

REVIEW OF EDUCATION SYSTEM: FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATION REFORM

LEARNING FOR LIFE

REVIEW OF EDUCATION SYSTEM

FOREWORD

I OVERVIEW

II PRINCIPLES OF REFORM

Early Childhood Education
Nine-year Universal Basic Education
Senior Secondary Education
Higher Education
Continuing Education

III FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATION REFORM

1. The Lifelong Learning Academic Structure
2. To Develop a New Culture for Early Childhood Education in Collaboration with Parents

3. To Provide a School Life Conducive to Life-long Learning
4. To Reform the Systems of Assessments, Public Examinations and School Places Allocation
5. Reform of Higher Education
6. Establish a comprehensive systems of continuing education
7. New roles for schools and teachers

IV REFORM AGENDA

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS?

SCHEDULE FOR THE FORUM AND SEMINARS

REPLY SLIP

Review of Education System

The Education Commission (EC) is now conducting a comprehensive review of the overall education system in Hong Kong. The review is being conducted in three stages.

Stage 1: **Aims of Education**

- The focus of this stage was on the aims of education for Hong Kong in the 21st Century.
- The public consultation was launched in January and ended in March this year.

Stage 2: **Framework for Education Reform**

- After considering all the comments received during the first consultation, the EC has revised the aims of education (please see <http://www.e-c.edu.hk>) and embarked on the second stage of the review.
- The focus of this stage is on the review of the academic structure, the curricula and the assessment mechanisms.
- The EC is now consulting the public on the education reform framework. Apart from extensive

distribution of the consultation pamphlet, the EC will hold a large-scale forum and a series of seminars on specific topics. All members of the community are welcome to attend.

**Stage 3:
Education Reform
Proposals**

- This round of consultation will last until 15 December 1999.
- After completing the second stage of consultation, the EC will immediately embark on the third stage of the review. It will draw up reform proposals on the academic structure, the curricula and the assessment mechanisms and will propose priorities on the basis of the comments received.
- When the above work is completed, the EC will consult the public again.
- We expect to complete the whole review and submit our recommendations to the Chief Executive by the middle of next year.

FOREWORD

During the first stage of the consultation, the EC received over 14,000 submissions of public comments. This reflects the public's strong desire for education reform. From these submissions, we have gathered many insightful and constructive suggestions. Having considered all the submissions, the EC is of the view that our priority should be to enable our students to **enjoy learning**, to enhance their **effectiveness in communication**, and to develop their **creativity and sense of commitment**.

On the basis of all the public submissions, the EC has reviewed the existing education system and developed some preliminary ideas for the framework of education reform.

We invite all members of the public to actively participate in

this review which concerns the entire community.

I. OVERVIEW

Learning brings enjoyment. Learning creates opportunities. Society is undergoing fundamental changes. As it transforms from an industrial society into an information society, and as our economy shifts its emphasis from manufacturing to knowledge-based activities, knowledge has become an essential element of our daily lives and our economy. Knowledge is being created all the time. New knowledge continues to emerge as existing knowledge becomes obsolete. Learning is no longer confined to school subjects or limited to classrooms; learning is no longer the prerogative of those aged 6 to 22. The age of lifelong learning has dawned.

However, our education system appears to have stagnated in the industrial age. The system still caters to a selected few, whilst disadvantaging the majority and creating a large number of losers. There are comments that kindergartens are teaching our children a curriculum that is too advanced for their age; school children have to cope with too much homework; and the structure of basic education is fraught with hurdles and dead-ends. Even in universities, students often have little experience outside their specialised areas of study. Many students stop learning after graduation, or are simply tired of learning even before graduation. This runs counter to the expectations of a lifelong learning society and poses a serious challenge to Hong Kong.

There is an urgent need to introduce fundamental reforms to our education system. Reforms in education should bring new learning opportunities to every citizen, and should bring new opportunities for the future development of Hong Kong. This should be the guiding principle for education reform in Hong Kong.

II. PRINCIPLES OF REFORM

The EC has adopted the following principles in formulating its proposals:

Student-focused	Learning should be focused upon students' personal development. Our reform should aim to give more room and flexibility for students to be masters of their own learning.
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"No-loser".	There should not be, at any stage of education, dead-end screening that blocks further learning opportunities. Everyone should be given the opportunity to learn anywhere, any time, and to be given due recognition for what they achieve.
Quality.	The basic objective of our reform should be to enable all citizens to access the most appropriate learning opportunity to realise their potentials. Everybody should achieve basic standards and strive for excellence.
Life-wide learning.	Learning is not limited to school subjects or examination syllabuses. Students should have a comprehensive learning experience through the formal, nonformal and informal modes
A society-wide mobilisation.	Lifelong learning is the key to a person's success, and to Hong Kong's success. The Government, educators, all sectors of the community as well as the learners themselves should all contribute to the reform.

III. FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATION REFORM

We propose the following framework for reform:

Early Childhood Education

- To re-affirm the role of early childhood education as the foundation for lifelong learning.
- To let children experience enjoyable and active group life and a variety of learning activities. This helps them cultivate a positive attitude towards learning and good living habits.

Nine-year Universal Basic Education

- To help students develop basic learning habits, abilities and attitudes, and construct a core of basic knowledge, as a favourable starting point for lifelong learning.
- To enable our students to experience an uninterrupted and comprehensive learning life, and to develop their multiple-intelligence instead of just preparing them for

subject-based examinations.

- To put in place effective assessment mechanisms and appropriate teaching methods to help students develop their potentials to the fullest, to ensure meeting the basic standard and to develop their strengths.
- To eliminate by stages all public assessments and banding system for the purpose of allocating secondary school places, so that the nine-year universal basic education process will become one through-road. This will enable students to engage in various learning activities which will benefit their all-round development.

Senior Secondary Education

- Besides enhancing basic knowledge, to enable our students to have some experience in the academic, vocational, organisation, social service as well as aesthetics and sports domains.
- To enable our students to lay foundations for lifelong learning in the domains of natural science and humanities, and to do away with streaming between the two domains.
- To provide students with a diversity of options in order to help them understand their abilities and aptitudes, and to prepare them for employment and lifelong learning. There should be no vocational schools that prematurely determine the direction of students' development.
- There should be only one public examination after universal basic education and before the commencement of higher education.

Higher Education

- To provide opportunities for everyone who aspires to higher education to attend programmes appropriate to their abilities, as a first step towards self-motivated lifelong learning.
- To establish a diversity of institutions, so that those who aspire for higher education could choose among formal universities, other post-secondary and in-service continuing education institutions to pursue further

education appropriate to their abilities. A transferable credit unit system should be in place as an ultimate goal. All those with the ability should be given an opportunity to pursue degree studies.

- Learning in higher education should be guided by students' interests, career needs or the requirements of further studies. Students should be given more autonomy and flexibility over the choice of programmes, the mobility between them, as well as the interruption and duration of programmes.
- Bachelor programmes should maximise opportunities for learning across disciplines, and should be less of a specialised nature. Students in formal universities should enjoy a comprehensive and rich campus life.
- Admission to University should consider students' all round performances, and not just their public examination results.
- To further develop post-graduate programmes for advanced studies in specific professions or disciplines.

Continuing Education

- To foster a continuing education system that is open, in order to provide suitable opportunities and channels for those who wish to engage in continuing education.
- To provide facilities, information and resources to allow people to pursue continuing learning regardless of qualifications and social status.
- To put in place effective evaluation and accreditation mechanisms in order to assure the quality of continuing education.
- To establish a comprehensive mechanism for qualifications to be fully transferable so that students' achievements attained through different channels and modes of study are duly recognised..

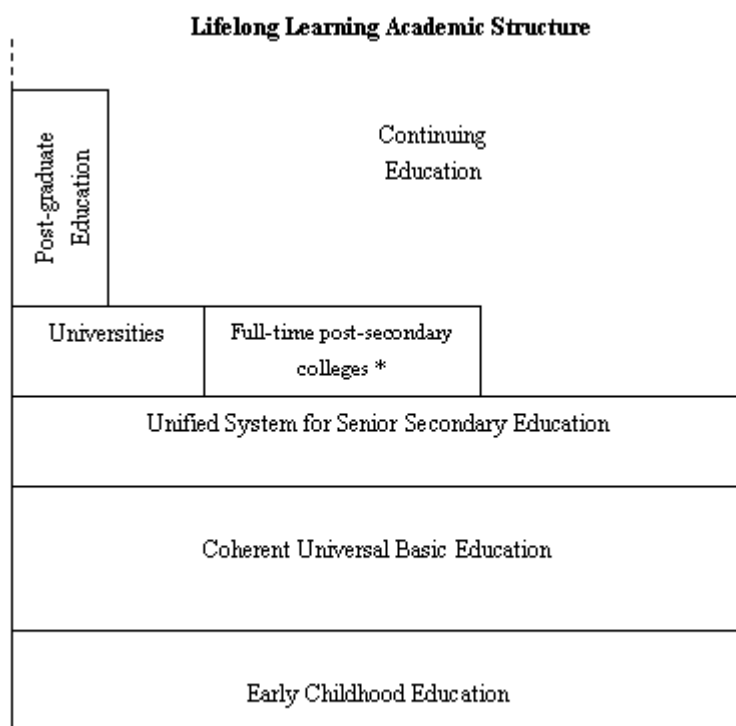
IV. REFORM AGENDA

In order to implement the above framework for reform, the EC proposes the following agenda of reform. Initial options will also be introduced and discussed in the subsequent topical

seminars.

1. The Lifelong Learning Academic Structure (See diagram)

- Can the two separate systems of nurseries and kindergartens be unified?
- How can we ensure continuity throughout the nine-year universal basic education so that it will no longer be necessary to allocate school places?
- Is it feasible to merge the senior secondary and matriculation levels of formal education and to eliminate the distinction between general and vocational schools, while catering for individual student's aptitude and strengths?
- Is it feasible to establish a diverse higher education system that comprises the existing universities, post-secondary and continuing education institutions, so that every person who aspires to higher education will have opportunities to attend programmes appropriate to their abilities?
- Is it necessary to establish a framework among all the providers of continuing education, so as to achieve maximum flexibility, openness and diversity in the system?



* Post-secondary colleges refer to institutions providing post-secondary courses, vocational courses and compensatory courses.

2. To Develop a New Culture for Early Childhood Education in Collaboration with Parents

Top priority:

- To reinforce administrative regulation in order to ensure that the curriculum adopted corresponds to the developmental stage of young children.

Issues under consideration:

- How to enhance the quality of teachers in early childhood education?
- How to cultivate a new culture in early childhood education through a parent education network?
- How to put in place a quality-enhancing mechanism within the teaching profession?

3. To Provide a School Life Conducive to Life-long Learning

Top priority:

- To promote the concept of life-wide learning experiences among educators and the society at large, and to mobilize existing resources to provide room and support to learning activities

beyond the confines of the classroom.

Issues under consideration:

- How to ensure that students are exposed to life-wide learning experiences through formal, non-formal and informal learning activities?
- How to reform the curricula in order to help students acquire life-wide learning experiences?
- How to enable teachers of primary and secondary schools to focus their efforts on enhancing the quality of students' learning and to ensure standards?
- How to help students adapt to the transition from kindergarten to primary and from primary to secondary education?
- How to create opportunities for excellence?

4. To Reform the Systems of Assessments, Public Examinations and School Places Allocation

Top priorities:

- To reform the Secondary School Places Allocation System to eliminate any adverse screening effect, and to put in place at various junctures mechanisms to enhance the quality of students' learning and to ensure basic standards.
- To reform university admissions.

Issues under consideration:

- How to promote the self-evaluation culture of schools?
- How to reform the Primary One Admission System?
- How to establish a nine-year "through road" of basic education?
- Is any screening necessary at the end of the nine-year universal basic education? How to assure that students attain the expected standards? What if they fail to do so?
- How to reform the public examination system at the end of senior secondary education? How to rectify the concept of learning only what is to be examined? How to simplify the examination system and syllabuses, such that only the crucial

aspects are assessed? How to maximise the positive effect of examination to enhance the quality of learning? How to set core competency standards for students and to ensure that they meet such standards?

5. Reform of Higher Education

Top priorities:

- To encourage the establishment of various types of post-secondary colleges, while accommodating the existing institutions.
- To encourage universities to adopt a genuine system for fully transferable credit units.

Issues under consideration:

- How could universities progress towards a transferable credit unit system? How could the credit units be transferred among institutes and eventually among different modes of higher education?
- How to redefine the first degree? How to broaden the knowledge horizon of university students? Does university campus life provide students with sufficient room to experience practical life in society?
- How to encourage the development of various types of private universities?
- Should we actively develop post-graduate education?

6. Establish a comprehensive system of continuing education

Top priority:

- To establish, among the government, continuing education providers and employers, a framework for collaboration and accreditation among various programmes of continuing education.

Issues under consideration:

- In what way should the government, educational institutions, employers, learners and other sectors

- of the community cooperate? How should responsibilities be divided? What should be the resource strategy?
- How to establish an information network for continuing education?
- Is it necessary to set up "life-long learning centres" that embrace libraries, information technology equipment, study rooms and advisory services?

7. New roles for schools and teachers

Top priority:

- To create more room for teachers so that they can exercise their professional judgement to cater to students' individual needs.

Urgent issues for consideration:

- What changes do teachers face, in terms of their beliefs and roles, in order to implement the above reforms? Where should the teachers focus their efforts? If public screening and elimination were reduced, what would be the guiding principle for teaching?
- How could we manage to allow the talented to excel, but at the same time not give up on any student?
- What corresponding reforms should take place in teacher education and teacher development in order to realise the new roles of teachers?
- How should teachers themselves undertake life-long learning?
- What can schools and teachers contribute to the broader society?

As a member of the community, what are your views on the following:

- In order to prepare for life-long learning, students' learning should not be confined to classrooms and subject contents; their performance should not be assessed on the basis of academic achievements alone. Are parents, teachers and other members of the community in support? How can each of them contribute to make this happen?

- The above recommendations imply a substantial reduction in screening and elimination in the education system. Would this dampen students' motivation and lead to a decline in standards? Would it be more difficult for the talented to excel?
- To create an enjoyable and effective learning environment for pre-school children, and to remove barriers for their healthy development, it is necessary to eliminate difficult subject content and weighty academic activities. Are parents, teachers and the community at large prepared to accept this?
- The implementation of the above framework for reform is expected to require a level of resource input significantly higher than the current level of Government subsidy. The joint commitment of both the government and the community is of the essence. In a life-long learning society, each member, including the learners themselves, are expected to contribute in terms of resources. Are you willing to make such a commitment? How can existing resources be utilized more effectively ?
- What other contributions do you think you can make towards this education reform?

We are organizing a large forum and six seminars on specific topics for members of the public to discuss our reform directions and proposals. We warmly encourage your participation. The discussion papers for the seminars will be available on the Education Commission web-site in the next few weeks.

Schedule for the Forum and Seminars

Code	Topic	Date & Time	Venue
01	Framework for Education Reform	23 September 1999 (Thursday) 4:00 p.m.	Theatre 1, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Wanchai
02	Adult and Continuing Education	11 October 1999 (Monday) 3:00 p.m.	Wei Hing Theatre Hong Kong City University
03	Higher Education	16 October 1999	Wang Gungwu Lecture Hall,

		(Saturday) 10:00 a.m.	Graduate House, The University of Hong Kong
04	Curriculum Reform And Life-wide Learning	28 October 1999 (Thursday) 4:00 p.m.	Tang Shiu Kin Victoria Government Secondary School, 5 Oi Kwan Road, Wanchai
05	Public Examinations, Performance Assessments and Admission Systems for Primary and Secondary Education	2 November 1999 (Tuesday) 4:00 p.m.	Tang Shiu Kin Victoria Government Secondary School, 5 Oi Kwan Road, Wanchai
06	New Culture for Early Childhood Education: Curriculum, Academic Structure, Teaching Profession	7 November 1999 (Sunday) 11:00 a.m.	Tang Shiu Kin Victoria Government Secondary School, 5 Oi Kwan Road, Wanchai
07	Teachers' Role and Professional Development	13 November 1999 (Saturday) 10:00 a.m.	Tang Shiu Kin Victoria Government Secondary School, 5 Oi Kwan Road, Wanchai

If you are interested in any of the above forum/ seminars,
please fill in the reply-slip and return it to the Education
Commission Secretariat.

Address : Education Commission Secretariat
Room 714, Central Government Offices
(Main Wing),
Lower Albert Road, Central, Hong Kong.

Fax No. : 2537 4591

E-mail Address : educom@netvigator.com

You are welcome to send in your views by mail, fax or e-mail
to the Education Commission Secretariat before **15 December
1999**. If you wish to obtain more information about this
review, please visit the Education Commission web-site at
(<http://www.e-c.edu.hk>).

Reply Slip

To : Education Commission Secretariat

Framework for Education Reform

I would like to attend the following forum / seminar(s) organized by the Education Commission :

Forum/ Seminar Code: _____

My particulars are:

Name : _____

Telephone no : _____

Address : _____

Fax No. : _____