

立法會

Legislative Council

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

Purpose

This report gives an account of the work of the Panel on Education (“the Panel”) during the Legislative Council 2023 session. It will be tabled at the meeting of 13 December 2023 of the Council in accordance with Rule 77(14) of the Rules of Procedure of the Council.

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, 2 July 2008 and 26 October 2022 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 1**.

3. The Panel comprises 20 members, with Prof Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun and Hon TANG Fei elected as its Chairman and Deputy Chairman respectively. The membership list of the Panel is in **Appendix 2**.

Major work

Provision of public sector primary and secondary school places

4. The Administration’s planning for the provision of public sector primary and secondary school places has received ongoing attention by the Panel. Some members expressed disappointment that the Education Bureau (“EDB”) had neither formulated new measures nor drawn up a holistic plan to tackle the challenges arising from the structural changes in student population. In planning for the provision of school places, members considered that EDB should take into

account fertility rate, the number of children leaving Hong Kong, potential incoming population brought by the Government's initiatives to compete for talents, etc. As such, the Government should first formulate an overall and forward-looking population policy (such as raising fertility rate and increasing population size owing to the government initiatives to compete for talents) for EDB to draw up targeted measures to tie in with the policy.

5. Members noted that EDB had adopted a "soft landing" approach to adjust the number of schools to cope with the decline in student population. However, some members were concerned that such an approach would gradually lead to school closures, which seriously affected teachers' morale and education quality. The Administration was asked to avoid class reduction or school closure. Members suggested that the Administration could consider converting under-enrolled schools into schools with special characteristics, such as schools incorporating more vocational elements to provide an alternative pathway for students. The Administration could also help under-enrolled schools retain students by issuing administrative directives to reduce the number of "door-knocking" places or even disallow schools to use repeater places to accommodate "door-knocking" applications.

6. In view of the worldwide decline of population, members considered it necessary for the Administration to think out of the box to attract more non-local students to pursue studies in Hong Kong, so as to expand the sources of students. For instance, the Administration should enhance the overall education quality to maintain Hong Kong's competitiveness over other neighbouring countries, formulate education/immigration policies to attract outstanding students from the Mainland and the Belt and Road Initiative countries, lift the 20% non-local student enrolment quota for publicly-funded programmes offered by the University Grants Committee ("UGC")-funded universities, provide more education programmes in relation to the International Baccalaureate, enhance diversity by developing schools with special characteristics, enhance the recognition of Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education ("HKDSE") Examination globally to attract non-local students to take the Examination, and establish an information platform to facilitate students from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations countries to pursue higher education and vocational training in Hong Kong.

7. As there should be unspent education resources with the decline in student population, some members considered that the Administration should take this opportunity to further enhance teacher-to-class ratio (such as reducing the standard class size for small class teaching in public sector primary schools from 25 to 23 and the class size of 34 for secondary schools to below 30); make greater use of technology in education to cater for learning diversity; strengthen the support for students with special educational needs; enhance the counselling

service for students and parent education; and improve school premises and facilities.

Promotion of STEAM education in schools

8. The Panel was briefed on the promotion of STEAM education among primary and secondary schools. For better promotion of STEAM education, members suggested that the Administration should start to implement STEAM education in kindergartens (“KGs”); make relevant topics of Science, innovation and technology (“I&T”), etc. in primary General Studies as an independent subject; set out the common literacy for STEAM education which students should learn, value and able to do in various key stages; provide clear curriculum guidelines on STEAM education for teachers to follow; allocate resources to primary schools and KGs for purchasing new and creative equipment and tools (such as educational toys) to enhance students’ interest in learning science and technology; make STEAM education a separate subject; keep abreast of the worldwide educational trend (such as implementation of coding education) when designing the relevant curricula; motivate students with career interest in STEAM-related fields to pursue advanced study in related areas at tertiary level; and consider establishing an I&T education centre to nurture I&T talents with a targeted approach so as to facilitate the promotion of STEAM for all.

9. On support for teachers, members considered that the Administration should help strengthen their professional capacity in implementing STEAM education. There were suggestions that local teacher training institutions should develop structured programmes on STEAM education for teachers; paid study leave or scholarships should be provided to encourage serving teachers to take up the courses; and all teachers should be required to receive basic training on STEAM education to enable them to understand the rationale behind the implementation of STEM/STEAM education, particularly on nurturing students’ problem-solving skills and innovativeness. Moreover, as the “Arts” was an important component in STEAM education, there should be specialized teaching for creative arts in schools as far as possible so as to tie in with the development of our country.

10. Some members also raised concerns that the turnover rate of Information Technology teachers was high and the number of teachers having expertise in STEAM-related subjects was insufficient. These members suggested that the Administration should increase the number of teachers having expertise in STEAM-related subjects in the staff establishment and employ more teachers specialized in computer science and science education to facilitate the implementation of STEAM education in schools.

Citizenship and Social Development

11. Members have been closely monitoring the implementation of senior secondary Citizenship and Social Development (“CS”). Some members relayed public concerns that one-day CS Mainland study tours were not desirable since transportation had taken up most of the time. There were suggestions that in case one-day trip was adopted, schools should be mindful that the travelling time for the whole trip should not be over three hours and High Speed Rail should be used to save travelling time.

12. Some members also raised concern about the quality of the Mainland study tours organized by service providers and suggested that the Administration should put in place a mechanism to monitor the quality of study tours and to handle complaints against service providers. There was a view that a list of service providers of poor performance should be prepared for schools’ reference.

13. Some members pointed out that many ethnic minority (“EM”) students participating in CS Mainland study tours had encountered difficulties, such as high visa application fees, long visa processing time, complicated visa processing procedures, relatively long waiting time for going through immigration clearance, etc. The Administration was asked to provide appropriate support to EM students participating in the study tours, such as providing recurrent funding in addition to the one-off grant to schools to cover the high visa fees of EM students and liaising with the Mainland authorities to set up green channel or dedicated corridor to shorten the time for immigration clearance of EM students.

14. As regards the assessment results of CS in HKDSE Examination, there was a view that the reporting of students’ performance in CS could be refined from “Attained” and “Unattained” to “Distinction”, “Attained” and “Unattained” to recognize students with excellent academic result in CS. There was another view that to release students’ examination pressure, the existing reporting arrangements (i.e., “Attained” and “Unattained”) should be maintained, diversified modes of assessment should be provided for students to choose (such as articles, project learning, competitions, and oral presentations) and students with outstanding performance should be commended as a recognition.

15. In members’ view, the quality of teachers, in particular for those responsible for teaching CS, was of vital importance. The Administration should require CS teachers to undergo assessment, so as to ensure that they possessed correct educational perspectives and accurate knowledge about the topics included in the CS curriculum.

Implementation of life planning education

16. The Panel was updated on the progress of the implementation of life planning education (“LPE”). Members pointed out that LPE was an ongoing and lifelong process for students’ personal fulfilment, with different foci at different stages of lifetime. Instead of helping young people plan out the entire life, members considered that LPE should aim to help students understand their own career/academic aspirations, develop positive attitudes towards work and learning, and integrate their career/academic aspirations with/into whole-person development and lifelong learning. Students should be given proper guidance and ample opportunities for making subject or career choice to help them realize their dreams.

17. To better prepare students for further studies and employment, members suggested that LPE should be commenced early at KG level, cross-bureau and interdepartmental collaboration should be fostered to implement LPE for all students in all schools, and topics/elements of new industries, new technology, life education, and moral values should be included in LPE. Besides, the Administration should include elements of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (“GBA”) in the school-based curriculum of LPE to assist young people in knowing more about the development of the country and seizing the distinctive opportunities brought about by Hong Kong’s integration into the country’s overall development. The Administration undertook to constantly review LPE curriculum and introduce new and relevant topics to equip students with the latest information on career opportunities, trends of the working world, etc.; and explore more opportunities to enhance students’ understanding of the trades and industries in GBA.

18. For effective implementation of LPE, EDB should explore more diversified ways to enhance the strategies of LPE. These included launching the mentorship programme, providing more experimental learning activities, integrating elements of LPE into vocational and professional education and training (“VPET”), making reference to the experiences of other places in promoting/implementing LPE, enhancing the Business-School Partnership Programme by making reference to the relevant activities initiated by organizations in local community, and establishing a new Industry-School Partnership Programme to promote cooperation and partnership between schools and different industries.

Support for students with mental health needs

19. The Panel was briefed on the measures implemented by EDB in primary and secondary schools to promote the mental health of students and provide

support for students with mental health needs. Some members pointed out that there were still inadequacies in the Administration's work to enhance students' mental health. The Administration should tackle students' health problem at source and proactively provide schools with support in enhancing the mental health of students and taking care of students with mental health needs. For instance, EDB could consider instituting a screening programme for all secondary school students to early identify those at risk and provide targeted treatment, providing guidelines to advise schools to reduce homework load and the number of examinations so as to alleviate students' academic pressure, improving the professional resources in schools, strengthening cross-sectoral and cross-bureaux/departments' collaboration to enhance communication among different professional disciplines to improve the support services to students with mental health needs.

20. As students had not been to schools for about three years during the epidemic, their social and emotional development had been greatly affected. There were views that the Administration should help students resume their normal learning and adapt to school life as early as possible; organize more activities to promote positive coping and help-seeking culture in the community; and identify optimistic students who faced challenges with a positive attitude to help create a positive, caring and supportive culture so as to infect all those around them.

Support for cross-boundary students amid the epidemic

21. The Panel had deliberated on the support measures provided for cross-boundary students ("CBS"). Some members pointed out that there was a decrease in the number of CBS attending face-to-face classes in Hong Kong upon full resumption of cross-boundary travel. To encourage more CBS to return to Hong Kong schools, the Administration should collaborate with the parent associations in Yuen Long, Tai Po and Tuen Mun to strengthen promotional work, and communicate closely with the education sector to facilitate CBS in travelling safely between the Mainland and Hong Kong.

22. For CBS returning to Hong Kong schools, members were of the view that the Administration should support CBS to adjust to the resumption of classes (such as conducting activities for CBS to know the community) and provide them with appropriate support; devise medium- to long-term plans to help CBS and their parents cope with social and emotional problems arising from the prolonged class suspension; and help students keep up with the learning progress. However, as there was a shortage in school social workers (particularly in primary schools), some members suggested that EDB should provide each primary school with one student guidance personnel for one year in addition to the existing school

social worker, proactively collaborate with non-governmental organizations (“NGOs”) to organize after-school activities and support programmes for CBS and their parents (including those in the Mainland), encourage schools to implement the “Big Brothers and Big Sisters Scheme”, and consider attracting guidance personnel from other places under the Top Talent Pass Scheme.

Operation of special schools

23. The Panel has been following closely on EDB’s support provided for special schools. Noting that both the estimated turnover rate of teachers in special schools and the number of students in special schools were increasing, members asked the Administration to ensure an adequate supply of teachers to meet the demand. Members suggested that EDB should liaise with UGC-funded institutions and self-financing post-secondary institutions to increase the number of programmes on special education and the number of training places of the existing programmes. On the other hand, the Administration could consider improving the remuneration packages of special school teachers (including increasing their entry salary), enhancing the recognition of experience acquired in special schools and recruiting special school teachers from other places, etc., so as to attract more teachers to join the profession of special education.

24. Some members pointed out that special schools had to procure professional services from private providers or NGOs at high costs owing to persistent difficulties in recruiting specialist staff such as speech therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, etc. EDB should think out of the box to expand the talent pool to alleviate manpower shortages in special schools. For instance, EDB could liaise with private providers or NGOs to launch public-private collaboration to ensure provision of professional services at lower cost; cooperate with the Labour and Welfare Bureau (“LWB”) to provide training sponsorship schemes, of which graduates of the relevant training programmes were required to work for special schools for a certain period of time; and provide incentives to attract retirees and returning migrants to work in special schools.

25. Members considered that special schools should strive to safeguard the well-being of students and suggested allocating resources for them to install artificial intelligence system to facilitate real-time monitoring of students’ safety; and locating the boarding sections in the school premises, with a view to providing more space for boarders to facilitate their learning and development when face-to-face classes were suspended in case of another pandemic like COVID-19.

26. Members were concerned that many special school leavers were unable to find a job and many parents had encountered great difficulties in taking care of them at home. To enhance special school leavers’ employability, members

suggested that special schools should provide students with career exploration courses in the curriculum to help them identify their interests, capabilities and needs; enhance the service mode for sheltered workshops to better address the vocational training needs of special school students; and strongly urge employers to increase placements for special school leavers or even legislate to safeguard their employment. On support for parents, EDB was asked to provide parents with training to facilitate them in working with schools to better support the development of their children; and to collaborate closely with LWB to commence planning the post-school transition for students as early as possible and shorten the waiting time for residential care services.

Teachers' professional roles and development

27. The Panel continued to follow up with matters relating to teachers' professional conduct and development. Members noted that EDB was responsible for handling suspected cases involving teachers' misconduct after the Council on Professional Conduct in Education had officially come to an end. There was a view that such arrangement might undermine the professional autonomy of teachers. From the perspective of education professionalism, the Administration should engage different stakeholders to enhance teachers' professional conduct and development, and review the mechanism regularly to strengthen teachers' participation.

28. Members pointed out that the role of school management committees ("SMCs")/incorporated management committees ("IMCs") in handling complaints against teachers was not well defined in the Guidelines on Teachers' Professional Conduct and members of SMCs/IMCs might not possess the necessary legal knowledge, communication and conciliation skills, etc. for handling complaints against teachers. There were suggestions that the Administration should enhance the school-based complaint management mechanism and provide clear guidelines to facilitate SMCs/IMCs' effective handling of such complaints and management of teachers.

29. Members expressed concern that some misconducted teachers were still taking up teaching posts in schools. To allay public worries, the Administration should request the schools concerned to monitor the behaviour and performance of the teachers concerned through, for example, increasing the number of lesson observation, requiring these teachers to meet with the principals regularly, and collecting parents' views on the performance of these teachers through questionnaires regularly.

30. As regards teachers' professional development, members considered there was a need to enhance teachers' proper understanding of the constitutional

order in Hong Kong, the Legislation Law of the People's Republic of China, spirit and operations of the annual sessions of the National People's Congress and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Also, continuous professional development programmes should be offered to refresh existing knowledge and improve skills of teachers; and specific training requirements should be set for teachers responsible for coordinating national education, patriotism education and national security education. Also, all teachers should take oath to uphold the Basic Law and bear allegiance to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Vocational and professional education and training

31. The Panel had pursued with the Administration the promotion of VPET. Members were concerned that despite the Administration's great effort in promoting VPET, there was still an entrenched bias towards traditional academic pursuit with the perception of vocational education leading to relatively lower qualifications. Some members asked the Administration to attach importance to VPET so as to eliminate public bias on VPET. For instance, the Administration should provide a uniform reporting system for senior secondary subjects under Category A and Applied Learning ("ApL") subjects under Category B, peg the Diploma of Vocational Education (Senior Secondary Curriculum) at a higher Qualifications Framework ("QF") level, position VPET on par with conventional academic routes, organize more relevant activities with parent-teacher associations to make parents become aware of the diverse opportunities available through VPET, and collaborate with the industry sector to enhance the recognition of VPET.

32. Members also raised concerns that some ApL courses in secondary schools and certain Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors ("SSSDP") programmes were under-enrolled. They suggested that the Administration should effectively promote ApL as a valued senior secondary elective subject by keeping the courses abreast of the latest developments in different professional and vocational fields, and encouraging post-secondary education institutions to accord priority to ApL graduates when selecting candidates for admission to their relevant programmes. As regards SSSDP programmes, EDB should liaise with the participating institutions on how to enhance the publicity so that students' understanding of the prospects of SSSDP programmes could be raised.

33. Development of vocational progression pathways was another way to enhance the promotion of VPET. Hence, members suggested that more Industry Training Advisory Committees of QF should be set up to provide platforms for stakeholders to implement QF and to exchange views on the training needs and

manpower development of industries; mutual recognition of qualifications should be developed to step up exchanges of talents between Hong Kong and GBA; and Vocational Qualifications Pathways should be expanded to cover industries such as Data Technology and Artificial Intelligence Coding.

34. There were also views that the Administration should strengthen VPET for students with special education needs to facilitate them to enter into the workforce and contribute to the community. Reference could be drawn from other places to arrange career exploration activities to help these students identify their own interests and career aspirations, and enable them to learn more about the job market as well as the knowledge and skills required by different industries.

Review of Sub-degree Education and Diploma Yi Jin

35. Members were briefed on the review of Sub-degree Education undertaken by EDB and the launch of the Diploma of Applied Education (“DAE”) Programme in the 2023-2024 academic year in place of the existing Diploma Yi Jin (“DYJ Programme”). Members generally concurred that the positioning of the Associate Degree (“AD”) and Higher Diploma (“HD”) qualifications should be more sharply differentiated. The more general AD qualification should be further consolidated to provide qualified AD graduates with articulation opportunities to general degrees. On the other hand, the more specialized HD qualification should be strengthened to serve as a main pillar in the VPET pathway to equip graduates with specialized knowledge and skills for better serving the human resource needs of Hong Kong.

36. Some members pointed out that many in the community remained sceptical about the value of AD and asked the Administration to enhance the recognition of AD qualification to boost graduates’ recruitment chance. For instance, the Administration should ensure at least 50% of AD students to articulate to top-up degree studies; and enhance AD graduates’ opportunities to articulate to local, Mainland and overseas universities. There was another view that a more focused study should be conducted to consider whether AD programmes should be phased out.

37. Members considered it necessary for the Administration to ensure that the curriculum design, delivery and assessment of HD programmes would support the human resource needs of Hong Kong and gain the recognition by the industries. To encourage more students to take up HD programmes, members suggested that the Administration should provide sufficient places of applied degree programmes to help HD graduates acquire relevant qualifications for the relevant trades; and help students know better about themselves and vocational/technical subjects through LPE so that they could make informed choices on their future

studies.

38. Members noted that DAE Programme would replace the existing DYJ Programme. While DAE Programme shared some similarities with DYJ Programme, it would incorporate substantial VPET elements and play a more important role in the VPET progression pathway, facilitating students' articulation to other VPET programmes to enhance the employability of students. Members suggested that the Administration should consider allowing students who completed apprenticeship programmes to apply for DAE Programme and setting a certain number of DAE graduates for articulating to HD programmes. The Administration undertook to take into account members' views when reviewing DAE Programme.

University Grants Committee and the Research Grants Council and the governance of University Grants Committee-funded universities

39. Members were briefed on the composition and funding mechanism of UGC and the Research Grants Council ("RGC") and the governance of UGC-funded universities. Some members considered that the Administration should review the role, composition and functions of UGC and RGC, with a view to keeping up with the development of Hong Kong after 1997 and building up education sovereignty.

40. On the composition of UGC and RGC, members suggested that the Administration could draw reference from the practices of New Zealand, Singapore, the United Kingdom and United States, where only nationals would be appointed as members of their organizations similar to UGC and RGC; appoint some experts in industrial and commercial sectors (rather than local scholars) as UGC and RGC members to avoid conflicts of interests; appoint experts from European/non-English speaking countries and overseas Chinese academics who were familiar with the development of the Mainland as UGC/RGC members (including RGC's committee/panel chairmen and members) to keep abreast of the latest development of the society; and conduct due diligence/integrity checking for potential members before they were appointed.

41. Members pointed out that UGC had all along put much emphasis on research when allocating recurrent funding to the universities. In view of the 2019 incident, universities should be required to put more emphasis on cultivating students' moral character, strengthening values education and enhancing counselling services. Besides, it was important for universities to enhance social responsibility and foster a positive environment for innovation and entrepreneurship.

42. Members considered that UGC and RGC should not only be responsible for funding allocation of the publicly-funded universities, without any monitoring and control role. UGC should strengthen the governance of universities which were expected to be responsible and accountable to the public. Regular reviews (say once every three or four years) on the governance of universities should be conducted and university council members should be required to attend mandatory training on governance to enhance their skills for effective governance.

43. Some members pointed out that RGC gave higher regard to proposals from science disciplines than those from humanities, social sciences and law disciplines when considering research proposals; and some RGC members appeared not to support research projects on issues on the Mainland. These members urged RGC to give equal support to different types of research across all disciplines and topics.

Management of student-led activities in universities and moral education

44. Members pointed out that there was much room for improvement in the management and monitoring of universities' student-led activities. EDB should urge all universities to review the existing practices for managing student-led activities, in particular new student orientation activities; to closely monitor the implementation of these activities; to provide training for student activity organizers and support for participants to ensure that the activities could properly achieve their objectives. Some members suggested that the universities could consider standardizing the practices, contents, guidelines of student-led activities; providing more intervention into the organization of these activities; and setting rules and regulations for these activities and informing students of the consequences of violating such rules and procedures.

45. Members considered there was a need to promote moral education, sex education and legal education in order to enhance the management of student-led activities. In members' view, moral education, sex education and legal education should be promoted from an early age; the curriculum of sex education should be reviewed and revised to include values related to intimacy and relationships; and universities should take into account the curricula of moral education in primary and secondary schools when formulating the initiatives for promoting moral education in order to have a coherent curriculum across primary, secondary and university levels. In the long run, the education system should be reviewed to ensure that the core mission of education to cultivate values and nurture people could be achieved.

Legislative proposal

46. The Panel was briefed on The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (Amendment) Bill 2023. The Bill is a Member's Bill which proposed to relax the limit on the number of Vice-Presidents ("VPs") that the Council of The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology ("HKUST") might appoint and allowed flexibility for HKUST Council to determine from time to time the number of VPs that may be appointed. Members generally supported the proposal, but some members expressed concerns over the duties of the additional VPs and considered it necessary for HKUST to put in place a mechanism to ensure that any appointment of additional VP(s) is for actual operational need and the most suitable candidate(s) is/are appointed.

Financial proposals

47. The Panel gave views on three financial proposals and supported their submission to the Public Works Subcommittee/Finance Committee. These included the proposal to further extend the current interest-free deferral of student loan repayment for another year; the construction of a 12-classroom special school at Oi Kwan Road, Wanchai for reprovisioning Hong Chi Lions Morninghill School; and proposed capital works project for HKUST to construct the New Research Building 2 on its Clear Water Bay campus.

Meetings held

48. From January to December 2023, the Panel held a total of ten meetings.

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 2023 session

Chairman	Prof Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
Deputy Chairman	Hon TANG Fei, MH
Members	Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, GBS, JP Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBM, GBS, JP Hon CHAN Chun-ying, JP Hon CHU Kwok-keung Dr Hon TIK Chi-yuen, SBS, JP Hon Stanley NG Chau-pei, SBS, JP Dr Hon CHOW Man-kong Hon LAM Chun-sing Hon Dennis LEUNG Tsz-wing, MH Hon Edward LEUNG Hei Hon Kenneth LEUNG Yuk-wai, JP Hon Rock CHEN Chung-nin, SBS, JP Hon CHAN Hoi-yan Hon Lillian KWOK Ling-lai Hon Benson LUK Hon-man Revd Canon Hon Peter Douglas KOON Ho-ming, BBS, JP Prof Hon LAU Chi-pang, BBS, JP Prof Hon William WONG Kam-fai, MH
	(Total : 20 Members)
Clerk	Angel WONG
Legal Adviser	Emily MOK (Up to 26 November 2023) Quincy NG (Since 27 November 2023)