

香港學術評審局

HONG KONG COUNCIL FOR
ACADEMIC ACCREDITATION

HKCAA

ACCREDIT
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NOTE

ISSUE NO. 22 MARCH 2001

Chairman : Professor John C Y Leong, OBE, JP
Vice-Chairman : Mr Edmund K H Leung, OBE, JP
Executive Director : Miss W S Wong

Chairman's Message

As a sequel of the tremendous success of our International Conference held on 4-5 December 2000, I wish to heartily thank all the delegates coming from different parts of the world, and local colleagues and friends of the HKCAA for their participation and presentations. The Conference has updated us on the latest global trends and developments in the quality assurance of higher education. As you might expect, the Cover Story of this issue of *Accredit Note* will report on the highlights of the Conference.

It is evident from the Conference presentations that the healthy development of higher education requires an increase not only in student numbers but also in student quality. That is why, coupled with the expansion of higher education in the 1990s, the HKCAA was established as an independent quality assurance body for higher education. The International Conference, on the theme of "New Millennium: Quality and Innovations in Higher Education", was held as an HKCAA Tenth Anniversary event. The many concerns expressed at the Conference, in particular over the quality of new forms of educational delivery, reinforce the concept that quality and quality assurance cannot be taken for granted. This is what underpins

the validation exercises carried out by the HKCAA in the capacity of an external review agent. In more and more cases, one finds an



increased worldwide awareness of the importance of the external and independent review process. We learn, for example, in the UK, universities and degree-awarding colleges, though autonomous and self-regulating, are beginning to be subject to some sort of external review at different levels. The UK authorities and those in other

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countries are also moving towards the development of systems of quality control over off-shore/transnational educational provision.

Although quality might be a difficult and variable concept for many, quality assurance is critical for education provision as well as becoming a mission in other walks of life. The HKCAA has been drawing upon international and local expertise to enhance the quality of education in Hong Kong and in exchange it also shares its experience with QA bodies in other parts of the world. It is within an international QA framework that the validation activities have been undertaken, including the recent ones conducted for the Caritas Francis Hsu College and the Hong Kong Shue Yan College. The International Conference provided a forum for the HKCAA to update its practices and to confirm that its modes and criteria of operation are in line with international trends.

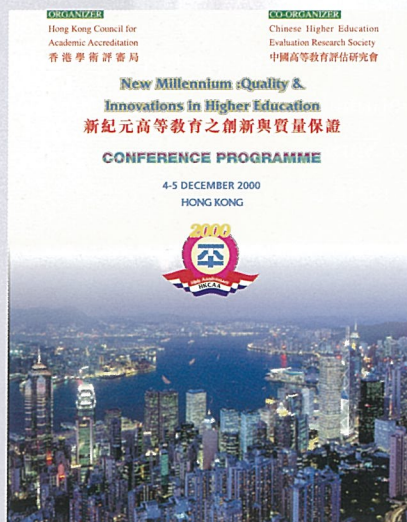
To brave the challenge of a knowledge-based economy and the globalisation of socio-economic activities, the education scenario in Hong Kong

has been undergoing a number of significant reforms in recent years. We are seeing the imminent reforms proposed by the Education Commission; initiatives such as the Project Springboard designed as an alternative route to the traditional academic curricula; and the Language Proficiency Training Scheme for the continuing professional development of school teachers, etc. As initiatives which are not underpinned by quality assurance mechanisms are unlikely to succeed, we are thrilled to have participated to various degrees in the quality assurance of many of these new projects. And we look forward to sharing our experiences about these and many other new developments with our international colleagues in other forums/conferences in future.



Professor John C Y Leong, OBE, JP
Chairman
HKCAA

THE HKCAA TENTH ANNIVERSARY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE



The HKCAA successfully organized its third International Conference from 4-5 December 2000 at the Sheraton Hong Kong Hotel. It was co-organized with the Chinese Higher Education Evaluation Research Society [中國高等教育評估研究會] and the Conference theme was "New Millennium: Quality and Innovations in Higher Education". The

Conference aimed at gathering education experts and scholars from all over the world to exchange views and visions on how to meet the challenges of innovative developments and quality assurance in higher education in the new millennium. The Conference was attended by 173 delegates from 24 countries (including Australia, Bahrain, Canada, China, Chile, Ethiopia, France,



international collaboration in quality assurance, and I applaud the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation and the Chinese Higher Education Evaluation Research Society for the initiative in organising this Conference. I am sure we will all benefit from the sharing of international perspectives and experiences."

Mrs Law then drew the audience's attention to the importance of lifelong learning and quality control of higher education: "In a knowledge-based society where lifelong learning is the only way to uphold one's currency, continuing education is a thriving business, and transnational education, a booming trade."



Professor Gu Ming-yuan (顧明遠教授), Chairman of the Co-organizer: Chinese Higher Education Evaluation Research Society (CHEERS)

Germany, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Namibia, New Zealand, Philippines, Russia, South Africa, Sweden, UK, Uruguay, USA and Vietnam) together with invited guests and Council members.

Our Council was honoured by the presence of **Mrs Fanny Law**, JP, Secretary for Education and Manpower of the Hong Kong SAR Government, who officiated the Opening of the Conference. Mrs Law in the Opening Address said, "The Conference has brought together distinguished academics and education experts from around the world to explore the new dimensions of quality assurance in higher education in the new millennium; an era marked by globalisation and innovations. The changing landscape of higher education calls for more



173 delegates from 24 countries



HKCAA Chairman Professor John Leong presenting a souvenir to the Secretary for Education and Manpower Mrs Fanny Law.

She affirmed, "In Hong Kong, *we think globally and act locally*. Against the backdrop of an increasingly knowledge-based, technology-driven and competitive environment, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government accords top priority to education, as a cornerstone of our social development policy. We are firmly committed to investing in human resources as an investment in the future. We have recently completed a comprehensive review of our education system, from early childhood to higher education, and developed a blueprint of education for the 21st century. Our vision is to nurture a new generation of global citizens who are creative, resilient, effective in communication, capable of independent and critical thinking, and committed to lifelong learning. ... As Hong Kong undergoes continuous economic re-structuring, and with China's impending accession to the World Trade Organisation, the demand for knowledge workers is expected to increase. Our Chief Executive has recently announced in his policy address a vision to provide tertiary education for up to 60% of the 17 to 20-year age cohort within ten

years."

In line with this rising expectation for knowledge workers, the Secretary anticipated: "The bulk of the expansion to be in sub-degree programmes as there is a huge unmet demand for associate professionals. We invite existing tertiary institutions, continuing education institutions, private corporations and professional organisations to participate in contributing towards this vision, and we welcome collaboration with overseas institutions. We envision the development of a more diversified, flexible and progressive system of higher education, which will provide for multiple points of entry and exit, and accumulation and transfer of credits among institutions."

After reviewing the rapid growth of the worldwide and local academic market, Mrs Law raised concern over the quality assurance of higher education in an increasingly competitive market. She was looking forward to a quality assurance mechanism "that is robust, without being intrusive; responsive and flexible, without



The Secretary for Education and Manpower Mrs Fanny Law, JP with Council members of the HKCAA



From left to right : Mr Edmund Leung, OBE, JP (Vice-Chairman of the HKCAA), Professor John Leong, OBE, JP (Chairman of the HKCAA), Mr Wang Yajie (Deputy Director of the Office of the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council, PRC) and Professor Danny Wong (Chairman of the Conference Organizing Committee)

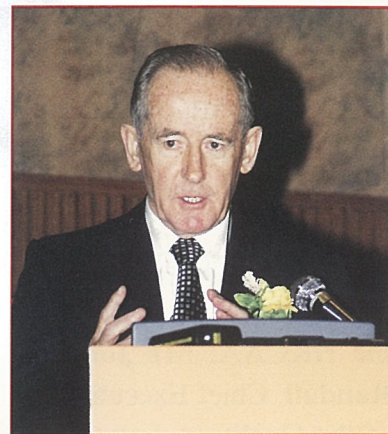


From left to right : Ms W S Wong (Executive Director of the HKCAA), Professor John Leong, OBE, JP and Dr Andrew Chuang, SBS, JP (former Chairman of the HKCAA)

compromising on standards". With confidence, she said, "The HKCAA, with its expertise and track record, will be a major player and facilitator in developing a quality assurance mechanism suited to the evolving higher education system." In her concluding remark, Mrs Law reiterated that she would like to work closely with the HKCAA "in developing a comprehensive quality assurance mechanism as Hong Kong moves ahead in building a more diversified, flexible, and accessible system of higher education that is consistent with Hong Kong's vision of being a world city in Asia and a major city of China."

Immediately after Mrs Law's address, the Conference commenced and the two-day programme included two Keynote speeches,

Emeritus Professor Ken McKinnon (former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Wollongong, Australia)



Mr Wang Yajie (王亞傑主任), Deputy Director of the Office of the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council, PRC

three Forum sessions and three Parallel sessions. The Keynote speeches on the first and second day of the Conference were presented respectively by **Dr Barry McGaw**, Deputy Director of Education of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and **Sir John Daniel**, Vice-Chancellor of the Open University, UK. It was also our honour and privilege to have nine eminent top-



Professor T P Leung (Vice-President of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University)

class speakers share their views on higher education in the three Forum sessions. According to the sequence of their presentations, they are **Professor John Leong**, OBE, JP, Chairman of the HKCAA; **Mr John Randall**, Chief Executive of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, UK; **Emeritus**



Mr Moses Cheng, OBE, JP (Chairman of the Board of Education, HKSAR)

Professor Ken McKinnon, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Wollongong, Australia; **Mr Wang Yajie** (王亞傑主任), Deputy Director of the Office of the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council (國務院學位委員會辦公室副主任), PRC; **Dr Judith Eaton**, President of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, USA; **Professor Leung Tin-pui**, Vice-President of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University; **Sir Christopher Ball**, founding Chairman of the Global University Alliance and Chancellor of the University of

Derby, UK; **Dr Andrew Chuang**, SBS, JP, former Chairman of the HKCAA; and **Mr Moses Cheng**, OBE, JP, Chairman of the Board of Education, Hong Kong SAR. Forty-six papers from academics and practitioners were also presented in the three Parallel sessions of the two-day Conference. All the papers were of a high quality and the corresponding presentations

were inspiring and well received by the participants. Most of the papers focused on the discussion of quality assurance and its relation with innovative developments in higher education. Readers can browse the full papers and/or their abstracts at the HKCAA website (<http://www.hkcaa.edu.hk/keynotes.htm>).

Some of the plenary speakers' inspiring thoughts with particular relevance to the Conference theme of quality assurance and innovations in higher education are extracted below.

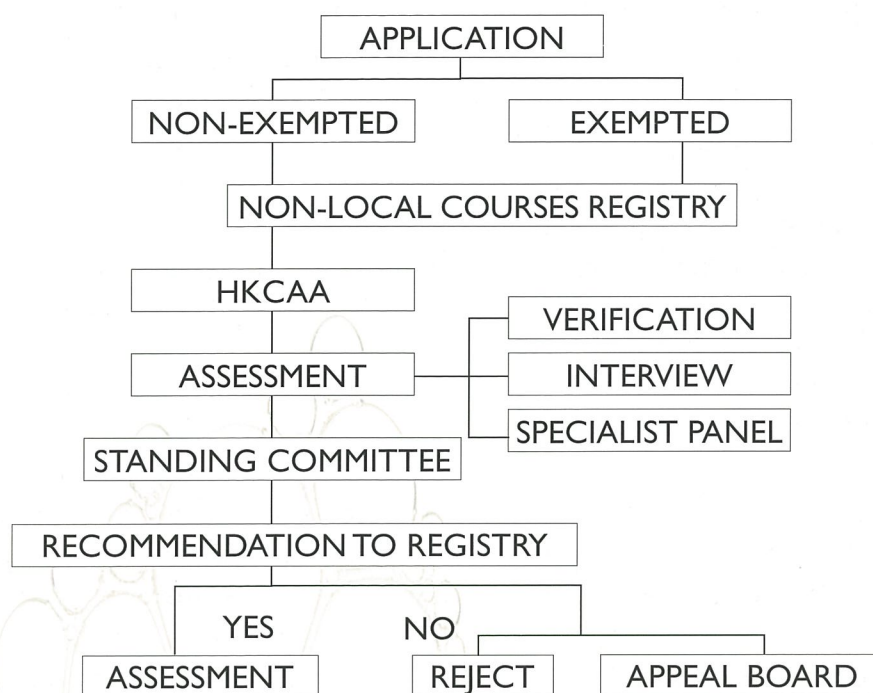
Free Market Vs Quality : the Hong Kong Experience of Global Education

*Professor John C Y Leong, OBE, JP
Chairman, HKCAA*

Professor Leong said that the HKCAA has always had a keen interest in the quality of courses offered in Hong Kong by non-local institutions and participated actively in the planning of legislation for the control of those courses. He informed the Conference participants that the Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance was enacted in 1997, and that the Council was commissioned by the Registrar of Non-local Courses to conduct assessment of

applications of non-local courses seeking registration under the Ordinance. Under the legislation, all courses conducted in Hong Kong leading to the award of non-local higher academic qualifications (i.e. Sub-degree, degree, postgraduate or other post-secondary qualifications) or professional qualifications must apply for registration. Professor Leong explicated to the Conference participants the procedures for registration of non-local courses.

Procedures for Registration of Non-local Courses



He went on to explain the registration criteria, and the indicators of effective measures to maintain quality employed by the HKCAA in its assessment process.

Criteria for Registration of Non-local (Academic) Courses

- recognition of the course by the non-local institution in the home country
- effective measures in place to ensure standard of the course is maintained at a level comparable with same/similar course in home country
- recognition of comparability in standard by the non-local institution
- recognition of comparability of standard by the academic communities and the relevant accreditation authorities of the country concerned

Criteria for Registration of Non-local (Professional) Courses

- recognition of the course by the non-

local professional body in the home country

- recognition of the non-local professional body in home country as an authoritative and representative professional body in the relevant profession

Indicators of Effective Measures to Maintain Quality

- institutional mechanisms for course approval and monitoring
- course design, teaching and delivery methods, staff qualifications and appointment procedures
- student support services, assessment procedures and criteria and course management
- assessment procedures
- course management

Professor Leong further elaborated that up to November 2000, the Council had

processed 366 applications for the registration of non-local higher academic qualifications and another 40 applications for non-local professional qualifications, majority of which are in the areas of Business Management, Computing and Science & Technology. He explained that the delivery of offshore courses can sometimes be fraught with problems, arising from insufficient understanding of nature of transnational education, insufficient understanding of local

educational context, the lack of comprehensive quality assurance measures for offshore courses, over-reliance on local partners or lack of communication, difficulties in providing teaching and learning support in a foreign country, and, also problems arising from non-academic constraints and considerations. All these present challenges to the monitoring role of the Council over the delivery of offshore courses by non-local institutions.

Making Lifelong Learning a Reality: Satisfying Need and Financing Access

Dr Barry McGaw

Deputy Director of Education, OECD

With the aid of statistics, Dr McGaw unveiled the trend of increasing demand and investment in education and training among OECD countries. He further showed that OECD countries had witnessed an increase in the average educational attainment of working-age population of 2¼ years.

The structural changes (i.e. globalization, technological change and changes in employment) in the knowledge economy had accelerated the need for higher levels of competencies, both cognitive and interpersonal, of the employees in the labour market. Dr McGaw further elaborated that making lifelong learning accessible would on the one hand enhance benefits for individuals, enterprises and countries, and on the other hand reduce learning costs by achieving efficiencies, providing access through tax breaks on learning expenditure, and shortening courses through focused contents and exemption for prior learning.

Dr McGaw pointed out that adult participation in tertiary education had increased rapidly across OECD countries and the trend can be observed

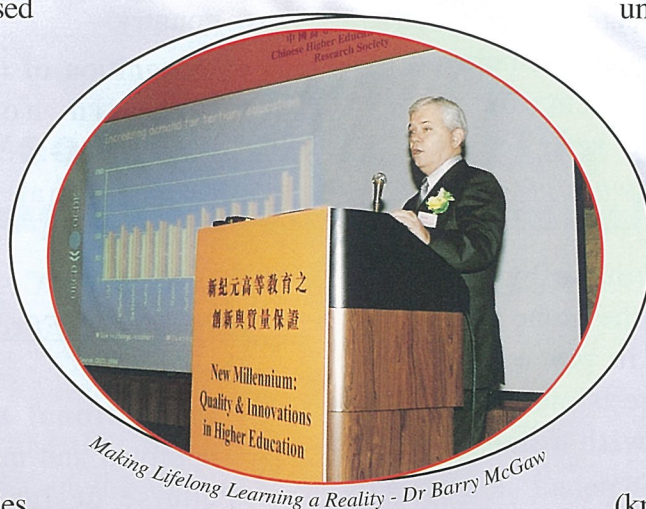
in the rapid increase of non-university tertiary providers

and the fast expansion of enrolment growth in universities. In response to these rapid changes, there should be some necessary shifts in focus alongside the lifelong learning objectives.

There should be a shift from "degree completion to competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes)"

for students; and from "core

business to specific products" for universities. Lastly, Dr McGaw concluded that the unique role of tertiary education institutions in building human capital should be shifted from the traditional mode to the creation of new learning packages which can cater for the needs of a diversified student population.



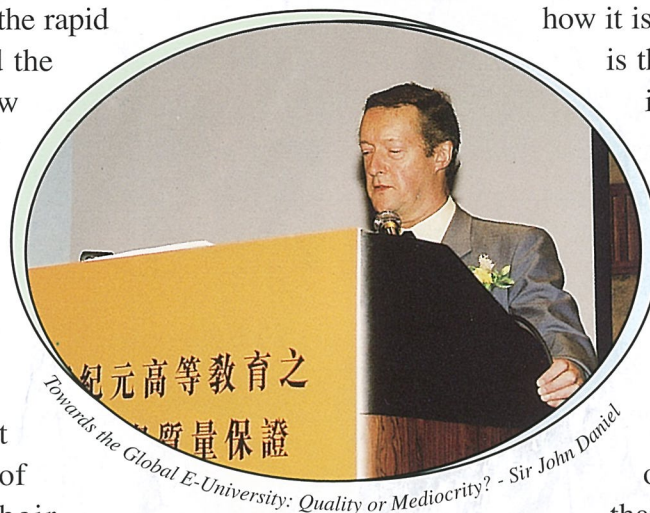
Making Lifelong Learning a Reality - Dr Barry McGaw

Towards the Global E-University: Quality or Mediocrity?

Sir John Daniel

Vice-Chancellor, The Open University, UK

Dr McGaw's suggestion was echoed by Sir John's analysis of the current development of the global e-university. Sir John examined the current developments in higher education in the UK and focused on the study of 'Borderless Education'. This 'Borderless' phenomenon can be observed through the rapid growth of e-learning and the frequent use of new knowledge media for educational purposes. This rapid growth is supported by the emergence of a group of new "for-profit" and "corporate" universities. Sir John also pointed out that there was a trend of institutions taking their teaching to other countries around the world instead of receiving students on the campus in its home country. One question that Sir John raised in his speech was "What constitutes quality e-learning and how do you deliver it?" He further asked, "How will the challenges of quality assurance change as distance teaching universities make more use of



online methods and spread their wings internationally?" After examining the six-dimensional quality assessment framework in the UK and the case analysis of the Open University in the UK, Sir John emphasized that "an institution's mission and value system, and how it is made effective in practice, is the best predictor of quality in e-learning". That means when we are determined to develop "for-profit" university business, we should revisit the mission and value system of our university, and its capability to guarantee the quality of university output. There is no doubt that lifelong learning and the emergence of innovative teaching media will dominate the education market in the next ten to twenty years. More and more institutions will provide various kinds of courses in order to meet the market needs. As a result, a relevant quality assurance mechanism should be developed to control the quality output of those courses.

The Impact of Societal Change upon Education and its Quality Assurance

Sir Christopher Ball

Chairman, Global University Alliance

Sir Christopher addressed the topic from a market viewpoint, by a review of the impact of social change, organizational restructuring and quality assurance on higher education. Most countries

in the world are attempting to reform their inherited education systems in order to achieve better outcomes, and higher education is in a similar process of reform.

He explained the context of social change which evolves around five main issues. They are "the shift from meritocracy to democracy", "the equality between men and women", "the growing effectiveness of the market in planning and service delivery", "the recognition of the partial failure of the 19-20th century model of state-controlled education", and "the impact of ICT (Information Communication Technology)".

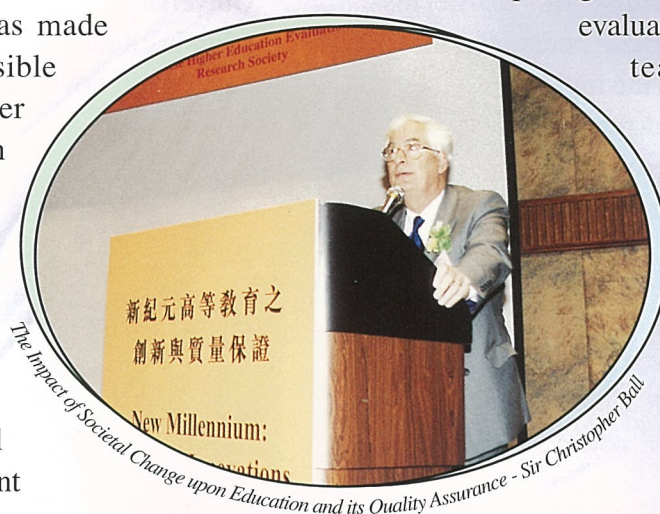
This context has made higher education susceptible to market forces. The demand-led global University has made higher education accessible and available to a greater number of people in different locations at lower prices. That means that market forces supersede the central and state controlled planning model. He stressed, "the elite (Oxford) model cannot deliver what we want now. The nature of change facing higher education is likely to be revolutionary and evolutionary".

Sir Christopher further asserted, "Organizations prosper and thrive if they attend carefully to four critical indicators: these are quality, availability, relevance and price (QARP). Both the GUA (Global University Alliance) and higher education generally need to consider these. Market forces always punish those who fail the QARP test. We shall ensure the availability of our courses and programmes of higher education through the medium of ICT - e-learning and online delivery. We shall ensure their relevance through extensive market research. What we

know already is that demand focuses on business studies, ICT, health, education, - and the rest! You will note that a demand-led global University has an interesting faculty structure. Our prices will be reduced to enable poor people in poor countries to have access to high-quality higher education. The combination of online learning and local support for students makes this possible."

On the question of quality, Sir Christopher distinguished three kinds of quality and each requiring assurance. The first is academic evaluation of the curriculum and teaching. The second is student evaluation of the learning experience; and the third is the social evaluation of the outcomes. He stressed the responsibility of the providers of higher education to provide quality assurance and evaluation by independent parties. As the Chairman of GUA (Global University Alliance), he would like to see the emergence of reciprocal evaluation among the ten universities for the first kind of quality.

In the long run, he expected to have reliable global external evaluation of the GUA's curriculum and teaching. He also suggested that external agency should take up the role of monitoring the quality of student experience. With regard to the problem of social evaluation, he proposed a solution by market forces. He said, "Society will not be satisfied if we cannot show that at least our students have not cheated and that they are 'fit for purpose'."



Meeting the Challenge of Global Provision: International Cooperation in Quality Assurance

Mr John Randall

Chief Executive, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, UK

Mr Randall proposed an approach to the mutual recognition of higher education qualifications, based upon outcomes achieved, and the nature of the knowledge and understanding upon which those outcomes are based.

Mr Randall asserted that higher education has always been and will be a global business, because there is no boundary for knowledge and ideas. Users of higher education, including students and employers, have to compare programmes offered by providers in different countries. Therefore, there is an increasing need for quality assurance agencies to cooperate and to provide comparative information.

Outcomes of higher education provide a basis for comparison. These include the skills and intellectual attributes associated with the graduates, the corpus of knowledge studied to develop these skills, and the conceptual

understanding required to explain and order advanced knowledge.

Mr Randall pointed out, "Qualifications awarded attest to these attributes. Both regionally and globally, the world is moving towards systems of mutual recognition of qualifications. In the professional field, systems of mutual recognition are relatively well established. In the academic world, regional initiatives, such as the Bologna Declaration in Europe, are leading towards common approaches to the recognition of higher education qualifications."

He further affirmed, "A university should be able to demonstrate how the design of the curriculum secures academic and intellectual progression by imposing increased demands on the learners over time, in terms of the acquisition of knowledge and skills, the capacity for conceptualization, and increasing autonomy in learning."



Change in Higher Education: Does External Quality Review Keep Pace?

Dr Judith Eaton

President, Council for Higher Education Accreditation

According to Dr Eaton, the central role of external quality review in higher education is to preserve and enhance the quality of



*The Challenge of Change in Higher Education to
External Quality Review - Dr Judith Eaton*

higher education. Existing quality assurance and accreditation practices can be effectively applied to assure quality as higher education meets the challenges of dramatic changes both within countries and internationally.

Expanding access, growth in private higher education provision, accommodating distance learning operation and a restructuring of financing of higher education are the major changes affecting higher education within countries. Simultaneously, international changes include portability of credits and credentials, a de facto international environment for

distance learning, concern for national values when considering quality and the growing presence of international institutions.

She concluded, "The changes in higher education, while demonstrating common themes, are taking place in an environment of enormous complexity of institutions and programs, national preferences, history and economic conditions. Quality review practices, similarly tied to history, place and preferences, nonetheless provide a **robust response** to the urgent need for strong international commitment to quality and effective modes of cooperation and communication around the world. Whether through the application of existing practices, developing new practices within current frameworks or establishing new frameworks entirely, **the quality review community is keeping pace and, in many instances, providing leadership.** ... Higher education institutions and quality review organizations can further sustain this robust response by continuing to work together to address some of the suggestions made here: a common language of international quality review, new attention to reciprocity agreements about quality, exploration of international standards and focused conversations within the quality review community in areas of particular significance."

The Council has indeed been privileged in being able to invite so many eminent speakers. Judging from the large number of questions and comments made after the speakers, all the presentations in the Plenary



Education Reform in Hong Kong - The Hon Antony K C Leung, GBS, JP

The Conference Dinner was held at the Sheraton Ballroom on 4 December and the Hon Antony K C Leung, GBS, JP, Chairman of the Education Commission, Hong Kong SAR, delivered a speech on "Education Reform in Hong Kong". He shared with the dinner participants his opinions and viewpoints on the Education Blueprint for the 21st century and his vision won acclaim from the international audience. After the speech, there was musical performance conducted by students from the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts lending a joyous and

sessions and Parallel sessions were very well received. Stimulating discussion took place among the participants and opinions and views were exchanged in the Conference Hall and function rooms. Delegates and guests expressed appreciation for the HKCAA Secretariat's effort in the logistic arrangements of the Conference.



Professor Danny Wong (right), Chairman of the Conference Organizing Committee, is receiving a souvenir from Professor Bi Jiaju (畢家駒教授), Tongji University.



HKCAA Chairman Professor John CY Leong (left) is receiving a souvenir from Mr Yan Zhengguang (嚴正廣先生), Director of Jiangsu Education Evaluation Institute.



Professor Yu Daoyin (郁道銀教授), Vice President of the Tianjin University of China and Professor John C Y Leong, HKCAA Chairman.

delightful touch to the evening. The dinner was concluded by the presentation of souvenirs to the HKCAA from Mr Yan Zhengguang (嚴正廣先生), Director of Jiangsu Education Evaluation Institute, Professor Yu Daoyin (郁道銀教授), Vice President of the Tianjin University of China, and Professor Bi Jiaju (畢家駒教授) from Tongji University.



Musical performance at the Conference dinner

PROJECT SPRINGBOARD

In January 2000, the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) of the Hong Kong SAR Government initiated a plan to launch a programme "Project Springboard" for secondary school leavers and adult learners. The Project aims to offer newly designed courses to secondary five school leavers and adult learners aged 21 or above with a view of enabling them to attain, upon satisfactory completion of a full programme, a standard comparable to five subject passes in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination

(HKCEE) for employment and continuing education purposes. The Project commenced in October 2000.

In response to the Government's initiative, member institutions of the Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions (FCE) (formed by members of continuing education departments of the University Grants Committee funded-institutions, the Open University of Hong Kong, Caritas Adult and Higher Education Services and the

Vocational Training Council) took up the responsibility to organise and offer the programmes under the Project. A Programme Management Committee was set up by FCE in March 2000 to oversee the development of the programmes. A full Project Springboard programme requires 600 hours of studies, comprising 420 hours for core modules and 180 hours for elective modules. There are at present seven core modules, i.e. Chinese, English (2 modules), Putonghua, Mathematics in Practices, Information Technology Applications and Communication Skills, which are compulsory, as well as a number of elective modules offered by different institutes.

The HKCAA was formally commissioned by the Hong Kong SAR Government as an Independent Consultant in September 2000 to provide professional advice and recommendations on the academic standards and quality assurance of the Project Springboard. In reviewing the Project Springboard, the HKCAA has conducted a two-stage assessment process:

- (a) Stage One - Review of course proposal and course materials; and
- (b) Stage Two - Monitoring of the programme outcomes

In providing an independent opinion to the Government, the HKCAA sought expertise from its Council members and subject specialists. A Core Panel under the

Chairmanship of Professor Peter Dobson, HKCAA Council member, was formed. The Panel includes employers, school principals/teachers, university academics, and representatives of relevant professional groups who have experience and expertise in the Hong Kong secondary school education. Comments were further sought from various subject experts. The Core Panel met on several occasions to discuss issues pertinent to the Project. To facilitate an understanding of the Project and the individual subjects of the Project, arrangements were made for some of the HKCAA Core Panel members and subject experts to meet with the relevant Springboard course designers and developers.

The stage one assessment process was completed in December 2000. Subsequent to the assessment, the HKCAA submitted to the EMB an interim report setting out the findings, recommendations and conclusions about the course proposal, and the quality assurance mechanisms of the Project.

Taking into consideration the recommendations from the HKCAA, the Government announced on 26 December 2000 that it will accept the full Project Springboard certificates as meeting the entry qualifications for appointment to Government jobs requiring five passes in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination.

ASSESSMENT OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY TRAINING COURSES

With growing competition resulted from globalization of economy, the Language Proficiency Initiative signifies the Hong Kong SAR Government's forward-looking commitment to boosting school teachers' language proficiency. Under the Initiative, serving teachers are required to get benchmarked by successfully meeting the requirements of a language proficiency training course, or by passing the public benchmark examination jointly administered by the Hong Kong Examinations Authority and the Education Department.

The HKCAA welcomes the Government's invitation to contribute the Council's experience and expertise in course review in this Initiative. The HKCAA's consultancy encompasses the design of the *Application Form*, formulation of the Government *Guidelines For Potential Course Providers* and the vetting of course proposals submitted to the Government and its Vetting Committee. There were 15 applications to offer Putonghua courses and 14 applications to offer English courses, the majority of which were approved. With a view to improving quality, conditions are imposed on some of the course proposals. Apart from courses conducted in Hong Kong, there are courses delivered in Australia and in Mainland China.

In preparation for the assessment work, the HKCAA conducted substantial background research, analysis of the Language Proficiency Syllabuses, and meetings with language experts.

To oversee and monitor the assessment process, a Review Panel was set up under the HKCAA comprising Council members, Dr Richard Ho and Professor Y K Fan, and professional staff

members of the HKCAA Secretariat. Dr Richard Ho was invited by the Council Chairman to chair the review panel.

In the process, additional information had to be sought from course providers and clarifications were also sought where unclear or inconsistent information had been provided. As many of the proposals appeared to have been put together hastily, much of the required information was found to be lacking.

The Review Panel spared no pains to ensure that the course proposals are not only quality ones but also ones that can realize the objectives of the Language Proficiency Initiative. The HKCAA has worked closely with the institutions concerned and the Government Vetting Committee to provide assurance of the quality and standards of the course design. We would like to thank the institutions concerned for their cooperation and openness to the HKCAA's independent academic judgement.

The assessment involved a significant amount of academic judgement by the review panel. While the Guidelines indicate the overall parameters for the design of the courses, the great variety in course design necessitated the exercise of academic judgement in the assessment process. Thus the panel examined major quality indicators of course provision, including course duration, modes of delivery, contact hours, quality assurance mechanisms, etc.

The assessment process has been a challenging job, particularly when the Education and Manpower Bureau requested the HKCAA recommendations be accomplished within four weeks and the number of applications far

exceeded what was expected.

The Hong Kong SAR Government attaches no less importance to the exit standards of the training courses, namely the exit language proficiency of the trainees. Now it is for the institutions to turn their course proposals into reality and to strive for continuous improvements.

It is hoped that the approved courses will assist teachers of all capabilities in brushing up their language abilities, and will demonstrate value for the Government subsidy invested in the Language Proficiency Initiative. The HKCAA is looking forward to get involved in the monitoring stage of the training provision.

ADVISORY ASSESSMENT SERVICE FOR THE CARITAS FRANCIS HSU COLLEGE

The HKCAA was engaged by the Government to provide professional advice for assessing the suitability of the Caritas Francis Hsu College to register with the Education Department as a post-secondary college under the Post-Secondary Colleges Ordinance. The assessment exercise consisted of an institutional review of the College and the validations of the four existing Higher Diploma programmes offered by the College in the areas of Company Secretaryship and Administration, Translation and Interpretation, Accounting Studies and Computing Studies.

The institutional review of the College was concluded in March 2000 when the HKCAA Review Panel chaired by the HKCAA Chairman, Professor John Leong, paid a 3-day visit to the College. During the visit, the Panel deliberated with the College senior management, advisers, staff, students and graduates on a wide range of institutional issues with due reference to the requirements of post-secondary college under the Post-Secondary Colleges Ordinance, Cap 320 and the Post-Secondary Colleges Regulations.

Subsequent to the institutional review, four programme validations were conducted during March to November 2000 for the College's Higher Diploma programmes, the purpose of which is to evaluate the standards of these programmes in comparison with similar programmes offered by local and overseas tertiary institutes. The HKCAA will submit a full report on the whole assessment exercise to the Education Department by the end of May 2001.

The assessment exercise for the Caritas Francis Hsu College saw the expansion of the scope of Council's accreditation activities from degree programmes to sub-degree programmes. Even, before then, the Council already has experience in reviewing sub-degree qualifications via the validation of those degree programmes for which diploma-level programmes were the feeder programmes. The current exercise paved the way for the Council to undertake further work in this area.

ACADEMIC REVIEW FOR THE HONG KONG SHUE YAN COLLEGE

The Hong Kong Shue Yan College was founded as a private independent liberal arts college in 1971 and has been registered under the Post-Secondary Colleges Ordinance since 1976. In 1995, the HKCAA was invited by the College to assess the suitability of its academic environment and processes for the development and introduction of degree programmes. The HKCAA found that the College had made significant achievements and progress through its offer of Diploma programmes, and particular strengths were identified in some programme areas. The College, it was noted, had established a base from which it could eventually become a degree-awarding institution.

In March 2000, the College engaged the HKCAA to validate four proposed degree programmes and to examine the institutional processes as part of the validation exercises. The Council recognized the nature of the College as a privately funded institution and assembled a review panel

of appropriately qualified local and overseas academics and experts. The review visit for institutional issues and the validation of the first degree programme were conducted on 20-24 November 2000.

Professor John Leong, the HKCAA Chairman, chaired the review panel on institutional issues. The Panel noted that the College has made conscious efforts to effect substantive changes to its institutional structures and processes since the last review in 1996. The review was followed by a validation of the proposed four-year full-time Bachelor of Commerce (Honours) in Accounting programme.

Validations of the remaining three programmes in Journalism and Mass Communication, Social Work, and Chinese Language and Literature are tentatively scheduled to take place in February - May 2001.

ASSOCIATE DEGREES

A number of local tertiary institutions are beginning to launch Associate Degree programmes in support of the Government's call for lifelong learning, with a target participation rate for 60% of the relevant age-group to gain access to post-secondary education.

Our Council considers the Associate Degree an exciting development in Hong Kong, which will owe its success to input from various stakeholders, including local academics and

employers and educational bodies including our Council. In this connection, we wish to seek your personal views towards this new breed of qualifications. Your views will be of great value in helping our Council to formulate a framework for this new qualification and make relevant recommendations to the Hong Kong SAR Government. All your views will be treated in strict confidence, unless you indicate otherwise. We look forward to your views by fax [(852) 2845 9910] or email (hkcaa@cityu.edu.hk).

HKCAA 10TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY QUICK CROSSWORD (SOLUTION)



CONTRIBUTION OF ARTICLES

Any article (or information) relating to accreditation or quality assurance issues in higher education is welcome. Please send your contribution to the Editor, Accreditation Note **by 31 May 2001** for the next issue.

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