

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(4)1640/16-17
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by the Administration)

Ref : CB4/PL/ED

Panel on Education

**Minutes of policy briefing
held on Tuesday, 24 January 2017 at 8:30 am
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex**

Members present : Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, JP (Chairman)
Hon IP Kin-yuen (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, GBS, JP
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, SBS, JP
Hon CHAN Kin-por, BBS, JP
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon Claudia MO
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming, JP
Hon MA Fung-kwok, SBS, JP
Hon Charles Peter MOK, JP
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Hon CHAN Han-pan, JP
Hon Dennis KWOK Wing-hang
Hon Christopher CHEUNG Wah-fung, SBS, JP
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT, JP
Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong, SBS, JP
Dr Hon Junius HO Kwan-yiu, JP
Hon HO Kai-ming
Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH
Hon Tanya CHAN
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-kwan, JP
Hon HUI Chi-fung
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH
Dr Hon CHENG Chung-tai
Hon Nathan LAW Kwun-chung
Dr Hon LAU Siu-lai

Members absent : Hon James TO Kun-sun
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee, GBS, JP
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
Hon Alvin YEUNG
Hon CHU Hoi-dick
Hon SHIU Ka-chun

[According to the Judgment of the Court of First Instance of the High Court on 14 July 2017, LEUNG Kwok-hung, Nathan LAW Kwun-chung, YIU Chung-yim and LAU Siu-lai have been disqualified from assuming the office of a member of the Legislative Council, and have vacated the same since 12 October 2016, and are not entitled to act as a member of the Legislative Council.]

Public Officers attending : Agenda item I

Mr Eddie NG, SBS, JP
Secretary for Education

Mrs Marion LAI, JP
Permanent Secretary for Education

Mr Kevin YEUNG, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Mr Brian LO, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education (1)

Ms Jessie WONG, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education (2)

Mrs Michelle WONG, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education (3)

Mrs HONG CHAN Tsui-wah
Deputy Secretary for Education (4)

Dr K K CHAN
Deputy Secretary for Education (5)

Mrs Angelina CHEUNG, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education (6)

Clerk in attendance : Ms Angel WONG
Chief Council Secretary (4)4

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

Miss Mandy NG
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 2017 Policy Address

(LC Paper No. CB(4)456/16-17(01) -- Paper entitled "2017 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 18 January 2017 -- "Make Best Use of Opportunities, Develop the Economy, Improve People's Livelihood, Build an Inclusive Society"

The 2017 Policy Agenda booklet

Briefing by the Administration

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Secretary for Education ("SED") briefed members on the initiatives on education in the 2017 Policy Address, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(4)456/16-17(01)).

(Post-meeting note: The speaking note of SED tabled at the meeting was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)473/16-17(01) on 24 January 2017.)

Discussion

Basic Competency Assessment Research Study

2. Mr LAU Kwok-fan, Ms Claudia MO, Ms Tanya CHAN and Mr HUI Chi-fung considered that the Administration should allow schools/parents to choose whether or not to participate in the Basic Competency Assessment Research Study ("BCA") for Primary 3 ("P3") students in 2017. Dr Fernando CHEUNG considered that a "Research Study" should allow voluntary participation with informed consent from participants. Mandatory participation of schools/students in BCA might contravene research integrity as well as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Deputy Chairman shared Dr CHEUNG's view. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen was of the view that BCA was a resumption of Territory-wide System Assessment ("TSA"). "Research Study" should be conducted on a sampling basis. There might be judicial review of the Administration's decision on the resumption of TSA with mandatory participation of all primary schools. Dr CHENG Chung-tai asked whether there would be any penalty for schools/students not participating in BCA.

3. SED advised that the 2016 Tryout Study (Primary 3) ("Tryout Study") included four new elements, namely improving assessment papers and question design, enhancing school reports, strengthening professional support, and including a questionnaire survey on students' learning attitude and motivation. These enhancement arrangements aimed to eliminate the incentives for over-drilling induced by TSA, provide targeted service to enhance the overall effectiveness of teaching and learning, improve communication and mutual trust between schools and parents. In view of the positive feedback from the schools participating in the Tryout Study, the Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy ("the Coordinating Committee") recommended extension of the Tryout Study to all primary schools in 2017, with a view to enabling more schools to understand the new elements of the Tryout Study through participation. SED further stressed that BCA was not a resumption of the previous TSA. The validity of BCA data would be undermined if too few schools participated in BCA. Should schools face difficulties in participating in BCA, the Education Bureau ("EDB") would look into the matters and provide assistance. As BCA was part of the daily teaching and learning activities of schools, students were encouraged to participate in it. In case students had any special reasons for not participating in BCA, they should inform their school principals.

4. The Deputy Secretary for Education (5) ("DS(Ed)5") supplemented that under the Tryout Study, schools could choose among four types of school reports that they considered appropriate. Participating schools indicated that the reports with detailed analysis were very useful for providing feedback to learning and teaching. With territory-wide participation in BCA, all primary schools could have a better understanding of how the reports could help improve teaching and learning.

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5. The Deputy Chairman noted that EDB had issued to schools on 23 January 2017 a circular on the implementation arrangements of BCA. However, schools were not given the option to opt out of BCA. He asked whether EDB would provide a reply slip for schools to opt out from BCA. SED advised that all along EDB and the school sector worked in collaboration with mutual trust and professionalism. He considered it not necessary to make any revision to the circular in question. In response to the Administration's explanation, the Deputy Chairman would move a motion urging EDB to allow voluntary participation of BCA.

6. Noting that SED had emphasized the four new initiatives to better TSA, Dr CHENG Chung-tai queried why BCA had not been included as a new policy initiative in the 2017 Policy Address. SED advised that the Administration had already reported the Coordinating Committee's findings and recommendations on the Tryout Study to the Panel the previous month. BCA would include the professional recommendations put forward by the Coordinating Committee. DS(Ed)5 added that the assessment of basic competency originated from the recommendation of the Education Commission Report published in 2000. TSA was an assessment tool to gauge students' attainment of basic competencies in the three subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. Since TSA had been implemented for over 10 years, it was time to review and enhance its arrangements. In this connection, BCA would serve as a study for evaluation purpose.

7. Mr HUI Chi-fung expressed concern that BCA school reports might be used by the Administration to evaluate schools' performance and BCA would continue to be a high-stake assessment. DS(Ed)5 clarified that TSA data had no longer been used as performance indicators to assess the performance of a school in the External School Review so as to help alleviate schools' concerns about the possible stakes of TSA data.

8. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-kwan considered it necessary for the Administration to explain to the public the usefulness of TSA/BCA data to alleviate their worries. While concurring with Mr CHEUNG that the Administration should explain how implementing TSA could benefit students, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung was of the view that the decision on the arrangements of future TSA could be left to the next-term Government. SED advised that a series of professional support measures had been provided for schools participating in the Tryout Study to facilitate schools' understanding in using the data in the school reports. Participating schools had found the reports useful in providing feedback for enhancing teaching and learning. The Permanent Secretary for Education added that the data in the school reports would enable schools and teachers to understand the strengths and weaknesses of students. EDB would continue to provide school-based support services to promote sharing of good teaching practices among schools.

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9. Ms Claudia MO, Ms Starry LEE, Mr LAU Kwok-fan, Dr Elizabeth QUAT, Mr Nathan LAW and Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung expressed concerns that students were under immense pressure arising from excessive drilling induced by TSA and heavy homework. The Administration should put in place effective measures to alleviate the pressure on students and parents. Mr LAW considered that student suicides and the education system were correlated. SED should apologize if schools were stressed by the implementation of BCA and student suicides continued in the coming year.

10. SED advised that the causes of student suicides should be concluded from evidence-based analysis rather than subjective view. He pointed out that over-drilling or heavy homework load should not be equated with BCA/TSA. As BCA aimed to assess the basic competencies of students, there was no need to prepare for it by means of drilling. In fact, an initiative was jointly launched the day before by the Chairman of the Committee on Home-School Co-operation and District Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations to oppose mechanical drills. SED further advised that after issuing guidelines to schools in October 2015 advising them to formulate an appropriate school-based homework policy in consultation with parents, and the Administration noted that the amount of homework assigned to students had been reduced thereafter. If parents had any views on homework load, they were encouraged to give feedback to schools or Regional Education Offices of EDB. EDB had followed up with the four cases related to over-drilling and pressure on students raised at the Panel's special meeting on 7 January 2017. One of these parents responded positively and EDB officials had communicated with the school concerned afterward. The other three parents declined to provide further information for EDB to follow up.

11. Ms Tanya CHAN requested the Administration to provide a paper on the arrangements for the 2017 BCA and SED to attend the meeting to receive public views on TSA/BCA.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's written response was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)683/16-17(01) on 13 March 2017.)

Kindergarten education

12. Mr HUI Chi-fung enquired whether the Administration would consider providing full subsidies to all kindergarten ("KG") places under the free quality KG education policy so as to achieve the objective of providing 15 years of free education. SED advised that the free quality KG education policy was based on the recommendation of the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education which had studied the relevant theories and made reference to the experience of KG education in various countries. In addition to the basic subsidy provided under the free quality KG education policy, various financial assistance schemes were also available for needy families.

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13. Ms Starry LEE expressed concern that children had to prepare for KG admission interviews. She was worried that drilling would start as early as in pre-school stage and enquired whether measures were put in place to monitor the admission interview of subsidized KGs. DS(Ed)3 advised that in mid-2016, EDB had issued a circular on admission arrangements to KGs. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide the Panel with the said circular.

(*Post-meeting note: The Administration's written response was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)603/16-17(01) on 22 February 2017.*)

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics education

14. Mr Charles MOK noted with concern that the provision of a one-off grant of \$200,000 to each public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme secondary school to facilitate the implementation of school-based Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics ("STEM") education was the only initiative to promote STEM education in the 2017 Policy Address. He expressed dissatisfaction that the Government had made no response to the technology sector's suggestion to set up matching fund scheme to support schools for offering technology-related courses. SED responded that the Government would enhance STEM education in primary and secondary schools. At post-secondary level, the Government would request the University Grants Committee ("UGC") to complete the review on the allocation of research grants within one year and expand the assessment criteria to include research impact and effectiveness of knowledge and technology transfer. The Government would also request, through UGC, all the universities to refine their three-year knowledge and technology transfer plans expeditiously within six months. In addition, more opportunities would be provided for students to gain experience and exposure by taking part in research projects and exchange activities with institutions of other places.

15. Mr HO Kai-ming said that in view of the promotion of STEM education in schools, school laboratory technicians were required to provide support to STEM-related activities. The provision of school laboratory technicians had been frozen for several years and secondary schools might retain surplus laboratory technicians until 2019-2020 school year. The Administration had indicated that according to the manpower projection, there should be sufficient available vacancies to absorb surplus laboratory technicians. However, he had recently conducted a survey receiving 97 responses from secondary schools with three or more laboratory technicians. About 57% of the respondents indicated that following the formula set by EDB on the new manning scale, one technician might be laid off from each school upon expiry of the transition period by 2020. Mr HO asked about the arrangement for surplus laboratory technicians in the event that schools still had surplus laboratory technicians and the measure to ensure sufficient technicians to provide support to STEM education. The Under Secretary for Education advised that EDB had been communicating with the

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school sector and trade union on the provision of school laboratory technicians. EDB would collect information from schools on their projection of manning scale of laboratory technicians. If the information collected had a considerable deviation from the initial estimation, EDB would further discuss with the school sector. As the provision of school laboratory technicians would remain frozen in the next three years, there was ample time to resolve the matter.

Basic Law education

16. Ms Claudia MO noted that as announced in the 2017 Policy Address, EDB would further promote the learning of the Basic Law. She said that there was concern about insufficient lesson time for teaching Chinese History subject. It might not be feasible to squeeze time for Basic Law education at the expense of lesson time of other subjects. Ms Tanya CHAN noted that the learning of the Basic Law would be promoted through different means such as updating relevant learning and teaching materials and renewal of relevant curricula. She enquired whether legal experts would be invited to take part in the process of curricula renewal.

17. DS(Ed)5 advised that under the existing mechanism, the curriculum contents were developed by committees under the Curriculum Development Council, members of which included school principals, teachers, academics and experts. In the course of renewing curricula, EDB would consult relevant bureaux/departments as well as legal experts as appropriate.

Support for students with special educational needs

18. Dr Fernando CHEUNG noted that starting from the 2016-2017 school year, the School-based Educational Psychology Service would be enhanced by improving the ratio of educational psychologist to schools progressively to 1:4 for the public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools with a large enrolment of students with special educational needs. He asked about the criteria for determining an eligible school and the timetable for full implementation of the enhanced arrangement. DS(Ed)3 responded that the current ratio of educational psychologist to schools was about 1:6 to 1:10. In the current year, the ratio in 30 schools had reached 1:4 and it was expected that another 50 schools would be benefited from this enhanced ratio shortly. She further advised that the ratio would be enhanced to 1:4 in a progressive manner as it would take time to train adequate professionals. The Administration had communicated with the two universities concerned for the purpose of meeting the demand for educational psychologists.

Issues related to school premises

19. Mr MA Fung-kwok noted that as announced in the 2017 Policy Address, the Government would encourage public sector schools to open up their facilities.

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However, as he was aware, some schools had reservations about opening up their facilities because of the possible increase in administration and management costs, school safety and legal liabilities. In this regard, Mr MA asked whether EDB and the Home Affairs Bureau ("HAB") had come up with any measures and incentives to encourage more schools to open up their facilities, and whether the opening up of school facilities would only confine to certain organizations. SED advised that EDB would collaborate with HAB to examine the need for school facilities by different stakeholders during weekends or weekdays after school hours. According to the school sector, some schools had opened up for organizing activities by District Councils. When considering opening up of more school premises, the Administration would take into account various factors, such as extra-curricular activities of the schools on Saturdays, repairs and maintenance, etc. The Administration would work with the school sector and launch a pilot scheme in due course.

(The Chairman extended the meeting for 15 minutes to allow sufficient time to complete the discussion and deal with the motion proposed by the Deputy Chairman.)

Hong Kong Scholarship for "Belt and Road" Students

20. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen recalled that in 2016, the Government had proposed to inject \$1 billion into HKSAR Government Scholarship Fund to finance the Hong Kong Scholarship for "Belt and Road" Students ("B&R Scholarship"). However, the Government had subsequently not sought funding approval from the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council ("LegCo"). Mr CHAN noted that as announced in the 2017 Policy Address, the Government would launch two B&R Scholarships for students from Malaysia and Thailand in the 2017-2018 academic year. He enquired whether the Government would seek funding approval from LegCo for financing the B&R Scholarships. SED advised that the two B&R Scholarships funded by private donations would be launched in the 2017-2018 academic year so as to attract outstanding Malay and Thai students to pursue undergraduate studies in Hong Kong.

Education for ethnic minorities

21. Ms Claudia MO was concerned that teachers faced difficulties in developing teaching materials for their non-Chinese speaking ("NCS") students under the Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework ("Learning Framework") which was implemented to help NCS students overcome the difficulties of learning Chinese as a second language. Noting that the Equal Opportunities Commission had put forward a number of recommendations in its recent submission to the Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities of LegCo, Ms MO urged EDB to follow up with the recommendations relating to the implementation of the Learning Framework and the development of Chinese language teaching materials for NCS students. DS(Ed)5 advised that to facilitate

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schools' implementation of the Learning Framework, EDB had been providing schools with learning and teaching materials/packages, including those in the form of textbooks.

Motion

22. The Chairman referred members to the motion put forward by the Deputy Chairman and the amendment motion put forth by Mr CHEUNG Kwok-kwan. The wording of the motion/amendment motion were as follows:

Motion moved by the Deputy Chairman:

"本會重申要求教育局容許學校、家長、學生有決定是否自願參加 TSA(或其新版本)的自由權利。"

(Translation)

"That this Panel reiterates our request to the Education Bureau that schools, parents and students should be given the right to freely decide whether they will participate in the Territory-wide System Assessment (or its new version) of their own accord."

Amendment motion moved by Mr CHEUNG Kwok-kwan:

"本會重申要求教育局容許學校自行處理學生是否參加 BCA。"

(Translation)

"That this Panel reiterates our request to the Education Bureau that schools should be allowed to handle on their own whether their students will participate in the Basic Competency Assessment."

23. The Chairman put to vote the amendment motion moved by Mr CHEUNG Kwok-kwan. A majority of members voted against it. The Chairman declared that the amendment motion was negated.

24. The Chairman then put to vote the motion moved by the Deputy Chairman. A majority of members voted for the motion. The Chairman declared that the motion was carried.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's written response was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)552/16-17(01) on 13 February 2017.)

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II. Any other business

25. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:15 am.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
4 October 2017