

Affairs body backs adoption of four-year degree courses

By C.K. LAU

THE problems affecting sixth form education can be solved only by adopting a six-year secondary course and a four-year degree course.

This is the conclusion drawn by the Hongkong Affairs Society's educational panel.

The political group's panel also decided that the Government should raise the quality of pre-school services by directly subsidising kindergarten teachers' salaries.

At a press conference yesterday, panel chairman Mr Thomas Chiu said the group felt the Education Commission's proposal to introduce intermediate level courses could alleviate the present confusion caused by having two sixth form courses of differing lengths.

A proposal allowing students to take the advanced level examination in English or Chinese was also welcomed, since it would even out graduates' chances of

passing whether they came from Anglo-Chinese or Chinese middle schools.

However, the group felt that in asking the Chinese University to drop its provisional acceptance scheme while asking other institutions to adopt similar schemes, the commission was contradicting itself.

It also said the commission's rejection of a six-year secondary course had been too hasty and that confusion at sixth form level could only be solved by having a six-year secondary course feeding a four-year degree course.

Such a structure would have the added advantage of relieving students of the pressure of too many examinations.

In the pre-primary sector, the group wanted the Government to subsidise kindergarten teachers' salaries directly, rather than relying on a proposal to subsidise kindergartens indirectly through

a fee assistance scheme for parents.

The Government's long-term goal should be to subsidise fully the provision of pre-primary services, the group said.

Laws should also be introduced providing for teachers' rights to be trained and stating the number of qualified staff each institution should have.

Training programs should be speeded up by using the resources of the Education Department, the polytechnics, the Lee Wai Lee Technical Institute and the universities' extra-mural departments, each of which was involved in such training on its own.

The proposal to set up a pre-school teacher training institute should be reactivated and recognition of the training provided by different institutions should be standardised.

On the training of gradu-

ate teachers, the group felt that the ultimate target should be a fully trained teaching force. It was disappointed that the commission's target was only 90 per cent.

Instead of relying on "blister programs" to boost their training capacity, the two universities should be allowed to plan for actual growth because their resources could be used for refresher training once the initial targets of pre-service training were met.

The proposal to provide graduate training to 30 primary school heads every year was welcomed, but the group felt that the number should be increased.

On open education, the group welcomed the proposed formation of a consortium by the five publicly-funded tertiary institutions, but felt that the commission had neglected the role played by voluntary agencies.