

# 4 wise men's review goes to Exco soon

GRUELLING hurdles of examinations faced by Hongkong students will come under serious review this year, Director of Education Colwyn Haye said yesterday.

Speaking at a Zonta Club luncheon, Mr Haye said an overall review, compiled by the "four wise men" from Britain on Hongkong's education system, is already in the hands of the governor and will go before the Executive Council in a few weeks.

The establishment of a Chinese Language Foundation, agreed to in principle last year, will also come up for discussion in Exco very soon, he said.

An in-depth research on how far, and why, standards of proficiency in languages have fallen, will be initiated this year following a preliminary study completed by the Education Department's research team.

On the overall review,

Mr Haye said: "I really do confidently believe it will be published. There has been so much public interest in its contents. But I can't say so definitely as that would preempt the Executive Council.

"I can't say any more on what is in the review either," he said, referring his audience to the topics focused on by the consultants in last year's plenary discussions, namely, language in schools, simplification of the school system, examinations, and management and organisation of the department.

"Exco won't take too long (with the review). They are not examining its contents, just what to do with it," he said.

The topic of examinations promises to be one of the most contentious for the coming year, as "the policy and mechanism has to be looked at afresh", said Mr Haye, referring specifically to the Junior Secondary Education

Assessment (JSEA).

Describing education up to Form 5 as "everyone's birthright," Mr Haye said that there must be courses for both the very clever and the less clever, "so that they can all get some sort of certificate at the end".

"We're going to have to do something about that certificate," he continued, "that's where our curriculum reform is going."

Mr Haye's emphasis on examinations was borne out by comments of another education source, who stated that the Curriculum Development Committee is understood "to have been looking at this question."

## RESPONSE

The Chinese Language Foundation, a community-based institution for raising the proficiency level in languages, has been one response to the widespread concern about current language standards, continued Mr Haye, and the details of how to set it up and how to phase it will be hammered out behind the closed doors of Exco very soon.

"Commonsense tells us the standards are falling, because so many people are screaming," he said.

Mr Haye described 1982 as a year of achievement for the Education Department, listing such developments as the admission of 93 non-profit making schools to fully-aided status, and the opening of 21 new aided secondary schools in their own premises.

More teachers for remedial work, careers education and counselling have been employed, more facilities have been provided such as ETV and audio-visual aids, and the 1981 White Paper on primary and pre-primary education has been implemented.

"The problem of quantity seems to have been solved. What remains is the question of quality," he said, referring to educational opportunities.

As for 1983, "I think it is safe to prophesy that we shall be taking a very hard look at what we have been doing and where we are going," he said.