

**For discussion
on 21 October 2011**

**Legislative Council Panel on Education
2011-12 Policy Agenda: New Initiatives on Education**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the major new education initiatives on the 2011-12 Policy Agenda.

New initiatives

Multiple study pathways

2. As pointed out by the Chief Executive in the Policy Address, the Government is committed to providing multiple pathways for our young people. Through promoting the parallel development of the publicly-funded and self-financing institutions, we estimate that by 2015, over one-third of our young people in the relevant cohort will have access to degree-level education. Including sub-degree education, over two-thirds will have access to post-secondary education.

3. Apart from the traditional academic programmes, vocational education plays an important role in providing a solid foundation for young people to seek employment in various industries. The Vocational Training Council (VTC) of Hong Kong offers about 235 000 vocational education and training places, including over 180 Higher Diploma programmes covering nine disciplines. These programmes provide students with professional knowledge as well as general education and training, with emphasis on both theory and practice. On completion of the programmes, students may choose to seek employment or pursue further study.

International Cuisine College

4. The Chinese Cuisine Training Institute under the VTC provides training for those who wish to pursue a career in the catering industry. The institute has gained international acclaim in just a decade. The Chief Executive proposed in the Policy Address to set up an International Cuisine

College under the VTC. The College will provide training facilities and progression pathways for people aspiring to become professional chefs proficient in international cuisines. It will help attract outstanding members of the culinary profession from around the world and promote the development of related sectors, such as tourism, catering, retail and wine trading. We expect it to be established in 2014 and will offer over 2 000 training places.

Youth College

5. The VTC also offers a range of career-oriented programmes to cater for young people's diverse education needs. It currently runs seven youth colleges offering employment-focused programmes to school leavers at Secondary 3 level or above. Students may choose vocational streams that best suit their abilities and interests. Upon completion of the programmes, they can either seek employment or pursue further studies. The Chief Executive proposed in the Policy Address to establish one more youth college to provide alternative progression pathways for young people, as well as specialised support for non-Chinese speaking students and those with special education needs (SEN). The new youth college is expected to provide 420 additional places.

Education services

6. We will continue to promote the development of education services through diversification and internationalization, with a view to enhancing Hong Kong's status as a regional education hub.

7. In support of the diversification of post-secondary education, we have allocated three sites and six vacant school premises since 2007, invited expression of interest for the Queen's Hill site and reserved another two sites under the Land Grant Scheme for the development of self-financing degree programmes. We have increased the loan commitment of the Start-up Loan Scheme by \$2 billion and disbursed seven loans totaling \$1.06 billion since 2007. We recommend in the Policy Address to extend the ambit of the Start-up Loan Scheme to provide financial support to self-financing degree-awarding institutions for the construction of student hostels, and increase the loan commitment of the Scheme by \$2 billion to support the construction of college premises and related facilities.

8. To promote internationalisation of higher education, we have implemented a basket of measures including establishing a HK\$1.25 billion Government Scholarship Fund and launching the Hong Kong PhD Fellowship

Scheme, as well as doubling the non-local student quotas of the publicly-funded programmes from 10% to 20% and relaxing the relevant immigration restrictions. These measures have been generally effective. Between the 2006/07 academic year and the 2010/11 academic year, the number of non-local students enrolled in sub-degree and degree programmes in Hong Kong has increased by nearly 90%. These students come from 70 different countries and regions around the world. The number of local students taking up exchange programmes has also increased by over 30% during the same period. We will consider the recommendations of the Education Commission so as to further promote internationalisation, diversify the source of non-local students, attract more students from outside Hong Kong to pursue further studies in Hong Kong, actively promote student exchange programmes including extending such programmes to sub-degree programmes, align the length of stay in Hong Kong granted to non-local students with the normal duration of their study programmes. We encourage institutions to further enhance the learning experience of non-local students and foster exchange among local and non-local students. We will also work closely with institutions to provide more hostel places for the higher education sector.

9. Hong Kong's first international boarding school being constructed in Tuen Mun will commence operation in the coming school year. Another three international schools will also come on stream from the next school year onwards. We estimate that some 5 000 additional international school places will be provided in the years ahead. To meet the demand for international school places, we will continue to support the in-situ expansion of individual international schools or allocate suitable vacant school premises to them for short-term use.

Enhancing research capacity

10. The Government established an \$18 billion Research Endowment Fund in 2009 to underline our long-term commitment to academic research. With the support of the Research Endowment Fund, we have launched a Theme-based Research Scheme to fund research proposals that are strategically beneficial to the long term interest of Hong Kong. In the Policy Address, we recommend an injection of \$5 billion into the Research Endowment Fund. The investment income from \$3 billion of the injection will give academics of self-financing higher education institutions an opportunity to compete for research funding and join hands in advancing scholarship and research in Hong Kong. The investment income from the remaining \$2 billion of the injection will replace \$100 million of the annual recurrent subvention to the Research Grants Council, so as to provide stable research funding for University Grants

Committee-funded institutions. The injection of an additional \$5 billion for providing research funding will further enhance the research capacity of higher education institutions in Hong Kong. This will complement teaching excellence and raise the competitiveness of Hong Kong in the long run.

Supporting students with SEN

11. In order to enhance the support for primary and secondary schools in meeting the needs of students with SEN, we will further expand the School-based Educational Psychology Service (SBEPS). At present, SBEPS covers 55% of all publicly funded primary and secondary schools. We plan to progressively extend the service to all publicly funded schools by the 2016/17 school year.

12. An overseas consultant, commissioned by the Government to review the delivery and development of Educational Psychology Service, has endorsed the efficacy of the SBEPS. Under the service mode of SBEPS, educational psychologists will pay regular visits to the schools they serve to provide assessment and intervention for students, training for parents, consultation and professional development for teachers as well as professional advice on the school policies and practices for supporting students with SEN.

National education

13. Cultivating students' positive values such as "Responsibility", "Respect for Others", "National Identity" and "Commitment" through different Key Learning Areas and diversified learning experiences is one of the key emphases of our education policy. On the aspect of National Identity, students are provided with systematic learning experiences on national education so as to strengthen their understanding of the motherland from different perspectives, enhance their national identity and foster a sense of commitment to the development of our motherland.

14. We are promoting national education through various measures, including compiling learning and teaching resources, supporting teachers' professional development and organising cross-border exchange activities for teachers and students. We will further organise seminars and workshops for primary and secondary school teachers, enhance the development of relevant learning and teaching resources, and organize teachers' network to support teachers' professional development. Through the "Passing on the Torch" platform, we will provide about 4 000 additional subsidized places each year starting from the current school year to enhance the participation of students in

Mainland exchange programmes. Our target is to provide subsidy for every primary and secondary student to join at least one such programme by the 2015/16 school year.

15. In addition, we are now piloting a learning package and a database of questions on the Basic Law for students at senior primary and junior secondary levels in order to strengthen the learning and teaching of the Basic Law and “One Country, Two Systems”. The revised teaching materials will be made available to primary and secondary schools in December this year. In parallel, the public consultation on the proposed Moral and National Education Curriculum Guide (Primary 1 to Secondary 6) was launched from May to August 2011. On the whole, the importance and goals of Moral and National Education are generally recognised by the school sector though views and suggestions on aspects relating to the mode and schedule of implementation, curriculum contents and support measures have also been expressed. The Curriculum Development Council is now studying the views collected and will submit recommend refinements to the Government. In deliberating the implementation of the Moral and National Education Curriculum, the Government will give detailed consideration to the Council’s recommendation.

Student financial assistance

16. The Government is reviewing the operation of the non-means-tested loan schemes administered by the Student Financial Assistance Agency with a view to providing effective measures to reduce the loan default rate and ensuring proper use of public resources whilst providing reasonable financial support to students. We conducted Stage 1 Public Consultation to tap public views on the operation of the loan schemes between March and June 2010. During the three-month consultation period, we met with various stakeholders including the advisory bodies concerned, student representatives, loan borrowers and course providers, and received about 600 written submissions. The majority of the views suggested that we should improve the repayment arrangements (including the interest rate, repayment period and deferment mechanism), suitably tighten the eligibility criteria of courses, and step up measures against the defaulters, etc. Having carefully considered the views received, we are drawing up improvement proposals and aim to seek public’s views in Stage 2 Public Consultation before the end of this year.

Electronic textbooks

17. In a knowledge-based society, using electronic learning resources to enhance students’ self-directed learning has become a global trend. It is

increasingly common for schools to use electronic learning resources to support learning and teaching in tandem with the progressively mature conditions for schools to use electronic textbooks. In June 2011, we set up the Task Force on the Review of Learning and Teaching Resources with a view to looking into various measures to improve the supply of textbooks. Capitalising on the merits of electronic learning, these measures include optimising the supply of textbooks, and encouraging more professionals from the publishing and education sectors to participate in the development of electronic learning and teaching resources. The Task Force will continue with its discussion and research, and submit a report to the Secretary for Education by the end of this year.

18. Apart from providing students with more interactive and diversified modes of learning, the development of electronic textbooks and learning resources can provide more flexibility to the production of textbooks, cater for the diverse education needs of students, lower production cost and reduce waste. It can also induce healthy competition in the textbook market and provide users with an additional choice over printed textbooks, thus improving the supply and quality of textbooks. In implementing necessary measures to further promote the development of electronic textbooks and learning resources, we shall draw reference from the recommendations of the Task Force and comments from stakeholders with a view to better ensuring the provision of quality and value-for-money learning and teaching resources for students and teachers.

19. At the same time, we will continue to encourage schools to use diversified and quality electronic learning resources through various measures, such as developing online learning and teaching resources, supporting relevant teacher professional development, providing grants for the purchase of electronic teaching resources and setting up a platform to facilitate transactions.

Conclusion

20. The Government has all along attached great importance to education and has made significant financial commitment. Looking ahead, we will continue to allocate resources to provide quality and diversified education for our people and nurture talent for the community. We look forward to maintaining good communication and effective co-operation with stakeholders in taking forward various education policies in the coming year.

Education Bureau
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