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LegCo Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Friday, 13 October 2000 at 8:30 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

- Members Present** : Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Prof Hon NG Ching-fai
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon LAU Kong-wah
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon SZETO Wah
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung
Dr Hon LO Wing-lok
- Members Absent** : Dr Hon YEUNG Sum (Chairman)
Hon David CHU Yu-lin
Hon Eric LI Ka-cheung, JP
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon SIN Chung-kai
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, JP
Hon WONG Sing-chi
- Members Attending** : Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon LAW Chi-kwong, JP
Hon Henry WU King-cheong, BBS

- Public Officers Attending** : Mrs Fanny LAW, JP
Secretary for Education and Manpower
- Mr Raymond YOUNG
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (2)
- Mr Joseph LAI
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (3)
- Mr Matthew K C CHEUNG
Director of Education
- Mr Anthony TONG
Deputy Director of Education
- Mr H F LEE
Senior Assistant Director of Education (Support)
- Miss Amy TSE
Senior Assistant Director of Education (Administration)
- Mrs Brenda FUNG
Acting Secretary-General, University Grants Committee
- Mr James WILLIS
Controller, Student Financial Assistance Agency
- 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. Briefing by the Secretary for Education and Manpower on the Chief Executive's Policy Address 2000

At the Deputy Chairman's invitation, Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM) briefed members on the salient points of the policy objectives

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and programmes on education as set out in the Chief Executive's (CE's) Policy Address 2000 (SEM's speaking note is in the Appendix).

Early childhood education

2. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the Administration had decided to raise the entry requirements of all newly appointed kindergarten teachers and improve the ratio of teachers to pupils for half-day and whole-day schooling from 1:30 and 1:20 respectively to 1:15 by stages within three years. Mr CHEUNG expressed concern that as Government subsidies to kindergartens did not include teachers' salaries, implementation of these initiatives would force kindergartens to increase their fees substantially in order to cover staff costs. He pointed out that it would create an undue financial burden on parents since the existing level of kindergarten fees and miscellaneous expenses amounted to as high as \$20,000 a student per year. Mr CHEUNG expressed concern that even parents of moderate income would find the current level of kindergarten fees and miscellaneous expenses very difficult to afford.

3. SEM responded that Government's policy was to ensure that no children would be deprived of the opportunity to receive early childhood education because of financial difficulties. She pointed out that kindergartens participating in the Kindergarten Subsidy Scheme (KSS) would be granted a sum of \$41,000 for each operating class in the 1999-00 school year if they employed the prescribed percentage of qualified teachers. While the KSS was under a review for improvement, the Administration had relaxed the requirements of the Kindergarten Fee Remission Scheme (KGFRS) to allow more low-income families to obtain full remission of school fees. She added that a joint working group had been established under the Education Department (ED) and Social Welfare Department to examine further harmonisation of kindergartens and child care centres. The Government had also earmarked \$100 million for implementing the joint working group's recommendations in the next financial year.

4. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong was of the view that the current level of KSS subsidy at \$41,000 for each operating class was minimal. He urged that the Administration must increase the amount of direct subsidy to kindergartens in order to achieve the targets of increasing the proportion of qualified teachers and lowering the ratio of teachers to pupils.

5. SEM responded that the joint working group would thoroughly consider the financial assistance provided to kindergartens under the KKS and to parents under the KGFRS in light of the financial implications of the policy initiatives. The joint working group would complete deliberations by mid 2001.

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6. The Deputy Chairman asked whether the Administration would have any remedial actions for kindergartens which failed to achieve the target teacher-pupil ratio of 1:15 in 2003-04. SEM responded that although sufficient time had been provided for kindergartens to meet the target, the Administration would allow flexibility in implementation.

7. Miss Emily LAU asked whether the Administration had a long-term target of increasing the proportion of qualified teachers in kindergartens and whether there was a timetable to achieve such a target. SEM said that the long-term target was to increase the proportion of qualified teachers in kindergartens to 100%. She pointed out that the entry requirements of kindergarten teachers would be raised to five passes, including Chinese and English, in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination from the 2001-2002 school year. All new kindergarten teachers would be required to possess a pre-service Qualified Kindergarten Teacher qualification from the 2003-2004 school year.

8. Mr LAW Chi-kwong observed that CE had set out various quality improvement proposals for early childhood education in his Policy Address but made no reference to special schools for children with special learning needs. He asked whether the Administration would give an undertaking that the needs of special education would not be neglected in the new initiatives. SEM responded in the affirmative. She explained that no reference to special education was made in CE's Policy Address because the needs of special education had been considered in the overall context of the new initiatives to improve early childhood education.

Enhancing learning opportunities at senior secondary and tertiary levels

9. Mr SZETO Wah asked whether the increase of annual recurrent expenditure on education of \$2 billion would suffice for implementing the education initiatives as outlined in CE's Policy Address 2000 e.g. providing 60% of senior secondary school leavers with tertiary education and expanding the usual length of degree programmes to four years.

10. In reply, SEM explained that CE had set the long-term objective of increasing the percentage of senior secondary school leavers receiving tertiary education on the ground that it had become increasingly difficult for secondary school graduates to find employment in recent years. In the face of a knowledge-based economy, they needed further and continuous education to upgrade their knowledge and skills, so as to strengthen their competitiveness in employment. SEM informed members that to project the future manpower needs of the community, the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) had

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conducted a study on manpower forecast for the next five years. EMB would submit the study report to the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Manpower for consideration. Preliminary findings showed that while there was a surplus supply of manpower at junior secondary level or below, the demand for workers at post secondary level would considerably exceed the supply in the next five years. The Government therefore aimed at creating an environment in which all students could continue their education on completion of junior secondary level and choose the path that best suited their individual abilities and character.

11. SEM further pointed out that while the Administration recognized the need to raise the general educational level of the population, improvement of basic education would be given the top priority. She clarified that the budget increase of \$2 billion would be deployed mainly for improving basic education in schools, of which some \$700 million would be spent on increasing senior secondary school places. SEM stressed that the Administration would facilitate a gradual increase in the supply of tertiary places in the next 10 years to achieve the policy commitment of providing tertiary education for 60% of the relevant age cohort. The majority of these programmes would be offered by tertiary institutions and vocational training institutes at certificate, diploma and sub-degree levels on a self-financing basis. The Administration would provide tertiary education providers with capital loans and school sites, and students with grants, low-interest loans and non-means tested loans. Financial assistance in the form of loans and land allocation would not be counted towards the budget of recurrent expenditure.

12. Miss Emily LAU asked whether a total of 6 000 additional subsidized school places (senior secondary four places or vocational training) could meet the demand in 2003-04. She also asked why the Government did not consider free provision of all secondary places.

13. SEM responded that the number of 6 000 places was estimated on the basis of the number of secondary three students studying in public sector schools. She stressed that the Administration would not force secondary three leavers to continue study and only those who were capable and want to continue studies would be provided with subsidized secondary four places or vocational training. SEM stressed that provision of free education would not necessarily guarantee quality education. Students who had financial difficulties might apply for fee remission under the student financial assistance scheme. Miss Emily LAU further asked and SEM replied that senior secondary places were subsidized at a cost-recovery rate of 18% and the current school fee was around \$5,000 a year.

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Tertiary education

14. Mr SZETO Wah asked about Government's policy on the provision of funds to tertiary education and also asked whether differential fees for university education was still under consideration. He pointed out that without sufficient funding support, tertiary institutions would have to charge high fees on non-degree programmes in order to recover the cost.

15. SEM said that the Administration would have to review the funding policy for tertiary education in the light of the Education Commission's reform proposals, such as the proposed credit-transfer system where holders of sub-degree qualifications could pursue university education at a higher entry point. In view of other changes to the funding model, the Administration would not pursue the proposal of differential fees for university education at this stage. She pointed out that many tertiary institutions had been able to run non-degree programmes on a self-financed basis. Government would provide loans to those who needed financial assistance to enrol in a programme. She reiterated that it was the Government's policy that no qualified students should be denied access to tertiary education due to a lack of financial means.

16. Mr LAU Kong-wah enquired about the Administration's measures to achieve the target of providing tertiary education to 60% of the young people. He considered that whether the policy commitment could be achieved would largely depend on supply of tertiary places according to market demand; appropriate recognition of the qualifications awarded by tertiary institutions; and support from business enterprises.

17. SEM agreed with Mr LAU Kong-wah's view that successful achievement of the 60% target would depend on market demand and the capability of the tertiary institutions to provide sufficient training places at the right time. The initial findings of the study on five-year manpower needs revealed that the demand for "associate professionals" would substantially increase in the years ahead. To encourage continuous learning in the community, Government would co-operate with the education, industrial and commercial sectors to develop a structure for life-long learning and establish a qualifications framework which would help maintain the confidence of employers and professional bodies in the qualifications awarded by the education and training providers. The Administration would collaborate with the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation, the Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions and various professional bodies to work out an academic accreditation and quality assurance mechanism in the next two years. SEM stressed that the participation and contributions of employers played a vital role in policy implementation. She pointed out that the manpower needs of industries at

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different stages of development would vary and the stakeholders concerned should maintain an on-going partnership with Government to ensure sufficient supply of workers with the required skills and knowledge.

18. Mr LAU Kong-wah asked whether the qualifications framework to be established in two years' time would include detailed procedures for accreditation of individual diploma and sub-degree programmes. SEM responded that the qualifications framework would set out a structure of various levels and standards of the available certificate, diploma and sub-degree programmes for life-long learning. As regards the necessary quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms, Government would need to consider further whether a centralized body or the tertiary institutions themselves should set the evaluation criteria for assessment of individual programmes. She added that while different mechanisms for assessment were adopted in overseas countries, it appeared appropriate to let local tertiary institutions determine among themselves the standards of individual programmes. SEM pointed out that the practice of transferring credits among tertiary institutions had already been established.

Adm 19. At Mr LAU Kong-wah's request, SEM agreed to liaise with tertiary institutions and collect statistics on graduates of the existing certificate, diploma and sub-degree programmes, and their employment situation for members' information.

The Learning environment

20. Miss Emily LAU urged the Government to allocate more resources for improving the school environment. She pointed out that the level of resources allocated to education (about 4.25% of the gross domestic product (GDP)) was not as high as that of advanced countries (around 6%-7% of GDP). Miss LAU questioned whether the allocation of \$10 billion could substantially improve the learning environment in the 358 schools which were included under the School Improvement Programme (SIP). Miss LAU said that as observed during the then Panel's visit to four schools on 8 June 2000, the conditions of some schools with old design were not suitable for improvement under SIP and should preferably be redeveloped or reprovisioned.

21. SEM responded that the major obstacle to improving the school environment was scarcity of suitable sites for construction of new schools. To expedite SIP works, the Administration would complete the feasibility studies for all the remaining 358 schools under the SIP by the end of 2002, and aim to complete all the works in 2004-05. The ED would flexibly consider the unique circumstances of individual schools and the views of schools and parents in

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implementing the SIP. She added that in line with the principle of prudent financial management, increase in budget allocations on education should follow the annual economic growth.

22. Miss Emily LAU said that given the importance of education to the future of Hong Kong, the Administration should allocate more land resources for construction of new schools. Referring to CE's statement that the teacher-pupil ratio in primary and secondary schools had decreased to 1:21.8 and 1:18.7 respectively in the past three years, she said that the learning environment would not be improved as long as class sizes in schools were not reduced. Miss LAU pointed out that the original programme for reducing class sizes was suspended when whole-day primary schooling was introduced in 1998. She asked whether the Administration had set a timetable for the reduction of primary and secondary class sizes.

23. SEM responded that the Administration had not set a timetable for reducing school class sizes, but had set the target of enabling 60% and 100% of primary school pupils to study in whole-day schools by September 2002 and 2007 respectively. SEM informed members that there was an adequate supply of school places so that the class size on average for schools which adopted the activity approach, should not exceed 32 students. She acknowledged that some popular schools might have classes accommodating up to 45 pupils. SEM stressed that compared with other Asian countries, the teacher-pupil ratio in Hong Kong was not high and the class size was not very large. In line with the spirit of school-based management, schools were encouraged to revise class schedules and re-organize teaching and learning activities to reduce class sizes. She expected that schools would take initiatives to utilize school and teaching resources in a more cost-effective manner, such as to flexibly adjust class schedules and extra-curricular programmes for better use of available resources.

24. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that reducing school class sizes and providing whole-day primary schooling should not be mutually exclusive. He enquired whether schools with low student intake could operate smaller classes of 25 students per class. Mr CHEUNG pointed out that in view of the priority given to whole-day primary schooling, it was unlikely that class sizes in schools would be reduced before 2007. He considered that such flexibility in policy implementation should be allowed so that parents could let their children study in a smaller class if they wished to do so.

25. SEM responded that there were various reasons for under-enrolment, e.g. demographic changes or poor quality. The Administration would have to consider the implications and examine each case individually.

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26. Mr LAU Kong-wah opined that reducing class sizes and providing whole-day primary schooling could proceed in parallel. He also queried whether the additional subsidies of \$550,000 and \$300,000 a year for primary and secondary schools respectively would be sufficient to enhance teachers' capability.

27. SEM said that the quality of education could be enhanced by a variety of measures. Reduction of class sizes was only one of the measures. Schools were encouraged to cut down on unnecessary administration work, reduce meaningless examinations and useless home assignments, and improve teaching methods etc. ED would provide on-site service and collaborate with teachers to work out plans to enhance teachers' capacity to improve reform and to raise the effectiveness of teaching and learning, and to cope with students' diverse and special needs. With the additional subsidies, schools would be able to hire additional staff or procure various services to relieve teachers' workload so that they could focus on their core functions of teaching and learning.

28. In response to Miss Emily LAU's enquiry about the proportions of primary teachers with university education and graduate posts in primary schools, SEM explained that the proportion of graduate posts in primary schools had been increased to 20%. Due to keen competition for employment, many university graduates had taken up non-graduate teaching posts in primary schools and 35% of primary teachers were already degree holders.

Resources support

29. Miss Cyd HO was worried that the proposed \$2 billion recurrent budget was insufficient for implementing the new education initiatives as highlighted in CE's Policy Address 2000. In this connection, she asked whether Government had estimated the costs which parents and employers as a whole had to share for implementing these initiatives.

30. SEM responded that such an estimate was not available. However, the recurrent budget of \$2 billion would suffice for implementing the various education initiatives outlined in CE's Policy Address 2000. She pointed out that Government had all along attached great importance to education and made substantial commitment in terms of resources to implement the education initiatives introduced in recent years. She anticipated that with increasing learning opportunities and better quality of education in the future, parents would save the costs of arranging private tuitions for their children.

31. Prof NG Ching-fai said that programmes run by tertiary institutions on a self-financed basis were mainly related to subjects which incurred low levels of

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capital and recurrent expenditure. He considered that tertiary programmes on science and technology subjects which involved laboratory-based studies could hardly be operated on a full cost-recovery basis. SEM responded that she believed that education and training providers would design their programmes in accordance with the market demand and work out the finances. She understood that the manpower most in demand was in the areas of information technology and financial services which might not involve laboratory-based studies. Prof NG pointed out that considerable capital cost would be needed to run an information technology programme.

32. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan shared some members' view that the \$2 billion recurrent budget was insufficient to implement the policy initiatives on education. He asked whether the existing 18% cost-recovery policy for the University Grants Committee-funded programmes would be increased to meet the budget shortfall.

33. SEM responded that in arriving at the \$2 billion budget, the Administration had not considered revising the cost-recovery percentage of UGC-funded tertiary education to fund the new programmes. However, she pointed out that Government policies were subject to review over time, and would be adjusted to meet the changing needs of the community. She reiterated the Government's policy commitment to ensure that everyone had the opportunity to receive education as long as he strived for it.

Curricula reform

34. Mr Michael MAK expressed concern about the adverse effects of the prevailing materialistic culture on the young generation. In addition to enhancing teachers' professionalism, he asked how school curriculum would be reformed to enhance all-round development of students.

35. SEM agreed that the existing school curriculum was not conducive to "whole-person development". It was too academic and overly examination-oriented and as a result, rote learning and mechanical drilling of students became the mainstream culture of the teaching and learning process in schools. She said that the Curriculum Development Council would consult the public and the education sector next month on curricula reform proposals. The new curriculum would aim to enable students to attain all-round development in the domains of ethics, intellect, physique, social skills and aesthetics according to their own attributes so that they would be capable of life-long learning, critical and exploratory thinking, and adapting to change. She added that moral and civic education would be strengthened to develop students with positive values, attitudes and sense of commitment towards the community.

Language education

36. Dr LO Wing-lok said that parents and employers were concerned about the overall decline in the standards of languages, particularly English, among students and the workforce. He suggested that apart from enhancing the proficiencies of language teachers, Government should provide students with more opportunities to learn English beyond the confines of classrooms, and create an interactive environment in which students would enjoy learning of English. Mr Tommy CHEUNG added that the overall decline in English standard of the workforce would discourage overseas investors to come to HK.

37. SEM responded that the entire community, including parents, employers and the media, shared a part in enhancing the language standards of students. As an on-going exercise, ED and schools in collaboration with employers would continue to arrange students to learn English in work-related environment during the summer holidays.

38. Deputy Director of Education (DDE) supplemented that ED had organized a total of 10 programmes for effective learning of English in the past year. For example, in collaboration with Radio Television Hong Kong and a newspaper, ED had developed a number of radio programmes supplemented with guidelines and learning materials for parents to engage in shared reading and story-telling with their children. ED had also encouraged schools to make use of the facilities in public libraries for students to develop their interest in reading and life-long learning.

39. Mr Tommy CHEUNG suggested that the Administration should increase the variety of books, improve facilities and extend the opening hours of public libraries so that parents and children would have more opportunities to develop their interest in reading. He pointed out that fostering a good reading habit during early childhood was crucial to achieve a good standard of language.

40. SEM responded that ED had taken the initiative to liaise with related bureaux and departments to better utilize public libraries and community centres so that parents and students could read and learn at venues which were in the vicinity of their residence. DDE supplemented that ED had planned and would implement a series of programmes and activities to promote good reading habits and enhance interest in language learning both inside and outside the school environment.

41. The Deputy Chairman thanked representatives of the Administration for the briefing.

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II. Any other business

42. The Deputy Chairman reminded members that the next meeting of the Panel would be held on Tuesday, 31 October 2000 at 4:30 pm to discuss reform proposals for the education system in Hong Kong.

43. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:08 am.

Legislative Council Secretariat

20 November 2000

2000 Policy Address
Briefing on Quality Education
Speaking Note for Mrs Fanny Law, JP
Secretary for Education and Manpower,
on Friday, 13 October 2000

Introduction

In his Policy Address announced last Wednesday, the Chief Executive mapped out a comprehensive blueprint for the development of education in Hong Kong. He reiterated that the task of nurturing talents still tops the SAR Government's agenda, and that the Government is firmly committed to investing in education. The Chief Executive announced the acceptance of all the reform recommendations put forward by the Education Commission (EC) relating to the academic system, the curricula, and the assessment mechanism. He also set as the key tasks for the next two years upgrading teacher qualifications, reforming the curricula and teaching methods, improving the assessment and examination systems, and providing more learning opportunities at the senior secondary and above levels.

2. I will now explain to you the SAR Government's philosophy of education, our key initiatives to raise the quantity and quality of education, the provision of resources and implementation timeframe.

Philosophy of Education

3. Education is the main avenue for social mobility; it also provides the ladder for personal success. Therefore, we must ensure that **everyone, rich or poor, has the opportunity to receive education as long as he strives for it.** We firmly believe that manpower is the most valuable social resources. As each of us has different natural endowments, education must be **"student-based" to cater for the difference in abilities.** As far as the system is concerned, there must be a diversity of schools and curricula which **offers multiple options for students,** so that the gifted and those with special educational needs alike will have the opportunity to develop their potentials to the full.

4. We believe that the essence of education is to enhance people's quality, to raise their cultural standard, and to build a harmonious and tolerant community. To this end, education should **aim at**

“whole-person development”. With the advent of a knowledge-based economy, education must also focus on **fostering students’ abilities and motivation to pursue life-long learning** to meet the changes of the times. We must, therefore, provide flexible and diversified channels **for everyone to pursue continuous education at different stages of their life** to broaden their knowledge base and strengthen their competitiveness in employment.

The Education Commission’s Review

5. The reform proposals put forward by the EC which focus on the academic structure, curricula and assessment mechanism have profound and far-reaching implications. Hence, many people might feel overwhelmed. Indeed, education issues are so closely inter-linked that it is inevitable that a single move in any one part will affect the system as a whole. Nevertheless, in implementing the education reform, we will proceed in **a gradual and orderly manner**. As a matter of fact, the success of the reform chiefly relies on the attitudes of parents and teachers, as well as the social atmosphere. We have tentatively **drawn up the priorities for implementation and their supporting measures**, as set out in Annex 1.

6. In implementing the reform, we **will closely monitor progress and coordinate different areas of work**. Where necessary, we will adjust the strategy and details of implementation. For this purpose, we have **set up a central coordinating team**, and will invite as members front-line educators who have actively participated in the EC’s review. The team will maintain close liaison with the schools and organizations concerned to assist them in solving any problems they may encounter in the reform process, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the reform.

Enhancing Learning Opportunities

7. To raise the general educational level of the population and to encourage life-long learning, the Chief Executive has announced that **starting from the 2002/03 school year, all Secondary Three students who have the ability and wish to continue their study will be given the opportunities to receive Secondary Four education or vocational training**. At the same time, the Government is committed to **increasing gradually the provision of tertiary places in the coming ten years, with the aim of providing tertiary education for 60% of the young people in the appropriate age group**. Whether these objectives can be

achieved depends on the learning ability of the students, the manpower demands of the community, and the community's commitment to the nurturing of talents.

8. We estimate that we will need to provide an additional 6 000 places at senior secondary level by the 2003/04 school year. The education sector will be fully consulted before we start detailed planning on the curricula and the mechanism for allocating the school places. Our preliminary idea is to provide all S3 students of public sector schools¹ with direct subsidy so that they can continue their study in the same schools or in other schools. During the early period of implementation, the new schools will mainly offer senior secondary programme with diversified curricula to cater for different abilities and interests. It is hoped that these schools will be able to develop their own characteristics and special strengths. In the long term, we expect that more secondary schools will switch to symmetrical structure so that students can complete their secondary school education in the same schools.

9. As for tertiary education, we will encourage the tertiary institutions, continuing education providers and private enterprises to provide continuing education other than the traditional matriculation courses. School operators will be granted loans and land for building the schools. Various levels of subsidy will also be provided for students in the forms of fee remissions, low-interest loans and non-means tested loans to meet their financial needs. We need to ensure that no one will be deprived of the opportunity to receive education or continuing education for lack of financial means. To ensure the curricula quality, we will collaborate with the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation, the Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions and various professional bodies **to work out an academic accreditation and quality assurance mechanism**. The task, albeit complicated, is essential in safeguarding the public interests. Besides, to ensure that the public moneys are put to good use, **the subsidy for students will only apply to recognised courses**.

Professional Development of Teachers

10. Apart from increasing the education opportunities at senior secondary level or above, the quality and effectiveness of basic education

¹ Public sector schools refer to schools that receive recurrent subsidy, including subsidised schools, grant schools and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools.

is also our main concern. The key is **to develop an outstanding and professional teaching force**. At present, 91% of primary teachers and 84% of secondary teachers are professionally trained, and degree holders are about 35% and 80% respectively. From the 2004/05 school year onwards, all new teachers graduating from teacher training institutions will be degree holders.

11. We set stringent demands on our teachers because what they do and say will have direct influence on our next generations. Basically, every teacher must have a solid foundation in subject knowledge and should genuinely care for the students. Excellent teachers must also have lofty sentiments and exemplary conduct; they should have a thorough understanding of learning psychology and be able to motivate students to learn; they must be equipped with good teaching skills and be able to teach students according to their aptitudes. Furthermore, they must keep abreast of the times and continue to learn as they teach.

12. To achieve these objectives, we **must first create more room for teachers** by cutting down unnecessary administration work, reducing meaningless examinations and useless home assignments, improving teaching arrangements and timetabling, strengthening community and parental support for teachers, and at the same time encouraging teachers to pursue continuing education, conduct classroom observation and share teaching experiences. As the situation of each school is different, the Education Department (ED) will provide on-site service under which officers from the Department will collaborate with teachers to work out improvement plans to enhance teachers' capacity to implement reform and to raise the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Subject to the approval of the Finance Committee, **we will increase the subsidy for schools** from this year. For example, for schools operating 19 classes or above, **each primary school will receive an additional \$550,000 each year, and each secondary school an additional \$300,000**. We will also allow schools to have **more flexibility so that they can put their resources to the best use**. To promote the professional development of teachers, we will make available in this school year a **total grant of \$23 million for the purchase of reference books on teaching and learning**. We hope that this initiative will facilitate school-based professional development.

13. On teacher training, we will collaborate with the training providers to formulate ways **to strengthen pre-service and in-service training** to be in line with the principles and direction of the education reform. We will work hand in hand with educators **to set up a**

professional development ladder for teachers and to develop a culture of life-long learning and professional self-improvement. We will also actively **consider the establishment of a General Teaching Council**. From next year onwards, the ED will **provide** new principals and teachers with **induction programmes**, and will include in the programmes for principals leadership training in professional development and curriculum design. We will also join hands with the education sector to explore how the appraisal and promotion mechanism could be improved to **reward the outstanding teachers**, and to mobilize their commitment and enthusiasm.

14. As for pre-primary education, at present the total number of qualified kindergarten teachers has already exceeded our 60% target. To further enhance teachers' qualifications, **all new kindergarten teachers are required to possess five passes in HKCEE (including Chinese and English) from the 2001/02 school year. From the 2003/04 school year, all new kindergarten teachers must have completed the pre-service training for qualified kindergarten teachers.**

15. To strengthen the professional and administrative leadership of kindergartens and child care centres, we will **provide child care education courses for all serving kindergarten principals and child care centre supervisors in the coming five years. We will also introduce, from the 2001/02 school year, a principal-ship training course.**

Reform in Curricula and Teaching Methods

16. The ultimate goal of education reform is to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The key to this lies in the reform of curricula and teaching methods. The Curriculum Development Council will consult the public and the education sector next month on the specific arrangements of curricula reform. The theme of the consultation is "Learning to Learn". Our aim is to **develop children's habit and interest in reading in the stage of early childhood**. In this connection, we will **provide a grant of \$20,000 in this school year to each non-profit making kindergarten and child care centre for the purchase of library books**. We will also **set aside \$50 million to promote parent education and home-school co-operation**, starting from the early childhood stage.

17. In primary education, we should focus on developing students' interest in reading, enabling them to be bi-literate and tri-lingual,

equipping them with the basic ability in numeracy and IT application, and enabling them to learn by themselves. We should also strengthen moral and civic education. For secondary education, the curricula will be grouped into eight learning areas to encourage all-round development. We must enable our students to learn from daily life and to put their learning into practice. Greater emphases should be put on creative thinking. Rote learning and mechanical drilling should be minimized.

18. The above changes will demand a lot more from teachers than merely “teaching by the books”. The ED will assist schools to implement curriculum integration and make arrangements for teachers to receive training, in particular, in **helping teachers to look after students of mixed abilities** and in strengthening the connection between student assessment and teaching for the purpose of devising appropriate “remedial and enhancement measures”. We have **earmarked \$10 million to provide enrichment programmes for gifted students, and will continue to promote integrated education**. It is estimated that the recurrent spending for the latter purpose will increase to \$50 million in four years.

19. The reform in curricula and teaching methods need to be developed in a new school culture. Hence, there is no shortcut for the reform. We will implement the reform step by step. Through piloting the reform measures, we will gain first-hand experience for further promotion. We will also allow a period of transition so that schools may implement the reform measures at their own pace.

Improve the Assessment and Examination Systems

20. Assessment should aim at reflecting the effectiveness of teaching for the purpose of enhancing the effectiveness of learning. To ensure that all students reach the basic standards in the key learning areas, we will **introduce the “Basic Competency Assessments in Chinese, English and Mathematics” (BCA) by phases starting from the 2001/02 school year**. The Student Assessment of the BCA can be conducted at any time during the school year so that schools may provide timely and appropriate assistance for individual students based on their performances and progress. The System Assessment will show whether students in all schools have reached the basic standards in the key learning areas; the information will facilitate assessment of the effectiveness of teaching.

21. The Hong Kong Examinations Authority will also **reform**

the marking system of the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination by introducing an element of core competency to a number of key subjects to set an objective standard for the passing grade.

Improve the School Environment

22. To expedite school improvement works, we will **complete the feasibility studies for all remaining 358 schools in the School Improvement Programme by the end of 2002**. We have earmarked \$10 billion to carry out improvement works for schools, subject to the results of the feasibility studies. **Our target is to complete all the works in the 2004/05 school year**. As for schools which cannot benefit from improvement works to the existing school premises, we will consider the possibility of redevelopment or reprovisioning.

23. In addition, the Steering Committee of the **Quality Education Fund (QEF)** has agreed to provide matching funds for **public sector schools to cover 50% of the cost of installing air-conditioners in classrooms and libraries**. Schools in need may apply directly to the QEF but they have to foot half the installation cost plus the electricity bills.

Resources Support

24. Currently, the **resources spent in education account for about 4.25% of our GDP or 24% of the total government recurrent expenditure**. In the coming five years, the Government will continue to implement whole-day primary schooling, promote IT in education, expedite the Schools Improvement Programme, increase the ratio of primary graduate posts, and improve the teaching and learning of languages, etc. All these measures involve huge public resources. In addition, the various education policies announced by the Chief Executive in his Policy Address this year will entail a further \$2 billion in recurrent expenditure when implemented.

25. Nurturing talents is an important social investment in building up Hong Kong's future. Subject to the fiscal management principles stipulated in the Basic Law, the SAR Government is firmly committed to the provision of education resources if social circumstances permit and when the conditions are ripe. Meanwhile, we call upon the public to take concrete action to support education, and the education sector to use the precious resources prudently and in the most cost-effective manner.

