

LegCo Panel on Education

Policy Initiatives of the Education and Manpower Bureau

Introduction

The 2004 Policy Agenda lists the Government's new and on-going initiatives over the next three and a half years. This note elaborates on the initiatives that concern the Education and Manpower Bureau. It also gives an account of the initiatives in the 2003 Policy Agenda which have been completed.

2004 Policy Agenda

Enlightened People with a Rich Culture

New initiative

We will consult the community on the 3-year academic structure for senior secondary education and 4-year undergraduate programmes, recommended by the Education Commission, including the conditions, financing and development of supporting measures.

2. At present, senior secondary education is disrupted by two high-stake examinations; namely the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination and the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examinations. The two public examinations severely constrain the curriculum, the mode of learning and teaching, and learning time at senior secondary and matriculation levels. With three-year undergraduate programmes, premature specialisation leads to narrowing of the curriculum base at the matriculation and university levels. This is not conducive to whole-person development and widening the knowledge base of students to meet the demands of a knowledge economy.

3. The Education Commission (EC) recommended the three-

year senior secondary and four-year first-degree academic systems to the Government to address the root of the above problems in its Review of the Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Interface with Higher Education Report published in May 2003. In view of the on-going education and curriculum reforms, and having regard to the fiscal constraints of Government and the education sector's capacity for changes, the EC recommended a measured pace of implementation.

4. The successful implementation of the new academic systems requires strong community consensus, sufficient lead-in time to manage the transition, and practical ways to resolve the financial aspect of the reform. We shall launch a consultation exercise in the first half of 2004 to solicit public views on the critical issues we need to consider for the reform.

On-going initiatives

We are improving language education and the language proficiency of our people, i.e. biliterate in written Chinese and English and trilingual in Cantonese, Putonghua and spoken English through a package of measures recommended by the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research.

5. The Government accepted the final language education review report published by the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) on 27 June 2003. The Committee made over 40 recommendations which, inter alia, aim to specify clear language standards to be achieved by students at different stages of formal education and by working adults of different educational background. They also seek to enhance the language learning environment in Hong Kong.

6. The following measures recommended by SCOLAR will be launched in 2004 –

- (a) An incentive grant scheme will be set up in the first quarter of 2004, to encourage serving Chinese and English

Language teachers to pursue professional development and upgrade their qualifications;

- (b) A Task Force on Language Support will be formed in the first quarter of 2004, to provide local schools with on-site and/or district-based professional support to enhance the curriculum development and pedagogical capability of the Chinese and English language panels; and
- (c) Starting from the 2004/05 school year, new Chinese and English Language teachers will be required to observe the entry qualifications recommended by SCOLAR.

We are rationalising and simplifying the teaching grade structure of public sector schools.

7. We shall consult the education sector on the findings of the review of the teaching grade structure of public sector schools.

We are continuing with our comprehensive programme of education reforms which cover the admission system to help promote students' balanced, all round development; the curricula and teaching methods; and the assessment mechanism to help enhance learning and teaching effectiveness.

8. We shall introduce the Basic Competency Assessments student programme to secondary schools and administer the system assessment at the Primary Three level in mid-2004.

9. Regarding the Curriculum Reform, we shall continue with projects on curriculum planning, effective pedagogy and assessment. We shall develop more resources on learning, teaching and assessment to support the primary and secondary curricula. Two newly revised Secondary 4-5 subjects, namely History and Chinese History, will be implemented in the 2004/05 school year.

We are planning with schools still operating in bi-sessional mode to work towards enabling all primary school students to study in whole day schools.

10. Of the 128 school premises still operating in bi-sessional mode in the 2003/04 school year, 80 have agreed plans for conversion to whole-day primary schooling (WDPS). We shall monitor the conversion of these 80 schools.

11. We aim to reach an agreement on the arrangement with the remaining 48 bi-sessional schools by 2007 as far as possible. We shall monitor their enrolment situation to assess the possible impact of the population decline and consult the sponsors on the best practical way forward.

We are conducting parallel reviews of the Medium of Instruction Policy and the Secondary School Places Allocation System.

12. The Working Group on Review of Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) and Medium of Instruction (MOI) for Secondary Schools, set up under the Education Commission (EC), plans to conduct public consultation in 2004 with a view to gauging the public's views on the long-term arrangements for both the SSPA and MOI.

We are implementing the University Grants Committee's recommendations of the Higher Education Review.

13. In particular, the University Grants Committee will review the funding methodology for the 2005-08 triennium with a view to promoting role differentiation among institutions and rewarding good performance.

We are setting up a qualifications framework and the associated quality assurance mechanism.

14. To be reported at the LegCo Panel for Manpower.

2003 Policy Agenda

Effective Governance

To enhance administrative efficiency and effectiveness of bureaux and departments through re-engineering, re-organisation and re-prioritisation of service delivery.

15. We successfully merged the Education and Manpower Bureau and the Education Department on 1 January 2003 with a net deletion of 5 directorate posts, producing savings of around \$14.2 million. The re-organisation has brought about better synergy between policy formulation and implementation, and reduced duplication of work.

Education and Manpower Bureau
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