

OFFICIAL RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday, 12 May 1994

The Council met at half-past Two o'clock

PRESENT

THE PRESIDENT

THE HONOURABLE JOHN JOSEPH SWAINE, C.B.E., LL.D., Q.C., J.P.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY

THE HONOURABLE MRS ANSON CHAN, C.B.E., J.P.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY

THE HONOURABLE SIR NATHANIEL WILLIAM HAMISH MACLEOD, K.B.E., J.P.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

THE HONOURABLE JEREMY FELL MATHEWS, C.M.G., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS SELINA CHOW LIANG SHUK-YEE, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE HUI YIN-FAT, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MARTIN LEE CHU-MING, Q.C., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE DAVID LI KWOK-PO, O.B.E., LL.D., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE PANG CHUN-HOI, M.B.E.

THE HONOURABLE SZETO WAH

THE HONOURABLE TAM YIU-CHUNG

THE HONOURABLE ANDREW WONG WANG-FAT, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE EDWARD HO SING-TIN, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE RONALD JOSEPH ARCULLI, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MARTIN GILBERT BARROW, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS PEGGY LAM, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS MIRIAM LAU KIN-YEE, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LAU WAH-SUM, O.B.E., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE LEONG CHE-HUNG, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE JAMES DAVID McGREGOR, O.B.E., I.S.O., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS ELSIE TU, C.B.E.

THE HONOURABLE PETER WONG HONG-YUEN, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ALBERT CHAN WAI-YIP

THE HONOURABLE VINCENT CHENG HOI-CHUEN, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MOSES CHENG MO-CHI

THE HONOURABLE MARVIN CHEUNG KIN-TUNG, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHEUNG MAN-KWONG

THE HONOURABLE CHIM PUI-CHUNG

REV THE HONOURABLE FUNG CHI-WOOD

THE HONOURABLE TIMOTHY HA WING-HO, M.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MICHAEL HO MUN-KA

THE HONOURABLE SIMON IP SIK-ON, O.B.E., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE LAM KUI-CHUN

DR THE HONOURABLE CONRAD LAM KUI-SHING, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LAU CHIN-SHEK

THE HONOURABLE LEE WING-TAT

THE HONOURABLE ERIC LI KA-CHEUNG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE FRED LI WAH-MING

THE HONOURABLE HENRY TANG YING-YEN, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE TIK CHI-YUEN

THE HONOURABLE JAMES TO KUN-SUN

DR THE HONOURABLE SAMUEL WONG PING-WAI, M.B.E., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE PHILIP WONG YU-HONG

THE HONOURABLE HOWARD YOUNG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ZACHARY WONG WAI-YIN

THE HONOURABLE CHRISTINE LOH KUNG-WAI

THE HONOURABLE ROGER LUK KOON-HOO

THE HONOURABLE ANNA WU HUNG-YUK

THE HONOURABLE JAMES TIEN PEI-CHUN, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ALFRED TSO SHIU-WAI

ABSENT

THE HONOURABLE ALLEN LEE PENG-FEI, C.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE NGAI SHIU-KIT, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LAU WONG-FAT, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE FREDERICK FUNG KIN-KEE

DR THE HONOURABLE HUANG CHEN-YA

THE HONOURABLE EMILY LAU WAI-HING

THE HONOURABLE MAN SAI-CHEONG

THE HONOURABLE STEVEN POON KWOK-LIM

DR THE HONOURABLE YEUNG SUM

DR THE HONOURABLE TANG SIU-TONG, J.P.

IN ATTENDANCE

THE CLERK TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
MR RICKY FUNG CHOI-CHEUNG

PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 4AA, HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR,
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE CHRISTOPHER FRANCIS PATTEN, ATTENDED TO
ADDRESS THE COUNCIL AND TO RECEIVE QUESTIONS.

PRESIDENT: Would Members please remain standing for the Governor?

CLERK: His Excellency the Governor.

PRESIDENT: The Governor will address this Council on the subject of education and training.

GOVERNOR: Mr President, we discuss many subjects in this Council. But few affect the long-term future of Hong Kong and its people more than education and training. In Hong Kong of all places, where we have no natural resources to depend on, we will stand or fall as an economy on the skills and talents of our people.

Hong Kong people know this very well. Hong Kong parents recognize the worth of a decent education for their children. They know that education and training are a ladder to a better life. So there is not a problem with motivation in Hong Kong. The demand for a good education is there. It is up to the Government to do all it can to meet that demand.

Hong Kong has come on in leaps and bounds over the last 30 years.

Thirty years ago:

Many children went to primary school on housing estate rooftops;

We could only provide secondary school places for about a third of the age group;

The University of Hong Kong was the only degree-awarding institution, offering just 400 degree places.

Today:

Every one of our children attends nine years of free and compulsory education;

Eighty-five per cent of those who go beyond Secondary III can get into subsidized Secondary IV and V places in public sector schools; another 10% can opt to undergo subsidized craft-level training in technical institutes.

Today, a fifth of our population is undergoing full-time education. By September of this year, nearly 20% of our young people aged between 17 and 20 will be enrolled in first-year, first-degree courses in our seven tertiary institutions. Another 14 000 will be studying sub-degree courses in the two polytechnics and the two technical colleges of the Vocational Training Council.

Sixteen thousand students are now enrolled in distance learning degree and sub-degree courses offered by the Open Learning Institute (OLI).

In Hong Kong no qualified student need be deprived of the opportunity to receive education due to lack of means. Financial assistance is available for needy students at all levels — from pre-primary to tertiary.

Hong Kong has come a long way in a short time. That so much has been achieved is a great tribute to all those involved in education in Hong Kong — above all to our 55 000 teachers. We all — parents, students, the whole community — depend upon them. The future success of our community depends on their calibre, their quality, their commitment to their work.

Where do we go from here?

We have set ourselves two key aims for the 1990s. First, to upgrade the quality of school education. Secondly, to expand the number of places available in tertiary education.

On school education, we have had the benefit of the advice from the Education Commission in its No. 5 report. We are acting to implement most of its recommendations. Let me tell you some of the things we have done so far:

First, the new Hong Kong Institute of Education is on target to offer its first academic programmes in September 1994 — thanks to 15 months of hard work by its Provisional Governing Council, led ably by the Honourable Simon IP. The new Governing Council is working to a tight timetable to mould the existing Colleges of Education into the new institute. Their top priority is to complete the \$1.9 billion new campus project in Tai Po by 1997. It will be the main centre for all teacher training in Hong Kong. It is a very big project, and it is on schedule.

Second, we are spending over \$600 million to improve the physical environment of 60 primary schools and 50 secondary schools. Shabby classrooms do not encourage excellence. We are also planning for improvements to more schools in the second phase.

Third, we are gradually reducing the pupil/teacher ratio, cutting class sizes, upgrading teaching posts in primary schools to graduate level, expanding the number of graduate teachers in secondary schools — and we have developed degree courses for serving teachers. We have set clear targets, and we are making good, quiet progress in meeting them. Since I first announced these measures in my policy speech in October 1992, the pupil/teacher ratio has fallen from 26.9:1 to 25.2:1 for primary schools, and from 21.8:1 to 20.6:1 for secondary schools; the average class size for Primary I has been reduced from 36 to 31; and by this September there will be 180 new graduate posts in primary schools, and an extra 800 graduate posts in secondary schools.

Fourth, the Council on Professional Conduct in Education has just been elected. Its establishment represents a further step towards greater professionalism in teaching.

Good, solid progress. But, as ever, the final sentence on the report card reads “could do better”. It is not enough just to meet our immediate targets. We have constantly to look beyond them, to try to detect and adapt to the new needs of tomorrow.

Let me sketch out how we see those next few years by offering Members a brief *tour d’horizon* of education in Hong Kong, starting, where a schooling begins, at the pre-primary level.

Over 85% of our children below the age of six now attend kindergarten. The Government must take account of this — irrespective of whether kindergarten education should form part of the formal education system. Pre-primary education is plainly an area where we can work for further improvements. The Board of Education has formed a special subcommittee to look into this. We are now waiting for the board’s and the Education Commission’s advice before deciding how best to act to upgrade the quality of our kindergarten education.

At the next level up — school education, the Education Commission has set up special working groups to look at three areas of widespread concern: educational standards; language proficiency; and the way in which we allocate resources to our schools.

We look forward to their report later this year. It will help to guide us as we debate these important issues.

The University and Polytechnic Grants Committee (UPGC) has recently launched a major consultation exercise on its interim report on the development of higher education in Hong Kong. This is a good report — focusing squarely on the future. It has provoked lively debate in the education world, prompting the UPGC to extend its consultation period by two months. We look forward to the UPGC’s final report, further enriched by this extra period of consultation.

Finally, continuing education and training. This is an area that has impressed me particularly since I have been in Hong Kong. Let me make just one point. If Hong Kong is to retain its capacity to adapt quickly and skilfully to a changing economic environment, if Hong Kong is to compete as a high-tech international business centre, it is crucially important that we continue to be able to educate and retrain our workforce. The pace of change in the marketplace never slows. If we slacken our pace, then our competitors surge ahead. If we fail to upgrade our skills in the workplace, our products will not make the grade in the marketplace.

We are doing pretty well. Hong Kong already offers a quarter of a million places in part-time courses and extra-mural studies. The VTC offers 58 000 alone. My senior colleague on the Executive Council, Baroness DUNN, is opening their new Technical College in Chai Wan this afternoon, which will provide further places. The Employees Retraining Board has already put 12 500 trainees through their courses in under a year.

Nowadays, people expect to change jobs several times in their careers — change careers too. We have to help them meet the challenge of such upheaval. The best way — the only way — is through education and training — starting at infancy and continuing through adult life. Education today is not something that starts abruptly at five or six and finishes abruptly at 15 or 16. It starts earlier — and it need not finish. That is good for Hong Kong, good for our economy. But it is good for us as human beings too. Thank you.

PRESIDENT: Members may now put questions to the Governor. A Member who has asked a question may for the purpose of elucidation only ask a short follow-up question. Show of hands please.

PRESIDENT: Mr Timothy HA.

MR TIMOTHY HA (in Cantonese): *Mr President, I am delighted to have heard that the Governor just now affirmed the status of teachers. The wastage rate in teaching profession, especially at secondary school level, is still very high. Will the Governor inform this Council what measures are available to attract more young people to join, and to retain them in, this profession?*

GOVERNOR: I agree with the Honourable Member that any wastage rate in a profession as vital as teaching is a concern. The overall wastage rate in teaching is, as the Honourable Member knows, about 10% and though we would wish it were lower, it is not at present in our judgment posing insuperable problems. We are able, for example, through extending our recruiting, and through enabling people to extend their service, to deal with any shortage of supply in teaching which is envisaged. But we do have to ensure that for young people, for young graduates, for example, teaching is demonstrated as a satisfying profession, as an honourable profession, as a profession which is crucial to the well-being of the community. All those things are true. I very much hope that in terms of professional esteem the establishment of the council will be a considerable help, and that we can look in the future to a statutory basis for the work. I think those who envisage the establishment and development of a general teaching council as it were, monitoring and policing professional standards, are right in their aspirations. I think we have to make sure that teaching is properly resourced, that teachers themselves are adequately remunerated, and I think that we have to make sure that the conditions in which

they teach are reasonable. I am very pleased that one of the things which is resulting from our school improvement programme is, for instance, the establishment of staff rooms in schools where they do not at present exist, which may be a small thing but I think is quite important for a teacher who is so busy to relax in for a little while during the course of the day. So, resourcing comes into the issue as well, and I hope by a combination of means we will be able to ensure that people are attracted to what is perhaps the most important profession of all in our community.

PRESIDENT: Dr David LI.

DR DAVID LI: *According to a revised interim report on the review of the development of higher education 1991 to 2001 from the UPGC, the funding to each tertiary institution is based on the quantity of research. Would you please, Mr Governor, inform this Council what consideration is given to the quality of teaching in determining the amount of funding to each of these institutions?*

GOVERNOR: I think that the UPGC's report in advocating the development of centres of excellence in our tertiary sector sees a determination of grant allocation, not solely through quantity but through quality as well, and quality is best assessed I think by peer group review. I do not think the Government or central administrators are, in a very good position to determine the quality of research. I think that is best done by other academic specialists in the field. The Honourable Member has of course touched on an area which is of some concern to us. We are expanding our tertiary sector very rapidly, though not, I underline, at the expense of education elsewhere. I think it is right for us to do that. It does have costs; it also has implications for the post-graduate sector, and in particular for research and research funding. We have increased research funding from \$100 million in 1991-92 to about \$210 million in this financial year so that I hope that we will see the encouragement of more post-graduates' research in Hong Kong and the broader the base of post-graduate research the higher the quality that research will attain.

PRESIDENT: Mr PANG Chun-hoi.

MR PANG CHUN-HOI (in Cantonese): *Mr Governor, the employees retraining programmes, apart from being very popular, are also very important to workers who wish to change their jobs. Just then, you said that over 10 000 people had participated in the retraining programmes. In reply to my question concerning the estimates of expenditure on these programmes, the Commissioner for Labour disclosed in March this year that only 21% of the retrained workers were able to switch to other jobs, and that is a relatively low figure. I hope you can advise this Council whether the Administration will take*

further measures to enhance job seeking counselling so that workers who joined the retraining programmes can really find suitable jobs?

GOVERNOR: Yes, we certainly intend to encourage and develop job seeking counselling. That is one of our proposals, for example, to interview those who are unsuccessful in looking for jobs after being retrained. I am not sure whether the figure I am about to give is on all fours with the figure which I did not recognize that the Honourable Member had been given previously. I believe I am right in saying that 70% of those who have gone through our retraining programmes are placed subsequently in jobs and that is, I think, an encouraging figure, though not as good as I would like it to be. I think that is the overall figure after the retraining of the first 12 500. By October, we think the figure will be more than 15 000. If we are actually talking about different parameters for our figures, if as it were, we are heading up different roads, then perhaps we can sort out the position later on, but I do think that the 70% figure that I have given is an accurate one.

MR PANG CHUN-HOI (in Cantonese): *Mr Governor, according to the figures provided to me by the Labour Department in March this year, only 21% of the retrained workers had been placed in jobs through job seeking counselling. That is the reply given by the Administration.*

GOVERNOR: Well, either we have made spectacular progress since March, (*laughter*) or else, which I cannot believe is the case, the Commissioner on that occasion was inaccurate whereas the Governor on this occasion is accurate. Perhaps it is just that we have made progress since then. I can confirm that the placement rate for those actively looking for jobs is 70%-75% of the 12 500 who have been through the employees retraining schemes.

On the question of those who do not find employment, I can tell the Honourable Member that the Employees Retraining Board will organize an intensive follow-up programme for retrainees who are unable to find a job four weeks after attending the five-day job search skills course.

We shall try to resolve between us, the Honourable Member and myself, later on perhaps the disparity between the March figure and the figure that I have just given, but it may be that we are talking about different things.

PRESIDENT: Mr Henry TANG.

MR HENRY TANG (in Cantonese): *Mr Governor, first of all, I would like to wish you a happy birthday. Despite the fact that Hong Kong is quite an affluent and prosperous society, the annual public expenditure on education is lower than*

that of our neighbouring countries. As far as the budget of the 1994-95 financial year is concerned, education spending only accounts for 6.5% of the growth in real terms, that is about 3% of the gross domestic product, which is on the low side when comparing with that of our neighbouring countries. The corresponding figure is 4.8% in Japan, 5.6% in Malaysia, some 4% in Singapore and Taiwan. We are only ahead of China (your beloved country), which is 2.4%. Mr Governor, given the prosperity in the territory, do you consider the ratio mentioned above acceptable? Or, do you find it embarrassing?

GOVERNOR: No, first of all before disagreeing with the Honourable Member, can I agree with him and wish myself a happy birthday as well. *(Laughter)* I hope that I will enjoy the greater longevity which Hong Kong health statistics show is the lot of the people who live in this community.

I do not actually happen to think that percentage of GDP is necessarily a very satisfactory basis for making comparisons about the quality or even the quantity of a product. If your GDP expanded very slowly but your public expenditure was going up by faster than the trend rate of growth in the economy, then it would look as though you were being frightfully virtuous if you were measuring education spending in proportion to GDP. But you might actually be spending less money in absolute terms on education because your economy was not growing as rapidly as you would have liked. I think it is also worth making the point that public expenditure and tax as proportions of GDP are much lower than in a number of our neighbouring countries, indeed, than in most countries. There are some private contributions to education which I doubt are included in those figures. I think the figure of 3.4% for Hong Kong is the figure for public expenditure on education.

I think it is perhaps more sensible to look at the proportion of our public expenditure which goes on education and the figure there is about 21% and it has remained fairly constant though it is certainly the highest or the largest public expenditure programme which is an indication of the priority that we accord. It is also true that expenditure on schools, for example, has been going up by 6.5% in real terms, that is over the inflation rate in the last few years, and that has been a larger figure than the increase in public expenditure as a whole on other programmes.

I think we are doing pretty well, but I do not dispute the fact that we need to do more. That is why we are spending another \$600 million on improving our schools. That is why we are spending over \$150 million to get additional teachers. That is why we are spending \$103 million on reducing class sizes. All those figures add up and I think add up in a way which the Honourable Member would agree was satisfactory, but I do not doubt that not only will education need to continue to be our biggest spending programme, if we are to have the quality of workforce that we will need in the future, but that we shall have to

spend a lot more on education as well, so at least on that the Honourable Member and I can march as one.

MR HENRY TANG (in Cantonese): *Mr Governor, why has the public expenditure on adult education been reduced from \$60 million to \$51 million?*

GOVERNOR: I think I am right in saying that if you take continuing education as a whole, the figures are going up too and some of the figures are for capital rather than just recurrent. For example, I announced a couple of years ago that we were providing the OLI with \$150 million so that it could buy its own headquarters. That has recurrent savings for the OLI in due course. I am not sure whether that figure is included in the Honourable Member's figure or whether the \$100 million that we are giving the OLI for course development is included in the figure. But the Honourable Member is entirely right in suggesting that continuing education is an area that we have to give greater priority to. I think he will know that the UPGC is looking at the subject at the moment and including in its review the question of self-financing and that is obviously going to have to shape our approach to the funding of this important sector in the future.

More and more people are going to want to drop into education at more mature stages of their lives. We have got to make that as easy for people as possible. I must say that I have been greatly impressed by those I have met in continuing education who are very often, after a very hard day's work, having a hard evening's work on top.

PRESIDENT: Mr Alfred TSO.

MR ALFRED TSO (in Cantonese): *Mr Governor, it is undisputable that the Government has allocated more resources to education for the benefit of our young people over the recent years to enrich their academic knowledge. However, at the same time, youth problems have become increasingly serious. Many young people easily succumb to materialistic temptations and they do not have any clear idea as to what is right and what is wrong. Some may be led astray involuntarily and become child prostitutes, drug addicts and law-breakers committing other criminal offences. I would like to ask, Mr Governor, whether the Government could expeditiously make civic education (including national education and political education) one of the compulsory subjects in secondary curriculum so as to instil into our young generation a stronger sense of belonging to prepare them to make the right choice and face up to challenges in life beyond 1997.*

GOVERNOR: There is quite a lot mixed up in that question and in responding to it as positively as possible, I will try to avoid the temptation to which politicians occasionally fall prey and start sounding like a bishop or spiritual leader, because I think that people that want moral uplift should, on the whole, look to spiritual leaders rather than to politicians.

It is, alas, one of the paradoxes of our age that increases in collective and individual affluence have not eliminated social problems. That indeed we see, quite often, a growth in some sorts of social problems accompanying greater materialism and increases in people's disposable income. That can be partly addressed at schools. And our schools have an important role in educating the whole boy or girl, so civic education, health education, teaching young people to respect themselves as well as others, all those things are an important part of education. But I think there is a tendency, from time to time, for parents to put the responsibility on schools rather than shoulder the primary responsibility themselves. I think most of the inculcation of moral standards and moral values should begin in the home and I do not think parents can expect schools to make up for what may be deficient in the domestic background. Schools have a role to play but I think that parents have to recognize their role as well. I am very pleased that the School Management Initiative is bringing parents and school managers together with the development of more parent-teacher associations (PTA) and so on. I think that is a very welcome move forward.

As for, as it were, the political content of the Honourable Member's question, I think that there is already within several syllabuses in the curriculum plenty of material about the Joint Declaration, the Basic Law, the changes that have been taking place in modern China. I do not think we need to go further in that direction, but it is an important part of our education that young people should know about the community and the constitution of the community in which they live. And I welcome the fact that our teachers have produced such good curriculum material on those subjects.

Perhaps I could just add one other thing. I am very impressed as I go around from district board to district board by the work of the Fight Crime Committees and by the liaison between the Fight Crime Committees and our schools. I think that work is exceptionally important, not least in discouraging young people from taking part in triad activity. I hope that we can see that sort of work which is so important increase in the future.

PRESIDENT: Dr LEONG Che-hung.

DR LEONG CHE-HUNG: *Mr Governor, Hong Kong unfortunately still has a fairly sizeable number of industrial accidents. What is the Government's policy on that front, if any; how will the policy and principles be implemented in the retraining of these disabled to get them back into society and will the Government take a lead in employing these people so as to make a good start?*

GOVERNOR: I think the Honourable Member will know that we have broadened the remit of the Employees Retraining Board in order to cover those who have been injured at work and, alas, there are all too many who fall into that category. I have had occasion to say before, not least when at the scene of appalling industrial accidents, that our figures for industrial accidents in Hong Kong are obscenely high. For an economy as sophisticated as this one, we still have appallingly primitive statistics for industrial accidents, particularly, though not exclusively, in the construction industry. We have taken steps with the active leadership of the Commissioner for Labour to try to address that question. I would like to say without reservation that I think the pressure that we have had from the trade union movement in Hong Kong on the subject has been wholly in the entire community's interest and I welcome the intelligent and effective lobbying that they have done on this issue. I very much hope that we can try to ensure in our training and retraining programmes that a proper regard for industrial safety is incorporated. It should certainly be the case for all those courses run by the construction industry but I will check exactly what is done on that front and let the Honourable Member know.

DR LEONG CHE-HUNG: *Will the Government take a lead in employing these people, Mr Governor?*

GOVERNOR: I attended, not very long ago, what was called a summit on disability in which we talked about the employment of those who were disabled and we made commitments in the Government for those disabled in general rather than those injured as a result of industrial accidents. I think it is difficult to distinguish between the two but we do have to make greater efforts in the Government to employ those with handicap, whether it is caused at work or whether it is genetic or whether there is some other reason for it.

PRESIDENT: Dr LAM Kui-chun.

DR LAM KUI-CHUN: *Mr President, up to now educational standards in the universities in Hong Kong are maintained at comparable levels to those in other Commonwealth countries by an external examiners system. In 1997, Hong Kong will cease to be a member of the British Commonwealth and the external examiners system presumably will cease to exist. Would the Governor inform this Council what is being done now and what the arrangements for the future will be to ensure that our university graduates will remain at comparable levels in terms of competence, and are recognized by major academic centres in the world? Particularly important is the case of overseas postgraduate medical training where a trainee is required by law to have a recognized medical qualification before he is allowed to touch a patient.*

GOVERNOR: I very much hope that the inevitable change in the relationship between Hong Kong and the Commonwealth in 1997 will not affect the academic links which this community has with not just the Commonwealth countries, but with other countries as well. The Honourable Member will know that the UPGC contains a number of distinguished academics from Commonwealth countries and also from one or two non-Commonwealth countries, certainly one non-Commonwealth country as well. I think the Honourable Member will also know, much better than me, the extensive international links which the Academy of Medicine has. Such links will survive and prosper, I am sure, after 1997. I hope that there can be no question of the change of sovereignty in 1997 affecting or disrupting the international links that the academic community in Hong Kong has beyond our shores and beyond our boundaries. If that were to be the case, which I do not believe it will, it would be sad and debilitating. We have to ensure that we retain an extrovert, outward looking intellectual community and that is, of course, one of the main themes of the UPGC's recent consultation document and mission statement which wants Hong Kong to pursue an extremely outward looking role.

PRESIDENT: Mr LAU Chin-shek.

MR LAU CHIN-SHEK (in Cantonese): *Mr Governor, the success of our retraining schemes hinges to a significant extent on employers' support. Has the Government, as the largest employer in the territory, maintained any links and co-operation with the Employees Retraining Board? And, to set a good example, has the Government ever considered putting aside a certain number of civil service vacancies to recruit graduates coming out of the retraining programme?*

GOVERNOR: We have not, I do not believe, got a set percentage figure for recruits that we would want to take who had, as it were, graduated from the programmes under the Employees Retraining Board. I am not sure that would always be appropriate, given what may sometimes be a skills mismatch between the sort of post that the Government is looking for and the sort of trainees who are coming out of the employees retraining schemes. But I will certainly look at the issue and see if there is more that we can do. As I said earlier, I think the figure for work placement of those who are actively seeking work after graduating from the employees retraining schemes is pretty high, and we are trying to further improve it. So we are not talking about many of the 12 500, shortly to be 15 000, who have been retrained but not actually be able to find jobs.

MR LAU CHIN-SHEK (in Cantonese): *Employers are, in fact, facing the same problem. If the Government can hold discussions, with a sense of purpose, or maintain close co-operation with the Employees Retraining Board regarding the recruitment of civil servants from the retrainees, I think it will go some way towards solving their work placement problem. Would Mr Governor enlighten us in respect of this point and would he give consideration to this arrangement to see if it can assist the retrainees in moving on to new jobs?*

GOVERNOR: Certainly. If we have not had the sort of dialogue which the Honourable Member understandably requests I will ensure that those discussions take place.

PRESIDENT: Mr TIK Chi-yuen.

MR TIK CHI-YUEN (in Cantonese): *Mr Governor, though you are a British, I hope that you can render your full support to the use of Chinese as the medium of instruction. Hong Kong has been using the mother tongue as the medium of instruction for more than 10 years but no significant result has been achieved. The main reason is that parents consider that English is superior to Chinese. Schools are reluctant to use the mother tongue as the medium of instruction for fear that it would have a negative effect on their status. The fact is that people attach much importance to English and neglect Chinese. The Administration is partly to blame for such a phenomenon. For example, English is used as the medium of instruction in most government secondary schools and the Administration requires the applicants to have a pass in English in the recruitment of civil servants for certain posts. But no mention is made on the proficiency of Chinese. Mr Governor, do you think that you have the responsibility to urge the department concerned to review such a policy which gives more weight to English and to rectify the situation, so that the Administration can set an example in promoting the use of Chinese as the medium of instruction?*

GOVERNOR: I am not entirely sure that the whole community, or for example, some distinguished senior officers in the public service on my right, would agree that teaching in English over the last years had been a complete disaster as the Honourable Member appeared to be suggesting.

The subject is of course a controversial one and a matter of concern to parents and we want to proceed as far as possible using voluntary methods rather than compulsion. Where I agree with the Honourable Member is that we want to see young people taught in the most appropriate medium. What we do not want is for young people to be taught in Chinglish rather than either English or Chinese. That is what we are trying to avoid at the moment. The Honourable Member will know that many parents when it looks as though the school which

their children attend is going to shift from English to Chinese as the medium of instruction do not like it because they think it is going to affect the career opportunities of their children; they think it is going to mean that their children get a less good education. In fact, one of the obvious things that one can and should do, where that shift takes place, is to ensure that more emphasis is placed, albeit within a curriculum which is taught in Chinese, on English language training itself through bridging courses and in other ways.

At present, we are encouraging schools to move to the most appropriate medium of instruction. I hope that in doing that we will have as much understanding from parents as possible. And that would of course be the backdrop to the much greater efforts that we are taking to encourage proficiency not just in English but in Putonghua as well. We set up a language fund for which this Council has now voted the cash. I think there are two Members of this Council who are on the committee which will determine how the fund uses its money. That is just one way in which I hope that we can ensure that Hong Kong retains the linguistic skills that it needs as one of the great international business centres in the world. Of course, with a living language like Cantonese, it is going to provide the main cultural backdrop for people in the territory. But it is equally true that in all sorts of walks of life, English and Putonghua are going to be very important and ways of ensuring that somebody can do the jobs as adequately as possible, and that will be true in the Civil Service as well. And there are some jobs in the Civil Service which will require from time to time all three languages and we must do everything we can to ensure that people can manage them all.

PRESIDENT: Mr Roger LUK.

MR ROGER LUK: *Mr President, just to follow up the answer of the Governor. Would the Governor elaborate on the way forward to improve both the spoken and written language skill of teachers and students?*

GOVERNOR: We will obviously have greater help in finding the way forward when the Education Commission's working group on language proficiency has reported a little later in the year. And I think that will provide the signposts for the committee which will be managing the language fund itself — the \$300 million that we have put into the language fund. There is, and I hear it regularly from business leaders, concern about what they believe to be lower standards of English proficiency. I am not quite sure how much that is anecdotal evidence and how much there is an objective basis to it, but I think that at the very least they are right to believe that Hong Kong, if it is to retain its economic position in the region and the world, needs to have language skills.

PRESIDENT: Dr Samuel WONG.

DR SAMUEL WONG (in Cantonese): *Mr Governor, a few years ago when the Administration was considering the licence applications for cable television, there had been some discussions that some channels or certain time slots would be allocated for the purpose of education television. May I ask if this idea is still under active consideration? If so, could you inform us the progress of the preparatory work on this?*

GOVERNOR: I am afraid that my own institutional history of these matters does not enable me to confirm or deny any commitments made about the educational role of television. I happen to believe, though it just shows a personal prejudice, that television is all too frequently an alternative to education. But, I can see that it can play an educational role too. I know that some of our television companies have established a regional lead in the production of children's television programmes. As for a broader educational role, perhaps I can get in touch with the Honourable Member about that again. At the moment I have to say that I do not see very much sign of the educational use of television, except perhaps in relation to continuing education and OLI courses from time to time.

PRESIDENT: Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong.

MR CHEUNG MAN-KWONG (in Cantonese): *Mr Governor, my question is also related to the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction which has been brought up by Mr TIK Chi-yuen just now. Since Hong Kong is a colony, the Administration has for long implemented a language policy which gives more weight to English than Chinese. Such a wrong way of thinking has indeed taken root in society. Now in view of the imminent end of the colonial era, what we are looking forward to is not only a locally based democratic system, but also a locally based language policy. When you talked about the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction just now, you seemed to be saying that this can only be done in either a "voluntary" or "compulsory" way. But there is in fact a third way, namely, the Administration can assist the few hundred schools that are willing to shift from English to Chinese as the medium of instruction to effect such a change before 1997 in accordance with an agreed schedule. Will the Administration provide assistance on its own initiative in this regard? Moreover, will the Administration implement a pro-Chinese language policy within government departments, in the court and in the recruitment of civil servants?*

GOVERNOR: I repeat what I said earlier. The Government is attempting to encourage schools to opt for whatever is the most appropriate medium of instruction. And a lot of the resistance to the idea comes from those who do not share the Honourable Member's views about English, comes from parents who think that to move away from using English as the medium of instruction, even if in practice English has not been used very effectively as the medium of instruction, is somehow to reduce the educational standards that their children are enjoying. We really do have a matter of parental education I think to deal with in tackling this particular problem.

I must say that I do not see the question of language training in a particularly colonial light. It seems to me that Hong Kong needs, in addition to its eloquent Cantonese speaking population, as many as possible people who can manage in Putonghua and in English and it is the job of the Government to make that as likely as it can.

In the Civil Service we are doing a good deal to increase language training with more Putonghua courses. But I think it is clearly true that there are a number of jobs which require English as well as Cantonese or as well as Putonghua. Particularly, for example, for those working in areas like international trade. So I think it is a question of keeping a balance and ensuring that we encourage, as far as possible, rather than coerce.

MR CHEUNG MAN-KWONG (in Cantonese): *Mr Governor, your reply has greatly disappointed me. Frankly speaking, your view is still a colonial one. If you consider that the mother tongue should be used as the medium of instruction in Hong Kong, will you take the lead and set an example by asking all government schools to implement such a policy should the authority concerned consider that it would be more appropriate for the students in these schools to be taught in Chinese?*

GOVERNOR: Well, I congratulate the Honourable Member to begin with. I think he is the first person who accuses me of colonial attitudes in the last couple of years, but the prize had to go to somebody.

I am not sure whether he believes all those parents who are at present concerned about schools moving from teaching in English or allegedly teaching in English to teaching in mother tongue are also colonialist. The fact of the matter is that there are parents that we have to lead along what I think is the right road. I do not disagree with the Honourable Member one bit that one wants teaching in the appropriate mode and that will very often mean, in Hong Kong, moving from teaching in English to moving to teaching in the mother tongue. I totally accept that. But I think we are going to be best served by trying to encourage and lead people along that road rather than by driving them along it. The Honourable Member is entirely right that what we want is the appropriate language in the classroom because it does not make very much

sense if children are being taught in a language which they never wholly grasped; it does not much help if children are being taught in something that is half Chinese and half English. What we want is the appropriate language but I hope we can lead parents and schools in this direction rather than drive them and I think that is probably the view of schools and teachers as well.

PRESIDENT: Mr Vincent CHENG.

MR VINCENT CHENG (in Cantonese): *Mr Governor, will the Administration promote an education policy which offers diversified choices such that parents will have the right to choose for their children their preferred mode of education, or an education system which offers no choice and under which students must learn in either Chinese or English? In other words, will parents have choices?*

GOVERNOR: You cannot conceivably be against giving parents more choice in the education of their children. It would be like being against motherhood. We all want to see parents having as extensive a choice as possible, while recognizing in running an education system that choice inevitably has limits. But I would like to see more parents involved in the whole educational process than is at present the case. That is why I welcome, as I said earlier the School Management Initiative, and that is why I welcome the establishment of parent-teacher associations. I think parents themselves welcome more information about the educational service. I think they particularly welcome more information when they can understand the bulletins and memoranda sent to them about the education of their children which are sometimes written, I think, in a rather fierce bureaucratese. Yes, I am in favour of extending choices as much as possible, though there are always going to be practical limits because of the practical difficulties of the Government providing for every sort of option in every neighbourhood. I think if I can just add one point that the way in which Hong Kong has leant so heavily and so properly on non-governmental institutions for the provision of schools is itself an assistance in providing a greater choice.

MR VINCENT CHENG: *The Governor may not have completely got my question. I really wish to convey an opinion. There are colleagues calling for modified education and I am all for it. But I also happen to think that parents, if they want their kids to learn more English, should be allowed to do so.*

GOVERNOR: I am sure that is the sort of choice that one welcomes, and it is why at the risk of appearing in my Marxist colonial role, I answered earlier questions in the way I did. I think that the more, for example, we encourage an appropriate medium of instruction policy, the more we can establish bridging

courses, intensive English language programmes; the more we encourage better language skills through the target-oriented curriculum, the more we can develop the vocational English programme as well as equivalents to all those things in Putonghua; the more we can do those things, the wider the parents' choices and the wider pupils' choices will be.

PRESIDENT: Mrs Selina CHOW.

MRS SELINA CHOW: *Mr Governor, I am sorry to belabour the point, but I still have to go back to the medium of instruction. I am afraid what was said just now by the previous speaker has in fact confused the issue somewhat. I do not think that here we are talking about depriving parents of choices, what we are talking about is what you said, Mr Governor, leading people on that road rather than driving them. Now the criticism that we have, particularly of the education panel, is that we cannot see the Government leading people on that road. We in fact see the Government following blind choices of parents who insist that their children should receive education in the medium of English when the children themselves are not equipped to do so and the teachers teaching them are not equipped to do so either. We have a problem where the majority of children have been suffering for years as a result of that. We want the Government to focus its attention to lead. We are not satisfied that what is being done now in the way of leading is enough on the part of Government, because already the Education Commission has given a grace period in which to, so to speak, soft land into the more viable ratio of having schools teaching in Chinese and in English, properly catering for the children's capabilities. But as you know, Mr Governor, as you mentioned the controversy, recently that resistance has come on very very strong and the schools are resisting because the parents are resisting. Now I agree with you that parental education is important but that is not the only thing we can rely on. We must see the Government playing a lead but the Government is not playing a lead. Can I ask you, Mr Governor, what you personally, as you have said that you place so much importance on this issue, will direct the Government to play that lead which is sadly needed and badly needed?*

GOVERNOR: Well, we are at present, as the honourable lady knows, at a stage in which we are encouraging schools to determine which, in their own circumstances, is the appropriate medium of instruction and to encourage them further, having made that determination, and if necessary, to change the policy of the school. We are, before long, going to have to move from encouragement to firm guidance; and when there is firm guidance I have to say to the honourable lady there will be a lot of resistance from a lot of parents. And I very much hope that when that resistance from parents comes, to a policy which I think is right and the Honourable Member thinks is right, we will have as a government the support of the honourable lady and some of her colleagues in seeing a difficult policy through because I do not think that one should under-estimate

the amount of resistance that there will be from some parents, in my judgment that is wrong and in the Honourable Member's judgment that is wrong, but we are going to have to deal with that and it will need a good deal of firmness from time to time in doing so.

So the Honourable Member chides the Government for not being sufficiently robust in pressing this policy. I am sure that I will never have occasion to have to chide the honourable lady for not supporting the Government when it is being more robust.

Adjournment and Next Sitting

PRESIDENT: In accordance with Standing Orders I now adjourn the sitting until Wednesday 18 May 1994. Members are invited to join me in the Ante-Chamber.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes to Four o'clock.