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M. J. ALDRICH

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Overhaul education, says panel

by George Black

The Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher has been told by her top level advisors that the education system needs a complete overhaul, with more money for new technology.

In a report* published on Monday the information technology advisory panel (Itap) urges Thatcher to set up a commission of enquiry into the UK's educational needs for the next century.

Thatcher has promised a response through the Department of Education before the end of the year.

The commission should review the whole spectrum of education in this country and decide how technology can be used to keep British edu-

cation up with developments abroad, says Itap.

The report criticises a lack of government strategy for education.

Panel chairman Charles Read, former director of IT at the Post Office, says: "Most of the current ideas smack of short-term palliatives. Long-term planning is remarkable by its absence. The whole picture needs an urgent review."

He challenges the government to face up to the fact that more public money has to be spent to ensure that Britain creates the skills that will be essential in the 21st century.

Panel member Mike Aldrich, managing director of computer supplier ROCC,



Advisory panel (left to right, Ivor Cohen, David Hartley, Charles Read, Mike Aldrich, Tony Davies) . . . Wants more money for new technology.

says: "Our education system was designed in the late nineteenth century to produce factory workers and colonial administrators, and was slightly modified in 1944. Unless it is changed, by the next century we shall have an education system that is in decay."

But the report speaks optimistically of the potential of computer-based systems to revive and inspire teaching the system.

The report is the last to be published by Itap, was dissolved in April with its work being moved to the Advisory Council for Applied Research and Development (Acad).

**Learning to live with IT - an overview of the potential of information technology for education and training by the Cabinet Office's information technology advisory panel.*

■ News Analysis - page 9. Leader Comment - page 11.