

香港浸會大學教職員工會提供的文件
Paper provided by the Hong Kong Baptist University
Faculty and Staff Union

Summary

- 一，我們的基本立場是官僚式的糾纏與束縛，至終可能窒息任何善意的改革。整個改革顯然缺乏教育界各部門的民主參與。
- 二，我們對「改革文件」的基本批評是：改革建議本身看似並非建基於有效的參考研究，沒有就國際上其它國家的相應制度作出研究與分析。文件似乎並不明白改革本身的巨大含義，即是從一個英式精英教育制度轉為一個較為平均主義的教育制度。
- 三，其實，改革應提出不同類型的改革模式，例如蘇格蘭的 5 + 2 + 4 模式，或中國大陸的 5 + 1 + 4 模式以供參考。
- 四，整個改革可被形容為一件「緊身衣」，只提供了一個缺乏彈性的「硬殼」。改革文件的官腔，承諾了許多頗為空泛缺乏實質的未來行動措施，不容易加以回應，公眾及教育界也不覺得實在。而政府對副學士大計的落空，也不能啓發公眾及教育界對政府改革的信心。我們恐怕香港特區特有的「多餘行政措施重複累贅」症候群(Superfluous Administrative Redundancy Syndrome)將繼續肆虐，而令整個改革至終失效。
- 五，整個新學制並不開放，沒對最終未能進入大學的一群提供重入大學的機會。對於從中三進入高中一也欠仔細考慮。
- 六，有關至為重要的財政安排，文件欠缺重要細節，以便公眾回應。單從表面上看，正如上面第五點提到，政府似未有為從中三進入高中一作出應有的財政安排，特別是沒有縮小高中的班級人數。也未有為大學以外的其他高等教育部門提供更多撥款。而政府為大學開辦四年制提供的 34 億基本工程投資也並不足夠。
- 七，當然，最重要的財政安排問題是需要家長為子女四年大學繳付接近多一倍的學費。這可能會引發一些不理想的嚴重問題如人才流失及進一步降低生育率。
- 八，我們提議政府應積極考慮稅務優惠，以鼓勵企業對高等教育捐款。另一方面，政府應以新會計模式，如剔除研究經費撥款之計算，以便更準確反映大學生的教學成本，以致可進行更公平之撥款分配，尤其是保證教學型大學得到應有的資源。
- 九，有關課程方面，我們的意見是「通識科」的關鍵性提議，極可能變成整個課程的死穴。而在進入大學以前提供通識科，實有本末倒置之嫌。這課程設計反映政府對改革之期望過度理想化，企圖以「通識科」達至多重教育目標。而且，現行被「目標為本」所完全籠罩的課程設計，由於太過行政干預式地強制推行與監控，會令通識科不能達至真正「自由學習」(liberal study)的理想。政府應充分考慮「全球化」的競爭要求，及適當加上對地方特性的重視，來進行課程發展。
- 十，政府對改革內含的精英主義與平均主義之間的矛盾視而不見，以至提出的以「香港中學文憑」來取代兩大考試，極可能吃力不討好，未必能有效裝備高

中生進入大學。一個要求太過淺易的「香港中學文憑」，會令三三四改革變成「不三不四」的改革。大學也可能會浪費了辛苦得來的額外一年，來為入學高中生補底。正如我們在第三點提出，政府應考慮提出不同類型的改革模式以供考慮。

十一，最後，我們要重提一個多方民主參與的模式，不單包括教育界各部門，也包括整個社會，特別是家長及僱主，以至參考祖國和世界各地的教育情況，才能在「硬殼」內放入真心與睿智(heart and brain)，來建立適當環境進行這個至關重要的教育改革，多謝。

- 1) Our basic understanding is that, bureaucratic entanglement has effectively stifled all well-intentioned reforms. There is an obvious lack of democratic participation at all levels of the education sector.
- 2) Our basic criticism of the reform document is that it is not based on sound research with meaningful international comparisons, nor does it understand the huge implications of this reform, which in fact is a big unprecedented switch from a British elitist system to an American egalitarian system.
- 3) The reform should in fact propose alternative proposals with their respective funding implications for the public to consider, say, a 5+2+4 model of Scotland, or a 5+1+4 model of China.
- 4) The proposed reform is a straitjacket reform, providing us only with an empty `nutshell'. With the reform document set in an official jargon, replete with promises of future action and measures that are not too substantial, the public as well as the education field would not find it very reassuring. Nor does the government's retraction of former pledge of support for associate degree inspire a lot of confidence in its reform. The `Superfluous Administrative Redundancy' Syndrome (SARS) continues to infect the whole thing, jeopardizing the reform in the long run.
- 5) The new academic system proposed is not open enough and has not given enough thought to alternative possibilities for the non-U entrants to enter universities at a later stage, nor does it extend detailed consideration to the transition from S3 to SS1.
- 6) Concerning the all-important funding issue, the document is not detailed enough to facilitate response. From what the document reveals, the government has not set aside any special funding for developing other tertiary education alternatives, nor for the transition from S3 to SS1, especially for reducing the class size. Nor does the government justify how the 3.4 billion is enough for the universities' hardware.
- 7) Certainly, the most important funding issue is that the shared funding model has required the parents to pay nearly double tuition fees for their children, which is severe and may cause long-term problems in losing talents and further depressing future birthrates.

8) We call for tax breaks to encourage the private sector to help fund tertiary education, and for new accounting procedures to tick out research funding from calculation to truly reflect the true teaching cost of university students, so that funding would be allocated on a fairer basis.

9) Concerning the curriculum, our view is that the Liberal Studies proposal as the linchpin of the curriculum would easily become the Achilles' heel of the reform, since to introduce such a subject amounts to putting the cart before the horse, and to practice the idea of general education before it is due. It shows that the government may have harboured too idealistic goal of education, and wants to use the Liberal Studies to fulfill too many objectives. Moreover, the problem of a TOCicated curriculum with too many bureaucratic monitoring directives hardly renders the subject suitable for authentic 'liberal' study. The way forward is to push for a curriculum development, with appropriate considerations for local specificity and global competition.

10) The government is oblivious to the delicate tension between elitism and egalitarianism, which may render her proposal of one single HKDSE to replace both the HKCEE and the HKALE an ultimate failure. A too shallow HKDSE risks losing the necessary selection and equipping function of the original HKALE, causing the 334 reform to become a de facto 'neither-3-nor-4' reform, and effectively canceling out the possible benefits of an additional university year. Here we are back to point 3, namely, that the government should in fact propose alternative academic systems together with their respective funding implications for the public to consider.

11) Lastly, we advocate a multi-party democratic participation model, involving not only the participation of the government and the various education sectors, but also of the whole society, especially the parents and employers, and with reference to education reforms in our mother country and the global world, in order to build up a suitable environment for this all important education reform.

“A reform in an empty 'nutshell' – putting brains and hearts into the 3+3+4 reform”

- Preliminary Position Paper of the Hong Kong Baptist University Faculty and Staff Union, the 334 Reform Concern Group

towards the “Reforming the Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education” consultation document published by the Education and Manpower Bureau in October 2004 (hereafter we shall refer to it as 'the reform document', and to its proposal as 'the reform').

(To be augmented with another essay detailing the failure of the Hong Kong

education curriculum for the past quarter century)

(Points in this document will be numbered with an initial `R` to distinguish them from points in the reform document.)

R1) Our Basic Disposition, Goal, and Understanding of the Situation

We basically support the idea of 4 years of university education, and our goal in equipping the youth is similar to that put forth by the reform document. However, as tertiary education professionals, we feel a duty to provide judicious criticisms to the reform document, and a duty to unveil the hidden presumptions and problems of the reform document, especially the tension between elitism and egalitarianism in the reform.

Our basic understanding is that, bureaucratic entanglement has effectively stifled all well-intentioned reforms. There is an obvious lack of democratic participation at all levels of the educational sector.

Our basic criticism of the reform document is that it is not based on sound research with meaningful international comparisons, nor does it understand the huge implications of this reform, which in fact is a big unprecedented switch from a British elitist system to an American egalitarian system. In tune with a more elitist tertiary infrastructure, the reform should in fact propose alternative proposals with their respective funding implications for the public to consider, say, a 5+2+4 model of Scotland, or a 5+1+4 model of China.

The proposed reform can be metaphorically described as a straitjacket reform, full of proposed management initiatives that can be likened to providing us with a nutshell. With the reform document set in an official jargon, replete with promises of future action and measures that are not **sufficiently concrete and detailed in important aspects**, the public as well as the education field would not find it very reassuring. Nor does the government's retraction of former pledge of support for associate degree inspire a lot of confidence in its reform. It depends on a lot more work and collaboration and democratic participation to fill the nutshell with brains and hearts, rather than nuts. Our worst fear is that such a nutshell reform would only cause myriad bureaucratic management directives to multiply, resulting in a syndrome called `Superfluous Administrative Redundancy' Syndrome (SARS) that can ruined the whole educational process.

R2) The New Academic System - Instituting openness to the educational system and the society (cf. Chapter 2 in the reform document)

Concerning the overall structure of the New Academic System (see Chapter 2), our basic diagnosis is that it has failed to achieve a degree of openness that is so crucial to the success of its goal.

To begin with, the reform document says nothing about the transition from S3 to SS1. Even assuming a **full** promotion to SS1, would there be a change of schools for a significant proportion of the students? Given the curriculum structure that it proposes, it is quite likely that senior secondary schools be streamed into vocational type and elitist type, each providing different kinds of elective subjects.¹ Some schools may even become district central schools, providing students from nearby school subjects that cannot be offered by their mother school. The reform document discusses nothing about the type of assessment students would face in their transition from S3 to SS1. **If there are purely internal assessments, how would they affect the transfer of students to different types of senior secondary schools?**

Secondly, it has been part and parcel of all tertiary educational systems in the West to provide ample chances or alternate avenues for secondary school leavers to re-enter the tertiary educational process. It does not seem that the proposed new system in the reform document has given enough thought to this all-important system openness. For the senior secondary students who fail to enter directly into university degree programmes, what reasonable resource and place allocations are afforded to them, to enable their re-entry into university at a later stage? The reform document talks vaguely of “school to work and further education and training” in 4.32 and 4.33, but in fact says nothing about the government’s commitment to various sub-degree and associate degree vocational and professional programmes, to IVE, or to other community college initiatives. In this sense the reform is grossly unfair to the non-achievers, who, given enough open avenues, would **re-enter tertiary education as mature students. Without such open avenues, and some kind of qualifications for early school leavers, education opportunities for such early leavers would be severely curtailed, and their prospect in the era of globalization extremely grim. This is a big blank in the tertiary sector for the government to fill in.**

R3) Funding – Forging government commitment and formulating funding

¹ See the reform document, 5.4, “different class structures will evolve and need to be encouraged, including senior secondary schools.” But where comes the funding to *encourage* such evolution? And in 5.6, it also anticipates “some will have larger groups of students either at the junior or the senior sections of the school to cater for the particular needs of their students.”

strategy

Concerning the all-important funding issue of the reform, our pertinent questions would be, firstly, is the government all clear about the full financial implications of her proposed reform? And secondly, what type of funding strategy does the government adopt to address these financial needs, and is such a strategy fair and far-sighted? The reform document does not provide us promising clues to answer such questions. It is not at all forthcoming in this all-important matter. We only see figures without any substantial details about their estimation, which make it difficult for the public to comment on them.

According to our estimation, the figure of \$3.4 billion is not enough for the construction of additional university complexes and facilities.

Secondly, just as we point out that the reform document says nothing about other tertiary education commitments, the government also seems oblivious to the financial need in this respect. The figures of \$3.4 billion and \$3.3 billion certainly do not address this need.

Nor does the government set aside any funding for the transition from S3 to SS1, and for catering special needs that may arise in the new senior secondary curriculum. (See Footnote 1) For example, we should consider educational subsidies for underprivileged senior secondary students to attend extracurricular learning activities, like joining field trips, that such students may be denied participation due to stringent family income. Moreover, the intention of the government to maintain the basic class size of 35-40 for senior secondary classes is dishonourable and outrageous. It signals a disturbing undertone of non-commitment to the reform. Surely the senior secondary students under such a big class size throughout their 3 years would be worse off than the present Advanced Level students who can enjoy a much smaller class size. (See R4.5 below). Our proposal is that the class size cannot exceed **30 students**. Without governmental commitment in funding **talk of supporting measures of reform** like the revision of teacher-to-class ratios become idle talk or number game. (See 5.9ff)

Thirdly, the reform document (see 6.10) states *without sufficient justification* that the government cannot afford the same level of subsidy for tertiary students to maintain the existing tuition fee of \$42,100 per annum, and fails to provide justification for the conjecture of parents' affordability while proposing to increase university tuition fee from \$42,100 to \$50,000. Surely this point has aroused widespread public concern, for the parents supporting the reform have to wake up feeling like a fool, for having to face the nightmare of providing double the tuition fee plus the living expenses of an additional university year for

their children. Such a 'shared funding model' would only save the government about 0.7 billion a year, In view of its ramifications on the parents and the students it does not worth to withheld the relatively small amount of 0.7 billion out of a recurrent education expenditure of \$49.2. Let's discuss:

Well-to-do parents would find overseas university fees much more competitive, and a significant proportion of them may then choose overseas studies for their children. This would definitely mean an accelerated loss of Hong Kong talents.

In view of the sustained high unemployment rate we call for the government to allow graduates to pay back their loan only after they begin to earn money. Yet even though the government may agree to a lengthened period of repayment the graduates can earn money, it means that the graduates can only repay their full debt after a long time – this would most likely result in their delay in achieving important life goals, especially marriage and bearing children. In view of our already low birthrate, such long-term social effects cannot be overlooked.

Thus it would be huge advantage to the whole society that the government commits to shoulder this \$0.7 billion, and relieve the students and their parents this nearly double amount of expense in pursuing tertiary education.

In future, with the advent of more diversified tertiary education, and the long term government fiscal constrain, it is obvious that the government should introduce tax breaks to encourage private enterprises to help fund tertiary and senior secondary education, especially in view of the significant number of vocational elective subjects that would be introduced into the senior secondary school curriculum.

Here we must call for new accounting procedures to calculate the per capita expense of a university student, for the present simple practice of dividing the amount of expense by the number of students is too simplistic and unfair, in view of the fact that a huge trunk of university funding has been set aside for pure research purpose. It becomes grossly unfair to count this part of the funding as the unit cost of student, especially in view of the growing call for diversifying university tuition fees, charging each student according to the actual expense of his/her major. Only with more accurate accounting procedures to reflect the actual teaching cost of university students can the \$3.4 billion be allocated among the universities on a fairer and more accurate basis.

R4) Curriculum, its assessment and certification - Putting back brains and discipline into the curriculum (cf. Chapters 3 and 4 of the reform document)

R4.1) *The linchpin as the Achilles' heel* – the `Liberal Studies' curriculum proposal

The reform document seems to paint an idealist and rosy picture of the curriculum and its execution. Its curriculum proposal, especially concerning the newly proposed `Liberal Studies', effectively becomes the linchpin of the reform², and has attracted most public attention. There is a structural problem of hinging everything on `Liberal Studies' – it seems that the EMB is not very sure of what its proposal of `Liberal Studies' is meant to achieve. Our worry is that this linchpin would become the Achilles' heel of the reform, landing the reform in a morass.

R4.2) *Putting the cart before the horse* – practicing the idea of general education before it is due?

To begin with, the idea of having some kind of general education or liberal studies or cross-faculty minors evolved in America in response to its particular situation, which one usually does not find in a British elitist education system, in which an elite entering the university is expected to be generally equipped in most, if not all, subjects. Even the mainland Chinese system with a public examination in SS2 before the university entrance examination in SS3, tries to ensure a broader knowledge base for all students entering the university.³

The idea of general education is basically practiced at university level. This has to do with its elitist nature, that as a second order intellectual reflection it requires competent professionals to disseminate it. Harking back to the Renaissance era the idea of general education tries to achieve the intellectual ideal of uniting science and arts into one comprehensive humanistic perspective. Yet for most students such ideal cannot be achieved without a broader knowledge base to start with. And it is only in the university with its very characteristic as `universitas' that a student can freely choose from a wide range of subjects, can such an ideal be pursued. Thus to push forward the idea to the secondary school is like putting the cart before the horse, and it runs the risk of requiring too much of the secondary teachers, as well as robbing the students precious time for them to choose one more elective subject, to build up better knowledge base for their specialization in the university. Moreover, when the universities with one more year at hand can now practice this idea liberally,

² See p.57 of the reform document, and `Liberal Studies' pdf file, p. 57
<http://www.emb.gov.hk/index.aspx?nodeid=4000&langno=1>

³ Chinese senior secondary students have to sit for a public examination similar to our HKCEE, when every student has to be examined in the following 8 subjects: Chinese, English, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, history, politics, and geography, thus providing them with a broader knowledge base than our S5 students.

would not this liberal studies curriculum overlap with what the universities are going to do anyway?

It seems that the government has harboured very idealistic goal of education (see 1.5, 6.1, Summary 3a)⁴, and of curriculum development (see 3.3)⁵. This may explain why the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) has such a penchant for general education curriculum (cf. the General Studies subject in primary education). Yet it also calls for alarm in our assessment of the government proposed curriculum, in that it is too idealistic and bound to fail⁶. Either that it cannot cater the more advanced need of the brighter students, or that it is too far removed from the more down-to-earth need of the average students. It seems that the government is inadvertently usurping the prerogatives of the universities, and to achieve the very goal of university education prematurely. Or we can imagine that the government has in fact taken a sweeping-under-the-carpet approach, conjuring up a cocktail or `chop-suey' (雜碎) curriculum `carpet' to accommodate everything it finds nowhere to handle within the overall curriculum. Thus the Liberal Studies becomes a subject without focus, and its

⁴ Cf. 1.5 “The goal, as stated in Learning for Life, Learning through Life published by the Education Commission in 2000 is for ALL students to develop into balanced individuals who can contribute in meaningful ways to society, and who can draw on their own internal resources to continue to learn, apply their strengths and address their weaknesses.”

Cf. 6.1 “To maximize the potential of every student, we have to provide access to three years of senior secondary education which offers a diversified curriculum to suit individual aptitude and four years of university education that is of international standard.”

Cf. Summary 3a. “All students will have an opportunity to study 3 years at the senior end of the secondary school...with enhanced language and mathematical abilities and a broadened knowledge base.”

⁵ Cf. 3.3 “The goals of the reformed senior secondary curriculum, building on those in basic education, are destined to help each student to:

- be biliterate and trilingual with adequate proficiency;
- acquire a broad knowledge base, and be able to understand contemporary issues that may impact on their daily life at personal, community, national and global levels;
- be an informed and responsible citizen with a sense of global and national identity;
- respect pluralism of cultures and views, and be a critical, reflective and independent thinker;
- acquire information technology and other skills as necessary for being a lifelong learner;
- understand one’s career/academic aspirations and develop positive attitudes towards work and learning; and
- lead a healthy life style with active participation in aesthetic and physical activities.

⁶ The government has recently shown an unwelcome backtracking of its lofty proposal by announcing that it would cut the units in the compulsory part of the proposed liberal studies curriculum from 15 to 9. And when the government combined the 3 important subjects in primary school, namely, Society, Nature, and Health Education, into the General Studies subject, it effectively meant that primary students now learn only 1/3 of the general knowledge their seniors used to learn.

curriculum has a lot of overlap with the General Studies curriculum in primary school.⁷ There is simply too little professionalism exhibited in the formulation of such a curriculum.

R4.3) *The problem of TOCicated curriculum*

Nevertheless, this is the first time that the government brings curriculum issues to the fore and attracts widespread public discussion. Such attention is long overdue. Its outcome would affect the success or failure of this reform. The curriculum development in recent years has been thoroughly ‘TOCicated’⁸, which has caused curricula to look what they are today. The problem of such curricula is that they are complicated and lofty in tone but with little substance, very thick on the peripherals or technicalities but thin in the description of the knowledge content. It is small wonder that such lofty tone reappears in the reform document. The effect of such curriculum development is that it easily allows multifarious rules and regulations of the bureaucracy to grow to grotesque proportions. Succinctness or lucidity is not the virtue of such curriculum, which signifies the concomitant lack of space for professional autonomy to operate. Such style of curriculum development hardly renders the subject suitable for authentic ‘liberal’ study. Teachers can only toil under the crushing weight of bureaucratic directives and supervision. There is simply no way out of this thick regulatory ‘forest’.

The government’s ideal is that “the proposed curriculum, assessment and articulation pathways will help address the needs of a modern society and help HK maintain competitiveness” (8(a)), and that “the remaining 50% of proposed curriculum provides for a wide enough range of achievement, interest and whole-person development (well-rounded students)”(8(b)). This is better said

⁷ In Section 2.5 Core and Extension of the General Studies subject in primary school, it features the following strands: Strand 1: Health and Living; Strand 2: People and Environment; Strand 3- Science and Technology in Everyday Life; Strand 4- Community and Citizenship; Strand 5- National Identity and Chinese Culture; Strand 6- Global Understanding and the Information Era. See

http://cd.emb.gov.hk/kla_guide/GS_HTML/english/frame.html

And compare these with the 15 units in the compulsory part of the proposed Liberal Studies curriculum.

See http://www.emb.gov.hk/FileManager/EN/Content_4036/liberal.pdf

⁸ This pun mentions the TOC meaning ‘Target Oriented Curriculum’, which was introduced by the government to primary school teaching in 1997, which has caused widespread complaints and discontent among the primary education sector. See Section 3.3, <http://www.emb.gov.hk/index.aspx?langno=1&nodeid=3504>

than done. Yet the reality is that the proposed curriculum risks the perennial danger of overstretching and oversimplification, and it does not help to paper over the difficulties with lofty statements and promises.

R4.4) *True globalization of our curriculum*

Despite the repeated invocation of globalization as a motive for reform, there is little attempt to bring our curriculum in line with those in China and in the West. Rather, we conjure up parochial subjects and strategies and dream of catapulting HK to international standards/plane. This is forever the mentality of Asia's international city – an essential self-contradiction. For one, we do not oppose to some elective subjects being locally or culturally specific to pass on unique local experience. For example, to teach home economics successfully it must also teach Chinese cooking, and Health Management and Social Care mandates the teaching of traditional Chinese medical concepts. Yet **to achieve** international standard we must **also** strive for the utmost continuities of our curriculum designs with that of the West and of our mother country. For example, a course on comparative cultural studies may be introduced as an elective subject.

R4.5) *The tension between elitism and egalitarianism in curriculum and its assessment*

Underlying all the problems with the reform proposal is whether the government is sensitive to this all-important problem of the tension between elitism and egalitarianism in curriculum and its assessment. Thus the reform document's problems are not just problems of timetabling or execution details only, but of fundamental concepts and approaches.

We must understand that the present matriculation course is a highly elitist course that is highly demanding but generally successful in selecting out the elite and equipping them with the necessary knowledge base to embark on a 3-year university education that emphasizes on immediate specialization rather than the broadening of knowledge base and cultivation of general intellectual perspective. The British system is good at producing professional experts. Whereas in the American system the undergraduate are still roaming through pre-medicine courses or liberal arts subjects the British students have already embarked on their professional training.

In this perspective, the depth of the curriculum and its assessment becomes all-important issue that can signal what directions we are heading towards. If we want to maintain an essentially British style elitist system then the curriculum

and its assessment cannot be too shallow. However, the government has tried to devise the HKDSE to replace both the HKCEE and the HKALE. Its ideal picture is to make this examination serve both **functions** of selecting and equipping the elite as well as giving all senior secondary leavers a decent leaving qualification to pursue vocation or training. (See 4.33) Our opinion is that such two-pronged approach is too ideal and would not work. One all-embracing examination is a myth, and to quest for it is futile.

In catering to the bulk of SS leavers the HKDSE cannot have the sufficient depth to equip and select suitable candidates for professional training. It simply loses the sharp competitive edge of the HKALE. Some professional faculties in the universities, like the medical school, have already signaled their readiness to set their own entrance examination, rendering the HKDSE to become a preliminary selection test only. Here we have the former HKHLE as an example, which could not be compared in depth to its contemporary HKALE at that time, nor can it be compared to the nationwide Higher Level Examination in mainland China, which succeeds in setting high standard to select university entrants. It is with such premonition that the HKDSE may fail to perform necessary equipping and selection function, and so jeopardize the whole senior secondary curriculum, causing many parents to send their children overseas, in the fear of a “**neither 3 nor 4 reform**”) And the tertiary sector is also apprehensive that the HKDSE would mean a significant lowering in the academic standard of university entrants, causing universities to waste the newly gained additional year to make up for their lost ground in pre-university training, thus effectively canceling out the beneficial effects of 4 years of university education.

Thus our opinion is that the HKDSE would not be successful in serving two functions, and it may push the Hong Kong society inexorably down the road of mediocrity. There may be a need for an additional examination. That is why we advocate going back to the drawing board to rethink the whole academic system. We should not forget that globalization pressures in fact demand real elites to emerge from an education system. And if our system fails to deliver them, our society will be punished harshly by such globalization pressures in the long run.

R5) Building up an environment of brain and heart for educational reform

- towards the democratic participation of all parties

R5.1) From what we have discussed above, a sound and effective education reform must not proceed by the fuhrer’s will(長官意志), with top-down directives for a single proposal, which only allows for fine-tuning comments from

the public. Rather, it must involve the public and all concerned parties a say in the formulation of major proposals. Strategic measures for pursuing the reform must involve all parties in the research, planning, execution, and feedback of the reform.

Here we must recognize that democratic participation is the number one golden rule of reform. Without sufficient recognition and enlisting of the parties concerned, reform with the pretense of an expert endeavour would fail, and fail miserably. Here we must also recognize that a delicate balance between elitism and egalitarianism must be struck, for democratic participation in post-modernity is in fact recognition of as well as wrestling with the diverse forces of our society. On the one hand globalization levies a stringent demand on elites and elitism, yet at the same time exerts a subtle and strong, if not stronger, pressure of egalitarianism. There is a fundamental need for all people in a knowledge society to get equal educational footing in life, so that the maximum number of elites will emerge to contribute to the advancement of the society. It is in this environment that all tertiary education systems in advanced countries try to provide ample opportunities for all citizens to participate throughout their whole life, and we find the government terribly wanting in this perspective (see R2).

Democratic participation also implies pluralism, true creativity and a respect for professionalism. It is here that the government reform proposal is found most wanting. For there is no indication whatsoever that there can be alternatives, that a diversification of strategies is allowed to cater for diversified need. Rather, in a monstrous bureaucratic atmosphere little creativity and innovation will emerge from the various parties. It is in this vein that we have reservation for an 'illiberal' Liberal Studies (R4.3).

Moreover, democratic participation does not mean a lack of respect for good old tradition. Rather, the people, especially the students and parents as direct participants are the ultimate repository of good tradition. Another source of tradition certainly lies with the professional teachers, whose professional expertise and autonomy must be respected and guaranteed to ensure a successful execution of reform, which would not mean a mindless sweeping away of age-old tradition and its wisdom.

R5.2) With this paramount principle of democratic participation, the role of the government should undergo a major transition, namely, not the omnipotent and omnipresent education provider in terms of resource, content and methodology, but a moderator or facilitator who mediates the whole education process among all parties. Although we allow government directives and legislation to regulate

school management, we should restrain the government to involve in pseudo-professional and bureaucratic interference in the educational field, and the government's education decision-making process must be made transparent. All 'slogan management' and 'rhetoric management' of the reform process must be countered. Here the legislature, as the representative of the public, should take a leading role in calling for hearing and for instituting expert working groups to monitor the reform process.

R5.3) The role of the universities in this higher end of education reform is crucial. Although the government has involved some academics in its management and reform proposal, such involvement is minimal and unilateral, for it is not self-initiated but initiated by the government. Even in the present reform only the university administrations are involved. There is no institutional allowance for university scholars to engage actively in secondary education. In UGC policy, academics do not get any credit from participation in the government process or from writing textbooks. The scanty participation of academics creates an acute deficiency, which is not conducive to the evolution of good quality textbooks written or scrutinized by competent academics.

In fact, the universities as the repository of the learned people of the society and the education field, should take a leading role in the development of curriculum, its textbooks, and its assessments. This mandates the CDC and the EA to take a backseat towards a coordinator's role, or at least these agencies must work in the closest collaboration with the universities, rather than working totally on their own. The present situation of having the SS curriculum and assessment developed solely by the CDC and the EA under the EMB is far from rational and satisfactory.

R5.4) Surely, universities cannot and should not be the sole leader in the SS education reform. The secondary schools themselves, together with the primary and pre-school forerunners should play a vital role in the SS reform. The primary and pre-school education sectors are important preparation grounds for the execution of SS education. It is important to align their curriculum and teaching to ensure adequate and successful preparation of the SS entrants. It is most crucial to include senior secondary teachers and students in the research, planning, execution and feedback of reform, for student attitude and the morale of teachers are important factors in the successful planning and execution of reform. It is especially important to guarantee the autonomy and freedom of the teachers from over-regulation by government bureaucracy.

R5.5) The society as a whole has contributed tremendously to the education process, in that the learning experience of the students inside and outside school is determined to a long extent by the socio-cultural environment. And we recognize that the present education situation of poor standard in English and the paucity of common knowledge is also related to the social atmosphere. In this sense the cultural policy of the city as a whole has a tremendous impact on the teaching and learning experience going on in schools. Therefore, we advocate an independent minister of culture, to coordinate and promote the cultural development of the society, and to better coordinate the media, the public and the school environment. Moreover, we must allow the parents and the employers a greater role of participation in our education process.

R5.6) Lastly, we must not forget the role of our mother country and the international society in the education reform. While the reform proposal claims to equip students to face global competition, the proposal hardly gives any hint how this can be achieved, nor does it display any research of education reforms **now running in the international society. Our present problem is taking too little notice of what is going on beyond us. It would be good for our education reform to take serious the reforms that are going on in mainland China and in the advanced countries. Though it certainly does not mean that we should copy their reforms en block, we must sieve out valuable education development ideas from abroad to reform our system. This would result in a beneficial alignment of our education system with other systems in the world, and **enhance** our students' competition with others in the global scene.**