

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(4)676/20-21
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by the Administration)

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Panel on Education

**Minutes of policy briefing-cum-meeting
held on Friday, 4 December 2020, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex**

Members present : Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, BBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, GBS, JP
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, SBS, JP
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon MA Fung-kwok, GBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP
Hon Christopher CHEUNG Wah-fung, SBS, JP
Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP
Hon Jimmy NG Wing-ka, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Junius HO Kwan-yiu, JP
Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan, JP
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-kwan, JP
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH
Dr Hon CHENG Chung-tai
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP

Public Officers attending : Agenda item III

Mr Kevin YEUNG, JP
Secretary for Education

Ms Michelle LI, JP
Permanent Secretary for Education

Dr CHOI Yuk-lin, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Mr Esmond LEE, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education (1)

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

Mrs CHAN SIU Suk-fan
Deputy Secretary for Education (3)

Mr Edward TO, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education (4)

Mrs HONG CHAN Tsui-wah
Deputy Secretary for Education (5)

Ms May CHAN, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education (6)

Agenda item IV

Dr CHOI Yuk-lin, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Mr Kasper NG
Principal Assistant Secretary (Further Education)
Education Bureau

Vocational Training Council

Dr Michael WANG
Deputy Executive Director

Dr NG Chak-man
Head of Information Technology Services Division

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

Staff in attendance : Miss Wincy LO
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

No information paper has been issued so far.

II. Items for discussion at the next meeting

(Appendix I to LC Paper No. CB(4)231/20-21 -- List of outstanding items for discussion)

2. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting scheduled for 4 January 2021 at 4:30 pm:

- (a) Review Report of the Task Force on Review of School Curriculum;
- (b) Governance and security issues relating to recent incidents on university campus and follow-up work; and
- (c) School bullying.

(Post-meeting note: The regular meeting had been re-scheduled from 4 January to 8 January 2021. Members were informed of the meeting arrangements and revised agenda via LC Paper Nos. CB(4)303/20-21 and CB(4)328/20-21.)

3. The Chairman informed members that as the COVID-19 outbreak in Hong Kong had been getting more severe, the special meeting originally scheduled for 12 December 2020 had been rescheduled to a later date.

(Post-meeting note: The special meeting has been re-scheduled to 19 January 2021.)

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III. Briefing by the Secretary for Education on the Chief Executive's 2020 Policy Address

(LC Paper No. CB(4)231/20-21(01) -- Paper provided by the Administration)

Other relevant documents

The Chief Executive's 2020 Policy Address
(issued on 25 November 2020)

The Chief Executive's 2020 Policy Address Supplement
(issued on 25 November 2020)

Briefing by the Administration

4. The Secretary for Education ("SED") briefed members on the initiatives on education in the 2020 Policy Address, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(4)231/20-21(01)).

(*Post-meeting note:* The speaking note of SED was issued to members via LC Paper No. CB(4)262/20-21(01) on 4 December 2020.)

Discussion

Quality of teachers

5. Mr Christopher CHEUNG pointed out that political conflicts had been brought into campus and some teachers had committed professional misconduct such as posting inappropriate messages on social media, misleading students to participate in street violence, etc. Many parents lost confidence in the education system of Hong Kong and sent their children to study abroad. He enquired whether the Education Bureau ("EDB") would review the education system comprehensively and address the inadequacies to restore parents' confidence, and whether a heavier penalty would be imposed on teachers who committed professional misconduct to safeguard students' well-being.

6. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-kwan was of the view that EDB should strengthen its gate-keeping role in quality assurance for the education sector. To restore public confidence in the education system, EDB should not be lenient with teachers violating professional misconduct or the law.

7. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung appreciated EDB's efforts in enhancing the quality of education in Hong Kong. However, he pointed out that the decline in

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international ranking of Hong Kong's universities had reflected many problems in the education system which needed to be redressed. Noting that some teachers even distorted the historical facts of the Opium War, he supported EDB's cancellation of registration of teachers committing professional misconduct and urged EDB to monitor and enhance teachers' quality.

8. SED stressed that EDB attached importance to the quality of teachers and trusted that most teachers had maintained professionalism in discharging their teaching duties irrespective of their political stance. He further advised that EDB had completed the investigation of some 200 complaint cases about teachers' professional misconduct and was summarizing the experience gained from handling those cases for considering improvements to the mechanism of handling such complaints, including imposing appropriate penalty on substantiated cases in a fair and reasonable manner. On Mr Christopher CHEUNG's suggestion of reviewing the education system, SED advised that various task forces had conducted in-depth reviews of eight key areas of education since the beginning of the current term of Government. EDB was now following up on the recommendations of the task forces.

9. Mr KWOK Wai-keung suggested that to uphold teachers' professional conduct, EDB should review the mechanism on handling the registration of teachers committing misconduct, strengthen teacher training and qualifications and improve the monitoring mechanism to ensure teachers' teaching content were in line with the aims and objectives of the school curriculum.

10. Ms Elizabeth QUAT opined that while considerable resources had been allocated to nurture talents, teachers' quality and students' behaviour were far from satisfactory. Students were instilled with biased political views and misled by some teachers to participate in violent protests and illegal acts during the social incident last year. To protect students' well-being, EDB should attach importance to cultivating both teachers' and students' positive values, sense of national identity, law-abidingness, and their understanding of national security. She asked whether EDB would enhance the training for teachers to meet the expectations of the general public with an implementation timeline.

11. SED advised that EDB would enhance the quality of teachers by measures covering the entry to the profession, training and management, enhance liaison with teacher education institutions for placing heavier emphasis on teachers' professional conduct in pre-service training for prospective teachers; and step up training requirements for newly appointed teachers, serving teachers and teachers to be promoted, with contents covering professional roles, values and conduct of teachers.

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12. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan considered it necessary to monitor teachers' performance in classes. She asked the reasons for not installing closed-circuit television systems ("CCTVs") in school premises which was a practicable means for monitoring the quality of teachers. SED advised that installation of CCTVs in all schools required careful consideration as it involved complicated factors.

13. Mr Holden CHOW considered that EDB should establish a clear mechanism for the public to make complaints against teachers' misconduct, under which procedures should be simple and identity of the complainants should be kept confidential. SED took note of member's suggestion and advised that to safeguard complainants' rights, EDB would seek the complainant's consent before providing information to the school concerned. In fact, EDB would follow up all complaints seriously even if they were anonymous and take necessary actions when sufficient evidence was collected.

Senior secondary Liberal Studies

14. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-kwan said that the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong supported the reform of Liberal Studies ("LS"), given the controversies over the subject in the society. While agreeing that the Administration was in a correct direction to mark the public examination result of the subject as a pass or a fail and to put in place a Recommended Textbook List, he enquired whether there would be measures for monitoring the quality of LS teaching materials, including supplementary information.

15. SED advised that same as other subjects, LS teachers would exercise their expertise in developing teaching materials to cater for students with diverse learning needs. EDB would continue to explore measures to facilitate teachers in developing appropriate teaching materials. Given that the Subcommittee to Study the Development of Textbooks and Teaching Materials for Kindergartens, Primary and Secondary Schools had been formed, he believed that members' concern on teaching materials could be addressed at the Subcommittee.

16. Mr Holden CHOW and Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok said that many teaching materials of LS subject contained biased information and some LS teachers imposed their political stance on students. Hence, they supported the reform of LS and agreed to the Administration's decision to reorganize the curriculum content of LS to attach importance in cultivating students' positive values and attitudes and sense of national identity, and their learning about national development, the Constitution and Basic Law education and the rule of law. Mr CHOW asked how EDB could ensure that LS teachers would teach and prepare teaching materials in accordance with the objectives of the school curriculum.

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17. SED advised that the school management (including the principals and subject chairpersons) had the responsibility to monitor teachers' performance. On the government level, EDB had always been monitoring the quality of learning and teaching through external school reviews and focus inspections, and providing specific professional advice to enhance schools' continuous development. EDB would formulate a well-thought-out plan to implement the revamped curriculum.

18. Mrs Regina IP was pleased that EDB had eventually adopted her recommendations to simplify the grading of LS subject to just pass or fail and strengthen the components of Chinese history and national education in the subject. However, she expressed disappointment that the review of LS conducted by the Task Force on Review of School Curriculum ("Task Force") had failed to address parents' concerns. She considered it necessary to reduce the curriculum content of the subject and make use of the lesson time to enhance students' understanding of our country in a comprehensive and serious manner. Making reference to the teaching of American history in the secondary schools in United States, she pointed out that national education should be made compulsory for all students. Textbooks for the subject should consist of relevant topics on Chinese history, Constitution and the Basic Law. While EDB should issue guidelines to publishers to ensure accurate information in the textbooks, schools should be required to use the textbooks approved by EDB.

19. SED agreed to Mrs Regina IP's view that students' understanding of our country should be enhanced and advised that EDB would attach importance to promoting students' comprehensive understanding of national development.

20. Dr Junius HO supported the reform of LS subject as the Report of the Task Force had revealed various problems of LS subject, including its curriculum, teachers' teaching strategies and mode of assessment. However, he considered that the revamped subject should focus on national security education, civic education, Constitution and the Basic Law, and no examination or mark submission should be required. SED advised that there were diverse views on whether LS subject should be a public examination subject. Some people expressed concern that adopting a pass or fail grading system for the subject would demotivate students from learning. To strike a balance between reducing students' examination pressure and maintaining their learning motivation, the grading system of "attained" or "not attained" was therefore adopted. Also, the examination results might facilitate universities in considering admission of students. The Chairman did not subscribe to the view that examinations were required for enhancing students' motivation for learning.

21. Mr KWOK Wai-keung held a strong view that LS subject should be abolished as some teachers had misled students and imparted negative values

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while teaching LS. A new subject with new curriculum content should be created. He also suggested that teachers should integrate more vivid daily life examples to illustrate abstract concepts and complicated issues when teaching the new subject. Ms Elizabeth QUAT shared the view that LS subject should no longer be a compulsory examination subject. It should be replaced with a new subject.

22. SED advised that LS enabled students to make connections with and integrate the concepts and knowledge across different disciplines, and see things in multiple perspectives. All these were essential for them to cope with the demands of our society in the future. Having considered the advantages of the curriculum, the subject was retained with more emphasis placed on cultivating students' positive values and attitudes, as well as learning about national development.

23. The Chairman appreciated EDB's efforts in reforming LS subject. However, she was of the view that LS subject should be abolished. As EDB decided not to abolish the subject, she sought information on the timing for implementing the revamped LS curriculum, monitoring of the quality of the subject during the transition period, specified training and qualifications required for teaching the revamped subject, and measures to ensure proper development of teaching materials.

24. Ms Starry LEE sought clarification on the impact of the reform of LS subject on existing Secondary Four to Secondary Six students, especially whether students' chances of entering local and overseas universities would be affected.

25. SED advised that the reformed subject was expected to be implemented in the next school year at the earliest for all Secondary Four students, subject to the review of curriculum content, teachers' training, textbook and teaching materials by the Curriculum Development Council. The existing cohorts of students taking LS would not be affected by the subject reform as they would continue their original study and assessment arrangements. Meetings would be held with local universities to explore and implement the arrangement to bridge the subject with universities' admission. As the aims and objectives of the curriculum of LS would be preserved, SED believed that the reform of LS would not affect local and overseas recognition of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education ("HKDSE") Examination qualifications. In addition, the majority of the revised curriculum content of the subject would be based on the existing curriculum, SED was confident that teachers could adapt to the revised curriculum after training. EDB would continue to discuss with schools to ensure a smooth transition.

26. Dr CHENG Chung-tai opined that instead of introducing national education under the guise of the revamped LS curriculum, EDB should abolish

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LS subject. He questioned the readiness of the existing LS teachers to teach the new LS subject according to the revised curriculum content. SED advised that training would be provided to enable teachers to understand the changes relating to the curriculum content, assessment and pedagogies. EDB would strengthen inspection to ensure smooth implementation of the subject when the revamped curriculum was implemented.

27. Mr Abraham SHEK remarked that LS subject could be replaced by the teaching of the Basic Law and examination was not necessary as students could learn through discussions and debates. In fact, Hong Kong's education should not be politicized. Apart from LS subject, there were various aspects of education that should be carefully reviewed, including what to teach and how to teach. More time and resources should be devoted to schools for providing quality education to students.

Moral, civic and national education

28. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-kwan was in full support that "law-abidingness" and "empathy" were added as the priority values and attitudes to strengthen the implementation of values education in schools. However, Ms YUNG Hoi-yan expressed concern about the effectiveness of EDB's initiative to strengthen students' moral values as some people in the community inculcated negative values in students, such as the concepts of achieving justice by violating the law and jumping bail. She asked how EDB would work with schools and teachers in preventing students from being affected by wrong concepts/behaviours. SED advised that law-abidingness and responsibility were priority values and attitudes in the school curriculum and urged the public to set a good example for the youngsters.

29. Ms YUNG Hoi-yan further opined that not much progress had been made in the promotion of civic and national education due to a lack of comprehensive policy. She suggested that EDB might collaborate with the Department of Justice ("DoJ") and the social welfare sector to explore targeted measures to promote civic and national education. Ms Starry LEE also expressed concern about the lack of national education in schools. SED advised that all along, EDB and some government bureaux/departments such as the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, DoJ, Home Affairs Department, etc. had been working together to promote national education in the area under their purview. EDB would continue to seek the views of relevant bureaux so as to provide schools with appropriate and more diversified support in areas such as the school curriculum and learning and teaching.

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National security education

30. The Deputy Chairman enquired what EDB had done to promote national security education in schools, universities and higher education institutions since the promulgation of National Security Law. Mr MA Fung-kwok expressed concern that recently, some university students still advocated independence for Hong Kong after the National Security Law had been implemented. He enquired how national security education would be promoted within and beyond the curricula in schools and universities, such as integrating the learning contents about national security education into relevant subjects and organising student activities for promoting national security education, etc. Moreover, Mr MA sought information on whether training would be provided to support principals and teachers in delivering national security education properly and whether new teaching staff would be hired with a view to implementing national security education effectively.

31. SED advised that to support schools in promoting national security education, EDB was updating the curriculum, developing teaching materials and providing training on Constitution, the Basic Law and national security to teachers. As regards promotion of national security education in universities, EDB had communicated with University Grants Committee-funded universities on the legal obligations.

Curriculum development

32. Ms Starry LEE relayed some people's concern that many youngsters did not have thorough understanding of the history of our country because Chinese History was not a compulsory subject at the junior secondary level for some time. She then expressed concern that the number of Secondary Four to Six students taking Chinese History as an elective under the New Senior Secondary ("NSS") academic structure was decreasing continuously. She further pointed out that the number of students taking HKDSE Examination was decreasing because parents had lost confidence in NSS academic structure.

33. SED explained that EDB had implemented Chinese History as an independent compulsory subject at the junior secondary level since the 2018-2019 school year. The revised curriculum of Chinese History had also been implemented progressively starting from Secondary One in the 2020-2021 school year so that students could learn Chinese History in a holistic and systematic manner. In fact, the percentage of students taking Chinese History as an elective had been stable in recent years despite the overall decrease in the number of students taking HKDSE.

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34. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok and Mr Abraham SHEK were of the view that learning Chinese History was a must for students in Hong Kong so as to have a better understanding of our country. Hence, Ir Dr LO welcomed the implementation of Chinese History as an independent compulsory subject at the junior secondary level. He also considered that students would develop virtues and cultural recognition through learning more about Chinese classic sayings and literature.

35. SED took note of members' concern and advised that EDB would continue to adopt diversified strategies to promote Chinese History and Culture education, for example, a campaign to promote Chinese classic sayings had been launched to enhance students' understanding of Chinese culture.

36. Mr Michael TIEN opined that EDB should endeavour to nurture talents who were proficient both in English and Chinese. Also, students' interest in innovation and technology should be aroused. Ms Elizabeth QUAT said that the number of healthcare and technology related undergraduate places should be increased to meet the manpower needs. SED took note of members' suggestions and advised that EDB had attached great importance to English and Chinese. Both languages were core subjects and were compulsory to all students.

37. Noting that the lesson time of LS would be halved, Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok suggested that the time freed up should be used for promoting STEM education which was essential for equipping students to meet the changes and challenges in the society. SED advised that one of the recommendations made by the Task Force was to strengthen STEM education. EDB was duly considering practicable follow-up work pursuant to the Task Force's recommendations and would announce the decisions in due course.

Teaching and learning under the COVID-19 pandemic

38. Mr LAU Kwok-fan expressed gratitude to teachers for implementing e-learning during class suspension periods to assist students' learning and asked whether all students, particularly those from grassroots families, were provided with sufficient computer and internet devices for undertaking e-learning at home.

39. Noting that \$2 billion under the Quality Education Fund would be earmarked to assist schools in implementing blended mode of learning and teaching, the Deputy Chairman was concerned when the funds for procuring computer devices could reach the schools and when students could get the computer devices. She was worried that any delay would greatly affect grassroots students' learning and widen the digital divide among students.

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40. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan suggested that the Administration might consider using part of the Quality Education Fund to strengthen information technology ("IT") support for schools as she was aware that many IT technicians at schools had to work overtime.

41. SED advised that to ensure students with limited economic means have equal opportunity to enjoy quality education under the new normal, the Government had provided subsidy through the Community Care Fund for schools to purchase mobile computer devices for students with financial needs to practice e-learning. It was estimated that about 100 000 students would benefit from the Programme. As procurement would take time, EDB had encouraged schools to lend mobile computer devices to students encountering difficulties first so that the students would have devices for use right away. The \$2 billion under the Quality Education Fund was earmarked to launch a three-year programme from September 2021 to support schools to continue to implement blended mode of learning and teaching. EDB would continue to communicate with the school sector to better understand their situation and provide necessary support.

42. The Deputy Chairman further asked about the support measures to assist cross-boundary students in learning at home during the COVID-19 pandemic. SED advised that EDB would continue to explore ways to better support cross-boundary students, including their personal development and interpersonal relationship.

43. Mr Michael TIEN was disappointed that the Policy Address had not proposed how to improve teaching and learning under the COVID-19 pandemic and how to help students catch up to the relevant grades after class resumed. Besides, Mr TIEN said that a support scheme "Zoom classrooms - modern learning for the modern student" which assisted teachers in providing e-learning to students ended in August 2020. He enquired whether the Administration would consider giving more support to teachers to teach under the "new normal" by funding them to obtain Zoom licenses, mobile data services and teaching tools such as web camera for online teaching. SED advised that it was undesirable for the Administration to restrict schools to use a particular platform for e-learning. Schools should have sufficient funding for developing e-learning and selecting the e-learning platforms with regard to their needs.

44. Mr LAU Kwok-fan and Mr Michael TIEN expressed concern about the potential health risks to young children using electronic devices, such as eye and vision problems. SED agreed that it was undesirable for young children to use electronic screen for long hours and e-learning was not suitable for kindergarten ("KGs") students. EDB had issued letters to KGs encouraging them to design diversified home learning activities, such as reading, to sustain children's learning interest. He believed that teachers could exercise their professional judgement in

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adopting suitable teaching modes that met students' needs.

45. Dr CHENG Chung-tai relayed the concerns of parents, teachers and students in primary and secondary schools that e-learning was not effective and enquired whether EDB had evaluated the effectiveness of e-learning. He suggested that EDB should only suspend face-to-face classes for schools with confirmed cases. SED explained that to his understanding, there were different views from the public on e-learning. E-learning could not fully replace classroom learning particularly in the development of interpersonal skills and moral values. However, the first and foremost concern of EDB was the health and safety of teachers and students, and e-learning appeared to be the best option for teaching and learning amidst COVID-19. EDB would allocate more resources to assist schools and teachers in implementing blended mode of learning and teaching, including e-learning.

46. Mr LAU Kwok-fan said that students of international schools and direct subsidy scheme schools still had to pay high tuition fees/miscellaneous charges when classes were suspended. He asked whether the Administration had developed some measures to support the parents. SED advised that schools were in practice providing services including e-learning to support students during class suspension periods. Parents might take a more accommodative attitude towards the teaching modes adopted by schools during the pandemic.

Support for non-Chinese speaking students

47. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan said that since the 2014-2015 school year, the "Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework" ("the Framework") had been implemented to support non-Chinese speaking ("NCS") students in learning the Chinese Language. However, the Framework was not very effective. According to the Administration, a review would be conducted after the Framework had been implemented for three years. She enquired when EDB would release the data collected during the review. SED advised that some baseline research had been conducted and preliminary results suggested that there was improvement in the comprehension skills of NCS students.

School-based Management

48. Dr Junius HO sought information on the School-based Management Top-up Grant which aimed to help schools enhance school governance. To facilitate schools in making good use of the Grant, he suggested that EDB might consider issuing guidelines on selection of suitable training providers or collaborating with DoJ and the Law Society of Hong Kong to develop training courses for schools. Deputy Secretary for Education (4) responded that the Grant could be used to support the operation of school management committees

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("SMC") and strengthening diversified training for school managers/SMC members to facilitate stakeholders' participation in school governance.

IV. The Implementation of the Smart Technology Applications and Mobile Platform by the Vocational Training Council to promote its Vocational and Professional Education and Training

(LC Paper No. CB(4)231/20-21(02) -- Paper provided by the Administration)

49. The Chairman drew members' attention to Rule 83A of the Rules of Procedure which provided that a Member shall not move any motion or amendment relating to a matter in which he had a pecuniary interest, whether direct or indirect, or speak on any such matter, except where he disclosed the nature of that interest. She reminded members to declare interests, if any, in the matter under discussion.

Briefing by the Administration

50. The Under Secretary for Education ("US(Ed)") briefed members on the proposal of the Vocational Training Council ("VTC") to implement the Smart Technology Applications and Mobile Platform ("STAMP") to further promote its provision of vocational and professional education and training ("VPET"), details of which were set out in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)231/20-21(02)].

Discussion

51. Ir Dr LO Wai-ki declared that he was the Chairman of the Engineering Discipline Advisory Board of VTC. He pointed out that despite limited resources, VTC had devoted years of hard work to enhancing the provision of VPET through the adoption of different technologies such as the use and application of virtual reality. To facilitate VTC's continuous development of quality VPET programmes, in particular during the COVID-19 pandemic which had brought unprecedented changes to the modes of teaching and learning, there was a need for VTC to maintain up-to-date information technology infrastructure. Hence, he supported the STAMP project. Besides, Ir Dr LO was concerned about the high number of cyberattacks recorded at the VTC's network in 2018-2019, as stated in paragraph 11 of the Administration's paper. Head of Information Technology Services Division, VTC advised that hackers generally searched the internet for cybersecurity loopholes by random. The majority of cyberattacks recorded at VTC's network were not targeting VTC.

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52. Ms Starry LEE supported the STAMP project. She opined that the various applications of smart technology in many government bureaux/departments were lagging behind those within the private sector or business community. The Administration should take the lead in building Hong Kong in a smart city. Moreover, Ms LEE expressed concern about the policy direction of promoting VPET. She said that while students' opportunities to pursue university education had been increased, opportunities for upward mobility were diminishing. The role of VTC in delivering VPET should be further strengthened so as to provide diversified and quality pathways for students.

53. US(Ed) responded that the Administration had rolled out a number of initiatives to promote VPET over the years, including establishing the Task Force on Promotion of VPET to advise the Government on the further promotion of VPET, launching the Training and Support Scheme, also known as VTC Earn and Learn Scheme to deepen industry collaboration, providing industrial attachment opportunities for VPET students, etc. In addition, the Administration was preparing to launch a pilot project on the development of applied degrees. In response, Ms Starry LEE opined that the Administration should review the effectiveness of the promotion initiatives. To her understanding, most parents still perceived VPET as an inferior choice and insisted young people to pursue university education through taking HKDSE Examination. US(Ed) advised that some measures to promote VPET were relatively new, which would help gradually improve the public's perception towards VPET after they had been fully implemented in the longer term.

54. Mr LAU Kwok-fan supported the STAMP project as smart technology applications would be essential for students to acquire applied knowledge in innovation and technology for career progression in the new digital age, and the expenditure incurred by the project was not substantial. He suggested that the Administration might consider reviewing whether more resources should be allocated to VTC for continuous technology advancement upon implementation of STAMP. Moreover, as young people in Hong Kong were encouraged to explore career opportunities in the Greater Bay Area, Mr LAU enquired whether VTC would cooperate with the vocational training institutions in the Mainland to provide exchange opportunities for VTC students, with a view to enhancing their understanding of the work culture and career prospects in the Mainland for fitting in the career market there.

55. US(Ed) advised that VTC would implement an outbound study programme to provide more exchange opportunities for their students and staff outside Hong Kong. Under the programme, six visits to the Greater Bay Area and three visits to other regions would be organised a year, each for seven to ten days. Furthermore, VTC had collaborated and exchanged with relevant VPET

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institutions in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Bay Area in acquiring multiple Qualifications Framework recognitions for collaborative programmes. Mr LAU Kwok-fan considered the above measures beneficial to students and suggested that VTC should take a more active role in building deeper cross-border cooperation with industries and institutions in the Mainland for students' future development.

56. The Chairman supported the implementation of STAMP by VTC. She pointed out that although the public still considered university education superior to VPET, there was an oversupply of Doctors of Philosophy and job openings for them were insufficient. On the contrary, there was a huge demand for talents in different trades, such as culinary and renovation industry. VTC should strengthen its role in promoting VPET so as to change public perception against VPET and enhance its smart technology applications to provide young people with quality VPET that meets the fast-changing manpower needs and working environments of different professions. In addition, the Chairman relayed some students' concern that they felt anxious when experienced technical problems with e-learning, particularly when they were attending an online examination. She urged the Administration to provide additional manpower to assist these students in reducing stress and anxiety.

57. US(Ed) explained that the STAMP project was one of the areas of focus in VTC's 8-Year Strategic Plan with the aim to further promote its provision of VPET. Furthermore, the Administration would enhance the promotion of VPET through secondary education, higher education, development of vocational progression pathways and publicity in pursuance of the recommendations made by the Task Force.

Summing up

58. The Chairman concluded that the Panel supported the Administration's submission of the proposed STAMP project to the Finance Committee.

V. Any other business

59. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:58 pm.