

**Statement to the Commission of Inquiry on Allegations  
relating to the Hong Kong Institute of Education**

**Mrs LAW FAN Chiu-fun, Fanny**

1. I, Fanny LAW FAN Chiu-fun, currently the Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, was the Director of the former Education Department from 9 November 1999 to 18 June 2000. During this period, I reported to Mr Joseph Wong, the then Secretary for Education and Manpower ("SEM"). I took over from Mr Wong on 3 July 2000 and became SEM until 30 June 2002. My duties as the Director of Education and SEM are set out in Annexes A and B respectively.
2. On 1 July 2002, the Government introduced the Accountability System whereby the office of SEM became a political appointment, and a new civil service post of Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower ("PSEM") was created at the same time. I was PSEM from 1 July 2002 until 30 October 2006. With the merger of the Education and Manpower Bureau ("EMB") and the former Education Department on 1 January 2003, the PSEM subsumed the responsibilities of the former Director of Education, upon abolition of the latter post. My duties as PSEM before and after the merger are set out in Annex C.
3. To put in context the various groundless allegations made by Professor Morris and Professor Luk, being the subject matter of this inquiry, I believe it is both necessary and prudent for me to first provide some background information concerning the education reform which was launched in 2000 amidst an economic downturn that led to a global progressive cut of the government budget commencing in 2003/04. I will also briefly explain the division of administrative responsibilities within EMB.

**Background**

***The Education Reform***

4. Education was one of the three priorities in the election platform of the former Chief Executive, Mr C H Tung. Since he took office, he tasked the Education

Commission, which advises the Government on the overall policy objectives, policies and priorities, to conduct a comprehensive review of the education system in Hong Kong. The aim was to map out a vision and strategy for developing the human resources of Hong Kong to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world.

5. Following intensive discussions, involving over a hundred educators in various sub-committees, and three rounds of extensive public consultation, the Education Commission published in 2000 a blueprint of education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century which covers all levels of education from pre-primary to higher education, as well as lifelong learning. The underpinning philosophy of the Education Commission was to improve the quality of education by providing choice (i.e. market force 市場機制), and enhancing transparency (i.e. accountability 陽光效應) in the delivery of education.
6. The core objectives of the reform are to motivate students to learn, and teach them how to learn on their own; in other words, to develop self-directed lifelong learners. The student-centred approach to teaching and learning calls for changes to what students should learn (the curriculum), how they learn (pedagogy) and how student learning is to be evaluated (assessment). The success of these initiatives will depend heavily on the professionalism of teachers and the way teacher education institutions prepare new teachers.
7. Thus, amongst the core recommendations of the Education Commission, the emphasis is on improving the qualities and professionalism of school teachers in Hong Kong, including kindergarten teachers and principals. The other important recommendation which has a long-term and significant impact on the education system in Hong Kong is the “334” reform, that is, to adopt a 3-year junior secondary, 3-year senior secondary and 4-year undergraduate academic structure. A summary of the recommendations on professional development of teachers/principals, language education and early childhood education is given in Annex D hereto.

#### *Implications of the budget cut*

8. In making decisions on resource deployment, EMB has to take account of the interests of the community as a whole and to maximize the cost-effective use of resources. This is particularly so in the light of the wide-ranging

recommendations made by the Education Commission. Education is in fact the single biggest item of public expenditure, making up about 24% of the Government's annual budget. Furthermore, subvention for schools and other educational institutions, including student financial assistance, make up about 96% of EMB's annual budget. Thus, any overall substantive cut in the education budget invariably required EMB, as a matter of policy, to balance the interests of education as a whole against those of the respective subvented organizations in assessing the competing demands for funding.

9. In order to give policy secretaries the flexibility to deploy resources properly, efficiently and effectively among the programme areas for which they are responsible, the then Financial Secretary, Mr Antony Leung, introduced the 'envelope system' of financial management in 2003/04. Under this system, every year the Financial Secretary informed SEM of the global budget for all education and manpower sectors for which he has policy responsibility, including pre-primary education, school education, higher education, vocational education, and student financial assistance etc.
10. Also in 2003/04, the Financial Secretary set the targets of bringing down total government operating expenditure to \$200 billion, and 20% of GDP or below, by 2008/09. To achieve these targets, bureaux and departments were expected to deliver 11% savings over five years. In 2003/04, EMB achieved 1.8% savings, or \$923 m from its own departmental expenses.
11. As a consequence of the said policy of progressive budget cut from 2003/04 on the one hand, and the funding need of the major reform in the pre-primary and school sectors on the other, the overall budget for the tertiary and vocational sectors had to undergo relatively more severe reduction. For the rollover year 2004/05, grants to the eight institutions funded by the University Grants Committee ("UGC") were reduced by 10% from \$11.563 billion in 2003/04 to \$10.45 billion. Thereafter, the amount of subvention was maintained at about the same level for the 2005-08 triennium. These were fiscal policy-driven changes.
12. The savings achieved were redeployed to fund new education initiatives and contractual growth, including incremental creep and provident fund contribution for aided school teachers. The cumulative value of education improvements introduced between 2003/04 and 2006/07 amounted to \$1.327 billion in recurrent

costs and \$10.7 billion in non-recurrent costs.

13. Between 2000 and 2005, the primary student population dropped by 15%. This was largely due to a sharp decline in the number of school-age children, in particular primary students from the Mainland. Although the drop began in 2000, the declining trend was only established and adjustments made in the 2001-based population projection, published in May 2002. From a positive point of view, the decline in student population and the closure of under-enrolled primary schools had helped to keep up the momentum of the education reform by releasing funds for new education initiatives. On the other hand, the schools and teachers in under-enrolled schools were naturally aggrieved. The Hong Kong Institute of Education ("HKIEd"), being a monolithic teacher education institution, with a focus on primary teachers, was also hard-hit as a result.

#### **Division of Responsibilities within EMB**

14. SEM has overall responsibility for education in Hong Kong, including policy formulation and implementation. In practice, he provides the policy steer and PSEM oversees the implementation. Under the Public Finance Ordinance, the PSEM, being the most senior civil servant, is the Controlling Officer responsible for managing SEM's financial envelope.
15. Within EMB, there are six branches, of which three have a direct interface with the HKIEd. Branch 1 deals with higher education policies and processes the triennium funding for UGC-funded institutions, including the HKIEd. Branch 3 has overall responsibility for teacher education, including teacher supply and demand projections, and represents EMB on the HKIEd Council. Branch 5 deals with curriculum development and early childhood education, which involves the HKIEd in the provision of training for teachers and principals.
16. Resources for the UGC-funded institutions are planned on a triennial basis. The planning cycle for the 2005-08 triennium, for example, began in early 2004. The recent funding cycles cover these periods: 2001-04, 2004/05 (called the rollover year) and 2005-08. The resource planning cycle for the eight UGC-funded institutions begins with a letter from the Chairman of the UGC to SEM to seek the Administration's advice on the manpower requirements for certain disciplines, such as teachers and social workers who are largely employed by

Government or government-funded organizations. Branch 1 then consults Branch 3 on the projected requirements for teacher training places, by levels (sub-degree, first degree and taught post-graduate) and by eight key learning areas (“KLAs”).<sup>1</sup> Branch 3, in turn, has to consult Branch 5 for advice on the provision of teacher training places for early childhood education, and then submits a consolidated reply to Branch 1 for onward submission to UGC

17. The manpower projections take into account existing education policies, student population, teacher turnover, lesson time allocation among the KLAs etc. This is largely a technical process, the outcome of which provides the initial planning parameters for the teacher education institutions (“TEIs”) to prepare their Academic Development Plans. There are further discussions among UGC, TEIs and EMB to resolve any implementation problems identified by UGC or TEIs before the planning parameters are finalized.

### **My Emphasis on Communication**

18. On all counts, the education reform, which was officially launched in October 2000, is an ambitious programme that covers all levels of education and entails changes to the curriculum, pedagogy, student assessment, school places allocation systems, and school governance. It affects one million students and their parents, over 1,000 schools and principals, and over 40,000 teachers. This is a tall order, in particular, at a time of budget constraint.
19. In an open and pluralistic society, there are bound to be differences of opinions. There are also conflicting interests among the various stakeholders. I therefore did not find it surprising that, despite the extensive involvement of educators in formulating the reform blueprint and substantial community support for the education reform during the public consultation, dissatisfaction and criticisms emerged when the reform was implemented and the impact felt.
20. I firmly believe that effective communication is critical. Throughout my eight years of service in education, I regularly visited schools, and met with academics, parents, the school councils and various educational bodies. I also cherished every opportunity to meet with students and teachers, as I considered personal

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<sup>1</sup> These are English, Chinese, Mathematics, Science, Technology; Personal, Social and Humanities; Arts and Physical Education.

contact and direct communication with stakeholders to be more effective. Through the CUHK Master of Education programme (2003-05), which I was enrolled in, I got to know many frontline teachers who shared with me their difficulties in implementing the new curriculum. They also inspired me to seek SEM's agreement to set up a \$550 million School-based Professional Support (SBPS) Fund to engage academic staff to support schools in implementing the education reform and promote experience-sharing among schools.

### **Responding to Public Reactions**

21. Given its importance for both the society and members of the public, the education reform attracted extensive community interests, and a number of daily newspapers have dedicated pages and columns on education.
22. Numerous academics and frontline educators have written about the education reform in various forums. They provide a rich source of ideas and input to policy formulation. For example, in response to the call from an academic to offer no-pay leave to teachers, EMB devised a scheme whereby serving teachers may take one year leave and draw salary at 80% over five years. Further, in the public consultation on the 334 reform, we analysed 360 editorial and feature articles and incorporated their views into the final report.
23. To maintain on-going dialogue and communication, EMB took note of public reactions and media reports on a regular basis and encouraged active engagement with the key stakeholders. Given the vast volume of the publications, it was not possible for EMB to respond to all of them. It was EMB's practice however that, where commentaries contained obvious or significant inaccurate information or misunderstanding which warranted clarification, subject officers would develop a response to clarify the same, and publish the same through the established channels, e.g. letters to the editor, press statements, newspaper articles, announcements on the EMB website, or communicating directly with the source. EMB would only keep in its file copies of these responses and the articles to which responses were made.
24. Occasionally, I would call the writer, if there were any serious misunderstanding of the government policy or significant differences of view in a commentary, or where the writer had offered a new perspective or good suggestions. I fully appreciated the frank exchange of views with critics, as the reform and its

implementation could only be further improved and refined through on-going dialogue and constant reflections on both sides, with the common objective of enhancing the quality of education. Over the past eight years, I have not had any negative feedback on such direct contacts. On the contrary, some openly welcomed the frank exchanges, as the press cuttings in Annex E show.

25. It is my firm belief that, in an open government, civil servants have the responsibility to reach out to stakeholders to gather views, explain policies and receive feedback. I believe academics have an open mind and should welcome discussion of different points of view. A direct approach by civil servants to exchange views should not therefore be seen as interfering with academic freedom.
26. My intention was to establish a common understanding of the facts and narrow the differences between the Government and its critics, as far as possible. I regarded teacher educators as a key partner in the education reform for we relied on them to equip teachers with the professional knowledge and skills to implement the reform. It was also my earnest wish that teacher educators would work in partnership with EMB to help schools and teachers to cope with the demands of the education reform by offering advice on good teaching practices, and to dispel common misconceptions. It was against this background that occasionally I called the President of the HKIEd and other academic staff to discuss current issues and to appeal to them and their colleagues to make more positive use of their newspaper columns and help teachers cope with problems commonly encountered in their work. I wished we could work together to counter the negative image of teachers, or education overall, so as not to deter young people from joining the teaching profession. In two of Dr Lai Kwok-chan's articles (Annex F), he offered a similar view, that is, a negative image of the teaching profession would turn away good students to the detriment of the long-term development of education in Hong Kong.
27. A negative image of teachers started to emerge during the public consultation on the education reform in 1999. This was exacerbated by the publication of the results of the Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers ("LPAT"), introduced for the first time in 2001, which exposed weaknesses in the writing and oral proficiencies of serving and potential English language teachers. The community was seriously concerned and the pressure was felt at the HKIEd. In turn, EMB was blamed for tarnishing the image of teachers, and undue negativity

towards the HKIEd. The reality is there was irresistible pressure from parents and the community for disclosure of the LPAT results. In every press release, EMB was careful to highlight the positive aspects of the LPAT, but what was reported in the media and how the community reacted were beyond EMB's control.

28. Against this backdrop, I now deal with the allegations made by Professor Luk and Professor Morris.

**First Allegation: Cutting Student Numbers**

29. I have no knowledge of the alleged telephone conversation between Prof Arthur Li and Prof Paul Morris in January 2004. I therefore have nothing to say on the substance of this allegation. Suffice to say that PSEM does not have a free hand to cut student numbers. Every decision concerning student numbers has to be justified and discussed with SEM, UGC and the teacher training institutions before submission to the Executive Council for approval of the triennium funding.
30. Moreover, given the various allegations made by Professor Luk at the LegCo Panel meeting on 28 February 2007, to assist this Commission, I believe it is again prudent for me to set out the following facts in such context.

***Reducing Student Number for Certificate in Early Childhood Education ("C(ECE)")***

31. At the LegCo Panel meeting on 28 February 2007, Prof Luk claimed that an unnamed EMB officer had said that the zero provision of C(ECE) places in the 2007/08 school year was a typing error. He went on to accuse the senior management of EMB for deliberately ignoring the mistake. The allegation was speculative and in any event unfounded.
32. In 2000, the Government, on the recommendation of the Education Commission, decided that all serving principals of kindergartens and supervisors of child care centres, who were not professionally trained, should obtain the C(ECE) by the end of the 2005/06 school year. All pre-primary teachers should complete the



qualified kindergarten teacher (“QKT”) training by the end of the 2003/04 school year. These targets were largely achieved as planned.

33. In the 2005-08 triennium funding exercise, HKIEd was informed of the allocation of ECE student places via the start letter in January 2004 as follows:

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Pre-service			
QKT	90	90	90
C(ECE)	120	120	120
In-service			
C(ECE)	200	200	0

34. The zero provision of in-service C(CEC) places in 2007/08 school year arose out of miscommunication between Branch 3 and 5 of EMB. Branch 5 recommended 100 places each in 2005/06 and 2006/07 to complete the training of KG principals who had not yet acquired the C(ECE), and another 100 places for untrained kindergarten teachers, including non-Chinese-speaking kindergarten teachers and degree holders. Mistakenly, Branch 3 provided for 200 in-service C(ECE) places for two years only, whereas Branch 5 had intended to provide 100 in-service C(ECE) places to upgrade teachers on a recurrent basis. Branch 3 had assumed that the provision was required for two more years only because, while kindergarten principals were required to hold a C(ECE), there was at that time no policy to require kindergarten teachers to be upgraded to the Certificate level, and the Administration had undertaken to review early childhood education in 2005/06.
35. In response to the feedback from HKIEd, and following consultation with the pre-primary education sector, EMB took the proactive step to identify funds from within EMB’s financial envelope and extended the provision of 200 in-service C(ECE) places for HKIEd to 2007/08. In addition, to meet the demand for professional upgrading of kindergarten teachers, and to provide more choice for teachers, EMB invited tenders for more in-service C(ECE) places. For each year between 2005/06 and 2007/08, 760 additional places were provided by way of open tender, of which 120 places were allocated to HKIEd.
36. Hence, the original zero provision was not a typo error, but a reflection of the fulfillment of the original policy target. Due to miscommunication within EMB,

the manpower estimate should have been 100 for 2007/08 rather than zero. In the end, instead of restoring the 100 places, EMB provided a total of 960 in-service C(ECE) places, i.e. 760 through open tender and 200 through UGC, of which 320 (120 through tender and 200 through UGC) were allocated to HKIED. The other two providers were Hong Kong Baptist University (“HKBU”) and the Institute of Vocational Education (“IVE”).

37. It is noteworthy that for the 2005-08 triennium, EMB supported and UGC approved HKIED’s request to convert some of the 90 QKT and 120 pre-service C(ECE) places into a four-year full-time BEd(ECE) programme with the fourth year operating on a self-financing mode.
38. The provision of ECE places for the 2005-08 triennium therefore ended up as follows:

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Pre-service			
QKT	90	60	30
C(ECE)	60	90	90
BEd(ECE)	60	60	90
In-service			
C(ECE)	200	200	200

*Alleged Lack of Transparency in Tendering of C(ECE) Places*

39. At the LegCo Panel meeting on 28 February 2007, Prof Luk also alleged that HKIED, HKBU and IVE did not know the criteria for the award of tender and the basis for the allocation of C(ECE) places. The allegation is similarly unfounded.
40. The assessment criteria with a marking scheme and weighting, i.e. 50% for quality and 50% for price, were clearly stipulated in the two tender documents issued by EMB for the 2005 intake in March 2005 and the 2006/2007 intakes in February 2006 respectively. The document also stated the estimated number of training places required for each of the courses. As the tender price for the first tender was lower than expected, the number of training places was ultimately increased from 400 to 760 and awarded after tender negotiation with all the three

bidders. HKIED was not given extra places after tender negotiation because it scored the lowest according to the assessment criteria. The other two bidders had the capacity to offer extra places at lower prices, whereas HKIED confirmed that there was no room for any reduction in the unit price for the training places. For each of the three cohorts in 2005 to 2007, 360, 280 and 120 C(ECE) places were commissioned to HKBU, IVE and HKIED respectively.

41. The preparation of tenders and the award of tender followed strictly the established government procedures and the approval of the Central Tender Board was obtained, in accordance with the Standard Procurement Regulations.

#### *Meeting on ECE in June 2006*

42. Professor Luk also hinted at the same Legco Panel meeting on 28 February 2007 that the HKIED was somehow “excluded” by EMB from a meeting for the discussion of ECE which was held in June 2006. If this allegation was made to try to portray a picture that HKIED was “ill-treated” or “targeted” by EMB, it is clearly misleading. To put the matter in proper perspective, I set out below the purpose of the meeting and the reason why HKIED and the other two institutions offering ECE programmes were not invited to the meeting.
43. In mid-2005, EMB initiated a comprehensive review of pre-primary education, since the policy targets set down in 2000 were largely achieved. It was recognized at the outset that upgrading the professional qualification of kindergarten teachers was the key to improving the quality of pre-primary education. Consultations with the pre-primary sector also showed a strong demand for more and diversified training opportunities in terms of level, delivery mode, and programme. EMB shared the view that diversity of provision was necessary to cater for the varied backgrounds and aspirations of existing and potential kindergarten teachers and to attract good quality students.
44. On 20 May 2006, PSEM met with representatives of HKU, CUHK, PolyU and UGC, joined by four other EMB colleagues. The three institutions invited to the meeting were at the time either not offering or, in the case of PolyU, in the process of phasing out professional training for kindergarten teachers, but had relevant experiences. For example, HKU had been running MEd(ECE) since 1984. PolyU had rich experiences but, due to UGC’s decision on role

differentiation, had to phase out its ECE programmes which had been popular among practitioners. CUHK had teacher education experience and was keen to start offering ECE programmes and had expressed a willingness to collaborate with PolyU and absorb its expertise. The three institutions (i.e. HKU, CUHK and PolyU) were requested to consider offering a variety of ECE programmes to be funded through re-deployment of existing resources or on a self-financed basis. For example, HKU uses English as the medium of instruction and is interested in offering a post-graduate diploma in subject knowledge on early childhood education. CUHK and PolyU adopt an inter-disciplinary approach combining early childhood education with applied/educational psychology and social work.

45. Hence, the purpose of the meeting was to encourage more universities to offer early childhood education programmes, and to explore further diversification of training provision in terms of the academic level, programme content and mode of delivery. This was necessary to cope with the anticipated increase in demand for training arising from the pre-primary education review that was underway (the outcome of which was announced by the Chief Executive in his 2006 Policy Address). Since EMB is aware of the existing programmes, capacity, strengths and expertise available at the three institutions (i.e. HKIEd, HKBU and IVE) already providing ECE training, they were not invited to the meeting.
46. In the circumstances, Prof Luk's remark hinting that only HKIEd was "excluded" was misleading.

#### **Second Allegation: Dismissal of Academic Staff**

47. Under the 2<sup>nd</sup> Allegation, Professor Luk alleged that a senior Government official had allegedly made telephone calls to Professor Morris shortly after academic staff had published articles to criticize the education reform or the education policy of the Government and its implementation, and that the purpose of each of the telephone calls was to demand the dismissal of staff.
48. However, it was not until 9 March 2007 when Professor Luk provided the particulars under the 2<sup>nd</sup> Allegations as directed by the Commission did he clarify for the first time that I was the senior Government official who allegedly called Professor Morris on four occasions between 2002 and 2005 to demand the dismissal of four academic staff members, namely Prof Cheng Yin-cheung, Mr Ip

Kin-yuen, Dr Lai Kwok-chan and Dr Wong Ping-man. It was also only on this occasion, when Professor Luk set out the particulars of the Allegation, that a set of newspaper articles written by these four academic staff was submitted as the materials triggering the call for the dismissal. On 12 March 2007, upon further direction of the Commission, Professor Luk related the four alleged telephone conversations with the particular academic staff that I had allegedly asked Professor Morris to dismiss.

49. I am not able to comment without more specific information on the context of the four alleged telephone calls other than to say that there is simply no logic or reason for me to make these alleged demands. First, the HKIED has well-established personnel policies and procedures. It is not possible for the President alone to decide who should be hired or fired, let alone at the behest of EMB. As a long-serving civil servant, I am well aware of the need of any administrative decision-maker to follow the established rules and systems.
50. Secondly, it is also illogical to suggest that, if indeed there was such demand, one would have continued to make the same demands repeatedly over four years, despite the lack of response or action from the requested party.
51. At the LegCo Panel meeting on 28 February 2007, Mr Ip Kin-yuen said he had heard a suggestion that his name be added to the list of staff in the 2005 Voluntary Departure Scheme ("VDS"). This again does not make any sense. The VDS was administered entirely by the HKIED. The selection criteria and procedures were approved by the HKIED Council on 4 March 2005. No one could add names to the list without the consent of the staff concerned, since the scheme was operated on a voluntary basis.
52. Since its establishment in 1994, the HKIED has carried out two staff redundancy exercises. The first exercise in 2001/02 was a Management-Initiated Retirement Scheme ("MIRS") which resulted in the departure of 35 academic personnel whose academic discipline/expertise could not match the future needs of the Institute. At the time, the Administration was fully in support of the determination of HKIED, in particular Professor Morris, to raise the academic profile of the teaching staff, as sub-degree programmes and professional upgrading courses were being phased out with a view to bringing in more degree and postgraduate courses to pave the way for institutional upgrading.

53. As early as in March 2003, HKIEd sought UGC's agreement in principle for another VDS. In 2004/05, the VDS was introduced alongside a Compulsory Redundancy Scheme ("CRS") which together led to the departure of an additional 65 academic personnel. The two schemes were proposed by HKIEd (with full support from the Administration) so as to achieve the savings targets required in the 2005-08 triennium and to further upgrade the academic profile of its teaching staff to match the future needs of the Institute. Thus, the funding cuts in the rollover year 2004/05 and the 2005-08 triennium in fact had facilitated HKIEd in meeting its long-held goal of upgrading itself into an institution predominantly teaching at the degree and postgraduate levels.
54. EMB was only involved in the MIRS and CRS, which enabled ex-civil servants, who were transferred from the former colleges of education to the HKIEd, to receive pension immediately upon retirement, or abolition of office. This was because, prior to the establishment of the HKIEd in 1994, the Northcote College, Grantham College, Sir Robert Black College, HK Technical Teachers' College and the Institute of Language in Education were part of the Education Department and were staffed by civil servants. To justify the premature payment of pension, EMB had to be satisfied with the justification and the criteria for the redundancy exercises, and seek the approval of the Secretary for Civil Service for payment of pension to these "transferred staff" immediately upon compulsory retirement. So far as Mr. Ip is concerned, as he was not an ex civil servant coming from the four colleges of education, he was not eligible as a candidate for the CRS.
55. Until I am fully informed of circumstances surrounding the alleged conversations under the 2<sup>nd</sup> Allegation, the above are what I am able to say at this stage by way of assistance to the Commission.

*Alleged Interfering with Academic Freedom*

56. Professor Luk further alleged in a note distributed to the media on 7 February 2007 (Annex G) that, at a meeting on 16 June 2005, I blamed the academics for exaggerating the problem of teacher workload and demanded that they should stop writing such articles. The said meeting was convened to discuss how EMB and the teacher education institutions could work in partnership to prepare teachers for the "334" reform. During the discussion, the issue of how to attract

Form 7 students to join the teaching profession was brought up and the image of the teaching profession came into focus. It is noteworthy that an expatriate professor was present at the meeting, hence the meeting was conducted in English.

57. Professor Luk's allegation quoted me out of context. Despite the fact that there were official minutes for the said meeting, Professor Luk prepared his own minutes of the said meeting which included the following extract relied upon by him:

“On the issue of the image of the teaching profession, PSEM wanted all parties to work behind the scene to improve the image. She observed that while EMB had made a number of efforts in recent months to promote a positive image of teaching, there continued to be stories and comments in the media which conveyed images of teachers as overworked, harassed and demoralized; some of these stories and comments were attributed to teacher educators. She wanted such *negative images to be stopped*, since they would discourage young people from wanting to go into teaching, and at the same time gave the business community a bad impression of teachers because businessmen do not see teachers as more overworked than their employees.”

58. It was in a spirit of partnership that I appealed to those present, i.e. teacher educators from HKU, CUHK, HKBU and HKIEd to work in a positive and constructive way to support teachers in implementing the education reform. I had been championing this message over the years among educational bodies and educators. I earnestly believed that we should capitalize on the strengths of many professional and dedicated teachers in Hong Kong to motivate and inspire following, rather than focus on the negatives which demoralize and undermine the reform. As a responsible government department, EMB had taken the lead, for example, by setting up the five School-based Professional Support schemes, creating professional development networks among schools and principals, and publishing good teaching practices to share among teachers.

### **Third Allegation: Teacher Protest**

59. I have no knowledge of the alleged telephone conversation.

### Conclusion

60. Throughout my thirty-one years of civil service career, I have served the community with dedication and diligence, always striving to give my best. The four core values which I firmly uphold are to be "proactive, customer-focused, results-oriented and professional" in discharging my duties. I believe in open government and direct communication with various stakeholders so that government policies can be better explained and understood. I did not demand the dismissal of four academic staff members as alleged by Professor Luk. Nor, so far as I am concerned, is there any factual basis in the said allegations giving rise to an inference that academic freedom was interfered with.

I confirm that all the matters stated in this statement are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief.

Dated the 23 day of March 2007



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Mrs Law Fan Chiu-fun, Fanny