

Aided school plan could help trim student expense

BY VICTORIA LAI

GOVERNMENT funded schools should be turned into aided schools, which cost up to 30 per cent less per pupil, a district board member said yesterday.

Sham Shui Po District Board member Cheung Man-ping, said Government schools should be converted into aided schools as a cost-effective way to achieve better school management.

Pupils in Government schools cost 20-30 per cent more per head than aided counterparts, Mr Cheung said.

He also challenged the pilot Schools Management Initiative (SMI) scheme and a recent proposal by the Board of Education to amend the Education Ordinance.

Mr Cheung said the proposed amendment was designed to clarify vague clauses regarding the registration of school management boards members by the director of education.

He said the recommendations fell short of the objective to devolve control of school management to parents and teachers.

Approval by the director of education is currently required before an applicant can qualify as a school manager and apply for a position at a school.

In future, a school manager would be considered to hold the general qualification if he gains a management position at a school.

"The Education Department loses control of the suitability of the applicant once he has been registered to be a secondary school manager when he may not be ideal to sit on the board at primary school level," he said.

Mr Cheung also attacked the SMI scheme which began

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last September with 50 schools taking part.

SMI was intended to give individual schools more control over their own affairs.

"The policy was formulated and enforced so suddenly, that there was not enough preparation - physical and psychological, on the part of school managers, principals, teachers as well as parents and students," he said.

The Government hoped to involve more than 1,200 Government and privately subsidised schools by late 1993.