

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(4)1344/20-21
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB4/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Friday, 4 June 2021, 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 Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP
Dr Hon Junius HO Kwan-yiu, JP
Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan, JP
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-kwan, JP
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP
- Members absent** : Hon Jimmy NG Wing-ka, BBS, JP
Dr Hon CHENG Chung-tai
- Public Officers attending** : Agenda item III
Dr CHOI Yuk-lin, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Mr Godwin LAI
Principal Assistant Secretary (Special Education)
Education Bureau

Ms Joyce YIP
Principal Education Officer (Special Education/Special Duty)
Education Bureau

Agenda item IV

Dr CHOI Yuk-lin, JP
Under Secretary for Education

Mr Philip HAR
Principal Assistant Secretary
(Infrastructure and Research Support)
Education Bureau

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

(LC Paper No. CB(4)1038/20-21(01) -- Information paper provided by the Education Bureau on the implementation arrangements for the third cycle of the fine-tuned medium of instruction policy at junior secondary levels)

Members noted the above paper issued since the last meeting.

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II. Items for discussion at the next meeting

- (Appendix I to LC Paper No. CB(4)1037/20-21 -- List of outstanding items for discussion
- Appendix II to LC Paper No. CB(4)1037/20-21 -- List of follow-up actions)

2. Members agreed that the following items would be discussed at the next regular meeting on 2 July at 10:45 am:

- (a) Promote home-school co-operation and parent education;
- (b) Learning arrangements for cross-boundary students amid the epidemic; and
- (c) Update on the Hostel Development Fund and \$16-billion provision for enhancement of campus facilities for UGC-funded universities.

(Post-meeting note: Agenda item (c) above was replaced by "School arrangements for COVID-19 vaccination". Members were informed of the meeting agenda via LC Paper No. CB(4)1130/20-21 on 17 June 2021.)

III. Providing professional support to ordinary schools for implementing integrated education

(LC Paper No. CB(4)1037/20-21(01) -- Paper provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(4)1037/20-21(02) -- Background brief on support to students with special educational needs in ordinary schools prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat)

Briefing by the Administration

3. The Under Secretary for Education ("US(Ed)") briefed members on the support measures provided to public sector ordinary schools for implementing integrated education ("IE") to cater for students with special educational needs ("SEN"), details of which were set out in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)1037/20-21(01)].

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Discussion

Teacher training and professional support

4. Mr Michael TIEN said that the professional competency of teachers was crucial given the increasing number of students with SEN. When he urged the Administration to increase progressively the proportion of teachers having received special education training from about 40% in the 2018-2019 school year to 100% at the Panel meeting on 3 May 2019, the Administration had given a very positive response. Moreover, according to the Administration's paper, each of the public sector schools was required to have 80% to 100% of teachers completed the basic special education training in six years starting from the 2021-2022 school year. He enquired about the latest proportion of teachers who had received special education training, whether and when the Education Bureau ("EDB") had informed schools of the training target, and whether the demand for such training courses could be met.

5. Mr KWOK Wai-keung enquired about the reasons for setting a long timeframe of six years for teachers to complete the Basic Course, and whether the timeframe could be shortened if institutions which offered special education courses were requested to increase the number of places of the relevant courses.

6. US(Ed) and Principal Assistant Secretary (Special Education) ("PAS(SE)") advised that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many training courses scheduled for the 2019-2020 school year had been postponed to this school year. EDB would consolidate the number of teachers who had successfully completed those courses at the end of this school year and announce the relevant figures for the current training cycle probably in early 2022. EDB was working in the direction of progressively having all teachers to possess basic special education knowledge. A circular informing schools that each of them was required to have 80% to 100% of teachers completed the Basic Course, 20% completed the Advanced Course, and 25% completed the Thematic Courses in six years would be issued within this school year. To enable more teachers to complete the Basic Course in a shorter timeframe, online courses which allow greater flexibility would be organized in the coming training cycle. Mr Michael TIEN requested the Administration to provide the proportion of teachers having received basic special education training from 2019 to 2021.

7. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok considered it important for all teachers to be equipped with basic special education training with the implementation of IE. He enquired whether all public sector ordinary schools were provided with a Special Educational Needs Coordinator ("SENCO"), as undertaken by EDB. US(Ed) answered in the affirmative and advised that EDB had also provided the schools with a total number of 1 140 posts of Special Educational Needs Support Teacher in the 2020-2021 school year.

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8. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung declared that he was a school manager of a primary school. He expressed support to the implementation of IE which provided an inclusive learning environment for students. Noting that a SENCO would lead the student support team to assist the principal and the vice-principal(s) in supporting IE and the SENCO post would be upgraded to a promotion rank, he suggested that a vice-principal post could be created in each school to provide career advancement prospect for SENCOs. US(Ed) advised that SENCO posts would be upgraded in schools with a comparatively large number of students with SEN. In general, a vice-principal was responsible for assisting the principal in administering the overall operation of a school. Schools would assign a designated teacher to take up the role of SENCO to support IE.

Early identification of students with special educational needs

9. Mr LAU Kwok-fan said that early identification and intervention services were crucial to the improvement of the conditions of children with SEN especially those between the age of three and six. However, the waiting time for assessment and follow-up services offered by the Government was so long that children usually passed their chance of receiving appropriate treatment. He urged the Administration to devote additional resources to shorten the waiting time for relevant services.

10. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-kwan appreciated EDB's efforts in implementing IE. He enquired about the average waiting time for assessment, the manpower position of the professionals in Hospital Authority ("HA") and the Department of Health ("DH") who carried out assessment for pre-school children, and the feasible ways to improve the situation.

11. US(Ed) advised that EDB had been aware of the importance of early identification and intervention. Despite the difficulties in recruiting professional staff, HA and DH had been striving to shorten the waiting time for assessment and treatment services. Meanwhile, EDB had been implementing the "Early Identification and Intervention Programme for Primary One Students with Learning Difficulties" in primary schools to ensure that those students not yet identified in preschool stage could be identified and provided with appropriate support. PAS(SE) added that to foster the smooth transition of kindergarten ("KG") students with special needs to primary schooling, EDB had strengthened the collaboration with HA, DH and the Social Welfare Department ("SWD"), by which the assessment information and progress reports of these students would be transferred to their recipient primary schools for timely support. Primary schools would also provide a summary of transition support to the students' parents so that they can understand the support provided to their children and make suitable complement to enhance the effectiveness of support.

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12. Ms YUNG Hoi-yan said that according to the Administration's paper, students with specific learning difficulties ("SpLD"), autism spectrum disorders ("ASD") and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder ("AD/HD") accounted for a significant proportion of students with SEN. To her understanding, signs of ASD and AD/HD mostly emerged at the age of two. Hence, she considered that for early intervention, assessment should be taken in the stage of pre-school education and enquired whether EDB would extend the support services to KG students with SEN.

13. As the number of children with SEN was increasing and the golden treatment time for them was between the age of three and six, Ms Elizabeth QUAT shared the view that EDB should not only provide services to students with SEN in primary and secondary schools. KGs should also be given sufficient resources so that they could provide appropriate services to their students with SEN, particularly in teacher training, manpower allocation and professional support. Mr KWOK Wai-keung asked whether EDB would request the Education University of Hong Kong to provide special education training to pre-service teachers.

14. US(Ed) advised that the most common type of SpLD was found in reading and writing. KG students might not show obvious symptoms of SpLD. Their problems would be more apparent when the demand for reading and writing increased in primary schools. Hence, relevant assessments were usually conducted at lower primary levels. In fact, it was SWD which allocated resources and provided rehabilitation services to the pre-school children with special needs and their parents. For teacher training, basic and advanced professional development programmes on catering for student diversity were offered to KG teachers by EDB with a view to enhancing their professional capacity in identifying and supporting children with special needs. PAS(SE) supplemented that a thematic training on supporting pre-school children with ASD would be launched to strengthen the skills and knowledge of KG teachers.

Support measures to students with special educational needs

15. Mr LAU Kwok-fan and Mr MA Fung-kwok expressed concern about the learning difficulties encountered by and specific support measures provided for students with different types of SEN amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms Elizabeth QUAT reflected that many parents of students with SEN were stressful as they had to take intensive care of their children during class suspension. She considered it necessary for EDB to provide support services for parents of students with SEN during the pandemic such as setting up a hotline and providing help-seeking information, and offer parent education programmes to help parents acquire the skills in managing and supporting children with SEN in the long run.

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16. US(Ed) advised that when face-to-face classes were suspended, EDB had been maintaining communication with schools, reminding them to show concern and keep regular communication with parents to understand the learning and emotional needs and changes of students with SEN, so as to provide appropriate assistance. Parents could also visit EDB's website "Smart Parent Net" for useful information on supporting the physical and mental development of their children. Besides, schools would remain open to take care of students who needed to go back to school.

17. PAS(SE) supplemented that apart from "Smart Parent Net", EDB had developed various teaching resources and uploaded to the EDB website to help parents support their children with different types of SEN, of which included the "Joyful Online Learning at Home" series for students with SpLD, ASD and AD/HD and a series of psychoeducational videos titled "Suspending Classes without Suspending Love in the Epidemic" for parents and students with mental illness ("MI") or mental health needs. In general, the problem of students with visual impairment, hearing impairment and speech and language impairment in ordinary schools might be less acute. Their parents could also make reference of the aforesaid online resources to support their children. Should individual students with SEN and their parents require assistance, they could contact SENCOs who would collaborate with professionals to provide targeted support.

18. While acknowledging EDB's effort in providing support to students with SEN, the Deputy Chairman pointed out that parents of senior secondary students with SEN were under great pressure because their children had to face with the challenges of public examinations. They were anxious about their children's special examination arrangements ("SEAs"), examination results, articulation opportunities and employment prospects. She urged EDB to strengthen its support for these students and collaborate with relevant bureaux to help parents cope with their emotions and stress.

19. US(Ed) responded that the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority would arrange SEAs, such as provision of assistive aids and extra time allowance, for candidates with SEN according to their needs, and conduct seminars for teachers and parents to familiarize them with the related application procedures. Besides, students with SEN who applied via JUPAS might submit information in relation to their SEN so that universities could provide help and advice at an early stage. To ensure that students with SEN in post-secondary institutions could receive on-going support as appropriate, EDB was establishing a SEN information transfer mechanism between secondary schools and post-secondary institutions. Moreover, additional resources had been granted to UGC-funded universities by phases for enhancing the support for those students.

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20. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok sought explanation of how the replacement of the Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme ("IRTP") and IE Programme by the Learning Support Grant ("LSG") could enhance the support for students with SEN. US(Ed) explained that LSG offered greater flexibility than IRTP and IE Programme in terms of usage of cash grant and procurement of professional service/additional manpower to cater for students with SEN.

Implementation of integrated education

21. Mr MA Fung-kwok pointed out that with the implementation of IE, some parents of regular students were worried that the learning of their children would be dragged by students with SEN because teachers would give extra support to students with SEN. He asked whether guidelines were provided to facilitate teachers in handling students with SEN.

22. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung was worried about the labelling effect on students with intellectual disability ("ID") and students with MI in ordinary schools. He also pointed out that students with SpLD, AD/HD and MI were generally not welcomed by their schoolmates.

23. Mr KWOK Wai-keung was concerned whether students with SEN in ordinary schools would be discriminated, ostracized or bullied, causing them to feel unhappy. He asked about the number of school bullying cases involving students with SEN and considered that teachers should show more concern to students with SEN to prevent bullying.

24. The Chairman pointed out that some parents of students with SEN preferred ordinary schools to special schools. She suggested that flexibility should be given to schools in handling and supporting students with SEN. On the other hand, some parents of ordinary students might be worried that the implementation of IE would adversely affect schools' academic competitiveness and ranking. She considered it necessary for schools to set up parents' groups to assist parents of students with SEN, explain to parents about their IE policy and support to ease parents' worries, and help students understand the importance of mutual respect so as to prevent bullying.

25. US(Ed) responded that a dual-track mode in providing special education was adopted. Students with less severe disabilities would attend ordinary schools. Schools implementing IE were required by EDB to complete a self-evaluation form annually. With increasing resources and professional training provided for schools and teachers, students with SEN would receive more appropriate support in ordinary schools while other students could acquire attitudes of acceptance and learn to care for others. Should students with ID in ordinary schools have severe adjustment difficulties, they might, upon parental consent, attend the short-term attachment programme provided by Special Schools cum Resource Centres.

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As regards school bullying, EDB did not maintain statistics of cases involving students with SEN.

26. The Chairman further enquired about the number of public sector ordinary schools implementing/not implementing IE, the number of students with SEN studying in those schools with the highest number of students with SEN, and whether there were unsuccessful cases for implementing IE.

27. Dr Junius HO concurred that IE would help fostering an environment of mutual respect among students. In his view, students with visual impairment and hearing impairment should be given more care and support, while students with more severe or multiple disabilities, such as those with ID and with MI should be placed in special schools for intensive support services. In order to successfully implement IE, quality of teachers was of foremost importance. Teachers should cultivate a caring school culture, understand the learning difficulties of students with SEN, provide appropriate support and guidance to develop their potential to the full. He further enquired about the Government's overall policy on supporting students with SEN, the number of private schools implementing IE, the number of special schools and whether additional funding was required.

28. US(Ed) replied that subject to the assessment and recommendation of specialists and the consent of parents, EDB would refer students with more severe or multiple disabilities to special schools for intensive support services according to their types of disabilities. To help school implement IE, EDB had all along been providing schools with additional resources, professional support and teacher training to strengthen ordinary schools' support for students with SEN, and would review the implementation of relevant measures on an on-going basis. As no subsidies were provided to private schools for implementing IE, EDB did not have the number of private schools implementing IE.

Summing up

29. The Chairman concluded that while supporting the implementation of IE, members urged the Administration to consider providing support services for pre-school children with SEN, raising public's knowledge of IE and providing help-seeking information to parents of students with SEN.

IV. 3363EP - A 24-classroom primary school at Au Pui Wan Street, Fo Tan, Sha Tin

(LC Paper No. CB(4)1037/20-21(03) -- Paper provided by the Administration)

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30. 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.

31. At the invitation of the Chairman, US(Ed) briefed members on the proposed construction of a primary school at Au Pui Wan Street, Fo Tan, Sha Tin for the reprovioning of Po Leung Kuk Siu Hon Sum Primary School ("SHSPS") in the same district, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. 1037/20-21(03)].

32. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok expressed support for the proposed project. Noting that the number of classrooms would remain at 24 after reprovioning, he enquired about the student enrolment of SHSPS and the reasons for not constructing a new school premises with more classrooms to increase the capacity of SHSPS. The Chairman was concerned that SHSPS might not recruit sufficient number of students in the face of the declining student population.

33. US(Ed) advised that the aim of reprovioning was to upgrade the facilities of SHSPS and improve the learning and teaching environment. As the projected future demand for primary school places in Sha Tin was roughly similar to the existing demand and the new site could only accommodate a 24-classroom school premises, the construction of a new school premises with 24 classrooms was considered appropriate. On student enrolment, SHSPS was currently operating 24 classes with a 100% enrollment rate and was expected to have the same rate upon reprovioning.

34. Ms YUNG Hoi-yan and Ms Elizabeth QUAT expressed support for the proposed project. As the new premises of SHSPS were situated near narrow roads with heavy traffic in an industrial area, they suggested that the Administration should widen the roads to alleviate traffic congestion and provide crossing facilities such as traffic lights at the main school entrance to ensure the safety of students. Ms QUAT then relayed the worries of some local residents that the already congested roads near the new school premises would be worsened, especially during school peak hours. She also urged the Administration to designate school bus boarding and alighting areas to avoid causing traffic congestion at the school entrance.

35. US(Ed) advised that most of the teachers and students of SHSPS went to school on foot or by public transport/school bus. In cases where large events were held at school, SHSPS would arrange students to attend in groups at different intervals. Hence, it was anticipated that the traffic nearby would not be adversely affected. Detailed information on measures to mitigate traffic impact of the

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proposed project would be included in the Administration's paper to the Public Works Subcommittee ("PWSC") to facilitate its members' deliberations.

36. Principal Assistant Secretary (Infrastructure and Research Support) supplemented that there were three school bus parking spaces and 12 parking spaces for private vehicles and taxis in the new school premises, so that students taking private cars or taxis could alight in the premises to minimize the impact on traffic nearby. SHSPS would also request the school bus operator to arrange school buses to reach the school at different times to avoid congestion at the entrance. In addition, traffic lights and pedestrian crossing would be provided near the school entrance at the junction of Au Pui Wan Street and Wo Heung Street. The developer of the nearby private residential development would designate "no-stopping restriction zones" at suitable road sections to ensure a smooth traffic flow.

37. The Chairman enquired whether assessment on traffic and environmental impacts had been conducted for the proposed project. US(Ed) responded in the positive and advised that to ensure road safety, the Architectural Services Department had taken into account the traffic flow, crossing facilities, private housing development, etc. in the district when planning the new school premises. Road improvement works, which were expected to be completed in 2023, would be conducted at Au Pui Wan Street and Wo Heung Street. To mitigate the environmental impact of the project, the works contractor was requested to minimize noise and air pollution according to the recommendations of the environmental impact assessment.

38. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok and Ms Elizabeth QUAT urged the Administration to put the to-be-vacant school premises of SHSPS into gainful use as soon as practicable. Ms QUAT relayed the local residents' suggestion of using the vacant school premises ("VSP") for setting set up local service units which were insufficient in the district. US(Ed) advised that SHSPS would surrender its existing school premises upon reprovisioning. EDB would, in accordance with the prevailing mechanism, assess the VSP's suitability for educational use. Once EDB confirmed that the VSP would no longer be required for school or other educational uses, EDB would inform the Planning Department and other relevant departments for consideration of suitable alternative uses in accordance with the central clearing house mechanism.

39. The Chairman drew the Administration's attention that a letter had been received from a Sha Tin District Councillor complaining that the Sha Tin District Council ("DC") had not been consulted on the proposed project. She also enquired whether the project had aroused opposition from local residents. US(Ed) advised that the 100% enrolment rate of SHSPS had reflected parents' recognition of the school quality. Besides, as the number of operating classes and school places would remain the same after the reprovisioning, the project would

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not affect the supply and demand of primary school places in Sha Tin. The school sector raised no particular concerns on the reprovisioning project. Regarding consultation with the Sha Tin DC, EDB had informed its Education and Welfare Committee ("EWC") of the project progress by circulation of paper. EWC had expressed concerns over the traffic and environmental implications of the project, but raised no objection to the project. EDB had provided supplementary information to Sha Tin DC and EWC to address EWC's concerns and no further queries had been received thereafter.

40. The Chairman concluded that the Panel supported the Administration's submission of the proposed project to PWSC.

V. Any other business

41. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:37 pm.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
11 August 2021