

Academic opposes plan to double tertiary places

By Rita Lun

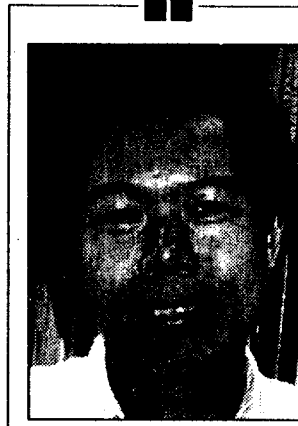
A SENIOR university professor warned yesterday that the rapid expansion of tertiary education in the territory was a rash decision made to stabilise Hongkong after the 1989 June 4 crackdown.

Hongkong University sociology professor Wong Siu-lun said the 100 per cent increase in tertiary places over the next three years was too drastic and would create problems.

"The sudden shift in the education policy is a rash decision made by the Government in the midst of confusion, hoping to rebuild its image and to regain the confidence of Hongkong people," Prof Wong said.

He was speaking at a seminar, "One Country Two Systems", organised by Hongkong delegate to the National People's Congress Liu Yiu-chu.

In 1988, the Government announced a rise in first-year, first-degree



The sudden shift in the education policy is a rash decision made by the Government in the midst of confusion, hoping to rebuild its image and to regain the confidence of Hongkong people.

— Sociology professor Wong Siu-lun

places from 7 per cent to 13 per cent of the relevant age group by 1995.

But in the following October, four months after the Tiananmen crackdown, the Governor unveiled a new programme which doubled the number of first year-year, first-degree places from 7,000 to 15,000 by 1995. Total tertiary places

were also to be doubled to 67,000 in six years.

The Government said the decision was intended to curb the brain drain in the wake of June 4. But the decision has been greeted with reserve by some educators because of the strain it places on the system.

Prof Wong said the expansion of tertiary edu-

cation would lower educational standards at tertiary institutions.

He said Government funding did not cover the cost of the extra places and resulted in less funding for each student.

Meanwhile, former member of the Basic Law Drafting Committee Prof Xiao Wei-yun called for widespread promotion of the Basic Law to realise the principle of "one country two systems" in Hongkong after 1997.

The Beijing University professor, who failed to attend the seminar, made his appeal indirectly through Liu Yiu-chu.

In the read speech, Prof Xiao stressed that the Basic Law should be understood and made familiar to the people of Hongkong.

"Only if the spirit of the Basic Law is deeply transpired into the mind of every Hongkong citizen could it be truly respected and practised," he said.