

**For discussion on
29 October 2004**

**LegCo Panel on Education
Reforming the Academic Structure of
Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education
-- Actions for Investing in the Future**

Purpose

This paper invites Members to give views on the proposals set out in “Reforming the Academic Structure of Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education – Actions for Investing in the Future” (the consultation document).

Background

2. To cope with the demands of the rapidly developing knowledge-based society, we need to prepare our next generation better for work or further study. For that purpose, the Education Commission in 2000 set out the blueprint for education development that will meet the challenge of the new century, and in May 2003 set out proposals for developing a new senior secondary and higher education academic structure (‘3+3+4’). The Chief Executive, in his 2004 Policy Address, confirmed this policy direction and undertook that the Administration would consult the community on the design blueprint, the timetable and financing for the proposed changes.

3. The Administration has been in continuous dialogue throughout 2004 to exchange views with the education sector and thrash out issues of concern for implementation of the new academic structure. This has included the development, in consultation with teachers, principals, academics and community members, of more subject details under the proposed new curriculum and assessment system and a timetable for implementation. We are now ready to undertake more in-depth and focused discussion with the education sector and the broader community. The Administration on 20 October 2004 launched a wider consultation exercise to seek community feedback on the implementation details of the proposed changes. The three-month consultation will end

on 19 January 2005.

Proposals

4. The consultation document proposes a three-year junior secondary and three-year senior secondary education linking to a broader set of post school pathways, including four year undergraduate university programmes, to facilitate improved articulation for students to proceed to further study locally or overseas, to join the workforce or to return to study in future. Changes in the curriculum and examination system focus on providing a broader knowledge base, more diversified learning experiences to suit individual aptitude and interests, and a single examination leading to the award of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education, which will free up more time for more effective learning. Under the new system, all students are expected to complete six years of secondary education. It is therefore important that the senior secondary curriculum should provide choice and engage every student in mastering the knowledge and developing the skills and attitude necessary to be a responsible and independent person. For this purpose, we have proposed four core subjects for all students, namely, Chinese, English, Mathematics and Liberal Studies.

5. The direction of change has enjoyed widespread public support. The Heads of Universities Committee, in particular, welcomed the changes and has announced its intention to incorporate the proposed new core subjects, including Liberal Studies, as general admission criteria for university entrance. This is an important first step for the Administration to establish the status and credibility of the new curriculum, and seek international recognition of the new diploma.

Implementation

6. The Administration does not underestimate the complexity of the proposed changes, the need for careful planning and coordination and, most of all, the importance of providing sufficient support for schools and teachers to embrace the changes, so as to ensure smooth implementation. The proposed timetable we have set out has taken into account the lead-time school principals and our curriculum and examination professionals believe is needed to prepare for the changes.

The Administration has sent detailed questionnaires to schools to solicit information and views on how we could plan training, and support schools and teachers. We have also set aside non-recurrent resources to assist schools to migrate to the new academic structure. The Administration will also work with individual schools, where necessary, to discuss possible arrangements for subject offer, deployment of resources, reorganization of class structures and any other transitional issues.

7. On funding, the Administration will continue to invest heavily in education. However education financing must be considered in the context of the constraints and demands on public finance in general. We have proposed a shared funding model to meet the costs for the new academic structure. Commitment to this principle of cost-sharing is a key consideration to allow us to move forward so our young people can benefit from the changes. The Administration will continue to provide assistance to students and ensure no student would be deprived of the opportunity to study through lack of means.

Consultation

8. Details of the proposed changes are set out in the consultation document provided to Members. The Administration will be soliciting views from all stakeholders and from the community on the proposal through various channels in the coming three months. Members are invited to give their views.

Education and Manpower Bureau
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