

Academic aptitude test plan opposed

Some educational organisations have reacted strongly against the introduction of an academic aptitude test as part of the allocation process for Primary Six pupils after the abolition of the Secondary School Entrance Examination.

"The examination will continue to distort teaching just as the SSEE has done, encouraging cramming, and acting as a deterrent to newer and more experimental approaches to education," a spokesman for the Education Action Group said yesterday.

The Director of Education, Mr Kenneth Topley, announced on Tuesday that as from 1978 allocation of Primary Six pupils into secondary schools will depend on the results of three internal assessment examinations and the new test to be introduced from December 1977.

"Pupils will not be required to study for the aptitude test as they do at present for the SSEE, and this should remove the pressure of the public examinations which is felt by so many to be intolerable," Mr Topley told a press conference.

He stressed that the test was primarily a monitoring device to ensure a fair basis for allocation of pupils to secondary schools.

But the EAG disagreed: "There is absolutely no need for the monitoring examination announced by Mr Topley."

They felt that schools would continue to strive for a prestigious image measure by examination results.

The SSEE is so firmly ingrained in the minds of all that to tell parents, teachers and students that there is no way to prepare for the new examination as suggested by Mr Topley is useless, the EAG said.

"The Education Department has been telling schools for many years not to prepare for the SSEE but it is the single goal of kindergarten and primary education."

Government had the money, and with the redundancy of primary school teachers and excess of primary school classes there was absolutely no excuse for not upgrading all primary schools to uniform standards thus eliminating the need for such a monitoring examination, the EAG said.

The EAG commented: "Mr Topley said the new system was a compromise, but it is only a compromise between the proposals of the Working Party on the Replacement of the SSEE and that of a few prestigious schools wanting to retain their positions."

"Mr Topley said an objective monitoring device becomes necessary to produce marks which can be compared with other schools to produce an order of merit. This would be completely unnecessary if the working party's plans had been followed."

"The only purpose the examination must accomplish is that the people of Hongkong will see that the fair system they had so hoped for had been denied and perhaps the new examination would upset the public enough to demand equality for all."

As to feeder intake of 50 per cent, the EAG said they still felt strongly that all schools should either be linked with a secondary school or the system completely eliminated. Allowing a minority of schools such a privilege was extremely unfair to the remaining schools.

The Chairman of the Hongkong Professional Teachers' Union, Mr Szeto Wah, said the introduction of the academic aptitude test was even worse than the original proposal of the working party.

Denying the claim that the new test would not assert any pressure on students, he said the test would mean an extra burden to the students.

School principals and teachers who want to seek a higher standard for their schools will in turn put the pressure on the students," he said.

He claimed that students would also have to study for the aptitude test if they want to get better results.

In addition to the three internal examinations, he said, the students now have to face a fourth examination.

He noted that the new proposal was still associated with the phenomenon of classifying schools to different grades.

Prestigious schools will then become more famous and less prestigious schools could hardly build up a reputation.