



新聞稿 PRESS RELEASE

A Senate Statement on the Educational Development of CUHK

Over the past 25 years, The Chinese University of Hong Kong has striven to provide quality education to the young people of Hong Kong, with an emphasis on achieving synthesis of Western and Chinese cultures. With each successive year, CUHK has refined its 4-year undergraduate programme that has long traditional ties with the education system in China, and is widely practised in major countries overseas including not only USA, Canada, France and Japan, but also such other Commonwealth countries as Australia and New Zealand which offer a 4-year honours degree programme. In this rapidly changing age, CUHK is coping well with the need to improve the quality of education and is proud of its achievements and heritage.

In the cosmopolitan and dynamic community of Hong Kong, diversity and freedom have been the key to its success in many important areas including education. A policy of minimum intervention by the Government is the only effective means to enable the universities to evolve sound and relevant academic programmes for Hong Kong and to make useful contributions to scholarship at the international level. Sir Adrian Cadbury commented at the Thirteenth Commonwealth Universities Congress in 1983 as follows:

'The role of the universities is to provide their students not only with the necessary knowledge to advance society's frontiers in a practical way, but also to inspire them to make the most of their individual abilities and to have the faith and tenacity to change the world for the better.'

In faithfully playing the role of the University as described, CUHK has never flagged in its efforts to improve the quality of its 4-year education.

With due respect to the wisdom and efforts of the Education Commission, the University cannot subscribe to the claim of the Commission that a scheme requiring all senior secondary school students to complete uniformly a two-year sixth form education before exit to enter local tertiary institutions is an optimum solution to the educational reform of Hong Kong. The Commission's recommendation that Secondary 7 be the single exit point has at least the following defects:-

- (i) CUHK must abandon its carefully nurtured education scheme combining a broad-based education with competency in a specialized field, and start anew to build a scheme which has less flexibility. The cross-cultural heritage with which by history and design the University is richly endowed, will be eroded.

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- (ii) Students wishing to go abroad to follow a 4-year degree course in USA, parts of Australia, Canada, UK (Scotland), Japan and China, will waste a year of time and money. It should be noted that the figures quoted in the Commission's report show that nearly 50% of Hong Kong's sixth form students are entering 4-year tertiary institutions, and that for these students there is no general, automatic recognition given by overseas universities for their A-level achievements. Furthermore, entry to US universities depends very much on such test results as SAT and TOEFL which can readily be taken after Form V.
- (iii) Students ready for university education after Secondary 6 are forced to stay on for a less fruitful and perhaps demoralizing year.
- (iv) The design of the two-year sixth form to prepare students for entry to all tertiary institutions in Hong Kong for degree or non-degree courses, and also to prepare students to enter society, gives rise naturally to the problem of how to channel Secondary 6 students into various streams. There can be very serious implementation difficulties. For one thing, the parents of Hong Kong students would have to be convinced that their children, while qualified for entering Secondary 6, are not immediately shunted to a stream preparing them for entry to the tertiary institution of their choice. Thus in the first year, students must be given a fair chance of demonstrating their ability before school assessment results show whether or not their abilities indeed match their aspirations. This means at the end of Secondary 6 there should be certain choices for both schools and students, including exit of certain students society for work and others to tertiary institutions. A compulsory integral two-year Sixth Form course is therefore quite impractical.

The freedom of choice is a most highly valued human right of Hong Kong; in fact it is no less than the *raison d'être* of Hong Kong and the very secret of its success and prosperity. To all intents and purposes, the proposal to unify exit at Secondary 7 will take away part (and a very important part at that) of this freedom of choice from those concerned. Students and parents will become the unfortunate victims, and Hong Kong as a whole will suffer, becoming a less open society.



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The University welcomes all positive actions to improve the quality of education through broadening the secondary school curriculum and to strengthen the tertiary sector with variety, depth and width. Regrettably, its Senate has to vote unanimously not to accept the present proposal of the Education Commission because of the fundamental and practical reasons set out above. On the other hand, the University is at present actively working on a viable scheme of sixth form and tertiary education that would be much more flexible and desirable, and the direction this would take is outlined below.

While reaffirming its strong commitment to the University's current academic programmes which are based on a 4-year undergraduate curriculum and student intake from both Secondary 6 (with or without H-Level examination) and Secondary 7, CUHK will further improve the flexibility and effectiveness of its recently introduced credit unit system. Under such a system, students enter the First Year through different channels and pursue their studies at an individual pace according to ability and motivation. When fully developed in close consultation and co-operation with the secondary school system, this scheme will complement, not contradict the improved and broad-based two-year sixth form proposed by the Education Commission, but with enhanced flexibility. It calls for no additional public examinations, and is the basis of an integrated secondary school exit scheme that achieves the desired uniformity of providing well defined multiple paths for students to enter into a great variety of tertiary education institutions in Hong Kong and abroad, as well as directly into society. It permits improvement in educational quality while reducing total educational expenses both for parents as well as tax-payers. It allows students not to waste unnecessary years of study while strengthening their skills for life. These are the objectives to which a broad-based sixth form education should aspire.

One implication of this scheme is the possibility of recognizing credits earned outside the University, which will enable CUHK students to take advantage of exchange with universities around the world by spending one of their undergraduate years abroad or completing their degree elsewhere with universities having reciprocal arrangements with CUHK. This type of arrangement is being explored and is based on CUHK's 4-year curriculum. The scheme will permit strong and meaningful two-way links to be established and expanded for Hong Kong.

CUHK is of the belief that a considerable amount of work is still to be undertaken before reaching the optimum solution for improving Hong Kong's education system. Working parties must be established to look into the rationale on which the Education

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Commission's recommendations are based, and to take into serious consideration alternative schemes such as the ones proposed by the CUHK and possibly also by HKU. It would be highly undesirable, with unforeseeable implications and consequences, for the Government to adopt as POLICY the recommendations of the Education Commission as they stand, especially the recommendation that the common entry point to all tertiary institutions be after Secondary 7. Such a development would prejudice the working parties by binding their hands to a sub-optimal solution. On such an important question as education, the Government must wait until the working parties to complete their work of reformulating these recommendations into an implementable and optimal form before adopting any new policy, even if this means one or more years' delay. Education has always been the key to success of Hong Kong. It certainly should not be short-changed by unnecessary haste at this critical moment of the history of Hong Kong.

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June 17, 1988