

立法會 *Legislative Council*

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Ref : CB4/PL/ED

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

Purpose

This report which is made in accordance with Rule 77(14) of the Rules of Procedure of the Legislative Council ("LegCo") gives an account of the work of the Panel on Education ("the Panel") during the 2019-2020 legislative session.

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 38 members, with Hon Regina IP LAU Suk-yee 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

Targeted Taught Postgraduate Programmes Fellowships Scheme

4. It was announced in the 2019 Policy Address that the Targeted Taught Postgraduate ("TPg") Programmes Fellowships Scheme would be launched to provide fellowships to meritorious local students to pursue TPg programmes that meet Hong Kong's development needs.

5. The Panel received a briefing from the Administration on the proposed implementation arrangements for the Scheme. According to the Administration, the Scheme would be implemented on a pilot basis for five cohorts from the 2020-2021 academic year. Eligible programmes covered by the Scheme should encompass one or more of the following seven priority areas which were conducive to the development of Hong Kong: STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics); Promoting good health; Developing a sustainable environment; Enhancing Hong Kong's strategic position as a regional and international business centre; Advancing emerging research; Promoting the creative industries; and Promoting the cultural and heritage industries.

6. Some members expressed support for the establishment of seven priority areas with manpower needs and market demand under the Scheme. They considered it important to encourage universities to nurture talents for industries with growing manpower requirements. Some other members, however, expressed concern that ineligible programmes might be perceived as not conducive to the development of Hong Kong. These members were of the view that the Administration should not solely nurture talents in response to economic needs. TPg programmes in arts, science, humanities and social sciences, etc. were also conducive to the long-term development of Hong Kong. The Administration should expand the coverage of the Scheme to include all TPg programmes so as to nurture talents of different areas. There was also a suggestion that the number of fellowship places under the Scheme should be increased to cover TPg programmes offered by self-financing universities.

7. The Administration explained that seven priority areas embodying inter-disciplinary knowledge were identified after consulting the eight University Grants Committee-funded ("UGC-funded") universities and taking into consideration the manpower requirements of different disciplines. After the universities had completed assessing the applications in the first cohort of the Scheme, UGC would invite them to offer comments on the implementation arrangements for the second cohort (i.e. the 2021-2022 academic year). UGC would also conduct a timely review of the Scheme and, depending on its effectiveness, make recommendations to the Administration on the way forward, including whether adjustment to the coverage of the priority areas was needed and whether TPg programmes operated by self-financing universities would be covered by the Scheme in future.

Self-financing post-secondary education

8. Members generally did not object to the revamp of the Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education ("CSPE"), including the proposed honoraria for its non-local members.

9. Members noted that the revamp was to implement the recommendation in the review report of the Task Force on Review of Self-financing Post-secondary Education that CSPE should provide strategic and policy advice on the development of the self-financing sector, including measures to facilitate, support and coordinate the development of the self-financing sector in its operation, quality and governance. Members supported the setting up of the Sub-committee on Quality Assurance under the revamped CSPE to oversee issues relating to the quality of self-financing post-secondary education. Some members were concerned how the Sub-committee would collaborate with the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications in raising the standards of the self-financing sector to meet public expectation. There was also concern on the progress on the review of the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap. 320) to promote coherence in quality assurance, governance, positioning and overall coordination of the sector.

10. The Administration also consulted the Panel on its proposal to establish the Enhancement and Start-up Grant Scheme for Self-financing Post-secondary Education, which would provide financial support for eligible self-financing post-secondary institutions to develop self-financing sub-degree or undergraduate programmes that meet market needs but require high start-up costs, so as to help the institutions launch such programmes.

11. Members were in general expressed support for the Administration's proposal, which encouraged the self-financing post-secondary institutions to develop their distinct character and niche areas, and launch quality programmes that would better respond to community needs. They considered that the Scheme would enhance the recognition of the self-financing post-secondary sector. There were suggestions that the Administration should maintain the long-term viability and sustainability of the approved programmes, and consider including part-time and top-up self-financing programmes under the Scheme. A member, however, expressed reservation about the Scheme. The member considered that self-financing institutions were operated on a self-financing and market-driven basis and should not be largely

financed with public funds. In particular, the Administration should consider whether additional public resources should continue to be channelled to the self-financing programmes with low student enrolment.

Provision of a subsidy to day-school students

12. The Panel discussed the Administration's proposal of providing a subsidy of \$2,500 for each student enrolled in secondary day-school, primary school, special school or kindergarten ("KG") 2019-2020 school year ("student grant"). According to the Administration's proposal, the student grant was non-means-tested and 900 000 students would be benefited.

13. While generally supported the proposal, members were concerned about the long processing time that might be required by the Administration for disbursing the student grant. They urged the Administration to keep the application and approval procedures simple in order to facilitate early disbursement and to avoid high operating costs. Some members suggested that the Administration should consider making use of schools' student information and payment online systems in processing applications and disbursing the subsidy.

14. There was also concern about parents' heavy financial burden in defraying education-related expenses. Some members suggested that the Administration should constantly review ways to assist needy students, such as increasing the study grant. To assist parents to defray education-related expenses during the class suspension period as a result of the outbreak of COVID-19, an additional \$1,000 was provided to each recipient of the student grant for the 2019-2020 school year, i.e. the amount of student grant of this year had been increased from \$2,500 to \$3,500.

School resumption arrangements

15. The Panel was briefed on the arrangements of school resumption announced by the Education Bureau ("EDB"). In the light of the outbreak of COVID-19, all schools in Hong Kong had deferred the resumption of classes since the Chinese New Year holidays. As the epidemic situation had shown signs of easing, the Administration considered that schools could resume classes by phases from May to June. Members called on the Administration to facilitate schools in getting well prepared for school resumption to ensure the safety and health of teachers and students.

16. Members expressed concern that despite adoption of various methods to support students' learning at home during the class suspension period, students' learning progress was somewhat affected, in particular for those from grass-roots families who lacked the resources for undertaking e-learning at home. They considered that EDB should advise schools how to assist students in catching up with the pre-scheduled learning progress, such as revising summer holiday schedule and arranging supplementary lessons. Some members also expressed concern about the arrangements for Primary 5 ("P5") second-term examination for the purpose of Secondary School Places Allocation.

17. The Administration advised that schools could suitably adjust their teaching arrangement upon class resumption to assist students in keeping up their learning progress, such as arranging supplementary lessons and adjusting summer holidays, according to their school-based circumstances and students' needs. Under all circumstances, schools should consult representatives of teachers and parents, and inform parents of the revised summer holiday schedule and supplementary lesson arrangements, if any. On the arrangements for P5 second-term examination, 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.

18. Members noted with concern that a considerable number of cross-boundary students ("CBS") would not be able to resume schooling when schools in Hong Kong resumed classes. They considered that detailed implementation plan for class resumption for CBS should be formulated as early as possible. Some members also urged the Administration to help Hong Kong residents attending schools in the Mainland resume schooling. There were suggestions that upon class resumption, the Administration should consider requiring CBS to present health certificate and a negative testing result for say, every seven or 14 days, and exploring the feasibility of exempting CBS and their parents/carers from the 14-day compulsory quarantine. The Administration explained that class resumption arrangements for CBS involved immigration control of the two places, epidemic prevention and control policies and transportation arrangements, etc. The Administration had been discussing with the Shenzhen Government and the school sector on the feasibility of class resumption for CBS, and would announce the implementation details as soon as possible.

19. Some members pointed out that many tutorial schools were experiencing financial difficulties after classes had been suspended for

months. These members considered it unfair to put tutorial schools under the same class resumption schedule for formal schools as they were relatively small-scale operations. The Panel passed a motion urging the Government to allow tutorial schools to resume operation as soon as possible.

Development of textbooks and teaching materials for kindergartens, primary and secondary schools

20. The Panel deliberated on the development, selection and monitoring of textbooks and teaching resource materials for KGs, primary and secondary schools.

21. Some members said that textbooks for most subjects in KGs, primary and secondary schools had undergone a rigorous textbook review mechanism. A one-off professional consultancy service for publishers of senior secondary Liberal Studies ("LS") textbooks had been introduced in September 2019 with a view to enhancing the quality of those textbooks already published on the market. Also, guidelines had been provided by EDB to remind schools of the necessity for setting out well-defined school-based criteria for the selection of learning and teaching materials and devising a review mechanism for evaluating and updating the learning and teaching resources adopted by schools. All these measures were effective in ensuring that the learning and teaching materials adopted by schools were in line with the school curriculum, of good quality and fit for student learning. Suppressing the school sector would be harmful to the sector.

22. Some other members, however, pointed out that despite EDB's various measure to ensure the quality of textbooks and teaching materials, many parents had complained about biased textbooks and teaching materials prepared by teachers. A few teachers did not adopt an objective and impartial manner in preparing school-based teaching materials. They prepared teaching materials based on their political stance and with biased and negative views, misled their students and imparted negative values. There were suggestions that EDB should include LS textbooks in the textbook review mechanism, review the school-based mechanism on teaching materials, strengthen the promotion of values education, involve members of parent-teacher associations and school management committees in monitoring the resource materials selected and developed by teachers, seriously follow up inappropriate teaching materials and take punitive actions against professional misconduct of teachers in developing teaching materials.

Question-setting mechanism of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination

23. In the light of the wide public concern on question 2(c) of the History 1 examination paper in the 2020 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination ("HKDSE"), the Panel held a special meeting to discuss the follow-up actions taken/to be taken by EDB and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority ("HKEAA") in respect of the examination question concerned.

24. Question 2(c) in History Paper 1 of the 2020 HKDSE was a compulsory question about Sino-Japanese relations in the first half of the 20th century. The question provided two pieces of information and stated that "Japan did more good than harm to China in the period 1900-1945". EDB had requested HKEAA to invalidate the examination question concerned.

25. Members expressed different views on the examination question concerned and requested HKEAA to release the marking scheme of the question. Some members supported the final decision of HKEAA to invalidate the question concerned as they considered that the question was biased, misleading and seriously hurting the feeling and dignity of the Chinese people who were victims of the Japanese invasion which caused millions of deaths across the country. There was no room for discussion in the question as there could only be one possible answer. The question in fact had fostered a wrong set of values. Students would study the examination question concerned in the coming years should it not be invalidated. Some other members did not support the invalidation of the question concerned as this would cause unfairness to the candidates having taken the examination, and have adverse impact on the reputation and international recognition of HKDSE. These members considered that the question concerned was an open question, the format of which had been widely adopted by public examinations. Students were expected to draw on the knowledge they had learnt to argue one way or the other. The Administration was putting politics before professionalism.

26. The Administration stressed that the decision to invalidate the examination question concerned was purely professional without any political considerations. In fact, the question by design had serious faults. It was not compatible with the History curriculum objectives and the information provided there did not fall into the level of understanding of the students. From the assessment point of view, a question with serious faults in design could not come up with a reliable, objective marking

scheme to differentiate students. The question concerned was invalidated to safeguard the education profession and address the public concern. It was in the interests of students and the public.

27. Members noted that a moderation committee was set up for each of the 24 Category A subjects of HKDSE to develop examination questions and marking schemes in alignment with the Curriculum and Assessment Guide and the Assessment Framework. In view of the problematic History examination question, some members raised concern about whether the mechanism had been strictly complied with during the preparation of the examination paper. They considered that a review should be conducted on the mechanism for setting and moderating HKDSE questions, including the mechanism for appointing members of the moderation committee, to ensure the quality of examination papers.

28. According to the Administration, EDB and the representatives of the education sector and HKEAA would set up a task force to review the issue. EDB had requested HKEAA to investigate the incident, review the question setting and moderation mechanism of HKDSE, and whether the mechanism had been strictly complied with in the question setting and moderation of the History examination paper. EDB would also review the existing mechanism to fulfill its monitoring role in HKDSE Examination, with a view to ensuring the sustained quality of HKDSE Examination and examination questions.

Interest-free loans to non-profit-making international schools

29. The Panel discussed the Administration's proposal of providing interest-free loans under the Loan Fund for the construction of school buildings to four non-profit-making international schools (viz. Christian Alliance International School, Malvern College Hong Kong, Shrewsbury International School Hong Kong and French International School).

30. Members noted that while the loans would be granted to the four international schools for the construction of school premises, the respective school buildings had been completed. Some members were concerned about the use of loans, if approved, by the schools. The Administration explained that as the four international schools could not use the sites allocated as collateral, they could only obtain bridging loans from banks or funding from other sources for meeting the construction cost of school buildings. The four loans, if approved, would contribute towards repayment of their bridging loans which they had taken out to finance the construction.

31. Collection of high tuition fees and school charges by international schools was another concern of members. Members noted that in the 2019-2020 school year, the median of tuition fees of the four international schools ranged from \$117,522 to \$192,920 and other school charges (such as debentures, school construction fees and nomination right fees) from \$28,000 to \$2,400,000. Some members cast doubt on the need to offer interest-free loans to the four schools which were charging exorbitant tuition fees and school charges. These members considered it necessary for the Administration to strengthen the mechanism for monitoring fee collection of international schools to ensure effective use of public resources. There was also a suggestion that international schools should provide scholarships and/or other financial assistance for needy students to ensure that they would not be deprived of the opportunity to receive quality education owing to a lack of financial means.

32. According to the Administration, although international schools were private schools operating on a self-financing and market-driven principle, an established mechanism had been in place to monitor their tuition fee levels. On other school charges, 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, as the fund-raising programmes of private schools had become more diverse in recent years, EDB will gradually enhance the monitoring from the 2020/21 school year with a view to formulating a more comprehensive vetting mechanism.

33. Members noted that international schools applying for capital assistance loan should be non-profit-making organizations. Some members expressed concern that the school sponsoring bodies ("SSBs") of non-profit-making international schools might not be non-profit-making organizations. The Administration would suffer loss should the schools employ financial skills to transfer wealth to their SSBs in order not to repay the loans. They considered that monitoring measures over the financial arrangement of international schools and their SSBs should be in place to ensure that resources would be put to intended use. The Administration explained that SSBs of international schools, 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 with the schools 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.

34. The Panel passed two motions urging the Administration to impose loan conditions requiring the four schools concerned to, amongst others, cap the tuition fees and other charges, provide integrated education for students with special educational needs, set up sufficient scholarship schemes, and holistically review the policy initiatives on the development of international schools.

Capital works projects for schools

35. The Panel was consulted on two capital works projects, viz. the partial redevelopment and conversion of the Hong Kong Chinese Women's Club College and the extension of Hong Chi Morninghill School, and supported the submission of the relevant proposals to the Public Works Subcommittee and Finance Committee.

Meetings held

36. During the period between October 2019 and July 2020, the Panel held a total of 8 meetings.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
8 July 2020

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 2019-2020 session*

Chairman	Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
Deputy Chairman	Hon IP Kin-yuen
Members	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 Alice MAK Mei-kuen, BBS, 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 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

(Total : 38 Members)

Clerk Ms Angel WONG

Legal Adviser Miss Joyce CHAN

Date 1 June 2020

* Changes in membership are set out in **Annex to Appendix II**

Panel on Education

**Changes in membership
(Year 2019-2020)**

Member	Relevant date
Hon Kenneth LAU Ip-keung, BBS, MH, JP	Up to 20 October 2019
Hon YIU Si-wing, BBS	Up to 3 November 2019
Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong, GBS, JP	Up to 3 November 2019
Hon LUK Chung-hung, JP	Up to 3 November 2019
Hon CHAN Kin-por, GBS, JP	Up to 20 November 2019
Hon AU Nok-hin	Up to 16 December 2019
Hon HO Kai-ming	Up to 31 May 2020