

**For discussion  
on 9 November 2015**

**Legislative Council Panel on Education**

**Progress of Implementation of Initiatives to  
Strengthen Vocational Education**

**Purpose**

This paper briefs Members on the progress of implementation of various initiatives to strengthen vocational education.

**Overview**

2. Vocational education plays a pivotal role in the education system, providing flexible and multiple pathways for school leavers and in-service personnel with diverse aspirations and abilities. It prepares people for future employment by equipping them with professional knowledge, practical skills and appropriate attitudes. It also nurtures requisite human capital in support of Hong Kong's economy. Besides, we have exchanges with the relevant authorities in the Mainland or overseas on the development of vocational education from time to time. The Vocational Training Council (VTC), a major provider of vocational education and training in Hong Kong, also has a lot of collaborations with its counterparts in the Mainland and other parts of the world.

3. It is worth noting that there are at least some 484 000 people participating in vocational education and training in various forms in Hong Kong every year, including those senior secondary students pursuing the Applied Learning (ApL) courses, students of Higher Diploma programmes, as well as people receiving education and training provided by related statutory bodies such as VTC, the Employees Retraining Board, the Construction Industry Council and the Clothing Industry Training Authority. Besides, many programmes at degree and other levels are also vocationally and professionally oriented but not covered above.

4. In the 2014 Policy Address, the Chief Executive highlighted that *“mainstream education is not a straightjacket that fits all young people as everyone has his or her own interests and abilities. The Government should*

*re-establish the positioning of vocational education in our education system and guide the younger generation in choosing their career.”*, and announced a series of measures to strengthen vocational education and support its development alongside academic education.

## **Initiatives to Strengthen Vocational Education**

### *Pilot Training and Support Scheme (Pilot Scheme)*

5. With the approval of the Legislative Council Finance Committee in July 2014 for a commitment of \$144 million, VTC has implemented the Pilot Scheme starting from the 2014/15 academic year (AY) to attract and retain talent for specific industries with a keen demand for labour, by integrating structured apprenticeship training programmes and clear career progression pathways. The Pilot Scheme targets Secondary 3 to Secondary 6 school leavers and eligible adult learners and will benefit a total of 2 000 students. Under the Pilot Scheme, apprenticeship training for targeted industries will be provided to students alongside a guaranteed level of salary and incentive allowance. So far, the electrical & mechanical (E&M) trades of the construction industry, printing, watch & clock, automobile and testing & certification industries have joined the Pilot Scheme. As at September 2015, there were 930 trainees participating in the Pilot Scheme.

6. With the Pilot Scheme, the retention rate of the trainees in the E&M trades of the construction industry (which is a major sector in the Pilot Scheme) has improved from 65% in the 2012/13 AY to 87% in the 2014/15 AY. Moreover, VTC has conducted a series of review sessions in March 2015 to better understand the preliminary views of employers and participating trainees on the Pilot Scheme. In general, the Pilot Scheme was well-received by both employers and trainees. Some employers considered that the Pilot Scheme could allow the industries to recruit a new workforce in a short period of time. The trainees opined that they could directly apply the skills learnt from class to the workplace since the modules in their programmes were practice-oriented. In addition, some trainees appreciated that the training allowance provided by the Pilot Scheme could effectively encourage them to join and remain in the industries.

### *Industrial Attachment*

7. With the Government's one-off funding support of \$43 million in the 2012-13 financial year, VTC launched a pilot programme to support industrial attachments (IA) for student intakes to subvented programmes.

The pilot programme indicates that IA could help bridge classroom/workshop instruction and actual workplace requirements and thus greatly enhance students' employment-readiness. Given the encouraging results, recurrent funding of about \$18 million has been allocated to VTC starting from the 2014/15 AY to provide IA opportunities for students mainly studying subvented Higher Diploma programmes and certain Diploma in Vocational Education programmes. The IA currently benefits about 9 000 students in VTC every year at an average of 90-hour attachment duration per student.

8. In the 2014/15 AY, over 80% of the attachment places offered to benefiting students were in a field directly relevant to students' programme of study. About 2% of the attachment places also extended beyond Hong Kong, e.g. in the Mainland, Taiwan, etc. Questionnaire surveys and focus group meetings have been arranged to collect feedback from employers, students and teaching staff. Students generally valued the authentic work experience in IA and treasured the opportunity to put knowledge into practice. Most teaching staff considered that IA could help students with a smooth transition from study to work and thus beneficial to enhancing their employability. Employers in general were positive on the IA and considered that students were hard-working and possessed good learning attitude and technical knowledge. In addition, many employers of big corporations were willing to extend attachment to beyond 90 hours per student whilst more efforts would still be required to lure small-and-medium enterprises to render attachment opportunities.

#### *Task Force on Promotion of Vocational Education*

9. The Task Force on Promotion of Vocational Education (Task Force) was set up by the Government in June 2014 with a view to mapping out a strategy to promote vocational education and raise the public awareness of vocational education and recognition of its value. The Task Force has submitted its report to the Government in July 2015, proposing a three-pronged strategy, comprising (a) rebranding vocational education and training, (b) strengthening promotion and (c) sustaining efforts, with a total of 27 recommendations. Members were briefed on the recommendations of the Task Force report at the Panel meeting on 15 July 2015.

10. The Government is now considering the Task Force's report and its recommendations and would formally respond to the report in due course.

#### *Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors (SSSDP)*

11. With the approval of the Legislative Council Finance Committee in July 2014 for a commitment of about \$960 million, the Government has implemented SSSDP starting from the 2015/16 AY to subsidise about 1 000 students per cohort to pursue designated full-time locally-accredited self-financing undergraduate programmes in selected disciplines to nurture talents to meet Hong Kong's social and economic needs. SSSDP is a pilot scheme for three cohorts of students, and will be subject to review on its effectiveness.

12. The distribution of programmes and their number of subsidised places under SSSDP are determined in consultation with relevant policy bureaux/departments. For the cohort admitted in the 2015/16 AY, SSSDP subsidises a total of 940 places under 13 programmes offered by five institutions; for the 2016/17 cohort, SSSDP will subsidise a total of 1 030 places under 15 programmes offered by six institutions. The selected programmes fall under six disciplines with keen manpower demand, including health care, architecture and engineering, testing and certification, creative industry, logistics, and tourism and hospitality. The list of programmes and the respective number of places subsidised under SSSDP as well as the subsidy amount for the two cohorts of students are at **Annex**.

13. The subsidised places are mainly allocated through the Joint University Programmes Admissions System to ensure that eligible students are selected under a merit-based system. For the 2015/16 cohort, 912 out of 940 subsidised places (i.e. 97%) were filled.

#### *Campus Development Plan of VTC*

14. VTC was invited by the Government in 2014 to draw up a strategic development plan for its campuses to foster synergy and provide state-of-the-art facilities pivotal to enhancing the image and quality of vocational education. VTC has submitted in late August 2015 its campus development plan which is being considered by the Government.

#### *QF Fund*

15. Launched in May 2008, QF has been underpinning the development of vocational education, alongside academic and continuing education, by facilitating articulation among the three with a comprehensive network of learning pathways. Recognising the importance of QF in maintaining a quality workforce, an endowment fund of \$1 billion, namely the QF Fund, was established on 1 September 2014 to provide a steady source of income to support the sustainable development and implementation of QF.

The QF Fund will further encourage relevant stakeholders to participate in QF, thereby supporting the development of vocational education.

16. So far, the Government has assisted 21 industries/sectors to establish 20 Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs)<sup>1</sup> under QF, covering 53% of the total workforce in Hong Kong. ITACs are responsible for drawing up the Specification of Competency Standards which set out the skills, knowledge and outcome standards required of employees in different functional areas of the respective industries/sectors, and provide a basis for course providers to design training courses including in-house training to meet the needs of the sectors.

### *Life Planning Education*

17. Starting from the 2014/15 school year, the Education Bureau (EDB) has provided each public sector school operating classes at senior secondary levels with a recurrent Career and Life Planning Grant amounting to about \$500,000 per annum. Schools are encouraged to deliver a more comprehensive life planning education and strengthen individual guidance and support to students so as to enhance students' self-understanding of their interests, abilities and academic/career aspiration and to make wise choice accordingly.

18. Career exploration is one of the essential parts of life planning education. To enhance students' understanding of different trades and the related career prospects, EDB has strengthened partnership between schools and business organisations under the Business-School Partnership Programme (BSPP). In the 2014/15 school year, more than 120 organisations have collaborated with EDB in organising over 750 BSPP activities benefitting some 250 000 students. Through participation in BSPP activities, students are provided with learning opportunities to explore different careers and develop positive work attitudes and values that are essential for life planning. EDB will continue to encourage closer collaboration among the relevant stakeholders to arrange more career-related learning activities and taster programmes for secondary school students.

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<sup>1</sup> The 20 ITACs are Automotive; Banking; Beauty and Hairdressing; Catering; Elderly Care Service; Electrical & Mechanical Services; Fashion; Human Resource Management; Import & Export; Information & Communication Technology; Insurance; Jewellery; Logistics; Manufacturing Technology (Tooling, Metals & Plastics); Printing & Publishing; Property Management; Retail; Security Services; Testing, Inspection & Certification; and Watch & Clock ITACs.

## **Vocational Education at Senior Secondary Level**

19. Apart from the above, at the senior secondary level, career related and vocational education in secondary school is facilitated through a variety of learning opportunities: ApL courses and the career-related experiences embedded in the Other Learning Experiences activities. These programmes and activities complement the core and traditional elective subjects of the senior secondary curriculum for whole-person development. ApL courses, which are subjects with stronger elements of practical learning linked to broad professional and vocational fields, have attracted a considerable number of students. In the 2015/16 school year, a spectrum of 40 ApL courses have been developed and about 9 000 Secondary 5 and 6 students from about 340 secondary schools participate in ApL. ApL courses are offered under six different areas of studies<sup>2</sup> to suit the learning interests and needs of students. Students may choose ApL courses to understand fundamental theories and concepts through application and practice, develop generic skills and career-related competencies necessary to prepare themselves for further studies and employment in the future.

20. The results of ApL subjects are recorded in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE). Effective from the 2018 HKDSE Examination, the reporting of students' performance in ApL will be refined to include a level comparable to level 4 or above of the Category A subjects of the HKDSE Examination to report students' better performance in ApL.

21. To enable ApL students to obtain the QF-assured qualification in addition to the HKDSE upon successful completion of the courses, a pilot exercise on accreditation of ApL courses has been conducted. As at November 2015, 12 ApL courses have been registered in the Qualifications Register as certificate programmes at QF Level 3. The pilot exercise will continue to explore linking more ApL courses to the QF in due course.

### **Advice Sought**

22. Members are invited to note the implementation progress of various initiatives in relation to vocational education.

### **Education Bureau November 2015**

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<sup>2</sup> The six areas of studies are Creative Studies; Media and Communication; Business, Management and Law; Services; Applied Science; and Engineering and Production.

**List of Programmes, Number of Places and Subsidy Amount under the Study Subsidy Scheme for  
Designated Professions/Sectors (SSSDP) for the 2015/16 and the 2016/17 Cohorts**

<b>Institutions</b>	<b>Disciplines</b>	<b>Programmes</b>	<b>Number of subsidised places for the 2015/16 cohort</b>	<b>Number of subsidised places for the 2016/17 cohort</b>	<b>Subsidy amount* (\$)</b>
Caritas Institute of Higher Education	Health Care	Bachelor of Nursing (Honours)	-	60	70,000
Chu Hai College of Higher Education	Architecture and Engineering	Bachelor of Architecture (Honours)	40	-	40,000
	Architecture and Engineering	Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Architecture	-	40	40,000
Hang Seng Management College	Logistics	Bachelor of Business Administration (Honours) in Supply Chain Management	70	70	40,000
The Open University of Hong Kong	Creative Industry	Bachelor of Fine Arts with Honours in Animation and Visual Effects	80	80	70,000
	Health Care	Bachelor of Nursing with Honours in General Health Care	150	150	70,000
	Health Care	Bachelor of Nursing with Honours in Mental Health Care	70	70	70,000
	Testing and Certification	Bachelor of Science with Honours in Testing and Certification	50	50	70,000

<b>Institutions</b>	<b>Disciplines</b>	<b>Programmes</b>	<b>Number of subsidised places for the 2015/16 cohort</b>	<b>Number of subsidised places for the 2016/17 cohort</b>	<b>Subsidy amount* (\$)</b>
Tung Wah College	Health Care	Bachelor of Health Science (Honours) (Nursing Major)	200	200	70,000
Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong, Vocational Training Council	Architecture and Engineering	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Landscape Architecture	10	10	40,000
	Architecture and Engineering	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Horticulture and Landscape Management	-	30	40,000
	Architecture and Engineering	Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Civil Engineering	60	60	70,000
	Architecture and Engineering	Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Environmental Engineering and Management	60	60	70,000
	Creative Industry	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Fashion Design	60	60	70,000
	Creative Industry	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Product Design	60	60	70,000
	Tourism and Hospitality	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Culinary Arts and Management	30	30	40,000

\* The unit subsidy will be administered by a two-tier arrangement in which a subsidy of up to \$40,000 is provided to programmes which are not laboratory-based while a higher subsidy of up to \$70,000 is provided to more costly programmes which are laboratory-based. Actual tuition fees paid by the students should reflect the subsidy under SSSDP.