

**Response to Issue related to the
Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2003
Raised at the Meeting on 4 December 2003**

Purpose

This paper sets out the Administration's response to members' request at the Bills Committee meeting held on 4 December 2003 that, in relation to the Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2003, the fees of the In-service Course of Training for Teachers (ICTT) to be offered by the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) in the 2004/05 school year be maintained at its present level.

Background

2. The ICTT used to be a sub-degree programme offered by the HKIEd and was funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC). Course participants were required to pay for their own fees at about \$8,000 per head per annum. To complement the move towards an all-graduate teaching force, the UGC and the HKIEd agreed that funding for the ICTT would cease after the 2003/04 academic year. Between 2000 and 2002, the HKIEd issued a number of call circulars to repeatedly remind eligible teachers to enrol in the course at the earliest opportunity.

Arrangements for the Transitional Period

3. As a special arrangement for the transitional period, the HKIEd has agreed in principle to offer the ICTT on a one-off, self-financed basis to enable unqualified permitted teachers to acquire their registered teacher (RT) status.

4. The Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) has negotiated rigorously with the HKIEd to run the proposed ICTT at the lowest course fees possible. HKIEd has indicated that, as an initial estimate, the course could be offered at about \$28,000 per head per annum. The limited number of unqualified serving teachers at around 300 that also require the provision of different subject

electives has inevitably reduced the possibility of further lowering the course fees. EMB considers the proposed fees to be reasonable.

5. In the context of Government's financial stringency, we do not consider it appropriate for Government to subsidize the course fees for a particular group of teachers. In the spirit of lifelong learning, it is also reasonable to expect that serving teachers with a regular income should acquire their professional status on a self-financing basis. In case individual teachers meet with genuine financial difficulties, the Administration could explore how to provide possible means of support.

6. The Administration will write to the heads of schools requesting them to encourage and facilitate untrained serving teachers to attend the ICTT. It will also continue to liaise with HKIED to offer the ICTT in a more flexible mode, such as arranging for some classes to be held on Saturdays or long holidays, to facilitate teachers' participation.

Education and Manpower Bureau
January 2004