to encourage the continual professional development of serving Chinese Language teachers in teaching the Chinese language to NCS students.

43. Some members were gravely concerned about the support provided to special schools admitting NCS students. The Administration advised that in the 2014-2015 school year, 23 special schools were provided with additional funding for enhancing the support for their NCS students' learning of Chinese. In addition, EDB was developing the Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Adapted Learning Framework (for NCS Students with Intellectual Disabilities) ("Adapted Framework") for special schools which were not offering the ordinary school curriculum. The development of the Adapted Framework was expected to complete by the end of 2016.

44. Members sought further information on the recognition of the attainment in the Applied Learning Chinese (for NCS Students) ("ApL(C)") subject introduced by EDB in phases starting from the 2014-2015 school year as an alternative qualification for NCS students. According to the Administration, in addition to the HKDSE qualification, ApL(C) courses were also pegged at Levels 1 to 3 of the Qualifications Framework. Post-secondary institutions had accepted "Attained" in ApL(C) as an alternative

Chinese qualification for NCS students in meeting the basic admission requirements. For employment purpose, the Civil Service Bureau accepted "Attained" and "Attained with Distinction" in ApL(C) as meeting the Chinese language proficiency requirements of relevant civil service ranks.

Premises and facilities of special schools

45. The standard of the premises and facilities of special schools received serious attention by the Panel. As many of the existing 60 aided special schools were built decades ago, their facilities might not be in compliance with the prevailing requirements on barrier-free access. Members drew the Administration's attention to the existing sub-standard premises of some special schools and the lack of appropriate facilities to support the teaching and learning of students with disabilities.

46. The Panel had reviewed the progress in upgrading the facilities of special schools by way of the School Improvement Programme ("SIP") implemented in five phases from 1994 to 2006, carrying out conversion works, as well as the Redevelopment and Reprovisioning ("R&R") Programme. According to the Administration, special schools built according to past planning standards would be upgraded and provided with adequate facilities through various means, subject to factors including the optimal use of public resources and technical feasibility. Some members referred to the unsatisfactory conditions at some special schools, and stressed the urgent need for R&R to improve their teaching and learning environment.

47. To ensure that the facilities at special schools could meet the teaching and learning needs of students, members urged the Administration to engage stakeholders including the school sponsoring bodies, teachers and parents in the design and planning of new special schools. At the meeting held on 13 April 2015, the Panel passed a motion urging EDB to, amongst others, expedite the redevelopment of aging special schools and to adopt the "Social Responsibility Support Mode" as the basis for designing the premises and facilities of special schools.

Issues related to the teaching force

Employment opportunities for young teachers

48. The Panel attached great importance to maintaining a stable and quality teaching force, and had discussed with the Administration issues related to the employment opportunities for young teachers.

49. Members sought information on the employment prospect of graduates of teacher education institutions ("TEI") and noted that each year, there were

around 1 000 TEI graduates and about 2 000 public sector primary and secondary school teachers leaving the profession. Apart from public sector schools, TEI graduates could also take up teaching posts in Direct Subsidy Scheme schools or private schools, or join other education-related professions. Members were nevertheless aware that a relatively high employment rate might include TEI graduates who were employed as contract teachers, teaching assistants or tutors in tutorial schools.

50. Some members were gravely concerned that instead of creating teaching posts on the regular staff establishment of public sector schools, the Administration had often relied on the disbursement of non-recurrent cash grants to schools for creating time-limited teaching posts. As a result, many young teachers could only be employed as contract teachers without job security or prospect. Temporary teaching posts also lapsed upon expiry of time-limited grants such as the Liberal Studies Curriculum Support Grant, the English Enhancement Scheme and the Refined English Enhancement Scheme. Some members cautioned that an unstable teaching force was not conducive to the accumulation of experience and knowledge. It would also lead to a succession gap in the profession, detrimental to the quality and long-term development of education. According to the Administration, the provision of cash grants could allow public sector schools the flexibility to acquire the teaching support and necessary services according to their school-based needs. The Administration assured members that it would continue to monitor the long-term manpower situation of teachers.

Teacher establishment in public sector primary schools

51. The Panel generally welcomed the initiative announced in the 2015 Policy Address to 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. The EDB's attention was drawn to the limited number of graduate teacher posts in some primary schools with the result that some teachers with degree qualifications could only take up the posts of certificated masters/mistresses. On whether the increase in the ratio of graduate teacher posts could proceed in a faster pace as suggested by some members, EDB advised that at present, over 90% of the teachers in public sector primary schools were degree holders. However, only some 87% of the graduate teacher posts on the approved staff establishment were filled. The Administration considered it prudent to implement the increase progressively.

52. To improve the quality of primary education, some members highlighted the need to further increase the ratio of graduate teacher posts to 85%, on par with that for public sector secondary schools. As advised by EDB, its long-term goal was to enhance the ratio of graduate teacher posts in both primary and secondary schools to 100%. In this regard, members

considered that the Administration should work out a timetable for implementation so that prospective and serving teachers could plan ahead for their career development.

53. The Panel also deliberated on the class-to-teacher ratio of primary schools at the current level of 1 to 1.5, which was one of the factors for computing the approved staff establishment of public sector primary schools. Given the increasingly heavy teaching and non-teaching duties of teachers, there was concern that the ratio could not adequately meet present-day needs and should be improved. Some members called for a comprehensive review on the teacher establishment in primary schools. According to EDB, the demand for and provision of manpower resources in public sector primary schools were subject to ongoing monitoring and review. Suitable adjustments would be considered where appropriate.

Implementation of free kindergarten education

54. At the meeting held on 14 April 2014, the Panel decided to set up a subcommittee to study the implementation of free kindergarten education ("the Subcommittee"). The Subcommittee commenced work in October 2014. Under the chairmanship of Hon Starry LEE, it held a total of 9 meetings by the end of June 2015, including a prolonged meeting to receive views from over 100 deputations.

55. The Subcommittee had deliberated on the policy and proposed scope of free kindergarten education, as well as the services provided by half-day, whole-day and long whole-day kindergartens. Members discussed whether free kindergarten education should cover only half-day services and whether attendance at whole-day and long whole-day kindergartens, which had been providing useful services to many families, should also be subsidized. In deliberating on the future funding mode, many members referred to the experience of the social welfare sector and objected to adopting lump sum grant as the funding option. The Subcommittee discussed issues related to the provision of premises for kindergartens and the arrangements of providing rent reimbursement to non-profit-making kindergartens. With a view to maintaining a quality teaching force, members followed up issues such as the need to set up a salary structure for kindergarten teachers, their professional development and upgrading. The Subcommittee also considered measures to support SEN and NCS students attending kindergartens.

56. The Committee on Free Kindergarten Education appointed by EDB published its report in May 2015. The Subcommittee held a meeting to exchange views with the Administration and the Committee, and would continue to study the findings and recommendations of the Committee's report and consider public views on various issues related to the

implementation of free kindergarten education.

Other financial proposals

57. The Panel gave views on the following financial proposals and supported their submission to the Public Works Subcommittee/FC –

- (a) proposed start-up loan to Chu Hai College of Higher Education 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;
- (b) proposed capital works project for The Chinese University of Hong Kong to construct two new blocks of student hostels within its northern campus;
- (c) construction of a special school in Shamshuipo to reprovision an existing special school currently accommodated in sub-standard premises; and
- (d) construction of two primary schools for converting two bi-sessional primary schools into whole-day primary schools.

Meetings and visits

58. From October 2014 to June 2015, the Panel held a total of 11 meetings, and received views from 44 deputations. A meeting has been scheduled for July 2015. It also conducted a visit to the Hong Kong Institute of Education to understand the latest developments in teacher training and education. The Panel has also planned to conduct a duty visit to Germany and Switzerland in September 2015 to acquire first-hand understanding on the vocational education and training systems in these two countries

Legislative Council

Panel on Education

Terms of Reference

1. To monitor and examine Government policies and issues of public concern relating to education.
2. To provide a forum for the exchange and dissemination of views on the above policy matters.
3. To receive briefings and to formulate views on any major legislative or financial proposals in respect of the above policy area prior to their formal introduction to the Council or Finance Committee.
4. To monitor and examine, to the extent it considers necessary, the above policy matters referred to it by a member of the Panel or by the House Committee.
5. To make reports to the Council or to the House Committee as required by the Rules of Procedure.

Panel on Education

Membership list for 2014-2015 session

Chairman	Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai, SBS, JP
Deputy Chairman	Hon IP Kin-yuen
Members	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 Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP

(Total : 27 Members)

Clerk Miss Polly YEUNG

Legal Adviser Miss Carrie WONG

Date 9 October 2014