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LegCo Panel on Education

**Subcommittee on increase in
post-secondary education opportunities**

**Minutes of meeting
held on Friday, 1 June 2001 at 10:45 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

Members Present : Dr Hon YEUNG Sum (Chairman)
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Prof Hon NG Ching-fai
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon SZETO Wah
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP

Member Absent : Hon WONG Sing-chi

Public Officers Attending : Mrs Fanny LAW, JP
Secretary for Education and Manpower

Mr Raymond YOUNG, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (2)

Miss Christine WAI
Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower (1)2

Mr Peter CHEUNG, JP
Secretary-General, University Grants Committee

Attendance by Invitation : Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation

Professor John C Y LEONG, OBE, JP
Chairman
(*also* Head of Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, The University of Hong Kong)

Ms W S WONG
Executive Director

The Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions

Mr Charles WONG
Chairman
(*also* Director, School of Continuing and Professional Education, City University of Hong Kong)

Mrs Amy CHAN
Vice-Chairman
(*also* Organiser for Academic Affairs, Caritas Adult and Higher Education)

Professor Enoch YOUNG
Director
(*also* Director, School of Professional and Continuing Education, The University of Hong Kong)

Mr Simon WONG
Director
(*also* Dean, School of Continuing Education, Hong Kong Baptist University)

Mr KY FONG
Representative
(*also* Head, Continuing Professional Development Centre, Vocational Training Council)

Dr Edwin WONG
Director
(*also* Head, Division of Continuing Professional Education,
Hong Kong Institute of Education)

Dr Anthony TAM
Honorary Secretary
(*also* Director, School of Professional Education and
Executive Development, Hong Kong Polytechnic
University)

Working Group on the Development of Post-secondary
Education of the Education Commission

Professor CHENG Kai-ming, SBS, JP
Chairman

Professor WONG Yuk-shan
Member

Hong Kong Association for Lifelong Education

Mr CHAN Cheuk-hay
Vice-Chairman
(*also* Principal, Hong Kong College of Technology)

Mr Robert AU
Member, Executive Council
(*also* Principal, YMCA)

Ms Susanna LEE
Honorary Secretary
(*also* Director of The Art School, Hong Kong Arts Centre)

Convocation of the Chinese University of Hong Kong

Dr YIP Kwok-hung
Co-Chairman, Subcommittee on Social and Educational
Matters of the Standing Committee

Clerk in Attendance : Miss Flora TAI
Chief Assistant Secretary (2)2

Staff in Attendance : Mr Stanley MA
Senior Assistant Secretary (2)6

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I. Meeting with deputations

The Chairman welcomed representatives of the deputations to the meeting.

2. The Chairman said that members were supportive of the direction to expand the provision of post-secondary education opportunities. He invited the representatives of deputations to present their views on the possible ways to achieve the Administration's target of providing 60% of secondary school leavers with post-secondary education opportunities in the coming ten years.

Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (HKCAA)
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1664/00-01(01)]

3. Professor John C Y LEONG, Chairman of HKCAA, said that HKCAA was supportive of an expansion in post-secondary education provision and the proposed introduction of a new regulatory framework for post-secondary education. It also welcomed being named by the Government as the academic accreditation body under the Administration's current proposal.

4. Professor John C Y LEONG said that HKCAA was concerned about the quality assurance of the Associate Degree (AD) for two reasons. First, this new qualification was designed for articulation into degree programmes. Second, AD was intended to have international currency as it was also intended that AD graduates would be recognised by overseas universities for transfer into their degree programmes. HKCAA recommended that AD or equivalent qualifications offered by non-self-accrediting institutions should be subject to accreditation.

5. Professor John C Y LEONG explained the accreditation process which comprised two parts: the institutional review and programme validation. He said that emphasis was put on the process of peer review. HKCAA recommended that -

- (a) non-self-accrediting institutions, such as the Hong Kong Productivity Council and Hong Kong Arts Centre which primarily were not set up as teaching institutions, should go through the institutional review and their AD courses should be subject to an accreditation process;

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- (b) registered post-secondary colleges under the Post-Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap. 320) should also be subject to accreditation;
- (c) for non-self-accrediting professional bodies which were going to offer AD programmes, they should first undergo an academic review at the institutional level conducted by HKCAA. This would be followed by accreditation of the proposed programme, which could be undertaken jointly by HKCAA and the relevant professional body as appropriate; and
- (d) only statutory professional bodies which had established accreditation systems and experience should be recognised for their accreditation role.

6. Professor John C Y LEONG informed members that HKCAA had embarked on the drafting of a definition of AD. Its proposed definition and descriptors of AD (subject to endorsement of HKCAA) had already been submitted to the Subcommittee.

7. Professor John C Y LEONG highlighted that it was important to use local accreditation system to uphold standards of the education system for Hong Kong. HKCAA was of the view that using non-local/overseas bodies would be construed as an imposition of foreign standards and requirements upon Hong Kong's higher education system and undermine the consistency of standards applied. Professor LEONG said that HKCAA supported the launch of AD programmes and the establishment of a sound accreditation system for quality assurance of the AD programmes.

The Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions (the Federation)
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1705/00-01(01)]

8. Mr Charles WONG, Chairman of the Federation, said that the Federation was made up of the eight University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions, the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK), Vocational Training Council and Caritas Higher Education Service (Caritas). He pointed out that most of the new self-financing AD programmes and Higher Diploma courses were offered by the schools of continuing education of these institutions. He said that except for Caritas, the other institutions offered courses which had been approved by their Senate or academic board.

9. Professor Enoch YOUNG of the Federation said that the Federation supported widening access to higher education and enhancing lifelong learning

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opportunities. He considered that these initiatives should be introduced as a matter of priority. Professor YOUNG said that the Federation was fully supportive of the 60% target and would spare no efforts to assist in materializing the target. He said that compared with many neighbouring advanced countries/places, the 60% target was a modest figure and was achievable on a self-financing basis.

10. Professor Enoch YOUNG said that the Federation was of the view that while existing self-financing providers of tertiary education were able to provide many courses on a part-time basis, they would not have the capacity to provide full-time post-secondary education which required a campus environment with library, study, counseling, sports and other supporting facilities. The Federation suggested that the Government should provide start-up assistance for providers to enable them to offer full-time post-secondary courses. The Federation also called for the support of the whole community in order to render the 60% target achievable.

11. Professor Enoch YOUNG pointed out that the Government should take the lead in recognising the qualification of AD so that employers would be encouraged to accept the new qualifications. He said that the Government should also provide financial assistance for needy students and ensure that no one would be denied access to post-secondary education for lack of money. Professor YOUNG further pointed out that the 60% target meant that about 3 000 additional places should be provided annually over the next decade. Based on past experience, the Federation was confident that this figure was achievable.

12. Professor Enoch YOUNG said that for quality assurance, new providers without self-accrediting status should only offer sub-degree courses which were subject to accreditation. Professor YOUNG further informed members that the Federation had recently reached a consensus on a "common descriptor" in respect of AD. This included quality criteria such as entrance requirements, curriculum design, contact hours, teacher requirements and so on. He said that the Federation considered that sub-degree programmes should be more oriented towards specific professional needs and provide generic content as well.

13. With reference to paragraph 8 of the submission of the Federation, Professor Enoch YOUNG spelled out their responses to the general concern that students' standard might fall with the increase in post-secondary education opportunities. In short, the Federation believed that widening access to higher education would contribute to raising the manpower quality. Moreover, the AD programmes were valuable to the young in preparing them for further studies or for employment. Professor YOUNG pointed out that the objectives of AD and Higher/Professional Diploma level awards were threefold: they could be

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standalone qualifications enabling students to enter the job market, helping students to acquire a solid academic foundation for articulation to further studies and preparing students for lifelong learning. He said that Hong Kong could follow the example of the United States where some 44% of high school graduates proceeded to Community Colleges to pursue further studies.

14. Professor Enoch YOUNG said that the high demand for and shortage of locally provided higher education opportunities were reflected in the presence of a large number of overseas educational providers in Hong Kong. However, as overseas providers might lack local experience and prospective, it was desirable for local education providers to collaborate with overseas institutions in offering courses.

The Working Group on the Development of Post-secondary Education (the Working Group) of the Education Commission (EC)

15. Professor CHENG Kai-ming, Chairman of the Working Group, pointed out that Hong Kong's economy was moving from manufacture-based to services-based and the number of the white-collar had far exceeded that of blue-collar. However, the education system was not working to complement this change. He said that the problem was that the majority of the workforce was only at the level of secondary school education. He believed that such an education system would no longer be able to meet the challenges of the new age. He said that the Working Group even considered the 60% target too low since it was meant to be achieved in ten years' time. He further invited members to note that Singapore was already achieving 60% whereas Shanghai 45%, and the latter had further planned to increase it to 55% by 2005.

16. Professor CHENG Kai-ming said that in the provision of sub-degree courses, the Working Group was of the view that the Government should assume a coordinating role for the purpose of protecting consumers' interests. It would also be necessary for the Government to extend assistance to providers, such as helping them to find land for their operation and to provide financial assistance for needy students.

17. Commenting on the four directions as proposed by the Administration for enhancing higher education opportunities, Professor WONG Yuk-shan suggested that the measures under the four directions should be implemented incrementally. For example, if the provision of places by local providers was able to meet the target, there was no need to encourage the provision of too many non-local courses in Hong Kong.

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The Hong Kong Association for Lifelong Education (the Association)

18. Mr CHAN Cheuk-hay, Vice-Chairman of the Association, said that the Association was also supportive of the target of providing 60% of secondary school leavers with post-secondary education opportunities in the coming ten years. It supported that the higher education system should be more diversified and multi-layered. It envisaged that more education institutions would embark on the provision of post-secondary courses and a greater variety of courses would be offered. In addition, there would be different levels of qualifications to be acquired by students (such as AD). The Association considered that the current proposals met the aspirations of many people in satisfying their needs for more learning opportunities and also catered for new economic needs by enhancing the manpower quality. In particular, the Association appreciated that the current proposals could provide more opportunities for secondary school leavers to pursue studies.

19. Mr CHAN Cheuk-hay expounded his views on how to strengthen employment opportunities of graduates of sub-degree programmes, such as by putting emphasis on the recognition of the vocational experiences of employees other than their academic qualifications. Mr CHAN said that to ensure the quality of the future higher education system, the following development should be encouraged -

- (a) diversified post-secondary courses should be offered;
- (b) to show more care for students and help them achieve greater confidence and adopt a more positive outlook on life;
- (c) to strengthen the training of teaching technique and not just to emphasize teachers' qualifications; and
- (d) the Government should provide start-up assistance for providers to help them launch courses.

The Convocation (the Convocation) of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK)

[LC Paper No. CB(2) 1702/00-01(01)]

20. Dr YIP Kwok-hung, Co-Chairman of Subcommittee on Social and Educational Matters of the Standing Committee of the Convocation of CUHK, said that the Subcommittee was basically supportive of the policy objective of providing 60% of secondary school leavers with post-secondary education opportunities in the coming ten years. However, it felt that equal emphasis should

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be put on the quality and quantity. The Convocation had conducted an opinion survey with the alumni of the University and the findings had been set out in the submission of the Convocation. It was found that divided views were expressed in the opinion survey on the 60% target. Respondents to the opinion survey were mainly concerned about whether student quality could be ensured while increasing quantity. Most respondents were of the view that entrance requirements for universities' degree programmes should not be lax for the purpose of filling up the places.

UGC

21. The Chairman sought UGC's views on the proposed expansion of post-secondary education in Hong Kong. Mr Peter CHEUNG, Secretary-General of UGC, responded that UGC fully supported the proposed expansion. It was of the view that the continuing education arms of the eight UGC-funded institutions could launch more AD programmes as this should help establish the standards of the programmes and enable the society to understand more about AD. It was of the view that the UGC-funded institutions should make the best use of existing physical space/staff/facilities to launch such programmes.

22. Mr Peter CHEUNG said that since the UGC-funded institutions were self-accrediting institutions (except the Hong Kong Institute of Education), they could guarantee the quality of their AD programmes by subjecting them to their own internal accreditation mechanism. As to the progression pathways of AD programmes, Mr CHEUNG said that UGC would explore if it could enhance opportunities for graduates of AD programmes to study universities' degree programmes by reviewing existing resources allocation and student quota mechanisms. He also informed members that UGC was undertaking a review of post-secondary education in Hong Kong, which would include studies on how to accommodate the proposed expansion in the post-secondary education system.

Questions raised by members

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1664/00-01(02)]

23. Members noted that the Administration had provided a paper setting out its response to members' concerns raised at the last meeting as some supplementary information on the proposals to support the increase in post-secondary education opportunities [LC Paper No. CB(2)1664/00-01(02)].

24. Ms Audrey EU recalled that Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM) had commented that there were almost not enough qualified students even for admission into the universities to fill up the annual 14 500 first-year first-degree (FYFD) places. She asked whether the situation would be improved with the

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launch of AD programmes. She was also concerned about the impact of the launch of AD on tertiary, secondary and primary education. Professor Enoch YOUNG responded that AD programmes usually incorporated studies in general education, which served as very good foundation for self-learning and lifelong learning. He believed that the AD programmes were more useful to students than the Form 6 and 7 syllabuses and the standard of graduates of AD programmes should be higher than that of senior secondary school leavers.

25. Professor John C Y LEONG pointed out that at present there were great differences in the standards of Diploma/Higher Diploma/Certificate programmes being offered by different institutions. He welcomed the launch of AD which offered alternative learning opportunities for students who were not admitted to universities. He said that AD programmes would be beneficial to students in preparing them for employment or for further studies. He stressed that quality assurance of these new courses was very important since AD programmes could be articulated with university curricula. Professor CHENG Kai-ming reiterated his support for the proposed expansion of post-secondary education as he felt that widening learning opportunities for students would anyway help develop their potential and introduce them to a breadth of knowledge.

26. Mr CHAN Cheuk-hay said that whether or not the launch of AD would foster the development of more diversified secondary/primary education depended on whether the new AD programmes to be launched were diversified or not. He took the view that a student should not be admitted into AD programmes merely based on his/her performance in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination because examination results could not fully reflect the student's potential.

27. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the Democratic Party was supportive of the direction of expanding the provision of post-secondary education. However, the Party was concerned about whether the proposed substantial increase in post-secondary opportunities was practicably achievable. The Party was also concerned about the quality assurance of the post-secondary programmes to be launched and the progression pathways of graduates of the programmes.

28. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed concern as to whether the standing of AD programmes would be widely recognised by the society. He agreed with the deputations that recognition of this qualification by the Government and employers' acceptance of it was most important. In this connection, he suggested that HKCAA should elaborate in greater detail on how to achieve quality control with respect to admission criteria for AD programmes and exit control of their graduates. Mr CHEUNG further said that the Administration should have worked out a projection of the progressive increase of post-secondary places on a yearly

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basis for the next ten years. He asked whether the Administration would take into account the calculation made by Professor Enoch YOUNG that 3 000 additional places would be needed annually over the next decade in order to achieve the 60% target.

29. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong also expressed concern about the quality control of programmes offered by self-financing institutions which had not achieved self-accrediting status. Noting that about 40% of students in Community Colleges overseas proceeded to study in universities, Mr CHEUNG asked whether the Administration had any projected intake of graduates of AD programmes for admission into local universities' degree programmes. He pointed out that if the number of FYFD places at the eight UGC-funded institutions continued to be fixed at 14 500, it would be difficult for the institutions to spare any places and offer them to graduates of AD programmes.

30. SEM clarified that the 60% target had been set in consultation with members of the Federation. Their views had been sought as to whether an annual increase of 3 000 post-secondary places was achievable and they had affirmed that the number of increase should be achievable. She added that overseas experiences and the practical circumstances in Hong Kong had also been taken into account in determining the 60% target.

31. As to the standing of AD, SEM pointed out that the Administration had commissioned the Federation and HKCAA each to draw up a set of common descriptors for AD and equivalent qualifications. The relevant recommendations had been submitted to members. The Administration would further decide to adopt which set of common descriptors for AD and recommend whether or not the qualifications of accredited AD programmes would be accepted for appointment to certain civil service grades.

32. On the progression pathways of AD programmes, SEM said that it was impossible to expect all graduates of AD programmes to be able to be admitted to second year degree places. However, the Administration also agreed that certain proportion of AD graduates should be able to enrol in degree programmes. She informed members that the articulation of sub-degree qualifications with universities would be explored in greater detail in the context of examining the feasibility of a credit accumulation and transfer system in Hong Kong. She pointed out that such arrangements would allow greater flexibility for the system of funding allocation for the UGC-funded institutions. SEM further said that all the AD programme providers had established articulation and credit transfer arrangements with many universities. For instance, 28 universities (including the University of Hong Kong) had agreed to accept AD graduates of HKU SPACE's Community College for admission to their degree programmes. SEM said that for

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those AD graduates who chose to seek employment, they could also consider part-time degree studies as offered by OUHK.

33. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong asked the Administration to explain whether the main emphasis of its education policy had already shifted from basic education to post-secondary education. SEM replied that the Administration attached great importance to fostering the development of basic education and considerable resources had been devoted for the purpose. However, the Administration also saw the need to widen learning opportunities for students. She said that to expand accessibility to post-secondary education, the Government would continue to provide financial assistance for needy students and for education providers to launch such programmes. She said that the Administration would increase the allocation of resources to foster the development of post-secondary education but the increase would not be substantial enough to affect the quality of basic education.

34. The Chairman invited representatives of HKCAA to give their views on how to ensure the quality of sub-degree courses offered by non-self-accrediting institutions. Professor John C Y LEONG replied that HKCAA had performed accreditation for about 400 non-local courses offered in Hong Kong and problems had been found with about 10% of them. He stressed that a system of follow-up and monitoring of any required improvements as a result of course validations and institutional review was important. Ms W S WONG of HKCAA supplemented that for institutions which had not been accredited by HKCAA before, an institutional review would be conducted for the institution to determine whether it had the appropriate institutional structure and academic environment to conduct programmes at a specific level. This would be followed by the validation of individual programmes, which often involved the stipulation of conditions to be fulfilled. HKCAA had established a system of monitoring to ensure that any required improvements were made by the institutions concerned. Professor John C Y LEONG added that HKCAA drew upon the experience and expertise of its international membership. It selected the membership of its specialist review panel from its Subject Register of over 1 000 specialists from and outside of Hong Kong to support the peer review process in accreditation.

35. Professor CHENG Kai-ming pointed out that "quality" and "quality assurance" actually involved different concepts. He said that "quality" was concerned with the human qualities needed by the society and the attributes of the students. On the other hand, "quality assurance" was concerned with accreditation. He also suggested that the Administration should not discuss the current proposals on increasing tertiary education opportunities only with HKCAA and the Federation but also with users' group and education providers.

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36. Ms Susanna LEE of the Association suggested that the Administration should give thought to the comparability of different qualifications such as AD, Higher Diploma, Professional Diploma and Certificates. She also considered that the Administration should review the traditional approach of student assessment which was mainly based on students' linguistic ability. She suggested that new requirements should be introduced and incorporated in the entrance requirements for AD programmes. She also hoped that the Administration would appreciate the resources limitation problems faced by non-government education providers and provide assistance for them where possible.

37. Professor NG Ching-fai expressed support for widening post-secondary education opportunities. However, he considered that the Administration should not implement the 60% target rigidly but should review it in the light of actual circumstances. Professor NG said that the Federation had pointed out in paragraph 4 of their submission that the Government should provide start-up costs for existing providers to offer full-time courses to secondary school leavers. However, he noted that the Administration's current proposal was just to offer loans for providers to meet start-up expenses. He said that the Administration's proposal seemed to fall short of the Federation's expectation. Professor NG further pointed out that AD was not a kind of "cheap" education and costly facilities were needed for disciplines such as science and information technology. He said that providers would not be able to meet the necessary costs merely by using income generated from tuition fees. He urged the Administration to consider providing financial assistance for providers to meet start-up expenses.

38. SEM responded that the Administration had carefully studied the projected number of students and other cost items before it reached a consensus with the Federation that providers should be able to meet start-up expenses by receiving interest-free loans from the Government. She requested members to provide more concrete details on any courses which could not be launched by providers without additional assistance rendered by the Government. In response to the Chairman, Mr Charles WONG pointed out that in the case of OUHK, free land was allocated to the university for construction of its premises. He said that the Federation was concerned about the problem of accommodation for the provision of post-secondary places.

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39. Professor NG Ching-fai considered that it would be most ideal for students to enrol in the AD programmes after completion of secondary six studies and that the first degree programmes should be standardised to four years. Professor Enoch YOUNG responded that as far as he understood, there was a consensus amongst universities that the first degree programmes should be standardised to four years. He said that in Los Angeles, the established ratio of freshmen and sophomores to juniors and seniors in the universities there was 4 to 6. Graduates

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of AD programmes could thus study in the third year of degree programmes since there were extra places to accommodate them. Professor YOUNG suggested the Administration to make reference to this example.

40. Mr Charles WONG informed members that the Federation was of the view that the qualification of AD should be equivalent to half of a university degree on the premise of a four-year first degree programme. Students should be able to enrol into the AD programmes after completion of secondary six studies. During the interim period, the Federation had proposed to introduce a Higher Education Foundation Certificate. This foundation programme would widen the access for secondary five school leavers to pursue AD programmes other than through the secondary six route.

41. Professor CHENG Kai-ming said that the Working Group was working on the premise of three-year senior secondary academic structure. However, it was considered that universities should determine the duration of stay for their first degree programmes in accordance with the actual circumstances and requirements of each programme without having to standardise all the first degree programmes to four years.

42. Ms Emily LAU said that she was supportive of the proposed expansion of post-secondary education opportunities. However, she was concerned about whether there was sufficient number of students qualified for admission into the AD programmes and she also noted that in the survey conducted by the Convocation, divided views were expressed on the 60% target. She was worried that it would be a waste of public expenditure if most of the students admitted to the post-secondary courses were substandard and could not benefit from the courses at all.

43. Dr YIP Kwok-hung said that percentage-wise, about half of the respondents to the opinion survey expressed support for the 60% target while the remaining half objected to it. On the standards of students, Dr YIP admitted that there was feedback that university graduates' learning and life attitudes fell short of the general expectation on them. Mr CHAN Cheuk-hay said that expansion of higher education should be introduced to enhance the learning opportunities for those who had the motivation and/or the ability for learning. Moreover, he pointed out that as the 60% target was only an indicative target, it needed not be so worried that many substandard students would be admitted into the programmes. Mrs Amy CHAN of Caritas said that Community Colleges provided opportunities for students to study non-credit courses which would be beneficial to them in preparing them for employment or studies. Mr Simon WONG of HKBU supplemented that based on the past experience, about 70% of students of AD programmes were able to complete the programmes. He assured members that

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there was quality control of the standards of graduates and in general these students demonstrated better learning attitudes than undergraduates.

44. Ms Emily LAU further asked whether universities which were going to launch new post-secondary courses would need to subsidize the operation of these courses. Mr Peter CHEUNG replied that at the initial stage, cross-subsidies might be necessary in the form that UGC-funded institutions might have to make use of existing physical space/staff/facilities to launch the post-secondary programmes. However, UGC was of the view that in the long-run, such cross-subsidies should no longer be necessary.

45. Mr YEUNG Yiu-chung considered that there were urgent needs to implement the 60% target. As the increase in post-secondary education opportunities was proposed to be on a self-financing basis, Mr YEUNG asked whether the Administration intended that universities should adopt the same mode of operation in the future. SEM replied that the Administration had no plan for universities to operate on a self-financing basis. Mr YEUNG further asked HKCAA how to achieve overseas recognition of the qualifications of local AD programmes to be offered. Professor John C Y LEONG said that the following factors would help achieve overseas recognition -

- (a) Government's acceptance of the qualifications of accredited local AD programmes for appointment to civil service grades; and
- (b) articulation of AD qualifications with local universities.

46. Professor LEONG added that the non-local/overseas experts in higher education in the accreditation panels of HKCAA might help introduce the qualifications of AD to overseas institutions. He further informed members that ten years ago HKCAA had spearheaded the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies for Higher Education which held meetings from time to time. Therefore, they served as good opportunities for HKCAA to introduce to overseas these new qualifications.

47. Mr SZETO Wah said that the proposed expansion of post-secondary opportunities would have implications on the current academic structure. He asked whether implementation of four-year first degree programmes needed to be expedited. SEM replied that the relevant working groups of EC were examining the feasibility of a three-year senior secondary education structure and its impact on the first-degree programme. They would submit recommendations to the Government in mid-2002. During the interim period, the Federation had proposed to introduce a Higher Education Foundation Certificate as previously mentioned by Mr Charles WONG. In response to Mr SZETO Wah's further question, SEM

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advised that the curriculum reform put emphasis on diversity, lifelong learning and all-round development which would aptly articulate with the new post-secondary programmes to be offered. It would also focus on developing the appropriate attitudes for work.

48. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that the Liberal Party had no objection to increasing funding allocation for the purpose of improving education. He agreed with Professor NG that the 60% target as a planning target should be reviewed from time to time. He asked whether there would be places offered to working people to embark on AD programmes on a part-time basis. Professor Enoch YOUNG said that a great variety of adult education courses equivalent to the AD or Higher Diploma qualifications was available now.

49. Summing up the discussion, the Chairman said that members were concerned about the following issues -

- (a) to implement the 60% target with flexibility and review it in the light of actual circumstances;
- (b) to provide start-up assistance for post-secondary education providers to meet the accommodation, facilities and equipment costs;
- (c) to look at the possibility of accepting the qualifications of accredited local AD programmes for appointment to civil service grades; and
- (d) to provide financial assistance for needy students to ensure that no students would be denied access to education because of a lack of financial means.

50. The Chairman thanked the representatives of the deputations and the Administration for attending the meeting.

II. Any other business

51. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:05 pm.