

Review of Education System Reform Proposals

**Abridged Version of
the Consultation Document**

**The Education Commission
of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region,
The People's Republic of China
May 2000**

Foreword

Education holds the key to the future of Hong Kong as well as each individual. Immediately after the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, the Chief Executive entrusted the Education Commission (EC) to conduct, together with all people in Hong Kong, a comprehensive review of the education system with a view to drawing up the aims of education and a blueprint for reform for the 21st Century.

Students are the focus of the whole education reform. The basic premise is to enable every individual to all-round development through life-long learning. Our education has seen much success in the past, and teachers, through their teaching and exemplary conduct, have nurtured many local talents. However, in tandem with changes taking place in the community, our students' learning needs have also changed. It is essential for our education system, including its academic structure, content and modalities, to be duly adjusted in response to these changes. Similarly, teachers should keep abreast of the times in a bid to enable our new generation to enjoy learning, to communicate effectively, and to develop their creativity and a sense of commitment. Enjoying learning in no way means it is no longer necessary to work hard. Instead, we hope that students will derive enjoyment as well as a sense of satisfaction and achievement in the process of learning. Neither does the term "all-round education" connote less importance being attached to academic standards. On the contrary, a balanced development helps enhance students' all-round abilities in various domains.

This exercise is a comprehensive review on the education system, including the academic structure, the curricula and the assessment mechanism, and the interface between different stages of education. The objective is to examine how the education system could be changed to provide the most favourable environment for teaching and learning, so that students can fully realise their potential and teachers can have more room to help students learn more effectively.

The reform needs to be supported by other factors such as the enhancement of teachers' professionalism, the participation of parents, the support of the whole community, an effective quality assurance mechanism, the devolution of responsibilities and streamlining of administrative procedures. To this end, we are liaising closely with the major education advisory and executive bodies to ensure that their policies and measures are in line with the direction of the reform.

The success of the education reform hinges on whether schools, teachers, students, parents as well as the community as a whole can make the culture change, re-affirming the importance of all-round education and life-long learning, and take concrete steps to support the reform. We expect that the education reform will bring considerable changes to teaching and learning. To really benefit students, schools, teachers, parents and all sectors of the society should be prepared to show commitment, make contributions, and to embrace these changes.

Last year, we consulted the public on the aims of education for the 21st century as well as the framework for the education reform. We have now embarked on the third stage of consultation, and are inviting the public's views on specific recommendations for the reform. Your support and participation will be the key to the success of this reform.

Antony LEUNG Kam-chung
Chairman
Education Commission

May 2000

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(This is a translated version)

Chapter 1: A Review of the Role and Functions of Education in the Context of Social Transformation

The World has Changed, so Must the Education System!

With the political, economic and cultural changes taking place in Hong Kong and around the world, we are witnessing a trend towards globalization, a knowledge-based economy and cultural diversity. To meet the challenges ahead, there is an urgent need to:

- ◆ provide opportunities and an environment for the people of Hong Kong to develop their potential and to upgrade themselves
- ◆ build a culturally diverse, democratic and civilised society with a global outlook
- ◆ strengthen Hong Kong's competitive edge

To achieve the above objectives, we need a huge number of talents with diverse abilities. They should possess the following qualities:

- ◆ keen to learn and improve themselves throughout their lives
- ◆ adept at self-learning, articulate, flexible, with good organizational skills, a sense of commitment and creativity
- ◆ able to absorb and keep abreast of new knowledge in multiple domains, apply knowledge effectively and have all-round analytical skills

In a knowledge-based society, new knowledge emerges while existing knowledge becomes obsolete quickly. The problems that we encounter in our daily lives and at work have become increasingly complicated and diverse, while social contact has become more frequent and enriched. To cope with these challenges, people must break away from their old selves. They must be more knowledgeable and be ready to venture into new domains of knowledge. They need to make more efficient use of knowledge and devise novel means to solve problems. They must also continue to learn and enrich themselves throughout their lives. Our education system must therefore lay a solid foundation and provide extensive opportunities for life-long learning.

Chapter 2: Aims of Education in the 21st Century

Enabling our students to enjoy learning, enhancing their effectiveness in communication and developing their creativity and sense of commitment

As shown by views collected at the first and second stages of public consultation, the community at large generally agreed that the overall aims of education for the 21st century should be:

To enable every person to attain all-round development according to his/her own attributes in the domains of ethics, intellect, physique, social skills and aesthetics, so that he/she is capable of life-long learning, critical and exploratory thinking, innovating and adapting to change; filled with self-confidence and a team spirit; willing to put forward continuing effort for the prosperity, progress, freedom and democracy of his/her society, and contribute to the future well-being of the nation and the world at large.

Our priority should be accorded to enabling our students to **enjoy learning, enhance their effectiveness in communication, and develop their creativity and sense of commitment.**

For the revised aims of education for each learning stage, please visit the Education Commission web-site at (<http://www.e-c.edu.hk>).

Chapter 3: The Principles of Reform

In setting the direction and formulating the proposals for reform, the EC has adopted the following principles:

- **Student-focused**
- **"No-loser"**
- **Quality**
- **Life-wide learning**
- **Society-wide mobilisation**

Chapter 4: Key Components of Reform

To achieve the above aims of education, the proposed blueprint for reform should include the following key components:

Key components	Focuses
Reforming the curricula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To aim at all-round development in preparation for lifelong learning ◆ To provide students with comprehensive and balanced learning experiences, including the five types of learning experience of intellectual development, life experience, job-related experience, community service as well as sports and art
Improving the assessment mechanisms	<p><u>Support for teaching and learning</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To help schools enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning through assessment, and to help teachers understand the learning progress and needs of their students so that follow-up actions can be taken as soon as possible ◆ To put in place Basic Competency Assessments in Chinese, English and Mathematics at various stages of basic education; schools may assess their students as and when appropriate with these assessments <p><u>Certification and selection</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To improve the public examination system in respect of its content, mode and assessment methods so as to maximise its positive effects
Removing obstacles to learning in the system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To remove obstacles to learning at the basic education level so that students will progress on a through-road, and be able to concentrate on various learning activities that will benefit their all-round development, while allowing teachers more room for teaching ◆ To reform the Primary One Admission (POA) mechanism to reduce the incentives for drilling which hinder the development of children ◆ To reform the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) mechanism and to eliminate by stages the Academic Aptitude Tests (AAT) and the banding system so as to eliminate drilling and minimise the undesirable labeling effect
Reforming the university admission system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To reform the criteria and mechanism for university admission to bring out its positive effects in motivating schools, teachers, students and parents to place emphasis on all-round development ◆ To urge universities not to over-emphasise students' results in public examinations but to consider their overall performance including their abilities in various areas and their interpersonal skills as reflected in their school's internal assessment, student profile, interviews and public examination results
Increasing post-secondary learning opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ post-secondary learning opportunities should be increased to align with the knowledge-based society

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To develop a diversified education system to nurture more generalists and specialists through different modes of learning
Formulating resource strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The objective is to raise the quality of education through more effective use of resources ◆ To review how the existing public resources invested in education are utilised and facilitate redeployment in accordance with the effectiveness and urgency of various expenditure items ◆ To make better use of existing resources in the society and parents' efforts to support schools' development, or to facilitate cooperation with schools to provide diverse learning experiences for students ◆ To identify new resources for implementing the education reform

Chapter 5: Reform Proposals

Section 1: Early Childhood Education

Aims of reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To enhance the quality of early childhood education as the foundation for children's lifelong learning and all-round development ◆ To help children cultivate interest in learning and good living habits in an enjoyable and inspiring environment
Focus of reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>Enhancing the professional competence of principals and teachers</i> to provide children with learning experiences appropriate to their development. ◆ <i>Improving the quality assurance mechanism</i> and increasing transparency to prevent excessive demands on children. ◆ <i>Enhancing the interface between kindergarten and primary education</i> to help pupils adapt to the changes in life and learning when they are promoted to P.1. ◆ <i>Reforming the monitoring mechanism</i> to raise the effectiveness of monitoring. ◆ <i>Promoting parent education and participation</i> to help understand children's needs and to improve cooperation with early childhood education providers.
Reform proposals	Please refer to Appendix I

Section 2: Nine-year Basic Education

<p>Aims of reform</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To nurture the basic attitudes, skills and knowledge for life-long learning ◆ To ensure basic competence and encourage the pursuit of excellence
<p>Focus of reform</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>Reforming the school curriculum and improving the teaching methods</i> to provide students with all-round, balanced, inspiring and interesting learning experiences, to cultivate various basic skills (including language, thinking, analytical, problem-solving, creative, inter-personal and cooperation skills) and a sense of integrity and civic-mindedness. Key Tasks: promoting moral and civic education, a reading culture, project learning and the use of information technology. ◆ <i>Reforming Primary One Admission.</i> This will be based on the principle of ‘vicinity’, school nets and parental choice, so as to minimise the incentives for making excessive demands on children. Applicants will, as a matter of course, be admitted to the school where their siblings/parents are studying/working. 15% of P.1 places will be discretionary places. ◆ <i>Reform of the Secondary School Places Allocation system:</i> The Academic Aptitude Tests (AAT) will be abolished as soon as possible to eliminate unnecessary drilling, while the allocation bands will be reduced by stages to minimise the labelling effect. <u>During the transitional period</u>, internal school assessments will be scaled by schools’ average AAT results over the past three years. The number of allocation bands will be reduced to 3, and the percentage of discretionary places will be increased to not more than 20%. In the long term, students will be divided into different bands according to their internal assessment results. <u>A mid-term review</u>, to be conducted in 2004/05, will put forward proposals on the percentage of discretionary places and the number of allocation bands. ◆ <i>Establishment of Basic Competency Assessments in Chinese, English and Mathematics</i> to enable teachers and parents to understand students’ progress and learning needs, so as to provide timely and appropriate assistance. Remedial and enhancement measures will be provided.
<p>Reform proposals</p>	<p>Please refer to Appendix II</p>

Section 3: Senior Secondary Education

<p>Aims of reform</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To develop a senior secondary education system where students can choose from a diverse range of curricula and channels according to their aptitudes, interests and abilities ◆ To help students develop generic skills (including language, numeracy, communication, IT and interpersonal skills) and positive attitudes and values, which are the basic requirements for self-reliance, employment and life-long learning
<p>Focus of reform</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>The curriculum reform</i> can provide students with the five types of learning experience to construct a wide knowledge base while allowing them to choose different combinations of subjects according to their aptitudes, interests and abilities. ◆ <i>The reform of the academic structure of senior secondary education</i> enables students to experience a more coherent and diversified learning life, to take modules across a number of disciplines, thereby enhancing their power of analysis and helping them construct a broad knowledge base. A 3-year senior secondary education has its own merits, but a number of problems, including the supporting conditions for the proposal, need to be resolved before it is to be adopted. <u>The EC will set up a working group to examine the feasibility of implementing the proposed 3-year structure for senior secondary education, formulate detailed proposals and suggest an implementation timetable. It will submit its recommendations to the Government in 2002.</u> ◆ <i>Reform of public examinations</i> in terms of content, modes and marking system. The Teacher Assessment Scheme will be extended to other HKAL subjects so as to evaluate the performance and abilities of students in a more comprehensive way. Rote learning will be discouraged while independent thinking and creativity will be encouraged. A core-competence approach will be introduced to reflect clearly whether students have the required knowledge and abilities.
<p>Reform proposals</p>	<p>Please refer to Appendix III</p>

Section 4: Higher Education

<p>Aims of reform</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To establish a diversified, multi-channel, flexible and interlinked system of higher education; to increase post-secondary learning opportunities ◆ To nurture quality people who possess knowledge and virtues, broad-mindedness, commitment, global vision, creativity and adaptability
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Focus of reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>To promote the development of different types of higher education institutions</i> (such as community colleges and private universities) providing students with more opportunities and choices for pursuing higher education ◆ <i>Reform of university admission</i> to play down the emphasis on public examination results. Due consideration should be given to students' all-round performance in setting admission criteria. ◆ <i>To promote a portable and transferable credit unit system among institutions and faculties</i> to allow more room for students to choose their own study modules according to their own pace of study ◆ <i>Reform of first degree courses</i> to provide students with a wide range of learning experiences through which students' adaptiveness, creativity, language and interpersonal skills can be cultivated ◆ <i>Enriching campus life</i> to broaden students' horizon and to cultivate their commitment to the community ◆ <i>Increasing the number of post-graduate places</i> to train more expertise for technology development ◆ <i>A working group will be formed</i> under the EC to further study, in consultation with the University Grants Committee, the development of private universities and the interface between universities and other post-secondary institutions, consider the problems involved, and formulate specific proposals.
Reform proposals	Please refer to Appendix IV

Section 5: Continuing Education

Aims of reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To promote the development of a flexible, diversified, and transferable system of continuing education to allow students more channels and choices in pursuing further studies ◆ To encourage lifelong learning and self improvement, and to promote all-round development
Focus of reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>To promote the establishment of a qualifications framework involving different institutions and courses</i> to accord due recognition to students' qualifications attained through different channels ◆ <i>A task group</i> will be established by the EC to advise the Government on policies and specific initiatives for continuing education

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To promote the <i>database for continuing education</i> which will soon be installed to help learners find the right courses ◆ To encourage better use of existing community resources and to establish <i>lifelong education centres</i> that provide various facilities and services
Reform proposals	Please refer to Appendix V

Section 6: Catering for students' multiple abilities and learning needs

Aims of reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ to provide suitable assistance to students with different learning needs ◆ to explore and develop students' multiple abilities (such as sports, art, creativity, intelligence), so as to fully develop their strengths
Focus of reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>At the society level</i>, a culture of respect for different learning needs should be promoted to create a favourable environment where students can develop their potential to the full. ◆ <i>At the school level</i>, clear policies and suitable measures should be formulated to cater for students' multiple abilities and learning needs. ◆ As regards the <i>promotion of integrated education</i>, more schools should be encouraged to adopt the whole-school approach. As a long-term goal, 'inclusion' should be the ultimate goal, and proper assistance will be provided according to students' different learning needs. Under the system of 'inclusion', there will still be a need for special schools. ◆ As regards the <i>promotion of gifted education</i>, there should be a long-term strategy which goes beyond the scope of school-based programmes and mobilises all parties concerned in our society to promote gifted education.
Reform proposals	Please refer to Appendix VI

Chapter 6: Implementation Strategy

Education reform is an enormous and complex improvement effort, and appropriate strategies for implementation will be the key to success. We propose to adopt the following implementation strategies.

(I) Setting Priorities

We propose that the following should be the priority items of reform –

- Reform of the secondary school places allocation mechanism;
- Reform of the primary one admission mechanism;
- Reform of the university admission system;
- Reform of the primary and secondary school curricula;
- Improvement of the existing public examinations;
- Implementing assessment programmes to ensure basic standards and to nurture excellence
- Enhancing the quality of early childhood education;
- Enhancing the professional competence of principals and teachers;
- Increasing post-secondary learning opportunities.

(II) Implementing changes incrementally

We propose that those reform measures which involve more radical changes (such as the reform of the SSPA) should be implemented by phases. This would enable all parties concerned to better adjust to the changes and, during the transitional period, it would be possible to remedy any problems that are detected promptly.

(III) Piloting changes

For those reform measures that require a longer period of time to develop and cover a wider spectrum (such as the curriculum reform), we propose to conduct pilot schemes in schools which are more ready, and then promote the successful experiences to other schools.

(IV) Undertaking Continuous Monitoring and Interim Reviews

The Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB), EC, ED and Board of Education will jointly and closely monitor the implementation of reforms, conduct interim reviews after each stage and make proper adjustment where necessary. The public will be consulted if we need to make major changes to the original plans.

(V) Conducting overall coordination

For better coordination, we propose to establish a monitoring team within the EMB to take charge of coordinating and monitoring the implementation of reform measures, and to report the progress regularly to the EC. The EC will continue to coordinate the work of the major education advisory bodies and relevant government departments to ensure that various education policies and measures are in line with the education reform. We will also continue to keep in touch with various concerned parties (such as educators, parents, students, employers, etc.) to gather opinions on the implementation of the reform.

Chapter 7: Resource Strategy

Education can help each individual enhance his or her quality and abilities. It also contributes to society's progress and prosperity. The success of the education reform will benefit each and every individual in society. To realise the reform, extra resources will be required. If put to effective use, our investment in education will bring us enormous returns which will far exceed the cost incurred.

(I) Resources currently devoted to education

- (i) The Government has all along attached great importance to education and made substantial commitment in terms of resources. Education is now the single largest item of public expenditure. It takes up over one-fifth of the Government's total recurrent expenditure, amounting to \$45 billion or equivalent to 4% of Hong Kong's Gross Domestic Product. In comparison, the proportion of private contribution to education is less than 10% of the total expenditure on education. This is smaller than that in many other places.
- (ii) To support the education reform, the Government has earmarked \$800 million in the 2000/01 Draft Estimates to allow the making of an early start on the implementation of the priority items. Apart from the education reform, the Government will continue to proceed with other commitments which call for substantial additional resources, such as whole-day primary schooling and the application of IT in education.
- (iii) In view of the high proportion of public expenditure currently devoted to education and the implementation of the committed new initiatives, which will also require a considerable amount of additional resources, we need proper strategies for making effective use of public resources and the community's resources. To realise the education reform, all sectors of the society, in particular the learners themselves, must be prepared to make greater contributions.

(II) Proposed resource strategy

(i) Principles

- (1) The fruits of education benefit everyone in society, particularly the learners themselves. Education is not only the whole society's joint investment but also an investment for the individual. Both society and the individual should make a contribution to the education reform.
- (2) Early childhood and primary education is a key stage where the foundation for lifelong learning is laid. When considering how additional resources are to be allocated, priority should be given to early childhood and primary education.

(3) Any additional public resources should be devoted to those reform measures which directly enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

(ii) Reform measures that require additional resources

Among those measures proposed to be launched in the next three years, the following will require additional resources –

Education stage	Reform/supporting measures
Early childhood education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ to provide training for in-service KG principals and CCC supervisors ◆ to increase students' fee remission as a result of raising the entry requirement of KG teachers ◆ to provide training for KG teachers ◆ to improve the teacher-to-pupil ratio for KG
Primary and secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ to provide training for teachers ◆ to provide professional support for schools ◆ to help schools streamline work processes and simplify their management structures to reduce the workload of teachers ◆ to set up Basic Competency Assessments for Chinese, English and Mathematics ◆ to reform the curriculum ◆ to provide remedial and enhancement measures
Other measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ to set up a monitoring team to be responsible for coordinating efforts on the education reforms

(iii) Proposed resource strategy

We propose the following resource strategy and would welcome views from members of the public –

(1) Effective utilization of existing resources

- ◆ The substantial public resources devoted to education should be put to more effective use. Existing activities should be better integrated, and any savings thus achieved would be used to implement the reform items. There is a need to achieve a better division of work within schools and to streamline work processes.
- ◆ The Quality Education Fund should be used effectively to provide non-recurrent funding for the reform.

(2) Better use of other resources

- (a) Many other organisations (including youth service organizations, uniformed groups, cultural and art groups, sports organizations, professional bodies, voluntary groups) are most willing to provide support for education. Schools and other education bodies should make the best use of contributions from the private

sector.

- (b) Schools should make better use of various public and community facilities, such as libraries, museums, cultural and art facilities and various learning resources centres, to raise the effectiveness of teaching and learning.
- (c) Parents play a very important role in supporting education. There should be a partnership between schools and parents, as the latter can provide support in the form of human and financial resources. In many other parts of the world, the proportion of education spending shouldered by parents and learners themselves is much higher than in Hong Kong.
- (d) We should encourage more private participation in running schools. We should also promote the development of private universities, community colleges, private schools and the Direct Subsidy Scheme schools so as to provide more channels for different sectors of the community to contribute towards education.

Chapter 8: The role of frontline educators

Frontline educators (including school heads and teachers) are key personnel to the success of education reform.

(I) Past contributions made by frontline educators

School heads and teachers have nurtured numerous talents for Hong Kong. One of the aims of the education reform is to allow them more flexibility and autonomy so that they are given a freer hand to exercise their professionalism and make contributions to society.

(II) The changing roles of school heads and teachers

- (i) From someone who transmits knowledge to someone who inspires students to construct knowledge
- (ii) From someone who implements the curriculum to someone who participates in the development of school-based curriculum
- (iii) From someone who executes policies to someone who leads and contributes to the reform

(III) Professional development of school heads and teachers

- (i) be more proactive and pursue lifelong learning
- (ii) enhance professional competence
- (iii) have a stronger sense of commitment

(IV) Support to school heads and teachers

To help school heads and teachers perform their roles most effectively in the education reform so as to maximise students' learning effectiveness, the Education Department is working with sectors concerned (such as universities, teacher training institutions and professionals) to strengthen the professional support provided to principals and teachers. For example:

- (i) Web-based education training courses facilitating school heads and teachers to access the knowledge and skills related to curriculum development and new teaching methods;
- (ii) A web-based teaching database facilitating schools to access information related to teaching resources, support services and successful experiences;
- (iii) School-based support for primary and secondary schools to train curriculum leaders as well as provide professional advice and assistance to the development of school-based curriculum;
- (iv) Disseminating successful experiences through school and teacher networks.

The University Grants Committee and the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications submitted recommendations on how to enhance the professional competence and status of teachers to the Government in 1998. In the same year, the Government decided to increase substantially the number of training places at sub-degree level or above for teachers in the following several years. It will continue to follow up on the other proposals, including the development of a professional development ladder for teachers. The EC will promote the establishment of a General Teaching Council when appropriate.

Chapter 9: Interface with other sectors

Apart from teachers' support, interface with other sectors is essential for education reforms to bring about effective changes to teaching and learning so as to provide more room for students' all-round development.

(I) Students:

As masters of their own learning, students should make the best use of every opportunity to learn. They should take the initiative to think, question, communicate, collaborate, participate, experiment and explore so as to construct knowledge, cultivate multiple abilities and enhance their personal quality, thereby laying a sound foundation for life, work and lifelong learning.

(II) Parents:

Parents are the closest and the most reliable mentors for students. Parents' viewpoints and guidance have a great impact on students' learning attitudes and effectiveness. They can help students learn effectively in the following ways:

- (i) according due emphasis to the concept of lifelong learning and all-round development and helping students cultivate this concept by words and deeds;
- (ii) maintaining close communication and cooperation with schools to understand students' learning needs and provide proper guidance to students at home;
- (iii) participating actively in school-based management with a view to enhancing education quality;
- (iv) providing schools with human and financial support so as to reduce teachers' workload and help schools develop an environment conducive to all-round education.

(III) Government and education advisory bodies:

- (i) Institutions/organizations involved in devising and implementing education policies and measures should keep in close contact to ensure that all education policies (e.g. language, use of information technology and promoting the diversity of education) and measures are in line with the direction of the education reform;
- (ii) To implement the education reform successfully, the Government should put in place various supporting measures including providing professional support to schools and teachers, promoting teachers' professional development, reducing teachers' workloads, and implementing school-based management and more effective remedial and enhancement measures.

(IV) Teacher education providers:

- (i) Teacher education providers should update the content of training courses and increase their relevance so as to help principals and teachers acquire the knowledge and skills required for the implementation of education reforms;
- (ii) They should participate in the design and development of curriculum;
- (iii) They should conduct research on new teaching pedagogy and carry out pilot scheme on key curriculum reform items in collaboration with the CDI and some pilot schools.

(V) Quality Education Fund:

- (i) To support the education reform, the Quality Education Fund encourages schools and other applicants to submit proposals which will facilitate the implementation of the education reform. It also encourages cooperation among primary schools, secondary schools, universities, other education institutions and other social organizations. Successful experiences obtained will provide a solid foundation for the implementation of education reforms.
- (ii) The Quality Education Fund supports a lot of school-based projects undertaken by teachers. Teachers' professional ability and confidence are enhanced and their professionalism is further developed through the exchange and dissemination of experiences.

(VI) Other Sectors:

- (i) Youth service groups, uniformed groups, culture and art organizations, sports groups and professional organizations can offer human and financial support to provide students with more diversified and interesting learning experiences and help them develop their personality, master life skills, broaden their perspectives, enhance their personal qualities and cultivate a sense of commitment to society;
- (ii) Apart from providing students with job-related experiences (e.g. visiting commercial institutes in various fields and providing opportunities to obtain practical work experiences), commercial institutes/personnel are encouraged to provide financial, technical and other support to education.
- (iii) We encourage the community to operate schools and to promote the development of private universities, community colleges, private schools and direct subsidy schools so as to make a contribution to education.

Early Childhood Education

Reform Proposals

(I) Enhancing professional competence

- (i) raise the entry requirements to 5 passes in the HKCEE (including Chinese and English) as soon as possible; in the longer term, entry requirements will be gradually raised to Certificate of Education (KG) level by stages
- (ii) after assessing the supply of manpower, draw up an implementation timetable for requiring all new kindergarten teachers to have completed one year of pre-service training
- (iii) draw up a timetable to require all serving kindergarten principals and child care centre supervisors who have not been professionally trained to receive suitable professional training

(II) Enhancement of quality assurance mechanisms

- (i) A mechanism that combines internal and external assessments will be set up to help early childhood education providers understand their relative strengths and areas for improvement and to facilitate them in enhancing the quality of education.
- (ii) A set of standardised quality indicators will be developed that cover the three areas of facilities and human resources in early childhood education providers, curriculum design and implementation, and the learning effectiveness of pupils
- (iii) External evaluation should be conducted by independent specialists/institutions in early childhood education or the concerned regulatory bodies
- (iv) Early childhood education providers will let parents know the results of external and internal evaluations so that there will be better communication with parents

(III) Reforming the monitoring mechanism

The current joint working group should actively study the feasibility of having one single body regulating all kindergartens and child care centres

(IV) Strengthening the interface between early childhood and primary education

- (i) To eliminate the incentives for drilling under the existing POA system (please refer to section C of Appendix II)
- (ii) At present, children can enter primary schools when they reach 5 years and 8 months, but they need to be three years old to enter a kindergarten. We propose to align the age of entering kindergarten to 2 years 8 months, but at the same time step up monitoring to ensure that kindergartens adopt a curriculum which is suited to the development of

children.

(V) Promoting parent education and participation

Parent education should be strengthened through various channels. For instance, maternal and child health centres and nurseries of the Government may provide more support to parents and help them understand the development needs of children and encourage cooperation between parents and early childhood education providers.

Nine-year Basic Education

(A) Reforming the school curriculum and improving teaching methods

(I) Strategy

- (i) To formulate a curriculum framework with a focus on the promotion of lifelong learning and all-round development;
- (ii) To promote a new culture of teaching and learning;
- (iii) To provide room for teachers and students to develop an all-round, effective, coherent and diversified learning life;
- (iv) To improve modes and mechanisms of assessment to effectively support teaching and learning;
- (v) To value and promote existing successful experience; and
- (vi) To formulate effective curriculum reform strategies to be implemented incrementally, to bring together specialists who can provide professional support to schools.

(II) A new culture in teaching and learning

The key to a successful curriculum reform is **to put in place a new culture of teaching and learning** that can bring about real changes in school life:

- (i) Shifting from '*transmission of knowledge*' to '*learning how to learn*'
- (ii) Shifting from *over-emphasising academic studies* to focusing on *whole-person development*
- (iii) Shifting from *compartmentalised subjects* to *integrated learning*
- (iv) Shifting the focus from *textbooks* to *diversified teaching and learning materials*
- (v) *Support from the community* and *learning beyond the confines of the classroom*
- (vi) Shifting from *a traditional timetabling* to a *flexible arrangement of learning time*
- (vii) Abolishing *premature streaming*, and providing more opportunities for students to explore their *aptitudes and potential*

(III) Key Tasks

Whilst a number of 'pioneering' schools will try out individual items in the curriculum reform, we will encourage all schools to improve the design of their own curriculum, update their teaching methods, and make better use of learning time and

community resources to provide diverse learning experiences for students and step up their efforts in the *following tasks* which are key to the success of the curriculum reform –

- (i) **moral and civic education**
 - adopt an integrated and life-wide approach to the provision of moral and civic education
 - learning activities in each key learning area should incorporate elements of moral and civic education
 - encourage students to provide services for the school and the community

- (ii) **promoting a reading culture**
 - The key to promoting an interest in reading is the provision of a conducive environment. Students should be encouraged to make better use of the resources in the school library and public libraries as well as the mass media, including the Internet, to read extensively and according to their own interests.

 - to provide appropriate guidance to students on ways to search for reading materials, on reading methods and on how to analyse and construct knowledge from reading

 - to encourage parents to read with their children and to give them appropriate guidance

 - students should be able to derive pleasure and develop learning skills through reading; they should not be required to produce too many reading reports as this would increase their workload and reduce their incentive to read.

 - to encourage students to share with their peers their thoughts and feeling about reading, as this would help develop their skills in expressing themselves and communication.

- (iii) **project learning**
 - Encourage schools to make use of project learning to nurture various abilities, knowledge and attitudes in students

 - They should take note of the following –
 - a. The process of project work is more significant than its results. The teachers' guidance is very important for helping students to learn through participating in project work.

 - b. Teachers should observe the performance of students during project work and give encouragement and advice where appropriate to help them improve and develop potential.

 - c. Teachers may make reference to students' performance in project work in assessing their progress and overall performance.

- (iv) **The use of IT** The proper use of IT can greatly enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning. e.g.
- Teachers can access the valuable teaching materials available on the Internet, and make use of the various teaching support networks. Students will find it easier to understand abstract concepts.
 - They may teach students how to search for information on the Internet.

(IV) School-based assessment system

A school's internal assessment mechanism is part of the curriculum. It mainly serves to assist teachers and parents to understand students' learning progress, their needs as well as their strengths and weaknesses, so that appropriate measures can be taken to help students learn more effectively and to maximise their potential. Students will also be able to understand themselves better.

Reform Proposals

- (i) **Mode of Assessment**
- Schools can adopt a diversified assessment model such as flexible formative assessment.
 - The use of quantitative assessment should be minimised to make way for more analytical assessment.
- (ii) **Focus of assessment**
- Students' attitude and abilities, rather than the knowledge they memorise, should be emphasised.
 - Emphasis should not be placed solely on the work completed by students; more attention should be paid to their performance and the problems encountered in the learning process.
- (iii) **Frequency of assessment**
- Excessive dictation exercises, mechanical drilling, tests and examinations should be avoided to allow students more time to participate in useful and diversified learning activities.
- (iv) **Basic Competency Assessments in Chinese, English and Mathematics**
- please refer to section (B) of the appendix

(V) Strategy for Implementation

- (i) **Curriculum development** The CDC is now conducting a holistic review of the primary and secondary school curriculum, and is in the process of formulating an open and flexible curriculum framework. Schools are expected to develop their school-based curricula with reference to the framework. To design a new curriculum framework and curriculum guides that will better meet the expectations and practical needs of the society, the CDC will invite experts in the key learning areas to participate in designing the curriculum. The CDC will also make reference to the latest trends in curriculum development around the world and streamline the process of curriculum development.
- (ii) **Professional support**
- (a) Develop and disseminate successful experience
- The CDI will work with pioneering schools and tertiary institutions to pilot the key items on the reform agenda.
 - It will exchange and disseminate successful experience through the networks of schools and teachers.
 - It will set up an online database of teaching resources
 - The sectors concerned (such as district school networks or community services organizations) are encouraged to set up district networks on their own initiative to strengthen cooperation between schools and the other supporting sectors.
- (b) On-site support
- The ED will strengthen the services of its curriculum support teams for primary and secondary schools to help them develop curriculum leaders and to provide professional advice and assistance in developing school-based curriculum.
- (c) Provide professional development programme
- To strengthen the element of ‘curriculum development and leadership’ in the training courses for school principals.
 - The ED will set up online teacher training courses

(B) Establishment of Basic Competency Assessments in Chinese, English and Mathematics

The EC proposes to introduce Basic Competency Assessments in Chinese, English and Mathematics as part of schools' internal assessment.

(I) The objective of Basic Competency Assessments

To offer an effective assessment tool with the following goals:

- (i) help teachers and parents understand students' learning needs and difficulties so that timely assistance can be provided through appropriate measures
- (ii) provide the Government and school management with information on how schools on the whole are doing in respect of the key learning areas

(II) Reform proposals

Basic Competency Assessments in Chinese, English and Mathematics consist of two parts:

(i) Student assessment

- ◆ It aims at diagnosing the standard of individual students in key learning areas so that schools can provide guidance and support to students in need.
- ◆ A computerised and adaptive testing mode will be used for the selection and assembling of test items, administration of the assessments, scoring, recording and result analysis.
- ◆ Initially, assessments for the key learning areas of Chinese, English and Mathematics at all levels from P.1 to S.3 will be developed.
- ◆ It is a low-risk and voluntary scheme implemented by schools
- ◆ It will be developed in stages, with the prototype for student assessment for P.3 completed and the pilot scheme implemented in the second half of 2001/02 school year.
- ◆ Student assessments for P.1 to S.3 students are expected to be in place in the 2005/06 year by stages.

(ii) System assessment

- ◆ It aims at monitoring the overall performance of schools in Hong Kong in key learning areas and helping schools formulate improvement measures for effective teaching and learning.

- ◆ The preliminary aim is to assess the basic competence of P.3, P.6 and S.3 students in the three key learning areas of Chinese, English and Mathematics.
- ◆ The assessment will be centrally administered. Participation by schools is compulsory but the results are not related to the allocation of school places.
- ◆ Since the test has a wide coverage, students can answer different questions by sampling, so that the basic standards of Hong Kong schools in various key learning areas can be reflected comprehensively.
- ◆ The basic standards for various learning areas must be ready before the formal implementation of the system assessment.
- ◆ System assessments for P.3, P.6 and S.3 students are expected to be introduced from 2003/04 to 2005/06 by stages.

(C) Reform of the School Places Allocation system

(I) The Primary One Admission (POA) system

(a) Rationale for the reform

- (i) *Under the existing system, certain kindergartens subject their pupils to unhealthy drilling for enhancing the chance of their pupils' being admitted to the 'elite' primary schools, thus distorting the curriculum for early childhood education.*
- (ii) *The existing point system of the POA mechanism has been criticised as unfair, and leading to wide disparity among schools.*
- (iii) *It has been argued that schools should be allowed to retain a certain degree of autonomy in admitting students so that their culture and tradition can be maintained.*

(b) Reform proposals

- (i) Reform of the POA system to avoid admission being based on ability; the principle of 'vicinity' should be adopted as far as possible. The main principles include:
 - (1) to admit pupils with siblings studying or parents working in the same school as a matter of course, so that escorting pupils to and from schools is made more convenient
 - (2) to cater for schools' wish to retain their own tradition, schools can have full discretion to admit pupils into up to 15% of its available places; and such 'discretionary places' will not be subject to the restrictions on school nets. However, no tests or interview of any form will be permitted, and the criteria for admission to these places should be made public.
 - (3) On the basis of the principle of vicinity, any remaining places will be allocated by computers at random according to school nets and parental choice.

- (ii) The new POA system will be implemented in the second year after the implementation of a transitional plan for secondary school places allocation (i.e. pupils who submit application for admission to P.1 in October 2001 and are to be enrolled in P.1 in September 2002)

(II) The Secondary School Places Allocation system (SSPA)

(a) Rationale for reform

(i) Problems with the existing system

- (1) *It causes drilling unfavourable to all-round development and distorts the primary school curriculum.*
- (2) *The banding system for the purpose of school places allocation carries an undesirable labelling effect.*

(ii) Vision — a ‘through-road’ for nine-year basic education

- (1) *The banding system will be abolished by stages.*
- (2) *The public assessment for the allocation of S.1 places will be abolished.*

(iii) Preconditions for the vision

- (1) *The overall standard of schools and students should be enhanced.*
- (2) *There should be multiple channels for access to higher education.*
- (3) *Teachers’ ability to tackle students’ learning differences should be enhanced.*

(iv) Besides changes in mechanisms and structures, a paradigm shift is also necessary to create room for teaching and learning. The changes in people’s mindset should include:

- (1) *Internal motivation to study should be emphasised by teachers, instead of external rewards or punishments and threats.*
- (2) *In accordance with the concept of multiple intelligence, there should be recognition that students with different abilities within a school or a class could be resources for, rather than obstacles to, teaching and learning.*

(b) Reform Proposals

(i) Transitional plan

(1) From 2000/01 to 2004/05 school years

Elements of the SSPA will be retained, but appropriate adjustments will be made, which include:

School year	Adjustment tool	Number of bands	Discretionary places	Mid-term review
2000/01	If accepted by the public, the Academic Aptitude Tests (AAT) can be abolished as early as this year. Schools' average AAT results over the past three years (i.e. 1997 to 1999) will be used to scale internal assessment results	remains at 5 or reduced to 3	increased to no more than 20%	
2001/02	If the public do not agree to abolishing the AAT in the 2000/01 school year, it will be abolished in this year and the average results of the AAT from 1997 to 1999 will be used to scale internal assessment results	reduced to 3		
2002/03		remains at 3		
2003/04				
2004/05				to conduct mid-term review and put forward proposals on the percentage of discretionary places and the number of allocation bands
2005/06	Students to be given allocation bands according to schools' internal assessment result only	to decide whether the percentage of discretionary places should be increased to 30% and the number of bands should be further reduced according to the findings of the mid-term review		

(a) Internal assessment results

- ◆ To promote all-round education, the weighting for individual subjects for calculating the internal assessment results will be adjusted.

(b) Scaling tool for new schools

- ◆ For example, the average AAT results of all schools in the same district over the past three years can be used.

(c) Discretionary places

- ◆ Each student can apply for one secondary school only, with no school net restrictions.
- ◆ No written tests are allowed; schools should make public their criteria for admission.

(d) Feeder and nominated schools

- ◆ Feeder and nominated schools must decide whether to adopt a ‘through train’ linkage before October 2001 (please refer to section (ii) below for the ‘through train’ model)
- ◆ If feeder and nominated schools decide not to turn into ‘through train’ in October 2001, feeder schools and nominated schools should discontinue their ties within 6 years and 3 years respectively

(2) From 2005/06 school year onwards

Allocation bands are given according to internal assessment results (please refer to section (c) below)

(ii) The ‘Through Train’ model

Primary and secondary schools can apply to adopt a ‘through train’ linkage in which students can be directly promoted to associated secondary schools without joining the centralised places allocation system. The following are the conditions for the establishment of ‘through trains’:

- (1) primary and secondary schools applying to adopt a ‘through train’ linkage should share the same philosophy and be committed to genuine consistency in the curriculum, teaching methodology, students’ personal development, and related areas.
- (2) based on the principle of ‘no-loser’, the number of places in each linked secondary school must exceed that of its primary school, and it must admit all the students of its linked primary schools so that there will not be any unnecessary selection; students of other schools will still have the chance to be admitted to the secondary school. If the parents of the primary school do not want their children to go to its linked secondary school, they can either apply for the discretionary places of other schools or centrally allocated places;
- (3) the primary and secondary schools applying for the change must have the same mode of financing to ensure that a consistent standard is applied in admitting students. As for feeder/nominated schools that have different modes of financing, the EC proposes that the sponsoring bodies and schools concerned should be given ten years to seek their own solution.

(c) Interim Review

An interim review will be carried out in the 2004/05 school year to put forward proposals on the ratio of discretionary places and the number of allocation bands.

(d) Other support

- (i) the Education Department will set up a provisional technical support group to deal with the problems encountered in implementing the proposed reform in the school places allocation mechanism

- (ii) facilitating measures and support should be strengthened to help schools adapt to mixed ability teaching

Senior Secondary Education

(I) Develop a senior secondary education framework providing diversified curricula and different channels

The senior secondary education framework, including subsidised and non-subsidised school places, should provide learning opportunities for all Secondary 3 leavers who wish and are able to continue their studies. There should be a variety of curricula that cater for students of different aptitudes and abilities. These curricula could be provided by different institutions, including ordinary schools which provide a complete secondary school curriculum, senior secondary / sixth form colleges which focus on post-S3 education and vocational training institutions (including bodies like the Institute of Vocational Education under the Vocational Training Council (VTC), industry training centres and the Construction Industry Training Authority). All of the curricula should help to develop the generic skills, positive attitude and values of students.

(II) The interface between nine-year basic education and senior secondary education

(i) Senior secondary education should be non-compulsory and should allow students to choose a curriculum that suits their interests and abilities. When the senior secondary education system is able to provide learning opportunities for all S3 leavers who wish and are able to pursue further studies, we recommend the following mechanism be put in place:

(1) S3 graduates can choose to apply for other types of courses (e.g. those offered by the Vocational Training Council or senior secondary colleges);

(2) In the spirit of ‘school-based management’, secondary schools can allocate their S3 and S4 places reserved for repeaters to students who do not wish to change school. Meanwhile, on the condition that no additional public resources are incurred, schools may adjust the number of S4 places and repeaters’ places for S3 according to the needs of students.

(3) Schools may also consider adopting cross-grade ability groupings for certain subjects, on the condition that no additional public resources are involved, and that every student should not receive subsidised junior secondary education for more than five years (including the years of repeating).

- (ii) We recommend to increase gradually senior secondary education opportunities. This new interface mechanism for S3 and S4 should be in place by the 8th year after the implementation of the transitional secondary school places allocation mechanism.

(III) The academic structure of senior secondary education

(A) Rationale for the reform

The merits of a 3-year senior secondary education are:

- (i) Students can enjoy a more coherent and diversified learning life.
- (ii) Students can take modules across a number of disciplines, and thus construct a broad knowledge base and enhance their powers of analysis in ways that will equip them for the knowledge-based society.
- (iii) It may strengthen the linkage between Hong Kong's senior secondary education system and the academic structure of higher education in other countries, as many countries around the world adopt a six-year secondary education system (or a 12-year primary plus secondary education system) and 4-year first-degree curricula.
- (iv) If the 3-year senior secondary education is to be implemented, the duration of the current 3-year first-degree programmes will likely be changed to 4 years and more time will be allowed to meet the requirements for individual subjects (particularly the more specialised subject areas). The restriction imposed by university admission on the choices and subject combinations in senior secondary education will become less strict, thus enabling students to enjoy a wider curriculum.

(B) Reform proposals

- (i) Issues to be addressed when implementing a 3-year senior secondary academic system
Supporting conditions need to be in place before the full implementation of the 3-year senior secondary education system. **The Government needs time to study its feasibility, having regard to the supporting conditions, the preparation work involved and the resource implications.** The supporting conditions include:
 - (1) Preparation of the new syllabuses and curriculum guides for the senior secondary curriculum: expected to be completed in 2 to 3 years
 - (2) Preparation of schools and teachers: to prepare teaching materials based on the new curriculum for senior secondary levels, re-arrange duties and assign teachers to undertake the necessary training.

- (3) Re-organisation of the class structure and provision of new school places: to allow sufficient time for identifying school sites and planning for school construction projects
- (4) Establishment of a new public examination: the Hong Kong Examinations Authority (HKEA) envisages that it will take 2 years to draft a new examination syllabus for the new system in collaboration with the CDI and another one and a half years to consult secondary schools, tertiary institutes and employers, etc. It will take more time if there are great discrepancies between the recommendations and the views collected. The HKEA would need to provide the new examination syllabus and specimen questions to overseas organizations concerned to secure their recognition and acceptance of the new examination.
- (5) Adjustments in the university admission system
- (a) During the transitional period, there will be secondary school graduates with two different types of qualifications competing for university places.
 - (b) Each university will have to set up a fair and reasonable admission system to assess these two types of qualifications.
 - (c) This system should be announced before the first batch of secondary schools begins to adopt the new senior secondary structure.
- (6) Adjustment of first degree programmes
- (a) In line with the changes in the duration and content of the new senior secondary school curriculum, the duration, content and structure of first-degree programmes should also be adjusted accordingly. If a 3-year senior secondary education model is to be adopted, the duration of study for first-degree programmes will need to be extended to 4 years in general, but the exact duration of individual first-degree programmes should be decided on the basis of their actual needs .
 - (b) During the transitional period, there will be two groups of secondary school graduates to be admitted into universities. To meet these students' different needs, universities will have to adjust and offer their first-degree courses with greater flexibility.
 - (c) Public resources devoted to higher education already account for one-third of the Government's total expenditure on education. If universities find it

necessary to extend the duration of study for some or all of their first degree courses, they would need to consider how the change can be made within the current level of government subsidy, on the condition that the number of students entering universities each year is not reduced and the quality of university education is not affected.

(7) Increasing post-secondary learning opportunities and channels leading to higher education

(a) To provide secondary school graduates with more opportunities to further pursue their studies, a mature system where higher education is provided by a diversity of institutions (e.g. community colleges) has to be established.

(b) The courses offered by these institutions should be recognised by universities and should be articulated with degree programmes.

(8) Overall enhancement of student standards

The new public examination will be more advanced than the existing HKCEE, and most Senior Secondary 3 students will have to sit the new examination. It is therefore necessary to reinforce students' foundation in basic education so that they will be able to face the new public examination.

(ii) Review in 2002

(1) The University Grants Committee, together with the universities, should address the problems arising from the above-mentioned supporting conditions, such as the university admission system and the adjustment of first-degree programmes

(2) The EC will set up a working group to examine the feasibility of implementing the proposed 3-year structure for senior secondary education and formulate detailed proposals and a suggested implementation timetable. It will submit its recommendations to the Government in 2002.

(IV) Reform of the Senior Secondary Curriculum

(A) Focus of the reform

- (i) To provide a broad-based senior secondary curriculum
- (ii) To provide different subject combinations and learning modules
- (iii) To provide five types of learning experience
- (iv) To provide students with more work/vocation-related experiences

(B) Recommended change in subject and combinations

(i) within the existing senior secondary structure, the CDC recommends the following subject changes:

(1) S4 and S5 level

(a) new subjects for students in general:

- (i) Integrated Humanities
- (ii) Integrated Science and Technology

(b) Recommended subject combinations:

- (i) Chinese + English + Mathematics + A + B + curriculum chosen from other key learning areas
- (ii) “A” represents taking at least one subject in the key learning area of ‘Personal, Social and Humanities Education’. If students only choose one subject from this learning area, schools should advise the students to take ‘Integrated Humanities’.
- (iii) “B” represents taking at least one subject in the key learning areas of ‘Science Education’ or ‘Technology Education’. If students choose altogether only one subject from these two learning areas, schools should advise the students to take ‘Integrated Science and Technology’

(2) S6 and S7 level

(a) Subject changes: to strengthen the part on project learning in the subject of Liberal Studies at the AS level

(b) Proposed subject combinations

- (i) Use of English at the AS level +
- (ii) Chinese Language and Culture at the AS level +
- (iii) Liberal Studies at the AS level (one specialised module and one project) or one independent project +
- (iv) One AL subject and one AS level subject OR two AL subjects

(ii) Under the proposed new senior secondary academic structure:

(1) At the initial stage: to extend the existing and the proposed S4/S5 subjects to S6 level (i.e. the new Senior Secondary 3)

(2) Long-term goal:

- (a) to gradually split the existing subjects into various learning modules
- (b) to gradually introduce new elective modules

(C) Assessment/Record of students' academic and non-academic performance

We propose that schools conduct comprehensive assessments and record students' participation and performance in different learning activities, through which the abilities and attitude of students can be fully reflected, and more useful feedback can be provided for students.

(V) Public examinations

(A) The HKEA has made the following recommendations to reform the existing public examination system –:

(i) Extending the Teacher Assessment Scheme

To extend the 'Teacher Assessment Scheme' to other HKAL subjects and, when appropriate, introduce it to the HKCEE level step by step.

(ii) Introducing a core-competence approach to HKCEE subjects

(1) To include a 'core-competence' part in the examinations to assess the basic skills and knowledge considered by curriculum specialists to be essential for S5 students.

(2) To adopt the 'criterion-referencing' approach to measure students' standards in the core competence part. They will be awarded a grade E if they can achieve the basic attainment in the core-competence part of the subject examination.

(iii) Providing greater flexibility for S6 students to sit for the HKALE

To allow students to sit for public examinations according to their own pace and abilities, the HKEA recommends allowing S6 students to apply to sit the HKALE for some or all subjects, subject to the consent of their schools.

(iv) Abolishing the fine grades in the HKCEE and HKALE

(1) At present, fine grades (i.e. classifying Grades A to F into A(01) to F(12)) are provided. As universities are beginning to pay more attention to students' overall performance rather than relying solely on public examination results, the fine grades are no longer necessary.

(2) The HKEA recommends abolishing this system with effect from 2002.

(B) In addition to the recommendations of the HKEA, the EC recommends the following measures to reform the public examination system:

- (i) To strengthen the linkage between examination questions and the basic knowledge and skills that need to be acquired by students covering more issues that are related to students' daily lives
- (ii) To refine the mode and marking system of examinations to allow more room for independent thinking and creativity
- (iii) To conduct the same examination more than once a year so that students do not have to wait for one whole year to re-sit the examination
- (iv) To examine the feasibility of introducing a public examination in Chinese and English covering different proficiency levels and focusing more on practical use.

(C) The EC hopes to gather the public's views on the following –

- (i) Should a new public examination be set up to assess candidates' ability in using Chinese and English as a tool for thinking, analysis and communication? Such an examination need not be related to the school curriculum. Individual candidates may apply to sit for it, and education institutions and employers may consider giving recognition to the qualifications attached to such an examination.
- (ii) In selecting students for admission, should universities give consideration to results obtained from a wide range of internationally recognised examinations, so as to allow students and individual candidates more choices?
- (iii) How can we streamline the processes relating to the updating of public examinations that are related to school curriculum, so that they can be promptly modified to tie in with the changes of the society?

Higher Education

(I) Components of higher education

Components of the proposed diversified higher education system are:

- (i) Universities: degree-awarding educational institutions (include University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded universities, the Open University; and private universities)
- (ii) Post-secondary colleges: institutions which provide courses above secondary level, including community colleges
- (iii) Continuing education institutions: those continuing education institutions which provide courses above secondary school level

(II) Characteristics of higher education

The system is characterised by:

- (i) multiple channels and diversity
- (ii) multiple entry and exit points
- (iii) quality assurance and mutually recognised qualifications

(III) Definition of First Degree courses

- (i) It is proposed that the universities review the functions, contents, focuses and modes of teaching of their first degree programmes, so as to strike the right balance between the breadth and the depth of such programmes.
- (ii) If the three-year senior secondary education system proposed in Section 3 part B is to be implemented, universities should consider providing new first-degree programmes for graduates of the 3-year senior secondary education system in order to ensure continuity in their studies. As the education system of senior secondary schools is being reviewed, universities may need to provide the old and the new first-degree programmes simultaneously for students coming out from two secondary education systems

(IV) The enrichment of campus life

Campus life is an integral part of a quality university education. A comprehensive and rich campus life will help students develop their strength of character, master life-skills, broaden their horizons and cultivate a sense of commitment to the community. Students are

encouraged to take part in a variety of extra-curricula activities to gain more exposure at an international level and work-related experiences.

(V) The university admission system

- (i) The university admission system does not only select the most suitable candidates for university education, but also has long been a decisive factor in how learning is conducted in schools. It is therefore one of the key foci in this education reform. We propose that universities should give due consideration to students' all-round performance when setting admission criteria. Apart from public examination results, universities may consider other information, such as schools' internal assessment reports (on both academic and non-academic performance), portfolios prepared by students and interviews, in making a comprehensive evaluation of the overall performance of students.

- (ii) As regards the requirements covering subjects to be taken by students in secondary schools, we recommend that universities consider the following :
 - (1) The AS Level Liberal Studies subject can help students broaden their knowledge horizon and develop important generic skills. Universities should give priority to students who have taken this subject.

 - (2) Universities should replace Advanced Level (AL) subjects with AS Level subjects as far as possible and minimise the requirements for specific subjects so that the secondary school students will have more room to choose subjects across different learning areas.

- (iii) We propose that consideration be given to what changes would be required to allow universities more flexibility to take in students at various levels on the condition that the total number of students entering universities each year is not reduced. The UGC and the universities should review the current funding mechanism to allow for this flexibility

- (iv) On condition that no additional public resources are required, universities and faculties should be allowed to admit a small number of outstanding S.6 students.

(VI) A portable and transferable credit unit system

- (i) We propose that universities work towards a transferable and articulated credit unit system among institutions and departments to allow students more choice of learning modules that suit their pace, interests, abilities and learning needs. Universities and individual departments would also be able to focus resources on their own strengths

with a view to developing their own areas of excellence.

- (ii) We propose that the UGC should discuss with the UGC-funded universities to identify an appropriate funding model to facilitate the implementation of a credit unit system.

(VII) Duration of study

- (i) If a 3-year senior secondary education model is to be adopted, the duration of study for the first-degree programmes will need to be extended to 4 years in general, but the exact duration of individual first-degree programmes should be decided on the basis of their actual needs. We propose that universities may decide on their own the duration of individual degree programmes, on the condition that no additional public resources are required and that the total number of students admitted to universities each year is not reduced.
- (ii) Existing resources should be utilised in a more effective way and other sources of funding should be identified.
- (iii) When the credit unit system proposed in (VI) above is implemented, universities will be able to determine the duration of their programmes with more flexibility.

(VIII) Quality assurance mechanisms

We propose that the UGC and institutions concerned should consider:

- (i) Besides reviewing the teaching and learning quality assurance process, whether external assessments should be conducted on the effectiveness of teaching and learning?
- (ii) How can universities strengthen their self-accrediting mechanism in order to enhance quality assurance?

(IX) The development of postgraduate programmes

One of the important economic strategies of Hong Kong is the promotion of innovation and technology. To underpin this strategy, we need experts in various specialised fields and technology areas. We recommend that the number of postgraduate places should be increased to nurture the manpower we need to propel the economic development of Hong Kong.

(X) Promoting the development of private higher education institutions

We propose that the Government should encourage the development of private higher education institutions in the following directions, so that the society as a whole may contribute to a diverse and vibrant higher education sector:

- (i) To encourage existing private post-secondary colleges or other education bodies to upgrade into universities upon appropriate accreditation.
- (ii) To provide a conducive environment for private higher education institutions, such as encouraging distinguished overseas universities to set up private universities in Hong Kong.

(XI) Community Colleges

(A) Rationale for reform

(i) The functions of community colleges are:

- (1) to provide learners with post-secondary curriculum which articulates with university programmes;*
- (2) to provide a second opportunity to learners who have yet to attain qualifications at secondary level through formal education; and*
- (3) to provide a variety of learning opportunities to assist individual learners to acquire skills and qualifications that are recognised by employers to enhance their employability.*

(ii) Characteristics of community colleges:

- (1) Lenient entry, stringent exit*
- (2) Flexible mode of learning*
- (3) Flexible course duration*
- (4) Diversified sources of subsidies (such as private companies, charitable funds, non-profit making bodies and income from tuition fees)*

(B) Reform proposals

The following sectors should take an active part in promoting the development of community colleges:

(i) The Government:

- (1) to formulate relevant policies and provide a conducive environment;

(2) to facilitate the establishment of a mechanism for articulation of qualifications and quality assurance

(3) to consider granting low-interest loans to learners with financial difficulties

(ii) The universities:

(1) to give proper recognition to the qualification conferred by community colleges;

(2) to consider granting partial course exemption as appropriate.

(iii) post-secondary colleges and institutions: to consider providing courses modeled on those offered by community colleges

(iv) other sectors/institutions: to encourage all other sectors and institutions to support and promote the development of community colleges in various ways.

(XII) Forming a working group

We propose to form a working group under the EC to further study and make proposals about the development of private universities and the interface between universities and other post-secondary institutions in consultation with the UGC; it will study the problems involved in implementing these proposals and formulate specific recommendations.

Continuing Education

(I) Proposed directions for future development

(A) Flexibility and openness

- (i) To adjust flexibly the content and modes of the curriculum to align with changes in society and students' aspirations;
- (ii) To introduce flexible study modes which allow students to have different points of entry and exit on the qualifications ladder
- (iii) Qualifications can be accumulated and should be portable.

(B) Mechanisms for quality assurance, accreditation and transfer of qualifications

- (i) To put in place a sound mechanism for quality assurance
- (ii) To develop a mechanism whereby qualifications are mutually recognised and transferable among various continuing education / formal education / professional / vocational training programmes

(C) Continuing professional development in the workplace

The workplace is an ideal arena for continuous professional development. This is an area worthy of exploration by the local continuing education community

(D) The internationalization of continuing education

- (i) To strengthen the cooperation with overseas tertiary institutions in offering specialised programmes that are unavailable in Hong Kong
- (ii) To draw on overseas experience and expertise

(E) The use of information technology

To make more use of information technology, such as providing net-based courses

(F) Resources

- (i) To continue to be funded on a 'user-pay' principle;
- (ii) To encourage people of various sectors, such as employers and professional bodies, to contribute manpower and resources to continuing education;
- (iii) Where resources permit, the Government should consider providing assistance to those learners with financial difficulties, and those who have become unemployed due to the economic restructuring, to help them pursue continuing education to

enhance their learning abilities and employability.

(II) Community-wide efforts in promoting continuing education

(A) The Government

To play the role of a facilitator and a coordinator, e.g. in respect of developing a ladder of transferable qualifications, offering incentives, etc.

(B) Employers

- (i) To provide training opportunities, leave and financial assistance
- (ii) To exchange training materials with the relevant bodies

(C) Providers of continuing education

- (i) To help various industries understand their training needs
- (ii) To help various industries gain access to the latest information on the labour market and to assist the small or outmoded industries to update themselves

(D) Voluntary/community organizations

- (i) To provide the grassroots with information and counselling services on continuing education through the community network
- (ii) To offer diverse programmes and activities in the community to arouse people's interest in learning

(E) Accreditation authorities

To study how to establish a mechanism for the evaluation, accreditation and transfer of academic qualifications

(F) Professional organizations

- (i) To provide learning opportunities for continuing education and to encourage members to pursue further studies
- (ii) To work with other relevant sectors to establish a qualifications accreditation mechanism

(G) Mass media

- (i) To help promote the concept of lifelong education
- (ii) To provide the public with the latest information on continuing education

- (iii) To provide diversified learning channels, such as setting up an education television section and network services on education

(III) Specific recommendations

(A) Setting up a working group on continuing education

To set up a working group under the EC to advise the Government on policies and specific initiatives related to continuing education.

(B) Establishing a database for continuing education

The Government will set up a web-site to provide information on continuing education courses. The Government will contact a wide range of organizations concerned to encourage them to make the best use of the web-site to assist those who are looking for suitable courses.

(C) Establishing lifelong learning centres

- (i) Continuing education institutions and community service organizations should make use of the existing community resources to establish lifelong learning centres that provide various types of teaching facilities and services
- (ii) Education institutions/public organizations can allow continuing education providers and learners to use their premises and facilities on a cost-recovery basis

(D) Working out supporting measures for continuing education

The proposed working group mentioned in paragraph (A) above will further explore other measures to help learners pursue continuing education.

Catering for students' multiple abilities and learning needs

(I) Community support and cooperation

To create a favourable learning environment for students to fully develop their potential, it will be very useful if we can foster a culture in the community that attaches great importance to the multiple abilities of students and respects their different learning needs. Concrete support from the community is essential.

(A) The role of the Government

- (i) To further encourage schools to formulate appropriate teaching policies and strategies using the whole-school approach;
- (ii) To provide professional support to teachers and help them enhance their abilities in meeting the different learning needs of their students;
- (iii) To consider using schools' effectiveness in catering for students' diverse needs as an indicator of schools' performance; and
- (iv) Regarding the Government's role in promoting integrated education and gifted education, we have the following proposals:

(1) The promotion of integrated education

- (a) to continue the existing policy of helping students with special educational needs to be integrated into ordinary schools as far as possible;
- (b) to encourage more schools to join the programme by adopting the whole-school approach;
- (c) to review the existing resources for helping students with special educational needs (including special classes, peripatetic advisory service etc.) and to explore ways of using such resources more effectively; and
- (d) as a long-term goal, to move towards 'inclusion': in this context, 'inclusion' refers to an education system that provides appropriate assistance to students according to their learning needs in order to help them develop their potential to the full. Under such a system, there is still a need for special schools.

(2) The promotion of gifted education

As a long-term strategy, there is a need to go beyond the scope of school-based training programmes and to mobilise all parties concerned in our society to work for the development of gifted education:

- (a) to draw up a comprehensive strategy to help gifted students develop their

potential to the full through different types of school-based and non-school-based programmes

- (b) to emphasise multiple abilities and not to over-emphasise the development of academic ability
- (c) to promote the participation and collaboration of different sectors (including teachers, parents and members of the community)
- (d) to avoid a labelling effect. Schools and parents should not subject students to drilling for the purpose of developing them into gifted students.

(B) Parental support

To support the policy, parents should strengthen their communication and cooperation with schools.

(C) Teacher Training Institutions

- (i) The content of pre-service training programmes for teachers should aim to foster a correct attitude to catering for students' different learning needs and equipping them with basic knowledge and skills
- (ii) To provide in-service teachers with training opportunities to enhance, upgrade and update their knowledge and skills in catering for students' different needs
- (iii) To include material that will help schools cater for students' different needs in training programmes for principals
- (iv) To provide professional support to schools, for example, conducting research and developing effective methods of catering for students' different learning needs, promoting these methods among schools and providing professional advice to schools.

(D) Support by the rest of the society

- (i) To jointly promote the culture of emphasizing multiple abilities and respecting students' different learning needs
- (ii) To provide support to schools in terms of manpower and other resources, for example to help schools carry out various programmes for the development of gifted education

(II) Policies and measures of schools

At the school level, it is necessary to formulate clear policies and adopt appropriate measures to develop students' multiple abilities and meet their diverse needs. Schools can consider the following suggestions:

- (A) To identify students' learning needs and provide appropriate assistance as early as possible.
- (B) To design school-based curriculum according to students' abilities and needs on the basis of the flexible and open curriculum framework provided by the CDC.
- (C) There should preferably be different types of grouping for students at different levels and a greater degree of flexibility than in the past, such as subject grouping, and mixed-ability teaching. Different teaching methods, such as collaborative learning, can be adopted in mixed-ability teaching.
- (D) To mobilise all members of a school (including teachers, students, parents etc) to support the implementation of integrated education.
- (E) For students with higher abilities, schools could adopt the teaching methods that best suit their abilities. Students with exceptional talents should be able to receive individualised guidance by utilising support provided by the community to help them develop their areas of strength even more effectively.
- (F) To keep in close contact with parents and help them understand the importance of teaching according to students' abilities.
- (G) To make good use of community resources and the resources provided by the Government.
- (H) The role of special schools
- (i) Special schools can continue to provide a suitable learning environment for the more seriously handicapped students and students with multiple impairment.
 - (ii) With the gradual development of integrated education, the role of a number of special schools has to be adjusted. An effective mechanism should be established to select appropriate special schools to act as regional special education resource centres apart from their function of providing special education.