

14 Oct 1992

700 teachers needed — report

By MARIANA WAN

HONGKONG will need about 700 more primary school teachers if it is to implement an Education Commission recommendation to provide whole-day schooling for all senior primary classes by the year 2001.

The proposal, along with the testing of pupils' proficiency in English, Chinese and mathematics as early as Primary Three, will be one of the key recommendations in the powerful Education Commission's fourth report.

The nine-chapter report, which was finalised last week and will be published next month, outlines the strategy Government should adopt for improving the language skills of the territory's young and reviews the nine-year compulsory education scheme.

Discussion on the final draft

was closed last Monday by the 15-member Education Commission, which is chaired by Mrs Rita Fan Hsu Lai-tai.

The report details the measures needed to raise educational standards in local classrooms, with members saying they are mindful of the principle that quantity alone should no longer be the yardstick for education.

The commission wants to improve the standard of education from primary level upwards to ensure a good supply of quality students for an expanding tertiary education. The other concern is that school leavers not interested in further education should be sufficiently equipped to enter the workforce.

At present, there is a shortage of teachers in Hongkong, but education sources expect to be able to find the additional teachers, given the increases will come over nine

years. There are about 19,200 primary school teachers in Hongkong.

Commission members agree that putting Primary Five and Six pupils in school for longer hours will offer increased teacher contact at a stage when pupils' performance will begin to be assessed for placement in secondary schools.

The phasing in of a mixed-mode operation, which will begin in 1992, is the most costly item outlined in the report.

It will cost about \$1 billion to build an estimated 35 additional schools as well as raising class-teacher ratios from the current 1:1.2 to 1:1.4.

The proposal to test students as early as Primary Three will act as an incentive for schools, parents and pupils to emphasise subjects at which pupils are weak, namely English, before it is too late.

Similar tests are also recom-

mended for Primary Six and Form Three students.

Commission members have suggested that tests conducted as early as Primary Three will not put extra pressure on students as criterion-reference tests did not advocate competition among students.

"The key to the criterion-reference test is to set targets for students, to test them and to decide whether they have attained a certain standard. Students are not competing among themselves," said a source close to the commission.

The English tests to be conducted at Primary Six, however, will continue to be the key factor in determining whether students should be streamed into the English or Chinese language for their secondary education.

Schools will be allowed to decide for themselves whether to use either Chinese or English as the

teaching medium, or use both streams. They will also be allowed to decide the size of each stream.

The Education Department will advise schools on what language to use, based on the English test results.

"We will point out to schools the kind of students they are getting and their results, and make our recommendations accordingly," said the source.

"If they insist on using English as the teaching medium, they should then prove in future assessment tests that their students can cope."

"Inspections will also be conducted during the years to ensure that teachers are qualified to use English to teach, and that they are using it in classes. We hope this will exert certain pressure on schools to follow the department's advice," he said.

The proposal to stream second-

ary students according to their proficiency in English was first put forward in an Education Department report on language-improvement measures.

It says only students with good English skills, estimated to number about 30 per cent, are put in the English stream, which uses the language as the medium of instruction in all subjects except Chinese language and Chinese history.

The remaining students are put in the Chinese stream, which uses Chinese as the teaching language in all subjects except English.

The Education Commission will also recommend the introduction of intensive English courses for school leavers entering the workforce.

It is thought that this will help allay parents' fears that their children's job prospects will be

Continued Page 2

700 primary tutors sought

• From Page 1

jeopardised if they receive a Chinese-language education.

Form Six and Seven students from Chinese secondary schools will be given an English bridging course to help them switch at the tertiary level from learning in Chinese to learning in English.

"They can make use of the summer break between Form Six and Seven to do the course and also do part of it during Form Six," the source said.

"This also applies to Primary Six students, as most of them know by July each year which secondary school they are allocated to. They have a whole summer to do the bridging course."

The courses will be conducted by the Vocational Training Council, the Institute of Language Education under the Education Department, and selected private-sector institutions.

It is also recommended

that the Curriculum Development Council be upgraded to a high-level consultation body supported by a working arm under the Education Department.

After establishment in 1992, it is recommended that the council compile detailed studies on module curriculum.

The Education Commission also will recommend the abolition of corporal punishment.