

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(4)811/19-20

(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB4/PL/ED

Panel on Education

**Minutes of meeting
held on Friday, 8 May 2020 at 10:45 am
in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex**

Members present : Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, 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
Prof Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, SBS, JP
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, SBS, JP
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
Hon Claudia MO
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming, SBS, JP
Hon MA Fung-kwok, SBS, JP
Hon Charles Peter MOK, JP
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP
Hon Dennis KWOK Wing-hang
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP
Hon CHU Hoi-dick
Hon Jimmy NG Wing-ka, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Junius HO Kwan-yiu, JP
Hon HO Kai-ming
Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding
Hon SHIU Ka-chun
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan, JP
Hon CHAN Chun-ying, JP
Hon Tanya CHAN
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-kwan, JP

Hon HUI Chi-fung
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH
Dr Hon CHENG Chung-tai
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS
Hon CHAN Hoi-yan

Members attending : Hon CHAN Kin-por, GBS, JP
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS
Hon WU Chi-wai, MH
Hon CHAN Han-pan, BBS, JP
Hon Kenneth LEUNG
Hon Alvin YEUNG
Hon LAM Cheuk-ting
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP
Hon KWONG Chun-yu
Hon Jeremy TAM Man-ho

Member absent : Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, BBS, JP

Public Officers attending : Agenda item III

Mr Kevin YEUNG, JP
Secretary for Education

Dr CHOI Yuk Lin, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Dr Verena LAU
Principal Education Officer (New Territories West)
Education Bureau

Agenda item IV

Dr CHOI Yuk-lin, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Ms Priscilla TO, JP
Deputy Secretary (2)
Education Bureau

Agenda item V

Dr CHOI Yuk-lin, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Mrs Elina CHAN
Principal Assistant Secretary
(Infrastructure and Research Support)
Education Bureau

Mrs Gloria LI
Principal Education Officer (Special Education)
Education Bureau

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

Staff in attendance : Miss Mandy NG
Senior Council Secretary (4)4

Ms Rachel WONG
Council Secretary (4)4

Ms Sandy HAU
Legislative Assistant (4)4

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I. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting

(LC Paper No. CB(4)238/19-20(01) -- Letter dated 10 December 2019 from Hon Charles Peter MOK concerning the personal information leakage arising from cyber attack on WebSAMS

LC Paper No. CB(4)238/19-20(02) -- Administration's written response dated 7 January 2020 to the letter dated 10 December 2019 from Hon Charles Peter MOK concerning the personal

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information leakage arising from cyber attack on WebSAMS

- LC Paper No. CB(4)466/19-20(01) -- Letter dated 25 March 2020 from Hon CHEUNG Kwok-kwan concerning the one-off grant for the promotion of Chinese history and culture and non-recurrent grant for supporting non-Chinese speaking students to learn Chinese history and culture
- LC Paper No. CB(4)466/19-20(02) -- Administration's written response dated 9 April 2020 to the letter dated 25 March 2020 from Hon CHEUNG Kwok-kwan concerning the one-off grant for the promotion of Chinese history and culture and non-recurrent grant for supporting non-Chinese speaking students to learn Chinese history and culture
- LC Paper No. CB(4)523/19-20(01) -- Letter dated 23 April 2020 from Hon CHEUNG Kwok-kwan concerning the provision of student grant for day-school students in the 2019-2020 school year
- LC Paper No. CB(4)523/19-20(02) -- Administration's written response dated 29 April 2020 to the letter dated 23 April 2020 from Hon CHEUNG Kwok-kwan concerning the provision of student grant for

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day-school students in the 2019-2020 school year

LC Paper No. CB(4)526/19-20(01) -- Joint letter dated 3 May 2020 from Hon Elizabeth QUAT, Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, Hon Steven HO Chun-yin and Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding requesting the Panel to discuss issues relating to professional misconduct of teachers and biased teaching materials)

Members noted the above papers issued since the last meeting.

II. Items for discussion at the next meeting

(Appendix I to LC Paper No. -- List of outstanding items for
CB(4)521/19-20 discussion)

Appendix II to LC Paper No. -- List of follow-up actions)
CB(4)521/19-20

2. The Chairman advised that the list of outstanding items for discussion and the list of follow-up actions had been updated and circulated to members.

3. Dr Priscilla LEUNG suggested that the Education Bureau ("EDB") should brief the Panel on its follow-up actions to complaints about misconduct of teachers, including the incident of Ho Lap Primary School. Mr Holden CHOW referred to his joint letter with Ms Elizabeth QUAT, Mr Wilson OR and Mr Steven HO [LC Paper No. CB(4)526/19-20(01)], and requested the Panel to discuss as soon as practicable professional misconduct of teachers and biased teaching materials. Mr Wilson OR said that in the light of the discovery of dangerous items and explosives at vacant school premises, the Panel should discuss the management of vacant school premises.

4. The Chairman advised that she would discuss members' requests with the Secretary for Education ("SED") and the Deputy Chairman.

III. Arrangements for school resumption

(LC Paper No.CB(4)539/19-20(01) -- Paper provided by the Administration)

5. SED briefed members on the arrangements for class resumption from May to June 2020, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(4)539/19-20(01)).

Discussion

Preparation for school resumption

6. Ms Claudia MO said that to her understanding, classes were suspended mainly due to mask shortage. She sought confirmation on whether there were sufficient masks for class resumption, and the number of masks (including surgical masks produced by the Correctional Services Department) provided to each school. In her view, those reusable masks distributed by the Administration, which had to be washed every day, were not suitable for use by students. Mr HUI Chi-fung expressed concern about the facilitation measures for supporting class resumption in primary schools, such as school bus and lunch services, surgical masks for children, etc.

7. SED advised that EDB had announced deferral of class resumption since the Chinese New Year holidays after taking into account the outbreak and development of COVID-19. The availability of masks was only one of the considerations for class suspension. At present, free reusable masks which came in three sizes were being distributed by the Administration. Primary and kindergarten ("KG") students would each be given two of these masks. Moreover, the mask supply in the market had improved and was relatively stable at present. Hence, mask supply should not pose a problem for class resumption. Regarding meal arrangement, schools would operate on a half day basis upon class resumption, and thus no lunch service would need to be provided under normal circumstances. EDB had made the announcement on class resumption arrangements as early as possible so as to allow schools sufficient preparation time. The school sector was confident of resolving the technical problems arising from class resumption, including school bus services.

8. The Deputy Chairman referred to his submission which summarized the views on class resumption collected from some primary, secondary and special school principals. He highlighted that the principals considered it necessary for EDB to issue detailed guidelines to schools for class resumption, such as arrangements for half-day classes, cross-boundary students ("CBS"), tuck shops, body temperature taking, conducting

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ceremonies, wearing of masks at schools, etc. They were also concerned as to whether EDB could provide schools more resources for epidemic prevention.

(Post-meeting note: The submission of the Deputy Chairman was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)541/19-20(01) on 8 May 2020.)

9. Mr CHAN Chun-ying said that as far as he knew, some schools and business organizations had used an antimicrobial coating spray developed by a local university to provide surfaces 90 days of protection against viruses. He asked whether EDB could provide the number of schools which had adopted the coating, and whether EDB would subsidize schools to use the spray. SED advised that EDB would issue schools detailed guidelines for class resumption covering, among other issues, cleansing and disinfection of school premises before class resumption. On antimicrobial coating spray, EDB had provided the relevant information to schools through school councils earlier on. Schools could choose the spray most suitable for them with regard to their needs, and deploy the recurrent funding and special anti-epidemic grant to cover expenses for the spray. According to the school sector, schools should have sufficient funding for epidemic prevention for the school resumption.

10. Noting that cross-boundary goods vehicle drivers were required to conduct nucleic acid test as a measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19, Mr LEUNG Che-cheung enquired whether EDB would consider launching a nucleic acid test scheme for students of a particular age group (if not all) in preparation for class resumption. SED advised that nucleic acid testing was not common in Hong Kong and only had a validity of six or seven days. Given that no new local confirmed case had been recorded for more than a week, the risk of community outbreak before class resumption should be relatively low, if the situation persisted. As such, it might not be necessary to roll out large-scale testing for all students and teachers.

Class resumption arrangements

11. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-kwan said that classes of Primary 5 ("P5") would resume on 8 June. Many parents expressed concern about the arrangement for P5 second-term school examination for the purpose of Secondary School Places Allocation. Under the prevailing policy, schools were required to submit the examination results to EDB by late July. In other words, the examination must be held only one month after class resumption. Moreover, he considered that implementation of e-learning during the class suspension period to support students' learning at home had widened the learning gap between students from rich and poor families. If the examination covered the topics taught during class suspension period, it might cause

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unfairness to those students without adequate resources.

12. SED advised that P5 second-term examination was an internal examination. Individual schools would set examination questions with regard to the learning progress of their students. All along, EDB had communicated closely with the school sector on the examination arrangements. According to the professional judgement of teachers, there would still be sufficient time for P5 students to prepare for the second-term examination if classes resumed on 8 June. EDB would continue to keep in view of the epidemic situation and assess whether the submission of the examination results to EDB would be held as scheduled.

13. Mr WU Chi-wai said that as classes had been suspended for a few months, it might take a long time for students to catch up with the learning progress. He asked whether EDB would advise schools how to help students keep up with the learning progress, for example, whether schools were allowed to flexibly adjust the number of school days according to school-based circumstances.

14. Mr HUI Chi-fung said that P1 to P3 would only resume classes in mid-June. Some parents considered that class resumption might not be necessary as students would only have classes for four weeks by the time summer holidays commenced. Also, some other parents were concerned whether supplementary classes would be arranged in July and August.

15. Mr Holden CHOW said that class suspension had affected students' learning progress to some extent. Many parents were concerned whether EDB would make special arrangements on summer holidays so that students could keep up with the learning progress, and if so, clear guidelines should be given.

16. SED advised that learning at home could not fully replace classroom learning. After liaising with the school sector, it was agreed that classes should be resumed by phases. Upon class resumption, schools should make their school-based decisions for the arrangements of summer holidays and supplementary lessons according to the best interest of students after consulting teachers and parents. It would be unnecessary to make special arrangements on summer holidays and supplementary lessons across the board. Besides, primary and secondary school curriculum might be flexibly adjusted within the framework of key learning stages. Hence, schools could review and flexibly adapt their curriculum in accordance with the progress of their own students, for example, arranging part of its curriculum to be taught in the next school year on a need basis to facilitate the transition between different levels or learning stages.

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17. Mr Tommy CHEUNG noted that K1 and K2 students would not resume classes in this school year and enquired whether interest classes such as interview skills courses could be held for these students during summer holidays. He explained that to prepare K2 students for the P1 admission interviews in September, KGs and parents usually arranged them to attend interview skills courses during summer holidays. Some parents were worried that their children's interview performance would be affected after months of class suspension and considered interview skills courses important for their children. He suggested that EDB could consider allowing KGs to arrange interview courses which consisted of six or eight students. SED took note of Mr Tommy CHEUNG's views and advised that the Administration would keep in view of the epidemic situation and maintain liaison with the KG sector so as to provide necessary assistance.

18. Mr CHAN Chun-ying enquired whether school tuck shops would resume operation upon class resumption; and if yes, the measures to be in place to minimize the spread of COVID-19. SED responded that upon class resumption, tuck shops could resume operation. Students were required to keep a proper social distance during recess and lining up at tuck shops.

19. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen sought clarification on whether schools would fall under the definition of public places under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) when they organized open days or hired out school premises to outside organizations. Furthermore, he was worried that after class resumption, some students might be accused of contravening Cap. 599G when gathered on the streets, resulting in confrontations between law enforcement officers and students. Mr HUI Chi-fung enquired whether parents gathered outside school entrance at school drop-off and pick-up times would be exempted from Cap. 599G.

20. SED advised that under Cap. 599G, school premises were not classified as public places on school days. However, Cap. 599G would apply to public places outside school premises. Schools and parents should explain Cap. 599G to students and remind them of the requirements of the law. On Mr HUI Chi-fung's concern, SED advised that parents should maintain appropriate social distance among themselves to prevent the spread of COVID-19 while waiting outside school entrance for drop-off or pick-up.

Cross-boundary students

21. Noting there were some 27 000 CBS living in the Mainland and studying in Hong Kong, Ms YUNG Hoi-yan enquired when they could resume schooling in Hong Kong. She was worried that additional workload would be created if teachers continued to sustain their support for CBS to

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learn at home when classes resumed on 27 May. She therefore urged EDB to formulate detailed implementation plan for class resumption for CBS as early as possible. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung sought information on the class resumption arrangements for CBS and their carers.

22. SED advised that class resumption for CBS was a complex matter involving epidemic prevention and control policies of Hong Kong and the Mainland. Discussions on the feasibility of class resumption for CBS had been held between the two governments of Hong Kong and Shenzhen. When considering whether and how CBS could resume schooling in Hong Kong, EDB had to take into account a basket of factors, such as public health risks, practical arrangements and learning needs of CBS. As a number of implementation details had yet to be finalized, it was unlikely that CBS could resume classes in the first phase of class resumption (i.e. 27 May). EDB would meet with schools admitting a considerable number of CBS to discuss class resumption arrangements for CBS and explore measures to strengthen learning support for CBS for the time being.

23. Mr Michael TIEN suggested that EDB should consider requiring CBS to present health certificate issued by the Mainland and proof of a negative testing result when entering Hong Kong. For better prevention of COVID-19, CBS should be required to undergo the test, say, every seven days or every 14 days. He asked whether and how regular EDB would require CBS to undergo the test upon class resumption, and considered that EDB could seek the advice of medical experts before deciding on the arrangements. SED said that EDB was discussing with the relevant bureaux/departments and Mainland authorities on various implementation plans, taking into account the overall situation. EDB would consider Mr TIEN's suggestion which could further protect public health and safety.

24. Dr Junius HO drew the Administration's attention that there was a small number of CBS living in Hong Kong and studying in the Mainland. If CBS studying in Hong Kong would be exempted from the 14-day compulsory quarantine requirement, he suggested that EDB should explore with the Mainland authorities as early as possible feasibility of granting the same exemption to CBS studying in Hong Kong and their parents/carers. SED advised that the discussion on class resumption arrangements would also include those who were Hong Kong residents attending schools in the Mainland.

Tutorial schools

25. Ms Claudia MO and Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that the student number and operation scale of tutorial schools were not comparable to those of formal schools. The risk of infection posed by tutorial schools was

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relatively low. Hence, it was unfair to put the some 3 000 tutorial schools under the same class resumption schedule as formal schools. Mr LEUNG considered that reopening of tutorial schools would not only facilitate students to catch up with the learning progress, but also provide valuable support to families with dual working parents. Tutorial schools, like restaurants, could make use of partitions to keep students separated. EDB should communicate with the industry as early as possible and consider afresh the reopen date for tutorial schools.

26. Mr KWONG Chun-yu, Dr CHENG Chung-tai and the Deputy Chairman questioned why tutorial schools were still not allowed to resume business when a number of prescribed businesses such as cinemas, amusement game centres and beauty parlours could resume business subject to conditions. They were worried that a lot more tutorial schools would close down, and urged EDB to allow tutorial schools to resume business as soon as possible. Mr KWONG opined that EDB might not be able to order tutorial schools to suspend classes as under the Education (Exemption) (Private Schools Offering Non-formal Curriculum) Order, they were exempted from certain requirements of the provisions of the Education Ordinance (Cap. 279) and the Education Regulations (Cap. 279A) relating to holidays. The Deputy Chairman considered that tutorial schools would not pose serious threat to public health as classes were usually conducted on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. EDB could communicate with tutorial schools to explore the possibility of early business resumption with conditions.

27. SED advised that tutorial schools, like other schools registered under Cap. 279, were required to follow the class suspension arrangement. EDB had prudently assessed the risk of infection arising from the operation of tutorial schools and the self-care ability of students in tutorial schools before making the decision. Despite the smaller number of students in tutorial schools, the risk of infection posed by tutorial schools was still high as most of them did not have sufficient space to maintain a proper social distance among students at a tender age. Yet the Administration was fully aware of the operational difficulties faced by various sectors including the tutorial schools amidst the epidemic. To help tutorial schools tide over this difficult time, tutorial schools could apply for the one-off relief subsidies under the Anti-epidemic Fund, and the time-limited financial support under the Employment Support Scheme. In fact, schools were in practice providing services by adopting diversified modes to facilitate students' learning at home and remaining open to take care of students in need during class suspension period.

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Motion

28. The Chairman put to vote as to whether the motion proposed by the Deputy Chairman, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung and Dr CHENG Chung-tai should be proceeded with (wording of the motion in the **Appendix**). At members' request, the Chairman directed that the voting bell be rung for five minutes to notify members of the voting. All members present voted for proceeding with the motion.

29. The Chairman put the motion to vote. All members voted for the motion. The Chairman declared that the motion was carried.

IV. Capital assistance loan to four non-profit-making international schools

(LC Paper No. CB(4)521/19-20(02) -- Paper provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(4)528/19-20(01) -- Letter dated 5 May 2020 from Hon IP Kin-yuen to the Chairman of Panel on Education)

30. Members noted the letter dated 5 May 2020 from the Deputy Chairman [LC Paper No. CB(4)528/19-20(01)] and the Administration's written response to the Deputy Chairman's letter (Chinese version) tabled at the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: The Chinese and English versions of the Administration's response were issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)541/19-20(02) on 8 and 29 May 2020 respectively.)

Briefing by the Administration

31. Under Secretary for Education ("US(Ed)") briefed members on the Administration's proposal to provide interest-free loans under the Loan Fund for the construction of school buildings to four non-profit-making international schools, namely the Christian Alliance International School ("CAIS"), Malvern College Hong Kong ("MCHK"), Shrewsbury International School Hong Kong ("SISHK") and French International School ("FIS"). Details of the proposal were set out in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)521/19-20(02)].

Discussion

Policy on international school development

32. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed support to the development of the international school sector. However, he cast doubt on the need for providing financial assistance to international schools for constructing school buildings at public expense, given their high level of tuition fees. In his view, international schools should be able to raise funds, for example through debentures, to finance school building projects. Meanwhile, he drew the Administration's attention to the aging conditions of some existing local schools (including special schools) operating in matchbox-style premises. He considered that priority should be accorded to students from grass-roots families (instead of those from wealthy families) in the allocation of education resources. Ms Claudia MO questioned why FIS which should be under the Ministry of Culture (France) needed to apply for the loan.

33. While supporting the proposed four loans, Mr CHEUNG Kwok-kwan expressed dissatisfaction to the slow progress of reprovisioning of schools operating in matchbox-style premises. In his view, equal importance should be given to improving the learning environment of schools accommodated in matchbox-style premises and international schools.

34. The Deputy Chairman supported the development of international schools. However, he was concerned that the support measures for international schools (including allocation of school premises/sites and offering of interest-free loans) did not apply to local private schools.

35. Mr HUI Chi-fung relayed public concerns that the existing education policies were tilted in favour of international schools. He said that many local parents could hardly afford the high tuition fees although they were eager to send their children to study in international schools. He asked whether the Administration had any measures to support local students in international schools or in local schools offering international curriculum, and whether the four international schools would admit a certain ratio of local students if loans were approved.

36. US(Ed) advised that the development of a vibrant international school sector to meet the demand for school places from non-local families living in/coming to Hong Kong was crucial in sustaining Hong Kong as an international financial and business centre. School premises/sites would be allocated for international school use only when there was a projected shortage of international school places. As a matter of fact, the proposed capital assistance was not a subvention. It was provided to the four international schools in the form of interest-free loans, which were capped at

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100% of the cost for constructing a standard-design public sector school accommodating the same number of students. Also, international schools were operated on a self-financing basis and had to bear all school expenditures. On the contrary, the Administration would support public sector schools which primarily served the local community by allocating school sites, covering construction, repairs and maintenance costs of school premises and providing recurrent funding for their daily operation. Hence, international schools had not been given any preferential treatment.

37. Ms YUNG Hoi-yan expressed support to the proposed four loans. She said that many parents were under the impression that international schools had better learning environment and university articulation pathway. To facilitate upward mobility of the next generation, she suggested that the Administration should consider requiring the four international schools to admit a certain number of local students from grass-roots families and provide them with financial assistance, if loans were approved. US(Ed) advised that in accordance with the prevailing policy, the service agreements signed between the Administration and international schools stipulated that the schools concerned had to reserve 10% of the total tuition income as scholarship and/or other financial assistance for needy students.

Loan arrangements

38. Ms Claudia MO said that to her understanding, school operators usually applied for capital assistance loans before or during the construction of school premises. She enquired about the reasons for the four international schools to make loan applications after new school premises had been constructed. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-kwan expressed similar concerns and asked whether there was a need for EDB to improve the loan application procedures.

39. US(Ed) explained that under the prevailing policy, there was no time limit for schools to make loan applications for the construction of school buildings. Deputy Secretary for Education (2) ("DS(Ed)2") supplemented that the four international schools had submitted their loan applications together with the relevant documents in or before 2019. It took some time for EDB to carefully consider the applications and examine the financial information of the schools before submitting the funding proposals to the Legislative Council.

40. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok supported in principle the proposed four loans. However, as the construction of the school premises had been completed, he enquired about the use of the loans, if approved, by the four international schools. US(Ed) advised that it was relatively difficult for schools to obtain bank loans for meeting the construction cost as they could not use the sites

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allocated as collateral. Therefore, the four international schools concerned could only obtain bridging loans from banks or funding from other sources for meeting the construction cost of school buildings. The four loans under consideration would contribute towards repayment of their bridging loans which they had taken out to finance the construction of their new school premises.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's response was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)651/19-20(02) on 29 May 2020.)

41. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok further asked whether the Administration had assessed the relevant default risks of loan repayment. Ms Claudia MO enquired about the follow-up actions that would be taken by the Administration in case the four international schools failed to repay the loans. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-kwan said that the four international schools should be able to make repayment given the keen demand of international school places in Hong Kong. He also enquired whether irregularities had been found in the course of allocating school premises/sites and offering interest-free loans to international schools in the past.

42. US(Ed) responded that in line with the prevailing policy, the Administration would sign a loan deed with each of the four international schools, if the loans were approved. Also, the loans should each be secured by a legal charge on the property in favour of the Administration. The Administration would make repayment of the loan a first call upon the liquidated assets of the school in the event of school closure, and in case of default of repayment of the loan, the Administration would take possession of the premises and assets of the school concerned.

43. Mr CHAN Chun-ying opined that the provision of sufficient international school places could help attract overseas talents to come to Hong Kong. He enquired whether there were any changes in the numbers of enrolment and student withdrawal of the four international schools amidst the epidemic of COVID-19, causing uncertainty in school revenue. In addition, noting that the four international schools were required to repay the first instalment two years (instead of the established practice of one year) after the loan was drawn, he asked whether EDB had communicated with these schools and taken into account factors, such as individual schools' cash flow, financial planning of operations, etc. to ensure that the arrangement was most suitable for them. He was worried that the four international schools might be under pressure to increase tuition fees in order to meet the repayment schedule.

44. US(Ed) advised that international schools did experience a much higher than normal attrition rates of students in the wake of COVID-19

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infection. She believed that the demand for international school places would re-bounce when the infection situation subsided. The Administration therefore proposed to have the first instalment of loan repayment be due two years after the drawdown to help the four international schools concerned to tide over this difficult period, regardless of individual schools' financial situation. At present, the four international schools were financially viable and should have no pressure to increase the tuition fees.

Control mechanism for international schools

45. Ms Claudia MO said that nowadays, the majority of international school students were Chinese, including those from the Mainland. Ms Tanya CHAN said that international schools allocated with school premises/sites by EDB were subject to the requirement of allocating at least 70% of school places to non-local students. However, among the four international schools, only FIS met the student mix ratio requirement in the 2019-2020 school year.

46. US(Ed) advised that since 2007, international schools allocated with school premises/sites were required to enroll no less than 50% of non-local students and the ratio had been raised to 70% since 2009. For non-compliance cases, EDB would take follow-up actions with the international schools concerned. Nevertheless, EDB would exercise flexibility in handling non-compliance over the student mix ratio by individual schools during the unprecedented challenging times caused by COVID-19 infection.

47. Dr CHENG Chung-tai and the Deputy Chairman were concerned that the parent company (i.e. school sponsoring body ("SSB")) of non-profit-making international schools might be profit-making organizations. The Administration would suffer loss if the schools employed financial skills to transfer wealth to their SSBs in order not to repay the loans. There was a need for the Administration to monitor the financial activities, such as wealth transfer, of the schools and their SSBs. Dr CHENG drew the Administration's attention that there was a case involving transfer of wealth by an international school and urged EDB to undertake measures to avoid recurrence of similar case. The Deputy Chairman, Dr CHENG and Ms Tanya CHAN sought more information on the four international schools, which included their SSBs and subsidiary companies.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's response was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)651/19-20(02) on 29 May 2020.)

48. DS(Ed)2 advised that SSBs of international school, who had been allocated school premises/sites or offered interest-free loans, were required to submit the school's audited accounts to EDB annually. EDB would follow up

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with the school concerned if irregularities were found. Further, these schools were not allowed to transfer income and property directly or indirectly, by way of dividend, bonus or otherwise howsoever to members of the association.

(At about 12:34 pm, the Chairman informed members that the meeting would be extended for 15 minutes to 1:00 pm.)

49. Dr CHENG Chung-tai, Ms Tanya CHAN, the Deputy Chairman and Mr Jeremy TAM were gravely concerned that while non-profit-making international schools were allocated with school premises/sites and offered interest-free loans, their tuition fees and charges such as debenture, nomination right or capital levy were still very high. For example, annual tuition fees and premium capital certificate of SISHK were \$177,000 and \$300,000 respectively. The Deputy Chairman relayed the concerns of overseas delegations and Consul-Generals that competition for enrolment in international schools was fierce as the number of local students in international schools had been on the rise, and the school fees of these schools were exorbitant. Dr CHENG, Ms CHAN and the Deputy Chairman considered it necessary for the Administration to monitor the school charges of international schools so as to ensure prudent use of public funding. Mr TAM opined that EDB should monitor international school charges as high-priced debenture would deter overseas talents to come to Hong Kong. EDB should also, as a loan condition, require the international schools receiving interest-free loans to reduce the price of debenture to a level agreed by EDB.

50. US(Ed) reiterated that while international schools were private schools operating on a self-financing and market-driven principle, mechanism was in place to monitor their tuition fee levels. Schools were required to provide information when applying to EDB for school fee revision, including schools' financial situation, parents' affordability, etc. In the light of the recent economic downturn, the four international schools would freeze tuition fees in the 2020-2021 school year. On other school charges such as debentures, some international schools would need to raise funds through debentures and nomination rights to meet the financial requirements for long-term school development. Debenture arrangement used to be a private financial arrangement between the schools and parents. However, it was noted that the fund raising programmes of private schools had become more diverse in recent years. EDB would gradually enhance the monitoring from the 2020-2021 school year with a view to formulating a more comprehensive vetting mechanism.

51. Mr Abraham SHEK declared that he was the Chairman of Board of Governors of the English Schools Foundation. While expressing support to

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the proposed four loans and the development of international school sector, he considered there was a need for the Administration to review the policy on the development of international schools and improve the monitoring mechanism, including whether subsidies should be provided for international school students, whether international schools had set aside financial assistance to needy students and had reserved certain school places for ethnic minority students, etc. Furthermore, the Administration should take forward the recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee ("PAC") to improve the international school sector and ensure education services provided by international schools were in compliance with Cap. 279.

52. US(Ed) advised that EDB had all along monitored the development of the international school sector. All schools, including international schools, were required to comply with the provisions in Cap. 279 and Cap. 279A. The Administration would continue to communicate with the international schools in order to have a better understanding of their situation and carry out enhancement measures as appropriate.

Summing up

53. The Chairman put to vote as to whether members would support the Administration to submit the proposal of providing interest-free loans to the four international schools to the Finance Committee ("FC"). Five members voted for the proposal and seven members voted against. The Chairman concluded that the Panel did not support the Administration's submission of the proposal for consideration by FC.

V. 3113ET – Extension of Hong Chi Morninghill School, Tuen Mun

(LC Paper No. CB(4)521/19-20(03) -- Paper provided by the Administration)

Briefing by the Administration

54. US(Ed) briefed members on the extension project of the Hong Chi Morninghill School, Tuen Mun ("Morninghill School"), details of which were set out in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)521/19-20(03)].

(At about 12:50 pm, with the consent of all members present, the Chairman further extended the meeting for 15 minutes to allow sufficient time for discussion.)

Discussion

Timing of the extension project

55. Mr Dennis KWOK said that parents had called for an extension of the Morninghill School early in 2013. The Administration, however, only commenced the procedures for seeking funding support from the Legislative Council for the extension seven years later. He expressed regret that the Administration had neither attached importance nor allocated resources to special education. While expressing support to the extension project, Ms Claudia MO shared Mr KWOK's concerns and enquired about the reasons for the long delay.

56. US(Ed) explained that a longer time was taken to process the project as over years, EDB had closely liaised with the Morninghill School in examining different extension options, including in-situ alteration, in order to find the best option for students and long term school development. After the construction of a new annex block was decided, time had been spent on identifying suitable site, conducting feasibility studies and overcoming site constraints.

57. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed support to the extension project as the Morninghill School was operated in "matchbox-style premises" sharing public facilities with another school. He further pointed out that 41 special schools had to be enhanced for the implementation of the New Senior Secondary academic structure and extension of years of study since 2009. To his understanding, the improvement works of 23 of them had not completed yet. He requested the Administration to provide written information on the causes of delay in and expected completion date of each of improvement works of special schools before submitting the funding approval to FC.

Admin

58. Principal Assistant Secretary (Infrastructure and Research Support) ("PAS(I&RS)") explained that EDB was taking forward 21 special school improvement works, which were at various works stages. The preparatory progress of the works projects concerned were constrained by various factors, e.g. time required to agree on the design option and then finalization of design, unforeseen circumstances and site conditions that led to substantive revisions in project design, etc. While EDB would continue to liaise with the schools concerned in taking forward the projects in an expeditious manner, EDB had also made every effort to explore feasible ways to speed up improvement works, including the appointment of term contractors for minor capital works since early 2019 to save the time required for launching tendering exercise for each construction project.

Action

Facilities of the new annex block

59. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok expressed support to the extension project. As another school operating under Hong Chi Association in Tai Po provided services for students of different grades of intellectual disabilities, he enquired about the target service users of the Morninghill School. Ms Claudia MO commented that the facilities of Mary Rose School, a special school in Kowloon Tong, were excellent in catering for students' needs. She asked whether the facilities in the new annex block would be as good as those in Mary Rose School and the number of additional places that could be provided by the new annex block.

60. US(Ed) advised that the Morninghill School was for students with mild intellectual disability. The extension project would result in 75 additional places. The Administration had taken into account various learning needs of these students when formulating the design proposals of the new annex block.

61. The Deputy Chairman welcomed the extension project to improve the teaching and learning environment of the Morninghill School. As the new annex block was limited in open space, he enquired whether students of the Morninghill School could use the basketball court next to the project site for student activities. Dr CHENG Chung-tai sought reasons for not making the basketball court a part of the new annex block.

62. US(Ed) advised that as the basketball court was for community use, it could not be designated for the sole use of the Morninghill School. Nevertheless, students of the Morninghill School could continue to use the basketball court for student activities.

63. Ms Tanya CHAN expressed concern over the long delay of the extension project. She sought more information on the drainage reserve area adjacent to the project site and the barrier-free access of the new annex block. PAS(I&RS) assured members that the new annex block would provide barrier-free entrances/exits and facilities. On drainage reserve area, it was non-building area with underground drainage facilities. As the drainage reserve area had taken up some 30% of the total project site area, available area for constructing the proposed new annex block was further limited.

64. Dr CHENG Chung-tai asked whether carpark space would be provided at the new annex block, and requested the Administration to give a list of facilities to be provided for the new annex block before submitting the proposal to the Public Works Subcommittee ("PWSC"). US(Ed) undertook to provide the list and advised that carpark space would be available at the new annex block.

Action

Impact of extension works

65. Mr Dennis KWOK enquired whether specific measures would be in place to minimize the possible impact of extension works on students and parents, such as the ingress and egress of construction vehicles, noise nuisance, etc. Ms Claudia MO asked whether window insulation would be provided for the existing school premises to minimize the noise impact as children with mild intellectual disability were very sensitive to noise.

66. US(Ed) explained that teachers and students would not be affected during construction as the project site was small and separated from the existing school premises by a road. Moreover, school management would closely monitor the construction works to avoid works impact on students.

67. The Deputy Chairman noted that the existing school premises and the new annex block would be separated by a road, and asked about the measures to be adopted to safeguard road safety of teachers, students and parents who needed to commute frequently between the two buildings. Dr CHENG Chung-tai shared similar concerns.

68. PAS(I&RS) advised that EDB and the Morninghill School were fully aware that the existing and new school blocks were separated by a road and had therefore taken this into account when liaising with the Transport Department, the Architectural Services Department and the Morninghill School on the project design. The traffic volume of Yeung Tsing Road was relatively low and all along, teachers of the Morninghill School had taken the opportunity to enhance road safety awareness among students on their way to the basketball court next to the project site for activities. US(Ed) supplemented that it was not necessary for students to commute between the two school buildings for classes.

69. The Deputy Chairman commented that the information provided in the Administration's paper was insufficient and requested the Administration to include more information about the School, such as the number of classes and students, in its paper to PWSC. US(Ed) undertook to provide more information including basic information of the Morninghill School and information concerning the extension project, for the deliberation of PWSC.

Summing up

70. The Chairman concluded that the Panel supported the Administration's submission of the proposal to PWSC.

Action

VI. Any other business

71. The Chairman reminded members that the next Panel meeting would be held on 5 June 2020 and on the instruction of Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, the next meeting for the election of Chairman of the Subcommittee to Study the Development of Textbooks and Teaching Materials for Kindergartens, Primary and Secondary Schools would be held on 29 May 2020 from 2:00 pm to 2:30 pm.

72. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-kwan suggested a longer time for the Subcommittee meeting. Ms YUNG Hoi-yan requested the Legal Adviser to the Subcommittee to attend the whole Subcommittee meeting. The Chairman advised that she would follow up with the Secretariat and arrange the Legal Adviser to attend the Subcommittee meeting.

73. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:13 pm.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
14 July 2020

教育事務委員會
Panel on Education

在 2020 年 5 月 8 日的會議上
就議程項目"復課安排"通過的議案
Motion passed under the agenda item
"Arrangements for school resumption" at the meeting on 8 May 2020

議案措辭

本委員會促請政府盡快讓補習學校恢復營業。

(葉建源議員、梁耀忠議員及鄭松泰議員動議)

Wording of the Motion

(Translation)

This Panel urges the Government to allow tutorial schools to resume operation as soon as possible.

(Moved by Hon IP Kin-yuen, Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung and Dr Hon CHENG Chung-tai)