

**For discussion  
on 3 July 2020**

## **Legislative Council Panel on Education**

### **Review Report of the Task Force on Promotion of Vocational and Professional Education and Training**

#### **Purpose**

This paper briefs Members on the recommendations put forward by the Task Force on Promotion of Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET) (the Task Force) in its review report and the Government's follow-up actions.

#### **Background**

2. The Chief Executive announced in her 2017 Policy Address to set up several task forces to carry out in-depth reviews on eight key areas of education, including VPET. The Task Force, chaired by Dr Roy CHUNG, was subsequently established in April 2018 to review and consider enhancements to the promotion of VPET in Hong Kong with a more targeted approach.

3. Over the course of the review, the Task Force widely engaged stakeholders and conducted public consultation on its initial observations from May to July 2019. The Task Force took into account the views of the stakeholders from the industries, professional bodies, industry academies, post-secondary institutions, secondary schools, teachers, parents, and students through focus groups, consultation sessions, and written submissions. It also made reference to the experience of other economies in the promotion of VPET and the implementation of applied degrees. The Task Force submitted its review report to the Government on 23 January 2020. The full report of the Task Force is enclosed at **Annex 1**.

## **Key Observations and Recommendations of the Task Force**

4. The Task Force reaffirms VPET's integral role in Hong Kong's education system to equip students with work skills for the future. Nevertheless, it acknowledges that the major challenge for promoting VPET in Hong Kong is to change the public's perception of VPET as an inferior choice relative to academic articulation pathways, as many do not appreciate the diverse career opportunities available through VPET. As such, the Task Force considers that the VPET pathways should be expanded and enriched to offer more programmes with greater flexibility as well as an emphasis on application and industry input, while underpinned by a robust qualifications system, with a view to attracting more young people to pursue VPET as a preferred choice. Details of the Task Force's key recommendations are set out in the following paragraphs.

### ***(a) Promotion of VPET in Secondary Education***

5. The Task Force sees secondary education as a crucial starting point to nurture young people's interest in VPET, and considers that the promotion of VPET in secondary education can be enhanced through the existing platforms, namely the Business-School Partnership Programme (BSPP) and Applied Learning (ApL). The Task Force recommends that the Government foster wider industry collaboration to improve the overall quality of VPET-related activities provided to secondary students under the BSPP through strengthening coordination and formulating an incentive mechanism for industry partners. Moreover, more of these programmes should be provided to junior secondary students, parents, and teachers to broaden their exposure to VPET.

6. Acknowledging the significant role played by teachers and parents in informing students' choices of further education pathways, the Task Force recommends that external advisory service be provided for teachers and career masters under a pilot scheme. Through the scheme, one-stop professional services on a wide array of issues pertaining to VPET can be offered, including on-demand consultation service, an online teachers' kit, professional development workshops, on-site VPET activities for students, and

consolidation of related online resources, etc. Parent-teacher associations (PTAs) and federations of PTAs (FPTAs) should also be encouraged to organise more VPET promotion activities.

7. As part of the senior secondary curriculum, the Task Force recommends that the Government continue promoting VPET through ApL by strengthening the engagement of industry partners, enhancing workplace experience through extension programmes, and piloting the development of VPET learning pathways starting with ApL courses and providing clear articulation pathways with reference to the “CLAP-TECH” model<sup>1</sup>.

8. Separately, the Task Force considers that the school-based approach in developing vocational training courses could better cater for the unique situation and needs of each school and its students. The Task Force recommends that the Government strengthen support to facilitate more secondary schools in developing vocational training courses recognised under the Qualifications Framework (QF).

### ***(b) Promotion of VPET in Higher Education***

9. At the post-secondary level, the Task Force considers that the value and positioning of VPET should be reiterated, providing a clearly defined and differentiated VPET pathway from the academic route, while upholding their parity in terms of both quality and recognition. In view of the support for further developing applied degrees in Hong Kong, the Task Force makes reference to a study on the international experience of implementing vocational degrees/applied degrees conducted by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ). Noting the implementation of applied degrees in other jurisdictions and the key features of applied degrees, the Task Force observes that the structure, mode of teaching and learning, and admission criteria of the vocationally-oriented degree programmes in Hong Kong are basically the same as those of other academically-focused programmes. It recommends that the Government

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<sup>1</sup> The “CLAP-TECH” initiative is funded by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust and operated in partnership with five secondary schools, the School of Continuing Education of the Hong Kong Baptist University and leading corporates, with a view to developing a five-year VPET learning pathway beginning with an ApL course followed by an industry-recognised Higher Diploma programme.

explore ways to facilitate the development of applied degrees at the Bachelor's degree level, by ensuring that the qualification systems and other infrastructure can accommodate the future development of applied degrees with the following distinctive features: a qualifications level at QF Level 5; flexible admission requirements; an applied focus and substantial work-based learning element in the curriculum; and strong industry involvement and recognition.

10. Furthermore, the Task Force recognises that the Higher Diploma (HD) serves as a key VPET pathway at the sub-degree level. To reinforce its role, the Task Force supports the Government's plan to conduct a holistic review of sub-degree education to better differentiate the HD from the Associate Degree qualification. It recommends that the review on the HD qualification should cover its positioning in the higher education system; possible enhancements to the programme structure and curriculum; modes of teaching and learning; admission requirements; a mechanism for industry involvement; articulation to the proposed applied degrees; and recognition as an exit qualification.

11. The Task Force notes that apprenticeship training can offer authentic training of work-ready skills in a real-life setting and the Training and Support Scheme (TSS) implemented by the Vocational Training Council (VTC) provides a solid foundation for furthering efforts in this aspect. Hence, the Task Force recommends that the Government conduct a comprehensive review on the TSS to explore different options of enhancing the scheme, including increasing incentive to employers, strengthening its dual-track learning mode, and enhancing its workplace learning and assessment (WLA). At the same time, the Task Force recommends that other post-secondary institutions, particularly the self-financing sector, be better encouraged and supported to incorporate WLA into their VPET programmes through close partnership with industries.

### ***(c) Development of Vocational Progression Pathways***

12. Outside the formal education system, the Task Force sees merit in establishing flexible vocational progression pathways for in-service practitioners in close partnership with industries. For career advancement,

they can acquire skill-based vocational qualifications duly recognised under the QF through an appropriate combination of vocational training at schools, workplace assessment, or in-service training. The Task Force also reaffirms the QF's role in supporting VPET development and recommends that the Government encourage more stakeholders to adopt the QF.

13. For encouraging working adults to pursue higher VPET qualifications, the Task Force understands the importance of offering greater flexibility for VPET learners in terms of the learning mode. Therefore, the Task Force recommends that the Government consider expanding the Pilot Subsidy Scheme for Students of Professional Part-time Programmes to include students pursuing a wider range of programmes.

*(d) Future Promotion of VPET*

14. Lastly, the Task Force considers that the aforementioned enhancements measures for VPET should be well complemented by strengthened publicity efforts to raise public awareness and understanding of the value of VPET. The Task Force recommends that the Government formulate a coherent message in the publicity of VPET that highlights its association with work skills for the future, diversity, and prospect, with a view to appealing to the younger generation. The Task Force also recommends that the Government adopt a more innovative, targeted, and coordinated approach to promote VPET, including establishing a steering committee to oversee the overall VPET promotion strategy. The support for VPET bodies organising and participating in large-scale VPET events should also be continued.

**Initial Views and First-stage Follow-up Actions of the Government**

15. The Government welcome the in-depth review conducted by the Task Force and has carefully studied the recommendations. The Government's initial views and first-stage follow-up actions are as follows –

## Promotion of VPET in Secondary Education

- (a) We agree that secondary school teachers should be better supported when providing career guidance to students on VPET pathways so as to enable the latter to make informed choices in accordance with their orientations, abilities, and interests, as many have not had personal experience of the VPET pathways. Thus, we plan to launch a pilot scheme to engage external consultant(s) for offering one-stop professional services on VPET for teachers of a selected number of secondary schools in the 2020/21 academic year, with a view to testing out its operational mode and effectiveness.
  
- (b) We agree that ApL is one of the key channels to provide students with an early exposure to VPET and more vocationally-related elements could be integrated into VPET-related ApL courses. We will liaise with course providers to make the engagement of industry partners a necessary condition in the development of VPET-related ApL courses as far as possible. Also, ApL extension programmes currently targeted at Secondary 6 students will be opened up to Secondary 5 students as well to provide more opportunities and flexibility for interested students to participate. Separately, the Task Force on Review of School Curriculum have also formulated initial recommendations on ApL courses for its public consultation<sup>2</sup>. We note that responses in the public consultation exercise were overwhelmingly supportive of the initial recommendations. While the Task Force on Review of School Curriculum has yet to submit its final report, we are considering how to take forward the initial recommendations that had full public support.
  
- (c) We agree that parents also play an important role in promoting VPET to young people. We plan to start enhancing parent

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<sup>2</sup> The initial recommendations on ApL courses formulated by the Task Force on Review of School Curriculum include offering ApL as early as in Secondary 4; relaxing the funding eligibility for students taking ApL as the 4<sup>th</sup> elective subject; encouraging more post-secondary institutions to offer taster programmes of short duration at the junior secondary level; providing a wider range of ApL courses to suit students of different abilities and interests; and encouraging post-secondary institutions to give due recognition to students' achievements in ApL when considering them for admission to relevant programmes of study.

education in 2020-21, covering topics such as refraining from making comparisons and respecting the choices of children. We believe that this will help facilitate parents' acceptance of their children's decisions to pursue VPET pathways. We will also encourage PTAs and FPTAs to organise more VPET promotion activities at the school and/or district level.

#### Promotion of VPET in Higher Education

- (d) We agree that the value and positioning of VPET in higher education should be reiterated to promote the parallel development of the VPET and academic route. As the development of applied degrees is a complicated issue and should be handled in a cautious and gradual manner, we will launch a pilot project in close liaison with relevant stakeholders to explore the practical details involved in the development of these programmes with distinctive features in selected VPET disciplines. We plan to commence the pilot project in 2021. At the same time, we will, together with the HKCAAVQ, jointly consider how the current higher education system can be modified to facilitate the development of these programmes in the future.
  
- (e) We agree that collaboration with industries should be deepened to enhance the quality and diversity of VPET programmes. In this connection, we will commence later this year a comprehensive review on the HD qualification to reinforce its role as a key VPET pathway at the sub-degree level. We have also invited the VTC to conduct a review on the TSS with a view to strengthening apprenticeship training and implementation of WLA.

#### Future Promotion of VPET

- (f) We agree that improving overall coordination of the VPET promotion strategy would be conducive to effectively raising public awareness on the subject. Hence, we will set up a steering committee later in 2020 to oversee the overall VPET promotion

strategy, strengthen coordination and foster closer industry partnership. In addition, we will strengthen promotion of VPET through a more innovative approach to appeal to students and young adults.

A summary of the Education Bureau's response to the Task Force's recommendations is at **Annex 2**.

### **Advice Sought**

16. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

**Education Bureau  
June 2020**



**VPET** 職專教育  
**3A 創。未來**  
FOR THE FUTURE

**Task Force on Promotion of  
Vocational and Professional  
Education and Training**

**Review Report**

**January 2020**

# VPET 職專教育

## 3A 創。未來

FOR THE FUTURE

### *Applied Learning* in secondary schools

#### 中學應用學習

- ↑ Workplace experience 職場體驗
- ↑ Industry participation 業界參與
- ↑ Articulation pathways 升學階梯

### *Applied Degrees*

#### 應用學位

- ↑ Flexible admission arrangements 彈性入學安排
- ↑ Industry recognition 業界認可
- ↑ Dual-track learning 雙軌學習

### *Applied Skills* for professionals

#### 專業人員應用技能

- ↑ Flexible progression pathways 靈活進階路徑
- ↑ Formal recognition of skills 正規技能認證
- ↑ Skills upgrading for the future 提升未來所需技能

# Introduction

## Background

Vocational and professional education and training (VPET) has always been a key driver of manpower development in Hong Kong for meeting the needs of the ever-changing economy. Its history can be traced back to the first Junior Technical School in the early 1930s. Over the years, with various statutory VPET bodies set up, which include the Vocational Training Council (VTC), the Construction Industry Council (CIC), and the Clothing Industry Training Authority (CITA), VPET has become an integral part of Hong Kong's education system, covering diploma to post-graduate qualifications.

2. The Government's policy is to provide multiple and flexible education pathways for young people with different aspirations and abilities. Through VPET, they acquire skills and knowledge for employment and lifelong learning. The Government has provided subventions and support measures for universities funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC), the VTC, and other post-secondary education and training institutions to run VPET programmes, and provided subsidies for students to pursue such programmes. Moreover, the Government has invested heavily in the development of the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (QF) to facilitate the recognition of vocational and professional qualifications.

3. Hong Kong continues to develop as a knowledge-based, high value-added, and diversified economy, as well as a finance and business service hub. With more opportunities for students to pursue post-secondary education, VPET might not be perceived as a valued education pathway. Many stakeholders, including students, parents, and teachers, still hold a narrow view of VPET, associating it with relatively lower qualifications and career opportunities involving manual work only.

4. In June 2014, the Government set up a Task Force on Promotion of Vocational Education (the 2014 Task Force) to map out a strategy to promote and raise the public awareness of vocational education and recognition of its value. All 27 recommendations proposed by the 2014 Task Force, along with the three-pronged strategy of (a) rebranding "vocational education and training

(VET)” as “VPET”; (b) strengthening promotion; and (c) sustaining efforts, were accepted by the Government in the 2016 Policy Address, and relevant measures have been put in place.

5. While the public’s overall perception of VPET has been gradually improving, the Government’s tracking surveys conducted in recent years reveal that a sizeable proportion of respondents still did not have sufficient knowledge of the articulation opportunities available through VPET. Students’ interest in pursuing VPET remains at the lower end as VPET is still considered inferior to other academic articulation pathways, for example, degree programmes in universities.

6. In the 2017 Policy Address, the Chief Executive announced the setting up of a task force to review and consider enhancements to the promotion of VPET in Hong Kong with a more targeted approach. The Task Force on Promotion of VPET (the Task Force) was established in April 2018, with its membership and terms of reference set out at [Annex A](#).

## **Principles and Approach**

7. As pointed out by the Chief Executive in the 2017 and 2018 Policy Addresses, *“talent is the most important element in Hong Kong’s continued development, and education is the key to nurturing talent”*. The Task Force fully recognises VPET’s unique value and advantages vis-à-vis conventional academic education in catering for learners’ diverse abilities and potential. With its orientation towards practical skills training, VPET can equip students with the work-ready skills required to harness the vast opportunities arising from the rapid technological advancement in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace, thereby contributing to Hong Kong’s sustainable development.

8. In the light of the public’s entrenched biased perception of VPET, the Task Force firmly believes that more needs to be done to give the stakeholders a more comprehensive understanding of the latest development of VPET. The Government has a key role to play in confirming and reiterating the significance of VPET as a valued education pathway in addition to conventional academic pathways, so that students can make better informed decisions about pursuing

VPET or other education pathways.

9. When formulating its recommendations, the Task Force adheres to the principle of supporting the development of VPET as a valued education pathway, with distinctive features but qualification levels equivalent to those of the conventional academic pathways. The Task Force has focused on two major directions. On the one hand, the Task Force considers that the Government should strengthen VPET at various levels of the education system, starting from the junior secondary level up to continuing education and training of industry practitioners. Elevating the quality of VPET programmes will help the stakeholders understand the value of VPET and encourage more young people to pursue VPET. On the other hand, the Task Force sees a need to step up the publicity and promotion efforts of VPET-related matters through more innovative approaches, with a view to raising the public awareness of the opportunities and prospects made available by VPET. Only with a combination of enhancement measures for VPET and publicity efforts can VPET be more effectively promoted to the stakeholders.

## **The Review**

10. Since its inception, the Task Force has held nine meetings. It has also arranged eight focus group discussions since January 2019 to gauge the stakeholders' feedback on the following key issues –

- (a) the overall strategies on the promotion of VPET;
- (b) the promotion of VPET in secondary education, including assisting students in identifying their career aspirations and orientation for life-long learning in specific areas, so that they can select pathways that suit their aspirations;
- (c) ways to enhance VPET in post-secondary education and to provide greater incentives for secondary school students to pursue the VPET route; and
- (d) building clear articulation pathways in the vocational sector or

industries for school leavers and in-service personnel to progress to the professional level by establishing vocational qualifications under the QF.

11. In May 2019, the Task Force published a consultation document with key observations summarised at **Annex B**. The Task Force's major initial recommendations are as follows –

- (a) promoting VPET in secondary schools through various channels (such as encouraging Business-School Partnership Programmes (BSPP) partners to provide career exploration activities for junior secondary school students) and through the continued implementation of Applied Learning (ApL);
- (b) reviewing the positioning of VPET in the higher education system in Hong Kong, exploring the merits of developing professional vocational qualifications at the degree level (e.g. applied degrees with a primary orientation towards practical skills), and reinforcing the role of the Higher Diploma (HD) qualification as a key VPET pathway at the post-secondary level; and
- (c) building clear articulation pathways in the vocational sector or industries for school leavers and in-service personnel to progress to the professional level by establishing vocational qualifications under the QF.

12. During the consultation period from 23 May 2019 to 12 July 2019, the Task Force arranged various engagement activities, including four consultation sessions with the key stakeholders, namely VPET institutions, secondary schools, industry organisations, employers, think tanks, and youth organisations, etc., as well as briefings for the Human Resources Planning Commission, the Education Commission, the Committee on Home-school Cooperation, the Steering Committee on QF Fund, and the Federation of Hong Kong Industries. More than 80 organisations were represented at the consultation sessions and about 40 written submissions were received. The lists of participants at the consultation sessions and respondents to the consultation document are at **Annex C** and **Annex D** respectively.

13. The Task Force has also made reference to the experiences of other economies and commissioned the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) to study the international experiences of implementing vocational degrees/applied degrees.

14. In the light of the views received during the consultation period and the international experiences, the Task Force has finalised its recommendations for submission to the Government.

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## Abbreviations and Glossary

AD	Associate Degree
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ApL	Applied Learning
API	Announcement in Public Interest
AY	Academic Year
BSPP	Business-School Partnership Programme
B/Ds	Bureaux and Departments
Cedefop	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CIC	Construction Industry Council
CITA	Clothing Industry Training Authority
CLPG	Career and Life Planning Grant
Common Descriptors	Common Descriptors for Associate Degree and Higher Diploma Programmes under the New Academic Structure
CTAN	Corporate Tech Academy Network
DFS	Diploma of Foundation Studies
DVE	Diploma of Vocational Education
DYJ	Diploma Yi Jin
ERB	Employees Retraining Board
FPTAs	Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations

HD	Higher Diploma
HKCAAVQ	Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications
HKDSE	Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education
IA	Industrial Attachment
IT	Information Technology
ITACs	Industry Training Advisory Committees
LPE	Life Planning Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OLE	Other Learning Experiences
PISE	Pilot Incentive Scheme to Employers
PTAs	Parent-Teacher Associations
QESS	Quality Enhancement Support Scheme
QF	Qualifications Framework
QFS	Qualifications Framework Secretariat
QR	Qualifications Register
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SCSs	Specifications of Competency Standards
SPEF	Self-financing Post-secondary Education Fund
SSSDP	Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors

STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
Study	Study on the International Experiences of Implementing Vocational Degrees/Applied Degrees
Task Force	Task Force on Promotion of Vocational and Professional Education and Training
TSS	Training and Support Scheme
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UGC	University Grants Committee
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VPET	Vocational and Professional Education and Training
VQP	Vocational Qualifications Pathway
VTC	Vocational Training Council
WLA	Workplace Learning and Assessment
2014 Task Force	Task Force on Promotion of Vocational Education

## **Executive Summary and List of Recommendations**

The Task Force on Promotion of Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET) (the Task Force) was established in April 2018 to review and consider enhancements to the promotion of VPET in Hong Kong with a more targeted approach.

2. The Task Force has taken into account the views of the relevant stakeholders from the industries, professional bodies, industry academies, post-secondary institutions, secondary schools, teachers, parents, and students through focus groups, consultation sessions, and written submissions. It has also made reference to the experiences of other economies and the international experiences of implementing applied degrees.

3. The Task Force recognises that the major challenge for promoting VPET in Hong Kong is to change the public's perception of VPET as an inferior choice relative to academic articulation pathways as the public fails to appreciate the diverse career opportunities available through VPET. The Task Force notes that overseas economies generally adopt a three-pronged strategy to promote VPET, namely strengthening the relevance of programmes, establishing quality articulation pathways, and raising the public awareness.

4. The Task Force reaffirms VPET's integral role in Hong Kong's education system, especially amid the rapidly evolving macro-environment in which innovation and technology changes the manpower requirements. The Task Force believes that VPET is well-poised to equip students with the work skills for the future workplace that will be increasingly technology-augmented. Therefore, the Government should work closely with VPET institutions and the industries to strengthen and diversify VPET articulation pathways that could cater for the sustainable development of the economy and attract young people to pursue VPET as a preferred choice.

5. The Task Force sees secondary education as a crucial stage where young people are taught to value skills and VPET. The Task Force observes that VPET is embedded within the secondary education curriculum in various forms, including Life Planning Education, Applied Learning (ApL), and Other Learning Experiences. The Task Force sees merit in stepping up collaboration

with industry partners and support for teachers and parents on the basis of these existing platforms so that students are given early exposure to and guidance on the multiple career opportunities available through VPET. In particular, ApL courses and school-based vocational training courses should be enhanced to provide a quality option for students to begin pursuing VPET.

6. The Task Force considers that at the post-secondary level, it is of utmost importance to establish meaningful VPET articulation pathways up to the degree level, with a view to fulfilling students' aspirations and ensuring parity between VPET and academic routes. The Task Force has given much thought to the idea of introducing applied degrees with a primary orientation towards practical skills, and considers that the higher education system should be suitably adapted to facilitate the development of these programmes with reference to international practices. Moreover, the Task Force acknowledges that the Higher Diploma (HD) plays a key role in the VPET pathway as either a standalone qualification or a stepping stone for further articulation. It warrants a timely review so that it can better serve such a purpose. Apprenticeship training is another aspect of VPET that has been widely promoted worldwide as it offers authentic training of work-ready skills in a real-life setting. The Task Force considers it necessary to step up the work-based learning elements of VPET programmes and integrate them into the core curriculum.

7. The Task Force considers that apart from the formal education system, there is a need to build flexible vocational progression pathways for in-service practitioners. For career advancement, they can attain skill-based qualifications based on their industry experience and part-time training that are underpinned by a robust qualifications framework. Hence, the Task Force recommends reinforcing the role of the Qualifications Framework (QF) in promoting VPET.

8. Lastly, to project a clear message to the public about these recommended measures, the Task Force considers it necessary to better coordinate the VPET publicity efforts under a unified theme that brings out the distinctive benefits of VPET. Apart from association with work skills for the future, VPET should be publicised with an emphasis on its diverse opportunities to appeal to the interests of young people nowadays. More innovative and interactive methods should be adopted, and more large-scale VPET events

organised.

9. The Task Force's recommendations (a total of 18) focus on four areas, namely enhancing promotion in secondary education, enhancing promotion in higher education, developing vocational progression pathways, and strengthening future promotion. The Task Force firmly believes that the recommendations, if implemented, will go a long way towards strengthening the VPET ecosystem in Hong Kong and contributing to our sustainable development.

### **List of Recommendations**

1. Facing the challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the education system needs to nurture **applied skills** to integrate different knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes. **The VPET pathways should be expanded and enriched** to offer more programmes with greater flexibility as well as an emphasis on application and industry input, while underpinned by a robust qualifications system, with a view to enabling young people to acquire professional work skills, applied knowledge in innovation and technology, as well as critical soft skills for career progression in the new digital age.

#### *Promotion of VPET in Secondary Education*

2. To **improve the overall quality of VPET programmes and activities** in secondary schools through the existing platforms, including the Business-School-Partnership Programme, by strengthening coordination, fostering wider industry collaboration, and formulating an incentive mechanism for industry partners.
3. To **encourage more industry partners to provide VPET-related activities for junior secondary students** and **involve more teachers and parents** in these activities through the existing platforms.
4. To **provide external advisory service on VPET for teachers and career masters** of secondary schools under a pilot scheme to offer one-stop professional service for teachers on a wide array of issues pertaining to VPET, including on-demand consultation service, an online teachers' kit,

professional development workshops, on-site VPET activities for students, and consolidation of related online resources.

5. To **encourage parent-teacher associations (PTAs) and federations of PTAs (FPTAs) to organise more VPET promotion activities** at the school and/or district level, making good use of the increased funding for parent education programmes or activities which is available to PTAs and FPTAs, starting from the 2019/20 school year.
6. To continue the Government's efforts to **promote VPET through ApL, by strengthening the engagement of industrial partners, enhancing workplace experience, and piloting the development of VPET learning pathways** starting with ApL courses and providing articulation opportunities to HD and top-up degree programmes.
7. To **strengthen support for secondary schools to develop school-based vocational training courses** recognised under the QF by offering sharing sessions, advice, and facilitation in the accreditation process.

#### *Promotion of VPET in Higher Education*

8. To **reiterate the value and positioning of VPET in higher education**, and provide a clearly defined and differentiated VPET pathway from the academic route while upholding their parity in terms of both quality and recognition.
9. To explore ways to facilitate the development of applied degrees at the Bachelor's degree level, by ensuring that the **qualifications systems and other infrastructure can accommodate** the future development of applied degrees which are characterised by the following features: a qualifications level at QF Level 5; flexible admission requirements; an applied focus and substantial work-based learning element in the curriculum; and strong industry involvement and recognition. A pilot project could be implemented for selected VPET programme areas to test the modifications required to better support the development of applied degrees.
10. As part of the sub-degree review, to **conduct a comprehensive review on**

**the HD qualification**, with a view to reinforcing its role as a key VPET pathway at the post-secondary level. The review should cover the positioning of HD in the higher education system; possible enhancements to the programme structure and curriculum; modes of teaching and learning; admission requirements; a mechanism for industry involvement; articulation to the proposed applied degrees; and recognition as an exit qualification.

11. To **conduct a comprehensive review on the Training and Support Scheme** implemented by the Vocational Training Council (VTC) (also known as the VTC Earn and Learn Scheme) **to enhance apprenticeship training**, including increasing incentives for employers, strengthening its dual-track learning mode, and enhancing its workplace learning and assessment.
12. To **formulate more robust policies to encourage, coordinate, support, and facilitate the post-secondary education sector**, including the self-financing post-secondary institutions, **to incorporate work-based learning and assessment in their VPET programmes** at both the sub-degree and degree levels through close partnership with industries, including considering **extending the Pilot Incentive Scheme to Employers to include institutions** other than the VTC.

#### *Development of Vocational Progression Pathways*

13. To **explore the development of a vocational route whereby professional skill-based vocational qualifications can be acquired flexibly** through an appropriate combination of vocational training at schools, workplace assessment, or in-service training, and duly recognised under the QF in close partnership with the industries. As a start, the Government should explore with relevant industries, regulatory and professional bodies, and training institutions how to develop professional pathways in selected industries.
14. To **reaffirm the QF's role in supporting VPET development by encouraging more stakeholders, including Government departments and industry partners, to adopt the QF.**
15. To **consider expanding the Pilot Subsidy Scheme for Students of**



**Professional Part-time Programmes** to include students pursuing a wider range of dedicated part-time programmes, with a view to encouraging working adults to pursue higher VPET qualifications.

*Future Promotion of VPET*

16. To **formulate a coherent message in the publicity of VPET in order to highlight VPET's association with work skills for the future.** The message should be able to convey the diversity and prospects of VPET as well as its appeal to the younger generation.
17. To **adopt a more innovative, targeted, and coordinated approach in the publicity on VPET** with a view to raising the public awareness, including **establishing a standing steering committee to oversee the overall VPET promotion strategy**, promoting success stories of past VPET students, enhancing the transparency of VPET-related statistics and articulation opportunities, and continuing to conduct tracking surveys on key stakeholders' attitudes towards VPET in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the Government's initiatives in promoting VPET.
18. To continue supporting the VTC and other VPET bodies **organising and participating in large-scale VPET events on a regular basis**, including the VPET International Conference and WorldSkills Hong Kong Competition and Carnival in 2020, to raise the public awareness and understanding of the significance of professional skills.

# Chapter 1

## VPET: A Global Perspective

### Definition of VPET

1.1. All around the world, education has been recognised as the key thrust for the sustainable development of the economy. No matter what the level of development or the economic structure is, suitably trained talent is indispensable for maintaining the daily operation and ways of life in an economy. In this light, VPET plays an important role in equipping the emerging workforce with the requisite skills and abilities for employment.

1.2. While its significance is well recognised worldwide, there does not seem to be a universally agreed terminology nor definition for VPET. In different contexts, the field of education that is currently covered by VPET in Hong Kong has been given various names, including but not limited to “*vocational education*”, “*technical education*”, “*workplace education*”, etc. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) decided in its World Congress on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to use the term “*TVET*”, which could most comprehensively describe the field. According to the UNESCO, “*TVET*” is understood as “*comprising education, training and skills development relating to a wide range of occupational fields, production, services and livelihoods*”.

1.3. On the other hand, the European Commission, another staunch advocate for VPET, through its European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), has adopted the term “*VET*”, which is defined as “*a key element of lifelong learning systems, which equip citizens with knowledge, skills and competences required in particular occupations and on the labour market*”. Separately, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) adopts the term “*VET*”, with the definition of “*education and training programmes designed for, and typically leading to, a particular job or type of job, typically involving practical training as well as the learning of relevant theory*”. The term “*VET*” has also been widely used in a host of other economies, including Australia, Switzerland, and previously Hong Kong.

1.4. Notwithstanding the varied nomenclature and definitions in different places, it is evident that the core elements of VPET, or equivalent, are threefold. Firstly, VPET has an applied nature with a focus on preparing students for employment in particular occupations in the labour market, which is why VPET programmes are commonly designed and offered under a close partnership between institutions and industries. Secondly, VPET emphasises the mastery of relevant skills, rather than deepening knowledge in a theoretical academic discipline. This can be reflected in the mode of teaching and learning for VPET programmes which emphasises practicums and on-the-job training/internship elements. Lastly and most importantly, VPET is an evolving concept without a rigid restriction in scope, which continuously evolves in response to the changing needs of the economy. Over the past decades, VPET has transformed itself from originally being confined to technical training in preparation for work in “blue collar” crafts and trades, to covering post-secondary levels of education and equipping students with both work-ready technical skills and soft competence that can cater for the demands of the new economy.

1.5. In line with the aforementioned key characteristics of VPET, on the advice of the 2014 Task Force, the Government rebranded “*VET*” to “*VPET*” in Hong Kong in 2016 with a widened scope to cover “*programmes of up to degree level with a high percentage of curriculum consisting of specialised contents in vocational skills or professional knowledge*”. Since then, the Government and different VPET institutions have been using the term “*VPET*” in all promotional and publicity materials. The term “*VPET*” can well embody the provision of education and training at all educational levels to equip learners with necessary practical skills, attitude, and knowledge for their effective performance in a wide range of relevant professions or industries.

### **Challenges and Opportunities for VPET in the Digital Age**

1.6. With the wave of innovation and technology sweeping through the world, advanced technologies such as robotics, artificial intelligence (AI), and machine learning are undergoing rapid development and revolutionising the traditional industry structure and job requirements all around the world. As a small open economy, Hong Kong is no exception to this global trend.

1.7. In recent years, there has been a growing spotlight on the impact of technological advancement on the labour market. While there has yet to be an international consensus on the extent of the impact, it can be certain that job functions and requirements will be shifted. The World Economic Forum projected that the accelerating adoption of technology will reshape the division of labour between humans and machines, as machines become increasingly capable of accomplishing not only routine manual tasks but also tasks involving cognitive capabilities<sup>1</sup>. It is anticipated that 42% of the core working skills involved in an average job will have differed in a few years' time from 2018 to 2022. Seminal research conducted by an international institute<sup>2</sup> estimated that, at the present demonstrated technology level, some 49% of work tasks in the global economy can be potentially automated. The exact percentage differs by the nature of the work tasks, with more routine and physical tasks facing higher automation potential. While a sizeable proportion of the working population will be unavoidably displaced in the process, automation is expected to contribute to the creation of numerous new types of technology-augmented jobs.

1.8. Another trend observed in recent years is the emergence of the “gig economy” enabled by digitalisation and increased work mobility. The “gig economy” is characterised by the prevalence of temporary work positions and contracting with independent freelancers for short-term engagements in specific tasks, commonly performed through online platforms. There is an estimated 20-30% of the working population in the United States and major European Union countries engaged in independent work<sup>3</sup>. In the United Kingdom alone, the number of highly skilled freelancers increased by 47% between 2008 and 2018, spanning a wide range of industries and occupations<sup>4</sup>. The contributions of the “gig economy” to the overall economy is projected to continue rising as more and more facilitating platforms are developed with the latest technologies.

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<sup>1</sup> World Economic Forum (2018), The Future of Jobs Report 2018, <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs-report-2018>.

<sup>2</sup> McKinsey Global Institute (2017), A Future that Works: Automation, Employment and Productivity, <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/featured%20insights/Digital%20Disruption/Harnessing%20automation%20for%20a%20future%20that%20works/MGI-A-future-that-works-Executive-summary.ashx>.

<sup>3</sup> McKinsey Global Institute (2016), Independent Work: Choice, Necessity, and the Gig Economy, <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Featured%20Insights/Employment%20and%20Growth/Independent%20work%20Choice%20necessity%20and%20the%20gig%20economy/Independent-Work-Choice-necessity-and-the-gig-economy-Executive-Summary.ashx>.

<sup>4</sup> The Association of Independent Professionals and the Self Employed (2019), Self-employment in the Modern Economy: Exploring the Rise of Self-employment in the Last Decade, <https://www.ipse.co.uk/resource/self-employment-in-the-modern-economy.html>.

1.9. In this connection, it would be of paramount importance to prepare workers for the threats and opportunities arising in the digital age. The local labour force should be well equipped with both job-ready professional skills and applied knowledge, as well as critical soft skills, including problem solving, adaptability, and creativity. They should also possess an adequate level of digital literacy to work coherently in an increasingly automated environment. Should they opt to participate in the “gig economy”, the possession of practical skills is undoubtedly an essential prerequisite. As such, the education system in the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs to nurture in young people the applied skills to integrate different knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes.

1.10. The authorities around the globe acknowledge that an abundant pool of skilled talent is fundamental to sustaining the competitiveness and capacity of the economies in driving growth and innovation amid the digital transformation. To this end, VPET could provide students and practitioners with the integrated experience of practical learning at work, application of new and emerging technologies to solve real-life problems, as well as acquisition of generic skills and knowledge for excelling in the changing workplace. While VPET has a central role to play, it is often marginalised in policymaking and overshadowed by the focus on general academic education. Thus, these economies have been placing a stronger emphasis on the development of VPET to cater for the evolving demands for skilled manpower. In particular, a number of major intergovernmental and supranational organisations, namely the UNESCO, OECD, and European Commission, have set out their strategies and recommended best practices on VPET<sup>5</sup>, which can serve as useful references for Hong Kong. Their VPET strategies can be generalised as follows –

- (a) **strengthening the relevance of VPET programmes** – As synthesised by the OECD in its *Learning for Jobs*<sup>6</sup> and *Skills Beyond School*<sup>7</sup> reports, a successful VPET system should feature close links with labour market actors in the development, updating, and delivery of programmes on the skills-in-demand. In particular, the VPET mechanism should systematically integrate quality assured **work-based**

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<sup>5</sup> While different places may have different taxonomies for VPET, the standardised term “VPET” is used throughout this report to ensure consistency.

<sup>6</sup> OECD (2010), *Learning for Jobs*, OECD Reviews of VET, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264087460-en>.

<sup>7</sup> OECD (2014), *Skills beyond School: Synthesis Report*, OECD Reviews of VET, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264214682-en>.

**learning elements** to maximise the synergy between school and workplace learning in training students' hard and soft skills. Similarly, the UNESCO recommended that governments foster effective partnerships<sup>8</sup> and formalise institutions to suitably involve relevant stakeholders in the governance of the VPET system<sup>9</sup>. In addition to launching a Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills and supporting apprenticeships, the European Commission also repositioned VPET as the hybrid training of both transversal and professional competences<sup>10</sup>, especially developing students' digital and innovation abilities, with a view to not only preparing them for existing jobs, but also **future employment and job creation**<sup>11</sup>.

- (b) **establishing quality and flexible VPET progression pathways** – The European *Riga Conclusions*<sup>12</sup> set out one of the key deliverables to promoting VPET as an attractive and valued option through developing more flexible and permeable training pathways. In addition, the UNESCO recommended that such pathways should accommodate both horizontal and vertical progression of the vocational or academic routes through flexible admission procedures as well as recognition of prior learning underpinned by a well-established qualifications framework, with a view to satisfying students' aspirations for articulation to higher qualifications. Moreover, the OECD pointed out that the upskilling needs of adult learners should be met as well through the provision of flexible modes of study, including part-time and modular arrangements.
- (c) **raising the awareness of VPET** – To improve the image of VPET as a genuine first choice, the European Commission launched the annual European Vocational Skills Week campaign in 2016 to showcase the opportunities and success stories of VPET to the public. Specifically targeting prospective VPET students, the UNESCO recognised that

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<sup>8</sup> UNESCO (2016), Strategy for TVET (2016-2021), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245239>.

<sup>9</sup> UNESCO (2015), Recommendation concerning TVET, [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=49355&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=49355&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html).

<sup>10</sup> European Commission (2018), Opinion of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training on the Future of VET Post 2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=20479&langId=en>.

<sup>11</sup> European Commission (2016), A New Skills Agenda for Europe: Working Together to Strengthen Human Capital, Employability and Competitiveness, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52016DC0381>.

<sup>12</sup> European Commission (2016), The Riga Conclusions: European Cooperation in VET 2015-2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7915&furtherPubs=yes>.

teachers might lack the relevant workplace experience and knowledge about VPET pathways to provide unbiased and objective career advice to students, especially with the increasing complexity of further education pathway choices. Hence, it was crucial to step up professional training for teachers and foster tighter business-school partnerships to support career guidance for students. In this connection, the OECD recommended the use of latest web and mobile technologies to disseminate clear information on VPET pathways so as to better inform students' decision making.

1.11. Using these three-pronged strategies, worldwide economies have been reviewing their respective VPET systems and have promulgated specific measures to keep up-to-date with the recent developments in the wider economy. The report of the 2014 Task Force captured a useful snapshot overview of the various VPET systems implemented around the world, which largely remain valid as of today. On that basis, the following paragraphs highlight some of the major developments in VPET promotion in places outside Hong Kong.

(a) Strengthening the Relevance of VPET Programmes

1.12. On the **engagement of industry partners**, the Reform of Vocational Education put forward by the New Zealand Government in July 2019 proposed the establishment of industry-governed Workforce Development Councils to put industry in charge of the development of vocational programmes to ensure their relevance to the world of work<sup>13</sup>. Similar pilot Skills Organisations will be set up in Australia in key industries to strengthen industry leadership in the national training system, as part of the Delivering Skills for Today and Tomorrow package announced in April 2019<sup>14</sup>. In Finland, a working group was established with the ambit of strengthening cooperation between VPET providers, other education institutions, and employers in 2019<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> New Zealand Government (2019), A Unified System for All Vocational Education: Reform of Vocational Education, <https://conversation.education.govt.nz/assets/RoVE/AoC/A-unified-system-for-all-vocational-education.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Australian Government (2019), Delivering Skills for Today and Tomorrow, <https://www.employment.gov.au/delivering-skills-today-and-tomorrow>.

<sup>15</sup> European Commission (2019), National Reforms in VET and Adult Learning: Finland, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/national-reforms-vocational-education-and-training-and-adult-learning-21\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/national-reforms-vocational-education-and-training-and-adult-learning-21_en).

1.13. Regarding **work-based learning**, the Finnish VET reform that entered into force in January 2018 comprised a new versatile learning model to facilitate work-based learning and assessment. On the other hand, one of the objectives of the *Implementation Plan on National Vocational Education Reform (國家職業教育改革實施方案)*<sup>16</sup> promulgated in Mainland China in January 2019 was to foster the integration of vocational schools with industries to offer work-based training with reference from the dual-track mode. Other economies, including Australia, England<sup>17</sup> and France<sup>18</sup>, have also stepped up their support for apprenticeship training through additional funding and incentives for employers.

1.14. To renew the VPET curriculum to address the growing demand for emerging skills in the labour market, Germany launched the pilot project VET 4.0 in February 2016, which included, inter alia, the **implementation of digital transformation** through VPET with the tripartite support of the government, education, and industry sectors<sup>19</sup>. The mission statement on VPET 2030 adopted by Switzerland in December 2018 also accorded priority to pioneering digital transformation through VPET with a funding initiative, [digitalinform.swiss](http://digitalinform.swiss)<sup>20</sup>.

1.15. Other than engaging industry partners on a programme or industry level, economies have also established formal institutions to incorporate relevant stakeholders' views in the formulation of VPET policies. Notable examples included the National Skills Commission in Australia and the National Vocational Education Steering Committee (國家職業教育指導諮詢委員會) in Mainland China.

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<sup>16</sup> State Council of the People's Republic of China (2019), The Notice by the State Council on the Issuance of the Implementation Plan on National Vocational Education Reform, [http://big5.www.gov.cn/gate/big5/www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2019-02/13/content\\_5365341.htm](http://big5.www.gov.cn/gate/big5/www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2019-02/13/content_5365341.htm).

<sup>17</sup> European Commission (2019), National Reforms in VET and Adult Learning: United Kingdom - England, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/national-reforms-vocational-education-and-training-and-adult-learning-75\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/national-reforms-vocational-education-and-training-and-adult-learning-75_en).

<sup>18</sup> European Commission (2019), National Reforms in VET and Adult Learning: France, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/national-reforms-vocational-education-and-training-and-adult-learning-23\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/national-reforms-vocational-education-and-training-and-adult-learning-23_en).

<sup>19</sup> Cedefop (2017), Developments in VET Policy in 2015-17: Germany, [https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/germany\\_-\\_vet\\_policy\\_developments.pdf](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/germany_-_vet_policy_developments.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> European Commission (2019), National Reforms in VET and Adult Learning: Switzerland, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/national-reforms-vocational-education-and-training-and-adult-learning-89\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/national-reforms-vocational-education-and-training-and-adult-learning-89_en).



## (b) Establishing Quality and Flexible VPET Progression Pathways

1.16. Different economies have restructured the elements of their education systems to provide more structured and agile articulation pathways for VPET students to develop their own unique learning and career paths based on their aptitudes and goals. In England, a new T Levels will be introduced between 2020 and 2022 to **consolidate the various technical qualifications at the senior secondary level with new career-focused pathways** that are on an equal footing with the academically-oriented A Levels qualification. Graduates of the T Levels can proceed to skilled employment or pursue higher technical education and training. New Institutes of Technology have also been established from September 2019 to specialise in delivering higher technical education at the sub-degree level with a focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects to allow progression of T Levels or A Levels graduates as well as adult learners. For Mainland China, selected higher education institutions offering degree level programmes (普通本科高等學校) are to be transformed into institutions with an applied focus (應用型本科高校)<sup>21</sup> by 2022. In addition, the “1+X” model, where students can acquire a number of occupational skills certificates in addition to an academic qualification, has been implemented on a pilot basis covering 20 skills areas with manpower demand in these institutions, thus extending the VPET route to the degree level<sup>22</sup>. The admission criteria for higher vocational education will also be expanded to incorporate alternative qualifications other than solely accepting entrance through the academic route of GaoKao (高考).

1.17. Apart from establishing VPET pathways to the tertiary level, overseas economies have acknowledged the **training needs of working adults** for career advancement. Under the SkillsFuture initiative, the Singapore government has introduced more subsidised skill-based modular courses at post-secondary education institutions at the Diploma level and above to support the

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<sup>21</sup> Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China (2019), The Situation Report on Supporting the Development of Institutions with an Applied Focus, [http://www.moe.gov.cn/fbh/live/2019/50294/sfcl/201902/t20190219\\_370019.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/fbh/live/2019/50294/sfcl/201902/t20190219_370019.html).

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China (2019), The Notice by Four Departments including the Ministry of Education on the Issuance of the Pilot Plan on the Implementation of “Academic Certificate + Several Vocational Skills Level Certificates” System, [http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A07/moe\\_953/201904/t20190415\\_378129.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A07/moe_953/201904/t20190415_378129.html).

skills development of mid-career individuals<sup>23</sup>. In Germany, legislation (Aufstiegsfortbildungsförderungsgesetz) was passed in 2016 to encourage skilled workers to participate in further training to acquire the qualifications of a master craftsperson or equivalent.

1.18. With regard to enhancing recognition of prior learning, the German ValiKom project has been operated since 2015 to **benchmark the skills and competences of in-service practitioners acquired through work** but without formal qualifications. Criteria and procedures to incorporate non-formal learning into the German qualifications framework are also being developed. Separately, Mainland China is expediting the establishment of a national credit bank to facilitate credit accumulation and transfer.

(c) Raising the Awareness of VPET

1.19. To improve the public perception of VPET, overseas economies have launched large-scale promotional campaigns through various media channels. Many of these campaigns are centred around a **memorable theme** to publicise the benefits of VPET. For instance, Germany conceived the “Vocational Training – Practically Unbeatable” campaign to position dual-track training as a realistic and attractive choice and England launched the “Get In Go Far” campaign to promote apprenticeships<sup>24</sup>. In Finland, dedicated funding was allocated to projects that improve the attractiveness of VPET, prioritising those adopting innovative communication channels and targeting new audience groups.

1.20. Apart from mass promotion, **targeted appeal to younger students** before their choice of articulation pathways is equally, if not more, important. Under the *Act for the Freedom to Choose One’s Future Career* promulgated by the French government in September 2018, information sessions were organised for lower and upper secondary students to find out more about the different professions available through the VPET route. Career guidance and coaching at school were also reinforced through professional training development programmes for teachers. For Mainland China, vocational institutions were

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<sup>23</sup> Singapore Government (2015), Factsheet on SkillsFuture, <https://www.mom.gov.sg/-/media/mom/documents/speeches/2015/factsheet-on-skillsfuture.pdf?la=en&hash=07744DA012B1F42A408AEEB82E987469>.

<sup>24</sup> Cedefop (2017), Developments in VET Policy in 2015-17: United Kingdom (England), [https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/united\\_kingdom\\_england\\_-\\_vet\\_policy\\_developments.pdf](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/united_kingdom_england_-_vet_policy_developments.pdf).

encouraged to collaborate with primary and secondary schools to offer early insights for students into VPET pathways.

1.21. Lastly, **schools are encouraged to reach out to industry partners** to offer career exposure programmes to stimulate students' interests in pursuing VPET. England launched the *Give Yourself the Edge Toolkit* in 2017 to help schools form and deepen partnerships with enterprises through workplace placements for teachers, office tours, and employer talks at schools. A Careers and Enterprise Fund was also created in 2016 to incentivise businesses and organisations to trial career-related activities for young people between the age of 11 and 18. On the other hand, some economies introduced taster VPET programmes into their secondary curriculum, offering a head start for participating students in the VPET route. As part of the Career Kick-start Strategy launched in Ontario, Canada in 2017<sup>25</sup>, the Specialist High Skills Major Programme, which offers extended learning programmes in specific economic sectors with industry recognised certification for senior secondary students to explore their career goals, was extended to benefit more students interested in pursuing VPET.

1.22. While different economies have their own unique education systems and varying economic structures, it is evident from the preceding synopsis that their VPET policy measures often adhere to similar principles. We are facing the same challenge that VPET is often perceived as an inferior choice. We are also competing in the same global arena, where technological advancement will pose challenges and open up new development avenues for the working population. To sustain Hong Kong's status as one of the most internationally competitive economies and a regional talent hub, more should be done to strengthen VPET as an elemental pillar in our education system, and these international experiences can serve as a valuable reference point as we chart the way forward for VPET in Hong Kong.

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<sup>25</sup> Ontario Government (2017), Ontario Boosting On-the-job Learning Opportunities for Students, <https://news.ontario.ca/mof/en/2017/04/ontario-boosting-on-the-job-learning-opportunities-for-students.html>.

## **Chapter 2**

# **Current Landscape of VPET in Hong Kong**

### **Historical Development of the VPET Sector**

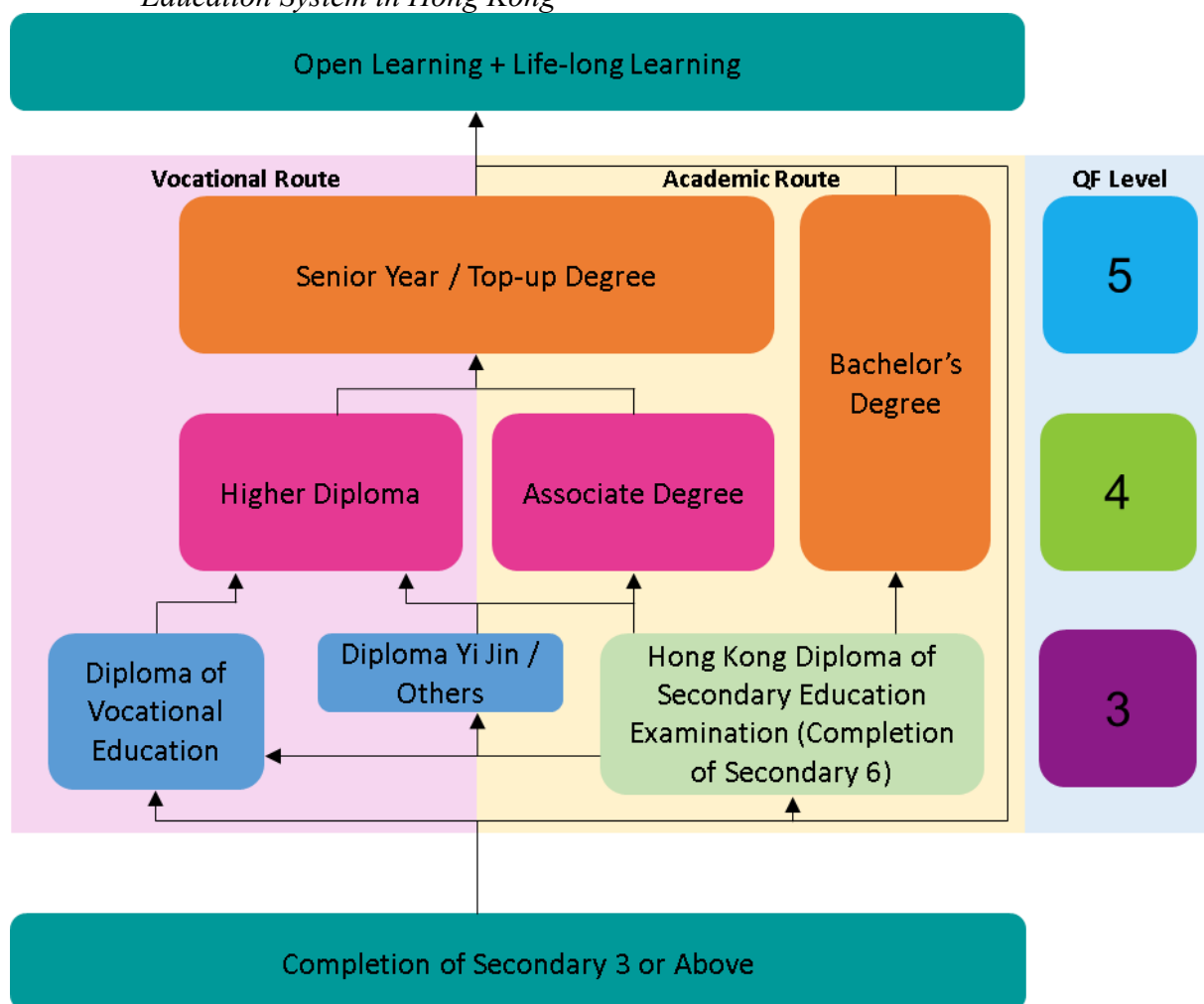
2.1. The formal development of VPET in Hong Kong can be traced back to the establishment of the first Junior Technical School and the Government Trade School by the Government in 1932 and 1937 respectively. Yet, even long before then, VPET had taken place in an informal or private setting in the community, with the opening of a host of technical institutes and industrial colleges in the early 1900s. This was followed by the setting up of a range of prevocational schools, technical institutes, and the Hong Kong Polytechnic in the 1970s. A number of statutory VPET institutions, including the then Construction Industry Training Authority and the Clothing Industry Training Authority (CITA), were also established around the time to address the specific training needs of the respective trades.

2.2. As VPET has gradually gained prominence over the years as an integral part of Hong Kong's education system running parallel to the academic stream, the Government established the VTC under the VTC Ordinance (Cap. 1130) as a government-funded statutory body to provide comprehensive technical education and industrial training in Hong Kong in 1982. Since then, the VTC has led the development of VPET with a holistic and coordinated approach while catering for the structural changes of the economy from manufacturing-based to service- and knowledge-based. For instance, the VTC has extended the provision of VPET to the post-secondary level with upgraded skill contents as well as strengthened support for lifelong learning and developed additional progression pathways for students and in-service practitioners. Meanwhile, following the implementation of education reform in the 1990s, former prevocational schools and secondary technical schools have progressively repositioned themselves as generic grammar secondary schools and have been less prominent in terms of VPET provision in Hong Kong.

2.3. Over the years, the Government has been committed to providing quality, flexible, and diversified study pathways with multiple entry and exit points for young people with diverse aspirations and abilities. At the same time, the business sector needs a life-long learning workforce with adequate

knowledge and skills to contribute to the sustainable development of Hong Kong and its economy. As such, VPET plays a pivotal role in broadening the learning opportunities for young people and working adults as well as nurturing the requisite human capital for Hong Kong’s development. An overview of the multiple articulation pathways attainable via both vocational and academic routes under the prevailing education system in Hong Kong is illustrated in *Chart 2.1* below.

*Chart 2.1 Overview of Vocational and Academic Articulation Pathway under the Prevailing Education System in Hong Kong*



2.4. As evident from *Chart 2.1* above, VPET is provided at different levels of the education system, offering diploma to degree qualifications and beyond. This is supported by a vibrant VPET sector comprising a wide variety of programme providers, including the UGC-funded universities, post-secondary education and training institutions, statutory bodies (including the VTC, CIC,

CITA, and Employees Retraining Board (ERB)), as well as the growing sector of corporate academies (which are in-house training arms of industry corporations), such as the MTR Academy and Hong Kong International Aviation Academy.

## QF

2.5. In Hong Kong, we have in place the QF, a credible qualifications system which enables integration of education and vocational training as well as recognition of skills and experiences. The QF can provide a solid foundation for establishing vocational and professional articulation pathways to enhance the continuous development of VPET in Hong Kong.

2.6. The Government introduced the QF in 2008, which is a seven-level hierarchy embracing qualifications in the academic, vocational, professional, and continuing education sectors, as illustrated in *Chart 2.2* below. QF-recognised VPET qualifications are quality assured and level-rated in accordance with well-defined standards. The QF also provides a common platform that facilitates articulation of academic and vocational qualifications across different subject areas, sectors, and levels. It serves as an important foundation underpinning our VPET system, rendering assessment and comparison of achievements within the vocational route and between the vocational and academic routes possible, thereby projecting a professional image of VPET. At present, over 8 000 academic and vocational qualifications, including VPET qualifications, are recognised under the QF and registered on the Qualifications Register (QR).

Chart 2.2 Seven-level hierarchy under the QF



2.7. Under the QF, Specifications of Competency Standards (SCSs) are drawn up by different Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs), which set out the skills, knowledge, and outcome standards required of employees in different functional areas of the respective sectors, and provide a basis for course providers to design training courses to meet the needs of the sectors. The use of QF credits and the policy and principles for credit accumulation and transfer

introduced under the QF have also further enhanced articulation among qualifications from different sectors.

## **VPET in the Education System**

### (a) VPET at the Secondary Level

2.8. Under the prevailing secondary education system, students are progressively exposed to career and VPET-related experiences through life-wide learning opportunities as well as the school curriculum. **Life Planning Education (LPE)** plays a significant role at schools in fostering students' self-understanding, personal planning, goal setting, reflective thinking, and articulation to progression pathways. LPE consists of three key elements, namely, self-understanding and development, career exploration, and career planning and management.

2.9. At the **senior secondary level**, students' understanding of VPET is enhanced through a variety of learning opportunities. **ApL courses**, which are subjects with stronger elements of practical learning linked to broad professional and vocational fields, are introduced as Category B elective subjects of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination. In gist, ApL is an integral component in the senior secondary curriculum for complementing other subjects and for achieving the learning goals. Currently, most ApL courses are registered on the QR as certificate programmes at QF Level 3. In addition to the HKDSE qualification, students will obtain QF certificates issued by course providers upon successful completion of these ApL courses. In the 2018/19 academic year (AY), around 350 secondary schools offered a total of 36 ApL courses for about 4 600 students in Secondary 5.

2.10. On the other hand, career-related experiences are embedded in the **Other Learning Experiences (OLE)** activities, which are an integral part of the senior secondary curriculum implemented since 2009. OLE are accessible by all senior secondary students to complement their learning in core and elective subjects in order to nurture their all-rounded development and positive values. Through OLE, various career-related experiences are provided for students to enhance and update their knowledge about the world of work, strengthen their



work ethics, and facilitate their decision making as well as personal career planning. VPET may be introduced to students as an articulation choice through relevant career-related experiences.

(b) VPET at the Post-secondary Level

2.11. At the **sub-degree level** (QF Level 4), there are currently 23 local post-secondary institutions<sup>26</sup> providing sub-degree programmes, and 65% of some 370 full-time sub-degree programmes offered in the 2019/20 AY are **HD programmes**<sup>27</sup>, making available nearly 19 000 intake places (about two-thirds of the total sub-degree intake places). According to the *Common Descriptors for Associate Degree (AD) and HD Programmes under the New Academic Structure (the Common Descriptors)*<sup>28</sup>, an HD programme's curriculum should consist of at least 60% specialised contents (e.g. learning related to concentrations, disciplines and professions, vocational skills, etc.). HD programmes seek to enable students to acquire the appropriate attitude, knowledge, and skills to support their initial employment at the para-professional level.

2.12. At the **undergraduate level** (QF Level 5), many higher education institutions are offering **degree programmes with a strong professional/vocational element**. Examples include Bachelor of Engineering, Bachelor of Science in Occupational Therapy, etc. Moreover, articulation opportunities to senior year places of UGC-funded undergraduate programmes and top-up degree programmes in the self-financing sector are available to sub-degree graduates, offering a total of about 14 000 places per year.

(c) Other VPET Programmes

2.13. Apart from the above, there is a wide array of full-time and part-time certificate and diploma programmes (equivalent to QF Levels 2 and 3), primarily

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<sup>26</sup> Apart from local post-secondary institutions, some other providers such as private hospitals offer HD programmes such as HD in General Nursing.

<sup>27</sup> Examples include HD in Airfreight Management and Global Logistics, HD in International Hospitality and Tourism Management, etc.

<sup>28</sup> The *Common Descriptors* was drawn up by the Education Bureau, the HKCAAVQ, and the Joint Quality Review Committee in 2010, accessible at [https://www.cspe.edu.hk/resources/pdf/en/Updated%20Revised%20Common%20Descriptors%20for%20Associate%20Degree%20and%20Higher%20Diploma%20Programmes%20under%20the%20New%20Academic%20Structure%20\(Updated%20in%20February%202017\)%20UPDATED.pdf](https://www.cspe.edu.hk/resources/pdf/en/Updated%20Revised%20Common%20Descriptors%20for%20Associate%20Degree%20and%20Higher%20Diploma%20Programmes%20under%20the%20New%20Academic%20Structure%20(Updated%20in%20February%202017)%20UPDATED.pdf).

targeting young people that have completed Secondary 3 to 6, including the Diploma of Vocational Education (DVE), Diploma of Foundation Studies (DFS) programmes, and apprenticeship schemes provided by the VTC as well as Diploma Yi Jin (DYJ) programmes offered by different institutions. Working adults who wish to acquire training or formal qualifications may also articulate using these alternative pathways. In addition, different training providers offer a range of Professional Certificate and Diploma programmes<sup>29</sup> with strong vocational content in specific disciplines, many of which are recognised under the QF at Levels 3 to 5, for in-service practitioners to upskill and pursue higher qualifications for career advancement.

## **Development of VPET outside the Education Sector**

2.14. In recent years, witnessing their intensifying demand for skilled manpower and the Government's enhanced promotion of VPET, more industries have played a more proactive role in promoting VPET through partnerships with education and training institutions in developing programmes for specific sectors/professions. For example, the Hong Kong and China Gas Company Limited and CLP Power Hong Kong have partnered with the VTC to offer more specialised training in nurturing professionals for their respective industries<sup>30</sup>. These joint programmes enable students to keep abreast of the latest industry knowledge and trends through theoretical learning and practice provided by the partner companies. The rising prominence of corporate academies also plays a significant role in offering practical training to nurture more high-calibre and professional talents for their respective trades. In September 2018, the Corporate Tech Academy Network (CTAN) was established with six major corporate academies<sup>31</sup> as founding members to promote VPET for the development of a skilled and qualified professional/technical workforce supporting the sustainable growth, life-long learning culture, and youth engagement in Hong Kong.

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<sup>29</sup> Examples include Professional Certificate in Fashion Sportswear and Bodywear Design as well as Professional Diploma in Plumbing Engineering for Building Services offered by the VTC, Professional Diploma in Property Management offered by the Caritas Bianchi College of Careers, etc.

<sup>30</sup> Examples include Professional Diploma in Gas Engineering and Professional Diploma in Power Engineering.

<sup>31</sup> The six founding members of CTAN include CLP Power Academy, Hong Kong International Aviation Academy, Hong Kong Institute of Construction, HKPC Academy, MTR Academy, and Towngas Engineering Academy.

2.15. On the QF front, notable progress has been made by companies and government departments in implementing the QF in recruitment and training. Their involvement has underscored the importance of VPET in manpower development in Hong Kong, and also helped to raise students' awareness of the employment prospects and avenues for further education available through VPET. Furthermore, there has also been a growing trend for employers, especially those in the property management, retail, catering, banking, and insurance industries, to develop QF-recognised in-house training programmes to suit the needs of particular occupations or positions.

### **Implementation of Recommendations of the 2014 Task Force**

2.16. The Government set up the 2014 Task Force to map out a strategy to promote vocational education and raise the public awareness of vocational education and recognition of its value. Its report was submitted to the Government in July 2015, proposing a three-pronged strategy with a total of 27 recommendations. The three-pronged strategy comprised (a) rebranding VET; (b) strengthening promotion; and (c) sustaining efforts.

2.17. As announced in the 2016 Policy Address, the Government accepted all the recommendations. The major progress of implementing the recommendations is summarised as follows –

- (a) rebranded VET to VPET, covering programmes up to the degree level with a high percentage of the curriculum consisting of specialised contents in vocational skills or professional knowledge;
- (b) carried out a series of publicity campaign for the promotion of the professional image of VPET;
- (c) fully subsidised ApL courses at the senior secondary level starting from the 2016/17 AY, with a view to encouraging more schools to offer ApL courses so that more students with interests in VPET could benefit from the courses;
- (d) extended the Pilot Training and Support Scheme for two more cohorts

of students from 2016/17 AY, under which apprenticeship training for targeted industries was provided to students alongside a guaranteed level of salary and incentive allowance; and

- (e) earmarked a site in the urban district to develop a new campus for the VTC with adequate capacity and state-of-the-art facilities so as to enhance the image and professionalism of VPET.

2.18. The 27 recommendations, with follow-up actions and measures implemented by the Government, are set out at **Annex E**.

### **Current Challenges faced by the VPET Sector**

2.19. The major challenge faced by the VPET sector in Hong Kong is VPET's inferior public perception vis-à-vis other academic articulation pathways. Despite the strengthened promotion efforts following the work of the 2014 Task Force, many stakeholders, including students, parents, and teachers, still hold a relatively narrow view of VPET. In fact, many of them are not aware of the diverse opportunities available through VPET, and often associate VPET with relatively lower qualifications (mainly at the sub-degree level or below) only. They also consider that career opportunities for VPET graduates are limited to those involving manual work, while maintaining the traditional mentality that only academic pursuit could promise a reputable and successful career pathway for young people. Such a narrow view of VPET has been entrenched in the minds of many and cannot be easily reversed in a short period of time, which is not conducive to the promotion of VPET in Hong Kong.

2.20. Pursuant to the 2014 Task Force's recommendation to keep track of changes in the stakeholders' attitudes towards VPET following the implementation of various enhancement measures, the Government conducted tracking surveys involving relevant stakeholders in 2015, 2017 and 2018. The tracking surveys' results demonstrated a noticeable improvement in the public's overall perception of VPET. 60.2% of the respondents agreed to have a good impression of VPET in 2018, an increase of about ten percentage points from 50.8% in 2015. Throughout the study period, more respondents also agreed

that VPET was helpful for self-development and opened up more job opportunities.

2.21. Nevertheless, the 2018 survey revealed that about half of the respondents (48.7%) still did not have knowledge of the academic attainment one could achieve by pursuing VPET. Moreover, only about 13.1% respondents had the first impression that VPET was related to professional skills training in 2018, even after the rebranding efforts. Among the student respondents, while more considered VPET a valuable choice for further academic or career pursuit (54.0% in 2018 as compared with 44.0% in 2015), only 20.7% were interested in pursuing VPET in 2018 (rather stagnant as compared with 19.3% in 2015). In addition, the top reason quoted by students for not pursuing VPET was that “their academic results allowed them to pursue better education opportunities”, whereas the main reason for others’ interest in VPET was “interest in career opportunities available through VPET”.

2.22. The pattern of the findings for non-student respondents was similar. While more were likely to recommend VPET to young people (37.2% in 2018 as compared with 30.2% in 2015), more respondents also cited “their academic results allowed them to pursue better education opportunities” as the top reason for not recommending VPET. For those who would recommend VPET, the most popular justification was conversely that “their academic results only allowed them to pursue VPET”, which was in fact more alarming than the findings for students as this statement only ranked third among their reasons to be interested in VPET. From the above results, it is evident that VPET is still considered by some as inferior to other academic articulation pathways, such as degree education.

2.23. Apart from the public perception of VPET collected through the direct channel of perception surveys, student enrolment and articulation statistics at relevant VPET programmes can also shed light on their underlying preferences over VPET and other pathways. At the secondary level, in the 2018/19 AY, ApL courses were taken up by around 9% of Secondary 5 students. While the take-up rate for ApL is comparable to those for some other Category A elective subjects, there is still room for attracting more students to take ApL courses with VPET-related contents to broaden their exposure to VPET.

2.24. Such a phenomenon is also observed at the sub-degree level. As stipulated in the *Common Descriptors*, AD programmes are of a generic nature to equip students with knowledge and skills required for further studies in a chosen discipline, whereas HD programmes focus on specialised content to support students' initial employment at the para-professional level. That said, according to the graduate statistics of sub-degree programmes, some 40% of HD graduates still opt for articulation to top-up degree studies. Even though the proportion is much lower than that of AD (at around 80%), it still demonstrates the underlying preference for VPET students to migrate from a vocational route to an academic one, with a view to ultimately attaining an academic degree qualification.

2.25. Such ingrained public perception of VPET as a second choice vis-à-vis academic pathways is not conducive to the sustainable development of VPET, thereby hindering the sector's ability to cater for the human resources needs of various industries in Hong Kong. Therefore, the Task Force firmly believes that more should be done to enable stakeholders to have a more comprehensive understanding of the latest development of VPET so that they can make more informed decisions about pursuing VPET or other education and training pathways.

### **Recent Efforts by the Government to Promote VPET**

2.26. To encourage more young people to pursue VPET as a preferred choice, and to raise the public awareness of the potential and prospects of pursuing VPET, the Government has introduced a number of new initiatives to further promote and support the development of VPET in the past few years. Some of the latest initiatives are listed as follows –

(a) Training and Support Scheme (TSS)

2.27. The TSS was introduced as a pilot scheme by the Government and implemented by the VTC under the name of VTC Earn and Learn Scheme starting from the 2014/15 AY, with the objective of attracting and retaining talent for specific industries with a keen demand for labour. The TSS provides apprenticeship training alongside a guaranteed level of salary and incentive

allowance under an “Earn and Learn” model. Upon completion of apprenticeship training, trainees may attain a range of QF-recognised qualifications, including Certificates, Diplomas, and HD. As of the 2018/19 AY, 4 660 trainees benefited from and some 280 employers participated in the TSS, covering a wide range of industries including engineering, construction, testing and certification, medical centre operations, etc. Starting from the 2019/20 AY, the TSS has been regularised with an increased number of training places to 1 200 per year and an increased average monthly subsidy of \$2,500 per month for each trainee.

2.28. Thus far, the Government has introduced several improvement measures to enhance the TSS. In order to evaluate trainees’ abilities and performance in the workplace more effectively, the Government has introduced a three-year Pilot Incentive Scheme to Employers (PISE) starting from the 2019/20 AY. With a subsidy of up to \$36,000 per trainee, the PISE encourages employers to participate in workplace assessment for trainees. This will facilitate the adjustment of the content of training courses more effectively and improve trainees’ work performance. On the other hand, to further enrich the learning experience of the TSS, the Government will provide subsidies to trainees for three years starting from the 2020/21 AY to take part in study and exchange programmes outside Hong Kong, attend short-term skills and practical courses, and visit institutions/enterprises in those places, with a view to facilitating skills exchange and broadening their exposure.

(b) Industrial Attachment (IA) Programmes

2.29. Starting from the 2014/15 AY, a recurrent funding of \$18 million has been allocated to the VTC to provide IA opportunities for its students. The programme aims at enhancing the employability of students and preparing them for a smooth transition from study to work. It is estimated to benefit over 9 000 students in the VTC every year. All HD and certain DVE students of the VTC are required to attend a minimum 90 hours of IA, or equivalent, for graduation.

2.30. Pursuant to the recommendation of the 2014 Task Force to extend the IA initiative to students pursuing full-time locally-accredited self-financing sub-degree and undergraduate programmes, an IA category was launched under the Quality Enhancement Support Scheme (QESS) of the Self-financing Post-

secondary Education Fund (SPEF) in the 2015/16 round for a pilot period of two years. The IA category supports projects initiated by institutions to increase students' employability by sourcing more internship opportunities or enhancing relevant institutional support. The pilot IA category was subsequently extended for four more rounds up to 2020/21, with an expanded scope starting from the 2019/20 round to also cover IA projects undertaken outside Hong Kong, with a view to further broadening students' international exposure.

(c) Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors (SSSDP)

2.31. The SSSDP was introduced in the 2015/16 AY on a pilot basis to subsidise students to pursue designated full-time locally-accredited self-financing undergraduate programmes to nurture talents to meet Hong Kong's social and economic needs. The SSSDP has been regularised from the 2018/19 AY onwards with an increase in the number of subsidised places from about 1 000 to about 3 000 per cohort. Starting from the 2019/20 AY, the scheme has been expanded to subsidise about 2 000 students per cohort enrolling in selected self-financing sub-degree programmes. Currently, the designated undergraduate and sub-degree programmes fall under ten disciplines that have been identified as having keen manpower demand, namely architecture and engineering, computer science, creative industries, financial technology, health care, insurance, logistics, sports and recreation, testing and certification, and tourism and hospitality.

(d) Subsidy Scheme for Students of Professional Part-time Programmes

2.32. To encourage working adults in designated industries to pursue higher qualifications, the Government launched the Pilot Subsidy Scheme for Students of Professional Part-time Programmes through the VTC for three years starting from the 2016/17 AY. The Pilot Scheme has been well-received and the Government has further allocated \$234 million to extend the Pilot Scheme for three more years from the 2019/20 AY. The extended Scheme subsidises some 8 000 students admitted to designated professional part-time Professional Certificate, Professional Diploma, and HD programmes at QF Levels 3 to 5 and in architecture and town planning, engineering and technology, or creative disciplines offered by the VTC. Under the Scheme, successful applicants are refunded 60% of the tuition fees of not more than two eligible programmes,



subject to a maximum of \$36,000 (for creative disciplines) or \$45,000 (for other disciplines) per person.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Promotion of VPET in Secondary Education**

3.1 Secondary education is a critical starting point to kindle young people's aspirations to pursue VPET. At this stage, students begin to have some thoughts about their future education and career directions and to make decisions accordingly, such as the choice of elective subjects of the HKDSE, VPET versus academic further education options, etc. To a certain extent, their decisions are often shaped by the predominant social and peer norms as well as advice from parents and teachers. It is thus of paramount importance to provide students with adequate exposure to and guidance on VPET early on to facilitate their informed choices in accordance with their orientations, abilities, and interests.

3.2 The Task Force notes that currently there are different programmes and activities that promote VPET and career-related information in secondary schools. At the junior secondary level, students are progressively provided with career-related experiences and exposure through life-wide learning activities. At the senior secondary level, students' understanding of VPET is further enhanced through ApL courses, the career-related experiences embedded in OLE activities, and other subjects in key learning areas such as science and technology education. The Task Force is of the view that the existing channels should be suitably enhanced and adapted to strengthen their effectiveness in promoting VPET to secondary students.

#### **Existing Promotional Channels of VPET in Secondary Schools**

##### *LPE and the BSPP*

3.3 Under the Senior Secondary Framework<sup>32</sup>, one of the seven learning goals is to enable students “to understand their own career/academic aspirations and develop positive attitudes towards work and learning”. This highlights the importance of career guidance and LPE in the secondary education curriculum. Within LPE, three key elements, namely self-understanding and

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<sup>32</sup> Education Bureau (2009), The Senior Secondary Curriculum Guide Booklet 1: The Student Programme to Achieve the Vision of the New Academic Structure – Whole-person Development and Life-long Learning, [https://cd1.edb.hkedcity.net/cd/cns/sscg\\_web/html/english/main01.html](https://cd1.edb.hkedcity.net/cd/cns/sscg_web/html/english/main01.html).

development, career exploration, and career planning and management are related to students' subsequent consideration of pursuing different articulation pathways, including VPET. At the junior secondary level, LPE focuses more on promoting students' self-understanding and development; whereas the weighting of career exploration as well as career planning and management is progressively increased at the senior secondary level. Starting from the 2014/15 AY, the Government has provided stronger support for schools to implement LPE, including the provision of additional manpower through the disbursement of a recurrent Career and Life Planning Grant (CLPG) and granting flexibility for schools to convert the CLPG into regular teaching posts, as well as enhancing professional training for teachers through structured training courses and thematic seminars. A new dedicated Life Planning Information Website<sup>33</sup> was also launched in September 2019.

3.4 To foster closer partnership between business entities/community organisations and secondary schools to support the implementation of LPE, the Government launched the BSPP in 2005. Through the BSPP, business entities and community organisations provide a wide range of career exploration activities to students on various industries and professions on a voluntary basis. Examples of these activities include career talks, workplace visits, workshops, work experience programmes, and competitions. The BSPP leads students out of the classroom to gain a wider perspective of the world so that they can get prepared for life in society. Through this non-traditional learning platform, students can learn about various industries, explore their own career orientations, enhance generic skills, and develop work ethics, thereby acquiring an initial understanding of the workplace. Currently, the majority of BSPP activities target senior secondary students, while a few partners have been providing career exploration activities for junior secondary students as well. Moreover, the BSPP provides support for parents and teachers through workplace visits, talks, and workshops, with a view to equipping them with knowledge and skills to assist students in life planning. Since the 2014/15 AY, over 5 000 activities have been arranged by over 350 BSPP partners, benefitting more than 1 150 000 participants.

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<sup>33</sup> The Life Planning Information Website can be accessed at <http://lifeplanning.edb.gov.hk>.

## *ApL*

3.5 ApL is another key channel to promote VPET in secondary schools. ApL offers studies with equal emphasis on practice and theory linked to broad vocational and professional fields. Through application and practice, students can develop beginners' skill sets, career-related competence, and generic skills. ApL courses are offered as HKDSE Category B elective subjects to enhance diversification within the senior secondary curriculum. The ApL curriculum focuses on achieving the following two aims –

- (a) enabling students to **understand fundamental theories and concepts** through **application and practice**, and to **develop their generic skills** in authentic contexts; and
- (b) providing students with opportunities to **explore their career aspirations and orientations for lifelong learning** in specific areas.

3.6 For the 2019-21 cohort, ApL courses are offered in the areas of creative studies, media and communication, business, management and law, services, applied science, engineering and production, as well as ApL Chinese (for non-Chinese speaking students). Many of the ApL courses are vocationally-related, such as Aviation Studies, Railway Studies, Electrical and Energy Engineering, Hotel Operations and Western Cuisine, etc. The course provision aims for a balance between breadth and depth in ApL and for lateral coherence within the senior secondary curriculum. A flexible combination of ApL courses with core subjects, other elective subjects, and OLE broadens students' learning experiences for a holistic learning, and helps students explore their career aspirations. Nonetheless, the current ApL curriculum is not intended to provide pre-vocational training.

3.7 Acknowledging ApL courses as a key platform for promoting VPET in secondary education, the 2014 Task Force has made a number of recommendations to promote ApL. Pursuant to the recommendations, the following measures have been implemented –

- (a) providing 100% grant subsidies to schools for the ApL course fees from the 2016/17 AY and encouraging more schools to offer ApL courses

based on student aptitudes, abilities, and backgrounds; and

- (b) encouraging course providers to arrange the accreditation of more ApL courses under the QF where appropriate so that apart from the HKDSE, students completing ApL courses may obtain a separate QF-recognised qualification for further studies in the relevant fields or entry into the industries concerned. For the 2019-21 cohort, all 39 courses are recognised under the QF, and are listed on the QR as certificate programmes at QF Level 3.

3.8 Furthermore, the 2014 Task Force suggested that post-secondary education institutions in Hong Kong give due consideration to the results of ApL courses attained by students in the HKDSE Examination during admission. Currently, for further studies in sub-degree programmes, students are eligible to apply for admission to HD or AD programmes if they meet the minimum entrance requirements of Level 2 in five HKDSE subjects (including Chinese Language and English Language); and in general, each student is allowed to use up to two ApL subjects in the application. For further studies in undergraduate programmes, post-secondary institutions generally value the learning experiences acquired by students in ApL. ApL subjects are often used as elective subjects, or considered for the award of bonus points or as additional information, varying by individual institutions, faculties, or programmes.

3.9 At present, some course providers offer extension programmes for ApL courses, with a view to providing add-on learning opportunities with a workplace attachment or experience to help students explore their career aspirations and prepare for career development. These programmes are of 60 hours in duration and target Secondary 6 students who have completed the ApL courses and taken the HKDSE Examination.

3.10 The Task Force takes note of the pilot development of the “CLAP-TECH” initiative funded by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust. The pilot project, which is operated in partnership with five secondary schools, the School of Continuing Education of the Hong Kong Baptist University and leading corporates, aims to develop a five-year VPET learning pathway setting students on path to academic success and career readiness in **Information Technology** (IT) and **STEM**-related disciplines. The pathway will commence

from early 2020 beginning with a newly developed ApL course named “Tech Basics”, with course fees fully subsidised by the Government, at the senior secondary level, followed by an industry-recognised HD programme with a focus on the areas of AI, data analytics, or cyber security. Interested students may also choose to proceed to top-up Bachelor’s degree programmes or enter into employment at the industry partner of the course upon graduation.

3.11 The key innovation of the pilot project is the close tripartite collaboration among secondary schools, post-secondary institutions and industry partners throughout the pathway development with industry partners as the key driver for mapping current and future skills in the curriculum design as well as providing mentoring support on life planning, meaningful workplace experience, and first-in-line interview opportunities upon graduation. Another key innovation is a clearly defined VPET articulation pathway which is duly recognised by employers and post-secondary institutions. The Task Force perceives the pilot project as a good opportunity to test how well this comprehensive VPET learning pathway is received by students, parents, and teachers. It will also provide a valuable experience for secondary schools, post-secondary institutions, and industry partners to work together in developing VPET learning pathways that are linked to future skills and industry needs for systematic talent development.

#### *School-based Vocational Training Courses*

3.12 In addition to the formal senior secondary curriculum, a few secondary schools have taken the initiative to develop and offer school-based vocational training courses in various disciplines, including creative arts, engineering, hospitality and catering, to suit the needs of their students. In particular, there are currently 14 courses offered by four schools at the senior secondary level that are quality-assured at QF Levels 1 – 3. The structure and design of these courses vary, with some running in parallel with the HKDSE curriculum in a dual-track mode. Industry partnership and workplace attachment are commonly featured in these courses. Upon completion of the dual-track courses, students are prepared for further studies at VPET-related programmes or immediate employment in relevant disciplines.

## Major Views Collected during Public Consultation

3.13 From the consultation sessions and written submissions received, the respondents generally acknowledge the key role played by secondary education in shaping young people's decisions on their education pathways. They also support the Task Force's observation that there is a need to strengthen the promotion of VPET in secondary schools. Some salient points are summarised in the following paragraphs.

3.14 Recognising the significant role played by the BSPP in broadening the exposure of secondary students to different industries as well as facilitating their career exploration, the respondents agree that this effective existing platform should continue to be adopted. That said, most of them see a need for more robust and solid collaboration with industries and the business sector to improve the quality of these VPET-related programmes. For instance, the Government should assist schools in **engaging more industry partners**, including chambers of commerce, professional bodies, and corporate academies, to add diversity to VPET programmes, and **step up support for these industry partners**. Their **efforts and contributions should be duly recognised**, too.

3.15 The respondents also suggest that the Government **improve the overall coordination of VPET programmes** to ensure that activities at various levels are provided to address the diverse needs of students. Schools should also be provided with **enhanced support** in selecting and arranging suitable VPET activities. Among other things, more VPET and career exploration activities could be provided to students at an earlier stage, starting from the junior secondary level at Secondary 2 or 3. Other than targeting students, more **teachers and parents are to be involved in these VPET activities as appropriate**.

3.16 While appreciating the key role played by teachers or career masters in students' choices to pursue VPET, the respondents generally acknowledge their **inadequacies in terms of VPET and industry knowledge**. Currently, teachers receive training on VPET and career guidance-related areas through various continuing professional development programmes. Other training institutions also offer dedicated training for teachers in relevant areas, including the Professional Certificate of VPET programme offered by the VTC. In this

connection, a sizeable number of submissions call for the Government to **better equip teachers and career masters with knowledge and information about VPET** through training of prospective teachers and professional development for in-service teachers. To ensure the relevance of these training, the respondents also consider that industry partners should be aptly engaged to share updated industry information and career progression pathways. Teachers should also be provided with the opportunity to participate in exchanges and placements to keep abreast of the latest VPET development, especially in relation to STEM, which is a key area in secondary education.

3.17 Other than teachers, the respondents note that parents also have a great influence over students' academic and career choices. They consider that **further steps should be taken to raise parents' understanding of VPET and its prospects**. During the public consultation, the respondents suggest that a suitable interface for the promotion of VPET to parents be parent-teacher associations (PTAs). Some of them also consider that parents' networks and experience in the workplace should be better leveraged by PTAs to complement teachers' inadequacies in industry knowledge. Parents working in different sectors could be invited to share with students their experience of pursuing VPET and real-life industry information.

3.18 With regard to ApL, the respondents broadly agree that the Government should continue to enhance ApL as **one of the key vehicles to promote VPET at the senior secondary level**, through exposing students to the career opportunities and the multiple articulation pathways available. In particular, they agree that VPET-related ApL courses are effective in providing students with an early understanding of the work environment as well as opportunities to explore their career aspirations for further pursuing VPET. Nevertheless, they consider that the scope of VPET-related ApL courses can be further broadened with **contents enriched to include more vocationally-related elements**. In this regard, a number of submissions call for **further industry engagement in VPET-related ApL courses** as well as **introducing related industry attachments of meaningful duration** to complement the classroom learning of ApL courses. In addition, the respondents suggest **facilitating the implementation** of ApL at schools through providing an option for students to start pursuing ApL at Secondary 4.



3.19 On the other hand, some respondents note that a number of secondary schools are currently offering school-based vocational training courses outside the territory-wide HKDSE curriculum, which could offer a valued alternative for students with different interests to pursue VPET. They urge the Government to provide more support and encouragement to secondary schools for the development of these courses and attainment of QF accreditation in accordance with the unique situation and student profile of each school.

### **Enhancement of VPET Programmes and Industry Participation**

3.20 The Task Force sees a need to strengthen the promotion of VPET beginning from LPE in secondary education. Currently, the BSPP provides a useful platform for industry partners to disseminate VPET and career exploration activity information to schools. All along, since BSPP partners provide activities on a voluntary basis and in accordance with their availability of resources, the Government often has little control over the scope of activities offered. In particular, it is difficult to plan and provide a sufficient number of VPET activities that are more comprehensive in scale with in-depth exposure.

3.21 The Task Force recommends that the Government **adopt a more strategic and coordinated approach** in the planning and organisation of VPET programmes and activities in secondary schools through the existing platforms (including the BSPP, PTAs, and ITACs set up under the QF Secretariat (QFS)), with a view to improving their overall quality. Some proposed directions to take forward this recommendation are as follows –

- (a) **enhancing the overall approach for the promotion of VPET in secondary schools**, such as considering whether a theme-based approach should be adopted instead of the current ad-hoc and one-off approach in organising VPET activities;
- (b) **improving the diversity and structure of VPET programmes and activities**, including better coordinating resources and expertise of different BSPP partners to maximise synergy;
- (c) **engaging wider industry collaboration**, such as considering the merits

of introducing new types of events (such as sharing sessions to facilitate exchanges on best practices between industry partners) and promotion methods (such as support toolkits for individual companies for the organisation of VPET programmes) to solicit the participation of new industry partners; and

- (d) **formulating an incentive programme to encourage more industry partners to provide VPET programmes and activities.** Such incentives might take the form of non-financial recognition of the partners' contributions. While there are views suggesting that financial incentives should be provided to BSPP partners, the Task Force is of the view that directly funding industry partners would be inconsistent with the voluntary nature of the BSPP. It would also be administratively costly and inefficient to vet the funding applications for activities that span across a wide range of industries.

3.22 The Task Force recommends that the Government **encourage more industry partners to provide VPET activities for junior secondary students** through the existing platforms, with a view to facilitating their consideration of various articulation options and selection of appropriate elective subjects for their senior secondary studies. For instance, a more targeted approach could be adopted to tailor these activities based on the abilities and interests of junior secondary students. At the same time, **teachers and parents should be more involved in these activities as appropriate**, so as to build their capacities in supporting students' life planning, especially in relation to VPET.

### **Provision of External Advisory Service for Teachers**

3.23 The Task Force recommends that the Government **consider providing external consultancy and advisory service for teachers and career masters of secondary schools** to complement current efforts to improve the quality of the guidance received by students regarding VPET. The Government could launch a pilot scheme to offer an external one-stop professional support service for teachers on a wide array of issues pertaining to VPET, including but not limited to the following –

- (a) **on-demand VPET consultation service** – When advising students on their career choices and VPET, teachers are often unaccustomed to the different articulation details of VPET programmes or career progression ladders in industries of students’ interests. It is also infeasible for teachers to be completely familiar with the multiple opportunities available in the whole VPET sector through training. Therefore, an on-demand consultation service, through online chatrooms or telephone hotlines, could be provided for teachers to obtain accurate information on VPET as and when necessary;
- (b) **an online teachers’ kit** – Apart from one-on-one career counselling, teachers often have to lead career exploration or VPET-related activities. Different resources, including teaching aids, presentation slides, worksheets, and handouts, are helpful for teachers to promote VPET to students. As the contents of these resources are largely generic and common for different schools, the consultant could build an online teachers’ kit for reference and adaptation by teachers in school-based VPET activities, with a view to maximising synergy between schools and reducing the workload of teachers;
- (c) **professional development workshops for teachers** – The consultant could engage the industry sectors in providing professional training workshops for teachers to boost their understanding of VPET as well as the latest development and manpower trends of different trades and professions. Exchange and placement activities could also be organised to provide teachers with first-hand exposure to VPET;
- (d) **on-site VPET activities for students** – The consultant could arrange tailor-made on-site VPET-related talks, workshops, and other activities for students upon the request of schools. This should complement the activities under the BSPP to better cater for the specific requirements of individual schools and aim at enriching students’ VPET learning experience on a more holistic level; and
- (e) **consolidation of online VPET resources** – Pursuant to the recommendations of the 2014 Task Force, a VPET portal was set up to disseminate information on VPET. In addition, there are other useful

resources available that are relevant to VPET, including the newly launched Life Planning Information Website and Manpower Information Portal<sup>34</sup>, as well as other sources from the industries and non-governmental organisations. The consultant could aim at consolidating information from the relevant sources to facilitate teachers, parents, and students in making informed choices on their studies and career pathways.

3.24 Considering the service scope, the consultant should possess training experience and VPET knowledge across different sectors. To test out the operational mode and effectiveness of the external advisory service, the Task Force recommends that a pilot scheme engaging a small number of schools should first be launched before considering expanding the scheme.

### **Stepping Up Support for Parents**

3.25 Currently, the Task Force notices that the Government supports schools and their PTAs organising home-school cooperation activities through the Home-School Co-operation Grant, under which PTAs could apply for activity/project-specific subsidies, covering themes to help parents understand the education system, multiple pathways, and life planning, including the promotion of VPET, among others. There are also Federations of PTAs (FPTAs) established in the 18 districts to facilitate district-based liaison and collaboration between PTAs as well as promote home-school co-operation and parent education. As a recommendation previously submitted by the Task Force on Home-School Co-operation and Parent Education to the Government, recurrent funding has been increased by about \$30 million to provide additional resources to PTAs and FPTAs for organising more school-based and district-based parent education programmes or activities starting from the 2019/20 school year.

3.26 The Task Force recommends that the Government **encourage PTAs and FPTAs to make good use of the aforementioned increased funding for organising VPET promotion activities at the school and/or district level**, such as hosting talks on the progression pathways of VPET and sharing sessions

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<sup>34</sup> The Manpower Information Portal is launched by the Human Resources Planning Commission and can be accessed at [https://www.talent.gov.hk/home?lang=en\\_US](https://www.talent.gov.hk/home?lang=en_US).

by parents with VPET or industry experience.

### **Enhancement of Promotion of VPET through ApL**

3.27 The Task Force reaffirms the key role played by ApL in enhancing VPET promotion at the senior secondary level and believes that the curriculum of VPET-related ApL courses could be further enhanced to integrate more vocationally-related elements.

#### *Strengthening Engagement of Industrial Partners in ApL*

3.28 The Task Force recommends that **the engagement of industrial partners be made a necessary condition in the course development and learning activities of VPET-related ApL courses**, with a view to facilitating industry recognition and enhancing the overall learning experience of students. Such industry engagement could take multiple forms, including but not limited to consulting relevant industry partners on curriculum development, providing integrated work-based learning experiences for students, etc.

3.29 The Task Force also recommends that the Government **encourage course providers to consider designing their VPET-related ApL courses with closer reference to the SCSs of the respective trades under the QF** where appropriate. By better aligning the skills, knowledge, and competence nurtured through ApL with those required of practitioners to perform various functions in the industries, this recommendation aims at further improving the industry recognition of students' competence attained through ApL as well as enhancing the professional and practical image of ApL. It also dovetails with the Government's initiative to reaffirm the QF's role in supporting VPET development.

3.30 Notwithstanding the importance of industrial engagement, it has to be reiterated that ApL constitutes an elective part in the senior secondary curriculum for achieving its learning goals. Thus, suitable flexibility should be allowed for individual course providers and industry partners to determine the nature of the latter's involvement as well as a reasonable extent of vocationally-related elements to be covered in each VPET-related ApL course. In addition, the

generic contents in VPET-related ApL courses should continue to play an important role in equipping students with general knowledge and soft skills for employment or further education.

#### *Enhancement of Workplace Experience of ApL Students*

3.31 The Task Force recommends that the Government **encourage the provision of more opportunities for ApL students to take part in extension programmes.** While these extension programmes currently only target Secondary 6 students who have completed the ApL courses and taken the HKDSE examination, the Task Force recommends that these programmes **be opened up to both Secondary 5 and 6 students,** so as to provide more opportunities and flexibility for interested students to participate.

#### *Development of VPET Learning Pathways Starting with ApL Courses*

3.32 The Task Force notes that the pilot “CLAP-TECH” project currently provides an articulation pathway related to IT and STEM. The Task Force recommends that the Government **consider stepping up support for institutions to launch more VPET learning pathways starting with ApL courses and providing articulation opportunities to HD and top-up degree programmes,** with reference to the “CLAP-TECH” model. Specifically, support should also be provided to institutions to foster close industry partnership in the course development and implementation of clearly defined articulation pathways at different levels, including HD programmes and top-up degree programmes, as well as providing exit options for students in case they would like to opt for immediate employment after graduation.

#### *Related Recommendations by the Task Force on Review of School Curriculum*

3.33 Separately, the Task Force notes that the Task Force on Review of School Curriculum has put forward initial recommendations on the enhancement of ApL, and completed its public consultation exercise in October 2019. The Task Force welcomes the initial observation that the value of ApL in the senior secondary curriculum should be reinforced. In particular, the Task Force echoes the suggestion that the Government should incentivise students to take ApL as an elective subject to support the development of multiple pathways and

enrich the learning experiences of the more academically-inclined students. The Task Force supports initial recommendations such as offering ApL as early as in Secondary 4; relaxing the funding eligibility for students taking ApL as the 4<sup>th</sup> elective subject; encouraging more post-secondary institutions to offer taster programmes of short duration at the junior secondary level; providing a wider range of ApL courses to suit students of different abilities and interests; and encouraging post-secondary institutions to give due recognition to students' achievements in ApL when considering them for admission to relevant programmes of study.

### **Strengthening Support for School-based Vocational Training Courses**

3.34 Consistent with the Government's policy to provide multiple and flexible pathways for young people through VPET, the Task Force thinks that **the school-based approach in developing vocational training courses should be encouraged** as it could better cater for the unique situation and needs of each school and its students. In addition, schools should be encouraged to suitably engage relevant industry partners in the curriculum design and incorporate work-based learning elements in the programmes. More importantly, to ensure that students receive quality education and that their attainment in these school-based courses would be widely recognised, schools should be encouraged to obtain QF accreditation for their school-based courses.

3.35 As secondary schools might not possess the relevant experience and expertise in accreditation, the Task Force recommends that the Government **strengthen support to facilitate more secondary schools in developing QF-recognised school-based vocational training courses, and proactively put in place measures to facilitate the accreditation process.** For example, tailor-made sharing sessions and/or workshops could be held for schools to learn more about the accreditation requirements as well as gain insights from the successful experience of their counterparts. Dedicated advisory service could also be offered to schools requiring more guidance in the course design and accreditation process.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Promotion of VPET in Higher Education**

4.1 In tandem with Hong Kong's development into a knowledge-based and high value-added economy, the market demand for highly skilled and educated talent continues to increase. Pursuant to the Government's announcement in the 2000 Policy Address to double the secondary school leavers' post-secondary education participation rate to 60% within ten years, the higher education sector has witnessed a rapid expansion. In view of the students' growing aspirations to pursue further education, the Task Force considers it essential to reiterate the value and positioning of VPET in higher education. The VPET pathways should be clearly defined and differentiated from the academic route while upholding their parity in terms of both quality and recognition.

4.2 Moreover, young people have to acquire professional work skills, applied knowledge in IT and innovation, as well as critical soft skills for career advancement in the increasingly digitalised workplace. The skill requirements of the industries are constantly changing as technology cycles shorten. VPET institutions should maintain close liaison with industry partners and update their course contents regularly to keep pace with the changing expectations of their students. To better prepare students for employment upon graduation, the Task Force sees merit in stepping up the work-based learning elements in VPET programmes.

#### **Major Views Collected during Public Consultation**

4.3 A majority of views received agree that the positioning of VPET in higher education should be strengthened at both the degree and sub-degree levels. In particular, the VPET routes should be clearly differentiated from the academic ones.

4.4 The respondents agree that at the degree level, **the proposed introduction of applied degrees is supported** with a primary orientation towards practical skills, which should be differentiated from conventional degrees. Nevertheless, many respondents are not aware of the key features of applied degrees. There are also suggestions that the Task Force should provide



more details of the proposed applied degree to facilitate discussion on its implementation. In this regard, the HKCAAVQ was invited to look into the experiences of implementing vocational degrees/applied degrees in nine economies (namely Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Mainland China, New Zealand, Singapore, and Switzerland). Some key features of the implementation of vocational/applied degrees identified in the study are discussed in the following paragraphs.

4.5 At the sub-degree level, the respondents concur that the role of HD should be reinforced as a key VPET pathway, and there is merit in conducting a holistic review on the sub-degree education in Hong Kong. During the consultation sessions, some employers expressed concerns over the mismatch in the present job market where many para-professional/technician positions requiring VPET training and knowledge at the sub-degree level (mainly HD programmes) remained unfilled. Some VPET programme providers, as well as teachers and career masters of secondary schools, also expressed the view that the adequate supply of undergraduate-level study places had steered the preference of many secondary school leavers, many of whom aspiring for a UGC-funded university degree, to pursue AD programmes instead of HD programmes. While some industry stakeholders suggested during the consultation sessions the extension of the HD programme from two years to three years in order to better prepare students for employment at the para-professional level after graduation, the stakeholders from institutions had diverse views on the matter, as some feared that such extension might further discourage students from pursuing the VPET pathway. There is also a written suggestion on the introduction of bridging programmes for AD graduates to obtain HD qualifications to provide an additional exit point for AD graduates to pursue the VPET pathway.

4.6 Some respondents point out that regarding the VPET curriculum in higher education, many existing programmes focus on classroom learning, while work-based learning opportunities are limited and their linkage with the core curriculum weak. To respond to the industries' demand for graduates with applied knowledge and work-based learning experience, they share the view that **more well-structured apprenticeship training should be incorporated in the curriculum of VPET programmes.** Thus, VPET graduates can be equipped with the requisite professional skills for immediate employment at the technician,

para-professional, or professional levels, depending on the qualifications levels of the programmes. Specifically, some respondents suggest making better use of the TSS implemented by the VTC to expand and develop apprenticeship training. To do so, some respondents advocate for **closer partnership with employers to offer industry placement opportunities that are aligned with the curriculum**. Moreover, these industry placement opportunities could enrich the all-rounded study experience of VPET programmes, thereby elevating the students' learning experience to a level on par with that offered by other higher education pathways and attracting more students to pursue VPET.

4.7 Apart from the VTC, the largest statutory VPET provider in Hong Kong, many respondents also recognise the significant roles played by other VPET providers, particularly the self-financing post-secondary institutions, in the development of a comprehensive VPET ecosystem in Hong Kong. As such, they suggest that the Government **consider extending its current VPET-related initiatives at the post-secondary level to encourage other post-secondary institutions to provide more diversified VPET programmes**.

## **Development of Applied Degrees in Hong Kong**

4.8 In view of the support for further developing applied degrees in Hong Kong, the Task Force has considered the findings of a study on the international experiences of implementing vocational degrees/applied degrees (the Study) conducted by the HKCAAVQ, which sheds light on the key features of vocational/applied degrees, as well as their implementation in other jurisdictions.

4.9 The Task Force observes that the terms “vocational degrees” and “applied degrees” are frequently used intuitively in the economies studied, and there are apparently no universal definitions<sup>35</sup>. When it comes to the features of applied degree programmes, the focus is mainly on three aspects, including the admission of students, the teaching and learning activities, and the learning outcomes of the programmes. The key features of applied degrees identified in the Study are discussed below.

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<sup>35</sup> The standardised term “applied degrees” is used throughout this report to ensure consistency.

### *Qualifications Level*

4.10 The mainstream comment received during the consultation is that **the qualifications for applied degrees should be equivalent to those for conventional academic degrees** (i.e. to be pitched at the same QF level), to demonstrate that applied degrees are recognised as “equivalent” to conventional degrees in terms of the qualifications level, though they possess distinctive features to serve different purposes. According to the Study, overseas applied degrees are usually pitched at the **same** qualifications level (i.e. the QF level) as that for conventional academic degrees (e.g. Germany, France, and Finland). However, for countries where Bachelor’s degrees and Bachelor’s Honours degrees are pitched at different QF levels (e.g. Australia and New Zealand), applied degrees are pitched at the lower QF level (i.e. the same level as that for Bachelor’s degrees instead of Bachelor’s Honours degrees). Given that all Bachelor’s degree programmes in Hong Kong are pitched at QF Level 5, the Task Force considers that **pitching applied degrees at QF Level 5** will be largely in line with practices in the economies studied.

4.11 While the Study also reveals that some overseas economies offer applied degrees up to the Master’s degree level (e.g. Germany, Switzerland, Finland, Australia, and Singapore (to be introduced in 2020)), none of the respondents suggest introducing applied degrees at the Master’s degree level. As the applied degree is a relatively new concept in Hong Kong and its implementation will be subject to a further study, the Task Force recommends that **it will be prudent to study how applied degrees at the Bachelor’s degree level can be further developed, and assess the need for extending it to a higher level at a later stage.**

### *Admission Criteria*

4.12 At present, students generally need to attain Level 3 in Chinese Language and English Language, and Level 2 in Mathematics, Liberal Studies and one elective subject in the HKDSE Examination (i.e. “33222”) in order to be considered for admission to first-year-first-degree programmes. While self-accrediting universities may admit students without “33222” or equivalent at their sole discretion, non-self-accrediting post-secondary institutions are subject to a cap of 5% “non-standard entry” admission on a programme basis as required

by the HKCAAVQ<sup>36</sup>.

4.13 The respondents generally agree that to introduce the proposed applied degree as a meaningful alternative pathway for students to pursue VPET in higher education, more flexible admission requirements should be allowed. For example, a think tank pointed out in its written submission that adopting the same admission procedures will hamper the ability of institutions offering applied degree programmes to find the right talents. Multiple assessment methods promote integrated learning and reduce the possibility of stigmatisation. The Study also shows that for overseas applied degrees, **recognition of prior learning and/or field-related experience** is often taken into account, in addition to academic achievements, during admission. To enable students with more diverse backgrounds and abilities to attain higher qualifications, **apart from academic results, recognition of other equivalent qualifications and experiences (e.g. skills-based competence and achievements, working experience, etc.) would be considered.** In fact, a robust mechanism that recognises work experiences and competence acquired by practitioners at the workplace is already in place in Hong Kong. Underpinned by the QF, assessments under the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism are quality-assured and assigned QF levels to facilitate professional progression and continuing education.

4.14 The Task Force recommends that the Government consider ways to encourage non-self-accrediting post-secondary institutions to identify relevant vocational qualifications that can be considered as equivalent to meeting the minimum requirements for admission to first-year-first-degree programmes in consultation with the HKCAAVQ. More collaboration with the relevant authorities would also be required to facilitate the accreditation of programmes and enhance the assessment of students' learning outcomes. To facilitate the wider recognition of alternative qualifications, the Task Force recommends that the Government explore the possibility of relaxing the 5% cap of “non-standard entry” for non-self-accrediting post-secondary institutions to offer applied degree programmes in the future.

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<sup>36</sup> “Non-standard entry” refers to the admission route that the applicants do not meet the minimum admission requirements. From the perspective of quality assurance, a reasonable quota has to be imposed to control the variation of students' overall abilities so as not to negatively affect the quality of teaching and learning.

### *Mode of Teaching and Learning*

4.15 A majority of the views received agree that practical learning with industrial attachment is an essential element of applied degrees. The Study also shows that a distinctive feature of teaching and learning design of overseas applied degrees is the emphasis on real-world training and application. In particular, practical on-the-job learning is required for all applied degree programmes in Finland and Singapore. This aligns with the positioning of applied degree programmes to cultivate mastery of the field of practice, rather than development of cognitive abilities or deepening of knowledge.

4.16 Regarding the recognition of applied degrees, many respondents, in particular representatives from the industries, consider it essential for the qualification to be well-recognised by professional bodies and employers of the industries. It is also reflected in the Study that most applied degrees overseas are supported by or delivered in close collaboration with industries, such that graduates are work-ready in the specialised profession. For example, in France, in addition to work placement schemes, employers may also be involved in curriculum design as well as in programme delivery (a certain proportion of programmes are delivered by non-academic staff such as industry/enterprise professionals).

4.17 The Task Force considers that **strong industry involvement, in areas including programme design and assessment methods, is key to the development of applied degrees in Hong Kong.** With reference to the international practices, institutions should work closely with industries in the curriculum design and delivery of programmes to provide substantial internships and work-based learning experience to students. A dual-track mode deeply integrating work-based learning elements into the curriculum will have to be adopted.

### *Areas of Study to be covered*

4.18 While the respondents generally agree that applied degrees should meet market needs, there was not much deliberation during the consultation period on what areas of study should be covered by the proposed applied degree. The Study shows that applied degrees overseas cover a wide range of subjects

depending on the economy and market needs in different places, and the area of study may not be the primary consideration in determining what qualifies as an applied degree. For example, applied degrees in Germany cover agronomy, forestry, public administration, social work, information technology, design, nursing, etc. In Singapore, applied degrees target growth sectors that have a strong demand for skilled labour (e.g. engineering, information and communications technology, health and social sciences, etc.).

4.19 In Hong Kong, the Government has introduced the SSSDP to provide a subsidy for students to pursue designated full-time self-financing undergraduate programmes in ten selected disciplines, with a view to nurturing talent for industries with keen human resources demand. While the disciplines selected under the SSSDP may be a reference point for determining the **areas of study for further developing applied degrees in the future, the Task Force considers that further deliberation will be required**, taking into account the features of applied degrees (e.g. practice-oriented curriculum and work-based learning) and the anticipated outcomes (e.g. manpower needs in specific areas).

#### *Operators to offer Applied Degrees*

4.20 There are mixed views on the types of operators to offer applied degrees. A number of submissions suggest that the programmes should be offered by different post-secondary institutions to allow a wide diversity of choices. While some institutions suggest stepping up Government support for the self-financing post-secondary education sector to play a more proactive role in promoting VPET in higher education, including the operation of the proposed applied degree programmes, diverse views have been received from other stakeholders. Some suggest that applied degrees should be provided by the VTC as the largest VPET provider in Hong Kong, or by the UGC-funded universities by increasing the number of senior year places in view of their existing resources and expertise for developing academic degrees.

4.21 According to the Study, there is no standard practice among different economies on the types of institutions offering applied degrees. Applied degrees overseas may be offered by comprehensive universities that offer both academic degrees and applied degrees; universities of applied sciences that focus on offering applied degrees; as well as vocational institutes that offer a wide

range of vocational training at different levels.

4.22 Given the diverse views received and the varied overseas practices, the Task Force considers it more prudent to conduct further studies and stakeholder engagement before deciding which operators are able and should develop and offer applied degrees in Hong Kong. Yet, the Task Force considers that it is important to develop the comparative advantages of applied degrees such that more institutions will be incentivised to offer similar programmes.

#### *The Task Force's Recommendations*

4.23 Noting the key features of applied degrees and their implementation in other economies, the Task Force observes that there are plenty of degree programmes in Hong Kong in the same disciplines as those covered by applied degrees in other economies (e.g. healthcare, engineering, etc.). However, the structure, mode of teaching and learning, and admission criteria of the vocationally-oriented degree programmes in Hong Kong are basically the same as those of other academically-focused programmes. The Task Force recommends that **the Government develop applied degrees in Hong Kong with an applied focus, and they should have the following distinct and prominent features that would differentiate them from other degree programmes –**

- (a) the qualifications should be equivalent to those of conventional academic degrees (i.e. to be pitched at QF Level 5);
- (b) a more flexible admission requirement should be adopted. Apart from academic results, other relevant factors (e.g. skills-based competence and achievements, working experience, etc.) should also be considered;
- (c) applied degree programmes should have an applied focus blending theory and practice, provide substantial internships and work-based learning experience, and prepare graduates for a specific trade/industry, though they can also support articulation to other qualifications; and
- (d) there must be strong industry involvement in the development of applied degrees with trade recognition.

4.24 In view of the international practices, the Task Force recommends that the Government pursue a pilot project to test out the practical issues involved in the development of applied degree programmes with the above features. The project will enable the Government to further explore, in close liaison with stakeholders, the mode of operation and other implementation details of the proposed applied degree, including but not limited to the areas of study to be covered, operators to offer the degree, assessment methods, funding mode, programme structure, duration of study, award titles, etc. The project can also provide more information on how the current higher education system (including but not limited to the accreditation of and admission to post-secondary programmes) can be modified to facilitate the development of applied degrees in Hong Kong in the future. The Government should also consider providing incentives and facilitation for industries to play a more active role in developing applied degrees and recognising the exit qualifications.

### **Reinforcement of the Role of HD as a Key VPET Pathway**

4.25 The Task Force sees a need to reinforce the role of HD as a key VPET pathway at the post-secondary level, formulating a clear distinction between HD and AD as two sub-degree qualifications leading to vocational and academic degrees respectively.

4.26 At present, the minimum entrance requirements for AD and HD are the same. Students generally need to attain Level 2 in five HKDSE subjects including Chinese Language and English Language (i.e. “22222”), and each applicant is allowed to use not more than two ApL subjects in the application. There are also a number of diploma programmes which are recognised by individual post-secondary institutions as meeting the requirement of “22222”, such as DYJ, DFS, DVE, etc. Applicants falling short of the minimum entrance requirements or other acceptable equivalent qualifications can be admitted on special considerations but should not account for more than 5% of the total intake on a programme basis, and not more than 3% on an institutional basis. The Task Force considers that the Government should **review the minimum entrance requirements for HD, for example, to take into consideration other vocational qualifications, skills-based competence and achievements,**



**working experience**, etc.

4.27 As regards the structure and curriculum of HD programmes, the Task Force supports enhancing **HD to provide more work experience opportunities with longer duration** (e.g. industrial attachment for a few months) for students to acquire practical skills in the workplace. The Task Force also considers that the Government should formulate more robust policies to encourage, coordinate, support, and facilitate the post-secondary education sector, including the self-financing post-secondary institutions, to offer HD programmes **in close partnership with industries** to equip students with professional work skills and applied knowledge in specialised fields, especially in industries with keen or growing manpower demand. Moreover, the Task Force emphasises the **importance of soft skills, working attitudes, and vocational language skills in HD education**, and suggests that HD programmes should provide better training in respect of vocational and essential non-technical skills required for employment at the para-professional level, such as adaptability, collaboration, creative thinking, communication skills, etc.

4.28 The Task Force notes that the Government has accepted the report submitted by the Task Force on Review of Self-financing Post-secondary Education, led by Professor Anthony CHEUNG. Among other follow-up actions, the Government will conduct a more focused study to review and improve the structure and curriculum of sub-degree education to reflect the respective refined positioning of AD and HD within the higher education sector in Hong Kong. The Task Force supports **a holistic review of sub-degree education to better differentiate the HD from the AD qualification**.

4.29 In particular, the Task Force recommends that the review comprehensively cover the following matters in relation to the HD –

- (a) **the positioning of HD** in the VPET pathway in the education system;
- (b) enhancement to the **programme structure and curriculum** with an emphasis on both technical skills and essential soft skills to be developed in close partnership with industries, taking into account the interfacing with the proposed applied degree programmes to facilitate articulation;

- (c) the **mode of teaching and learning** for HD programmes, including possibilities of providing more work-based learning, internship opportunities with longer duration and developing suitable assessment tools to evaluate students' learning outcome;
- (d) refinement to **the minimum entrance requirements for HD to allow more flexibility** to take into consideration other vocational qualifications, skills-based competence and achievements, working experience, etc.;
- (e) **a mechanism for industry involvement** in the development and implementation of HD programmes;
- (f) **the positioning of various existing diploma programmes** being recognised as meeting the entrance requirements of sub-degree programmes (e.g. DYJ, DFS, DVE, etc.); and
- (g) the qualifications level of HD as an exit qualification with industry recognition as **job-ready at the para-professional or technician level, while supporting articulation to the proposed applied degree.**

### **Enhancement of Apprenticeship Training under the TSS**

4.30 The recent development and improvement of the TSS is in line with the stakeholders' suggestion as well as the observed global trend of strengthening apprenticeship training as a core pillar of VPET. At present, the TSS operates under an "Earn and Learn" model, trainees are enrolled in standard VPET programmes at the VTC and receive apprenticeship training at the workplace. However, the classroom teaching and the apprenticeship training are not directly interrelated and thus there is less effective for learning. Hence, the trainees and employers may have less incentive to take part in the scheme. Following the successful experience of overseas economies, such as Germany and Switzerland, the Task Force considers that **a dual-track learning mode for VPET programmes should be developed** to better integrate apprenticeship training with school-based learning, and the TSS could provide a solid foundation for

furthering efforts in this regard.

4.31 Therefore, the Task Force recommends that the Government **conduct a comprehensive review of the TSS with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of apprenticeship training**. The review may explore the following options to –

- (a) **increase incentives for employers to participate in the TSS** – under the TSS, the employers are required to offer a total incentive allowance of \$30,800 on top of paying the required minimum monthly salary to and tuition fees for the trainees. In the review, the Government could consider whether more incentives should be provided to solicit wider industry participation in the TSS, particularly amid the increasingly challenging economic environment;
- (b) **strengthen the dual-track mode of the TSS** – in view of the limited integration between the school-based learning and work-based training under the current TSS, the Government could review the programme curriculum under the TSS and identify ways to facilitate better alignment between classroom and work-based learning, with a view to implementing a genuine dual-track learning mode. Consideration could also be given to expanding the scope of the TSS to cover more industries with keen manpower demand; and
- (c) **strengthen the workplace learning and assessment (WLA) of the TSS** – with the launch of the PISE, an incentive has been provided under the TSS for employers to implement WLA. In addition to encouraging more employers to implement WLA, consideration could be given to developing industry-recognised trade tests as a certification of the trainees' competence after completing training under the TSS. This would also be conducive to providing valued exit points for trainees for immediate employment as well as enhancing the recognition and attractiveness of the TSS.

## **Incorporation of Work-based Learning in VPET Programmes**

4.32 It is the Government's policy to support the parallel development of the publicly funded and self-financing post-secondary education sectors, as this is conducive to encouraging the growth and diversity of higher education in Hong Kong. Given their market-driven nature, the Task Force considers that the self-financing post-secondary sector has strong potential to play a bigger role in the provision of VPET at the higher education level, which hinges on the ability of institutions to respond swiftly to market needs for differently skilled graduates.

4.33 Currently, a sizeable proportion of the programmes offered by the self-financing institutions are VPET in nature. The Task Force notes that the Government has launched a range of measures, including most significantly the SSSDP, to support students enrolled in self-financing sub-degree or degree programmes of designated professions that have keen manpower demands, many of which are essentially VPET programmes. Echoing the aforementioned significance of work-based learning to a successful VPET programme, the Task Force recommends that the Government **formulate more robust policies to encourage, coordinate, support, and facilitate the post-secondary education sector**, including the self-financing post-secondary institutions, to **incorporate work-based learning and assessment in their VPET programmes** at both the sub-degree and degree levels through closer partnership with industries.

4.34 In this regard, with the successful experience of the TSS, the Government could **consider facilitating other institutions to operate VPET programmes under a similar dual-track mode**, incorporating industry involvement in the design, delivery, and assessment of the courses. Currently, the Government operates a number of support measures for the self-financing post-secondary sector, including the QESS under the SPEF as well as the new Enhancement and Start-up Grant Scheme for Self-financing Post-secondary Education announced in the Chief Executive's 2019 Policy Address Supplement. The Task Force considers that the Government should **consider ways to make good use of these existing platforms to support institutions developing their own dual-track VPET programmes**.

4.35 In addition, to incentivise more employers to work with these institutions in developing their VPET programmes, the Task Force recommends

that the Government **consider extending the PISE to benefit employers supporting the work-based assessment in VPET programmes offered by other institutions than the VTC.** Nevertheless, due consideration should be given to safeguarding the quality of the work-based learning and assessment received by students in these programmes.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Development of Vocational Progression Pathways**

5.1 The pursuit of VPET does not stop as students exit the education system. The Government is committed to supporting lifelong learning and providing pathways for young people to seek higher qualifications after joining the workforce. In this increasingly digitalised society, there is need for in-service personnel to continuously upskill and update themselves of the latest industry development in order to sustain their competitiveness and progress along the career ladder. In this light, education and training pathways for VPET have to be further expanded and enriched beyond the formal education system, as underpinned by professional and vocational qualifications that are well-recognised within the trades. To cope with the rapid transformations in the workplace, these pathways should offer greater flexibility for learners in terms of their learning mode and curriculum to quickly react to changes in market demands. Hence, the Task Force sees a need to develop vocational progression pathways for practitioners.

#### **Major Views Collected during Public Consultation**

5.2 The respondents generally agree that clear vocational progression pathways should be developed to recognise the skill-based competence and qualifications attained by practitioners in the industries. Within this context, a number of submissions also remark that the Government should support members of the working population, apart from students, in need of upskilling or reskilling to pursue VPET programmes to facilitate their career advancement or transition.

5.3 From the consultation sessions and written submissions received, the respondents generally agree that the QF provides a solid foundation for **recognising skill-based competence and qualifications, especially those qualifications acquired outside learning programmes**. A majority of the respondents support the development of **QF-recognised skill-based qualifications pathways** for practitioners which run parallel to the existing academic routes, in order to facilitate articulation and transfer between the academic and professional pathways. Since the QF plays an important role in

enhancing the promotion and development of VPET in Hong Kong, some of the respondents urge the Government to review how the QF can be more widely applied to promote the importance of vocational qualifications. Some respondents also consider that the Government should take the lead in encouraging the use of the QF in recruitment and training across different bureaux and departments (B/Ds).

## **Development of a Vocational Route under the QF**

5.4 At present, about 8 000 qualifications are recognised under the QF. All QF-recognised qualifications are acquired through the completion of learning programmes, except for the following two types of qualifications –

- (a) qualifications obtained through the RPL mechanism, where work experiences and competence acquired by practitioners at the workplace are recognised without undergoing a learning programme. At present, there are about 700 RPL qualifications; and
- (b) qualifications obtained through the recognition of professional qualifications under the QF, where such qualifications are granted by bona fide local organisations to individuals who meet the requisite academic qualifications plus prescribed years of industry or professional experience and have passed a robust assessment in either a written or practical format, and not underpinned by an associated learning programme. At present, there are 16 professional qualifications under the QF.

5.5 While the RPL qualifications and professional qualifications under the QF are available to recognise such skills, competence, and work experiences, no clear progression pathways are available for aspiring entrants and in-service practitioners. Therefore, the Task Force recommends that progression pathways similar to the Vocational Qualifications Pathways (VQPs)<sup>37</sup> should be developed for practitioners with a focus on QF-recognised skill-based

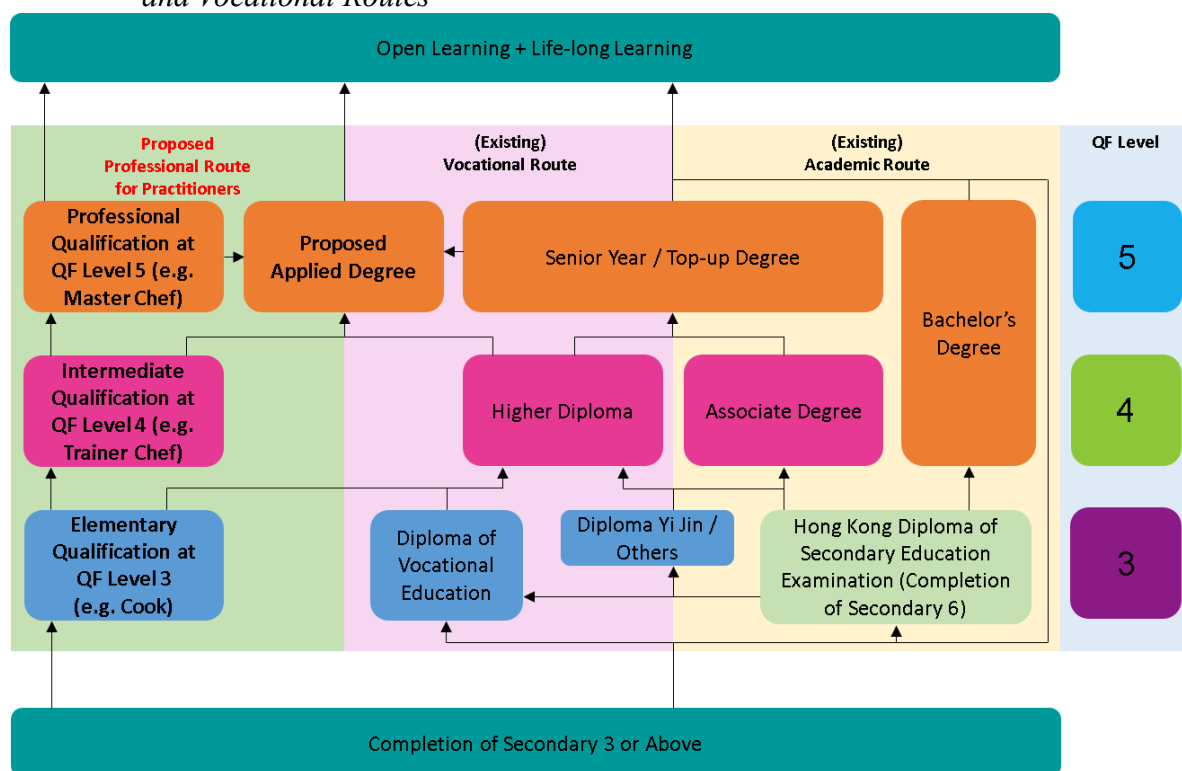
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<sup>37</sup> Since 2017, the VQPs have been developed for four industries (automotive, banking, property management, and elderly care service industries) under the QF to set out roadmaps for progression in learning and employment, along which learners and practitioners can progress at various levels through the completion of relevant occupation-based learning programmes.

qualifications that are not underpinned by associated learning programmes.

5.6 As a start, the Task Force recommends that **the Government should explore with relevant industries, regulatory and professional bodies as well as training institutions to develop professional qualifications pathways in selected industries** (e.g. lift and escalator engineering, plumbing engineering, arboriculture and horticulture, etc.). The Government and the QFS should assist in providing advisory support, if necessary, to help the regulatory and professional bodies and/or institutions to go through the accreditation processes for obtaining the QF recognition. The proposed professional route for practitioners should complement the existing academic and vocational route to provide flexible progression opportunities both along and across routes, as shown at Chart 5.1 below.

Chart 5.1 Proposed Professional Route for Practitioners alongside the Existing Academic and Vocational Routes



5.7 The public awareness and acceptance of the QF is the key to promoting QF-recognised skill-based qualifications. The Task Force considers that it is difficult to promote the concept of the QF alone to students and parents, and the promotion of the QF should go hand-in-hand with that of VPET, emphasising



that the QF provides quality assurance for VPET pathways and their qualifications. The Task Force also notes that more and more Government B/Ds have adopted the QF in recruitment and in-house training policies<sup>38</sup>. These efforts will have a positive impact on the public's perception about the relevance and importance of the QF. For example, the Social Welfare Department has introduced the Training Subsidy Scheme for Staff of Residential Care Homes to provide subsidies to home managers, health workers, and care workers to enrol in QF-recognised training courses. In this connection, the Task Force recommends that **the Government encourage more stakeholders, including Government B/Ds and industry partners, to adopt the QF.**

### **Support for Working Adults to Attend Professional Part-time Programmes**

5.8 A comprehensive vocational pathway should provide multiple entry and exit points to allow full-time VPET students as well as in-service practitioners to pursue skills upgrading and progression in vocational qualifications. With adequate support and training, working adults in industries with acute manpower needs at the technician, para-professional, and professional levels can make greater contribution to the sectors' development.

5.9 In addition to the subsidies provided through the Continuing Education Fund and courses provided by the ERB, the Government has launched the Pilot Subsidy Scheme for Students of Professional Part-time Programmes through the VTC to encourage working adults to pursue higher qualifications. According to the interim review conducted by the VTC on the effectiveness of the Pilot Scheme, a vast majority of students agree that the subsidy gives them a strong incentive to pursue further training to sharpen their technical skills. The Pilot Scheme currently only covers programmes of three disciplines, namely architecture and town planning, engineering and technology, and creative disciplines. As rapid technological advancement brings about disruptions to the workplace, the need for continuous upskilling of the workforce will only continue to surge. In this regard, the promotion of VPET to equip working

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<sup>38</sup> For example, the Hong Kong Police College, the Hong Kong Customs College, and the Correctional Services Department have been organising QF-recognised in-house training programmes. The Education Bureau, the Labour and Welfare Bureau, the Housing Department, and the Civil Engineering and Development Department have been featuring references to the QF in their recruitment advertisements and tendering documents.

adults with the emerging work skills would be of paramount importance. Thus, the Task Force recommends that the Government consider **expanding the Pilot Subsidy Scheme for Students of Professional Part-time Programmes to cover a wider range of designated professional part-time programmes offered by the VTC as well as other VPET institutions.** Further consideration should be given to ascertain the scope of programmes to be covered, while adhering to the established principle of including trades facing keen manpower demand as well as with a comparatively high and specialised skill requirement.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Future Promotion of VPET**

6.1 In the preceding chapters, the Task Force has critically reviewed the implementation of VPET-related programmes at various levels in the education system and made recommendations to enhance VPET pathways. The Task Force also appreciates the importance of adopting an effective publicity strategy to raise the public awareness and recognition of VPET. The aforementioned enhancement measures should be carried out hand-in-hand with bolstered promotional efforts so that the work of the Government, institutions, and industry partners pertaining to VPET would not lie unnoticed in the community.

6.2 The Task Force acknowledges that the Government's past achievements in terms of VPET promotion, such as rebranding "VET" to "VPET" to encompass programmes up to the degree level, launching publicity campaigns to promote the professional image of VPET through a range of media platforms, have helped raise the public perception of VPET to a certain extent. Nevertheless, changing the public perception takes time, and the survey findings for the past few years as well as the public views collected during the consultation period still reveal rather considerable room for improvement in this aspect. With reference to the large-scale VPET promotional campaigns launched by a number of major economies overseas, the Task Force has formulated some guiding directions for the future publicity of VPET in Hong Kong.

#### **Major Views Collected during Public Consultation**

6.3 The respondents largely agree that **more promotion should be done to modernise and improve the image of VPET** in collaboration with different stakeholders, including secondary schools, VPET institutions, and the industries, with the Government playing a leading role. Moreover, the respondents across different sectors stress the importance of presenting a clear picture of VPET pathways with comprehensive articulation opportunities linked to the long-term manpower development trends in the relevant industries. The respondents also agree that such promotion should be conducted **through more innovative approaches and in a more interactive way**, such as highlighting success stories

of VPET students through different media platforms.

6.4 Notably, **large-scale VPET events** are well recognised by the respondents to be a **direct and useful channel** to raise the public awareness of VPET. In this connection, some suggest regularly organising relevant exhibitions and skills competitions for students, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders to have a better understanding of VPET and to build up connections with industry partners.

### **Adoption of a Coherent Message**

6.5 Even though the scope of VPET has been expanded following the rebranding to cover a wider variety of programmes of a professional nature, ranging from healthcare services to business and engineering, and up to the degree level, the Task Force observes that the common perception among people in Hong Kong is that VPET only covers programmes training practical skills at lower qualifications levels specific for the traditional industries featuring mainly manual labour, such as construction and manufacturing. In fact, this phenomenon is common to many overseas economies and is not conducive to the sustainable development of a comprehensive VPET system that is integral to the economy. In response, many of these economies have launched targeted publicity campaigns that emphasise the importance and relevance of practical skills and VPET. A prevalent defining feature of these campaigns is a memorable overarching theme that highlights the distinctive benefits of VPET. For instance, WorldSkills<sup>39</sup> adopts the brand of “Skills Change Lives” and Singapore names its key national skills training campaign “SkillsFuture”.

6.6 With reference to the international experience, the Task Force recommends that the Government **formulate a coherent message as the cornerstone of the publicity strategy of VPET**. At its crux, the Task Force identifies three key themes that the message should be able to bring out, namely **diversity, popularity, and opportunity**. At first, the **diverse range of VPET programmes** offered at different levels should be showcased to tackle the public’s narrow view of VPET. VPET should be seen as a choice that could

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<sup>39</sup> WorldSkills is an international organisation comprising 82 Member organisations that reach two-thirds of the world’s population. Its mission is to raise the profile and recognition of skilled people, and show how important skills are in achieving economic growth and personal success.

offer something suitable for everyone with their unique interests, goals, and abilities.

6.7 Furthermore, the publicity campaign should build a **refreshing and trendy image** for VPET that would be well received by the public, especially the younger generation. Traditionally, VPET is often perceived as “old fashioned”, “lower class”, and “second choice”, which is not a fair depiction of VPET in modern days. With many programmes offering top-notch learning experiences and adopting state-of-the-art technologies, VPET should be presented as a trendy and appealing choice for young people that can compare favourably with the alternative academic articulation pathways.

6.8 Finally, the prospects of a flourishing career in different professions attainable through pursuing VPET should be clearly demonstrated. Particularly amid the global mega trend of adopting innovation and technology, the meaning of VPET should be enriched to emphasise its association with **work skills for the future**. In this new digital age, the requirement and format of jobs are being constantly transformed to varying degrees. In order to stay relevant in the labour market, employees have to possess job-ready professional skills, applied knowledge in innovation and technology, as well as critical soft skills. Encompassing practical skills training in a work-based setting as well as embracing the acquisition of generic skills and knowledge (such as creativity, adaptability, problem solving skills, and digital acumen), VPET is well positioned to prepare students and practitioners for the evolving workplace. The future publicity efforts on VPET should be able to portray these messages loud and clear.

### **Enhancement of Coordination**

6.9 In addition to anchoring the publicity efforts through a coherent central theme, the Task Force sees a need to **strengthen the overall coordination of the Government’s VPET promotion measures**, with a view to raising the public awareness in a more targeted manner and strengthening collaboration with industries. The Task Force notes that there is currently no permanent consultative body established with the ambit to advise the Government on its VPET promotion strategies. Instead, ad hoc task forces are set up from time to

time to review this subject on a need basis. In this connection, the Task Force recommends that the Government **set up a standing steering committee to advise on the strategic directions to improve VPET promotion as well as oversee the coordination of various VPET promotion initiatives.** The membership of the steering committee should comprise representatives from the relevant industry stakeholders, VPET institutions, industry academies, and the school sector. Among others, the steering committee could give a steer on ways to strengthen industry collaboration in providing VPET programmes at secondary schools and means of better utilising the QF as a tool to promote VPET. Members of the steering committee could also act as the Government's **key partners in promoting VPET and champion the Government's VPET initiatives.** Given its representative membership, the steering committee could also consolidate the efforts of different sectors in the promotion of VPET with a view to maximising synergy and minimising overlapping of work.

6.10 Furthermore, the steering committee could offer advice on how to **adopt a more innovative and interactive approach** to publicise VPET through various prominent media channels. The publicity should better target the intended audience as well as address their needs and interests by adopting the suitable timing, channel, format, and content. For example, the transparency of VPET statistics and articulation opportunities could be enhanced to highlight the diverse opportunities available through VPET at graduation seasons when students are pondering their education and career choices. Different success stories of VPET graduates in a wide range of professions could also be shared to appeal to students through popular online platforms, whereas publicity through traditional media should be suitably retained to reach out to teachers and parents.

6.11 To keep track of any further changes in the public's perception towards VPET and evaluate the effectiveness of these proposed promotion measures, the Task Force also recommends that the Government **continue conducting regular tracking surveys on key stakeholders' attitudes towards VPET.** The survey results would serve as a useful benchmark and yardstick for the steering committee to carry out its duties.

## Organisation of Large-scale Events

6.12 The Task Force considers that the stakeholders are very receptive to the organisation of large-scale VPET events that enable participants to find out more about different career opportunities as well as try out different professional skills first-hand. The organisation of or participation in large-scale competitions also helps generate much positive publicity on and public attention to VPET. For example, Team Hong Kong achieving its best-ever results with 11 Medallions for Excellence in the WorldSkills Competition 2019 recently held in Kazan, Russia could improve the public perception of the professionalism of VPET and the importance of skills, thereby inspiring more young people to pursue VPET. As such, the Task Force recommends that the Government **continue to support the VTC and other relevant VPET bodies organising and participating in large-scale VPET events on a regular basis**, such as conferences, competitions, and exhibitions. In particular, secondary students can be engaged earlier and more extensively in these events to cultivate a culture that promotes skills and VPET starting from a young age.

6.13 In this connection, the Task Force notes that it was announced in the Chief Executive's 2019 Policy Address Supplement that the Government would enhance publicity through a series of activities in 2020 under the theme of "2020 Hong Kong Skills Year", including supporting the VTC organising the VPET International Conference as well as WorldSkills Hong Kong Competition and Carnival. The Task Force fully supports this initiative to synergise and coordinate the efforts of different VPET providers, industry stakeholders, and schools in promoting their respective VPET activities with a common goal of raising the public awareness and understanding of the significance of professional education and skills training. The Task Force appeals to relevant stakeholders and the general public for their support of the "2020 Hong Kong Skills Year" campaign.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Conclusion**

7.1 VPET has all along played an integral role in Hong Kong's education system. In tandem with the rapid development in innovation and technology that is bound to revolutionise the workplace all over the world, the importance of VPET in training the requisite talent to meet manpower needs of different trades will only continue to grow. Global economies have been reviewing and reforming their respective VPET systems to keep pace with the ever-changing economic and societal environment, and Hong Kong could not afford to lose out as we strive to develop into a high value-added and diversified economy.

7.2 Having reviewed the existing measures to promote VPET and the current situation regarding the public perception of VPET, the Task Force has deliberated and formulated preliminary recommendations on matters pertaining to promoting VPET in secondary schools, reviewing the positioning of VPET in the higher education system, building clear articulation pathways in the vocational sector under the QF, and the future promotion of VPET.

7.3 In the light of the views received during the public consultation, the Task Force has finalised 18 specific recommendations. The Task Force firmly believes that, facing the challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the education system needs to nurture applied skills to integrate different knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes; and courses with more emphasis on application are a good choice outside courses focusing on academic elements to cater for different students' aptitudes, develop their talent, and broaden their experience and exposure.

7.4 Therefore, VPET pathways should be expanded and enriched to offer more programmes with greater flexibility as well as an emphasis on application and industry input, while underpinned by a robust qualifications system, with a view to enabling young people to acquire professional work skills, applied knowledge in innovation and technology, as well as critical soft skills to excel in this new digital age. The Task Force firmly believes that its recommendations will go a long way towards strengthening the VPET ecosystem in Hong Kong and contributing to Hong Kong's sustainable development.



**Task Force on Promotion of VPET**

**Membership**

Chairman

Dr Roy CHUNG Chi-ping, GBS, JP

Non-official Members

Mr Alan CHEUNG Yick-lun

Ms Quince CHONG Wai-yan, JP

Mr Eugene FONG Yick-jin

Mr IP Wai-ming, MH

Mr Brian LIU

Mr Thomas LO Sui-sing, JP

Mr Joseph TSANG Chi-to

Dr TSANG Wing-hong

Miss Winnie YING Fung-sau

Mr Taylor YIP

Official Members

Representative(s) of the Secretary for Education

**Terms of Reference**

The terms of reference of the Task Force on Promotion of VPET is to evaluate the implementation progress of the recommendations of the 2014 Task Force, and advise the Secretary for Education on the following areas:

- (a) how VPET can be better promoted in the career and life planning education in secondary schools to cater for students' diverse abilities and interests;
- (b) how to foster closer business-school collaboration through the BSPP to meet the manpower needs of Hong Kong; and

(c) to make recommendations on other VPET promotion measures.

**Key Initial Observations of the Task Force on Promotion of VPET  
in its Consultation Document**

**Promotion of VPET in Secondary Schools**

- (a) The Task Force suggested that the Government continue to facilitate industry involvement through the BSPP in promoting VPET, and to encourage more industry partners and their corporate academies, as well as professional bodies to develop, improve and enrich the variety and structure of VPET activities.
- (b) The Task Force suggested that the Government step up promotion of VPET-related activities for junior secondary students, BSPP partners can be encouraged to provide career exploration activities for junior secondary school students to enhance students' exposure.
- (c) The Task Force suggested that the Government better equip secondary school teachers with knowledge and information about VPET through training of new teachers and professional and career development for in-service teachers.
- (d) The Task Force suggested that the Government enhance parents' understanding of the opportunities and prospect of VPET through various channels, including regular communications between schools and parents, workplace visits under BSPP and more targeted promotion efforts.
- (e) The Task Force suggested that the Government continue the efforts to promote VPET through ApL. The scope of VPET-related ApL courses can be broadened with contents enriched to include more vocationally-related elements.
- (f) The Task Force recommended that the engagement of industrial partners from different sectors be made a necessary condition in the development and design of VPET-related courses in ApL.

- (g) Institutions providing ApL courses should be further encouraged to consider designing ApL courses with closer reference to competency standards of respective trades under the QF where applicable.

### **Building Promising Pathways for VPET**

- (h) The Task Force saw a need to review the positioning of VPET in the higher education system in Hong Kong. Specifically, the Government should explore the merits of developing professional vocational qualifications at the degree level.
- (i) The Task Force suggested that the Government reinforce the role of HD qualifications as a key VPET pathway at the post-secondary level.
- (j) The Task Force considered that the Government should formulate more robust policies to encourage, coordinate, support and facilitate the post-secondary education sector, including the self-financing post-secondary institutions, to offer VPET programmes at both sub-degree and degree levels in close partnership with industries.
- (k) The Task Force urged the Government to explore the development of a vocational route whereby professional skill-based vocational qualifications can be acquired through an appropriate combination of vocational training at schools and workplace assessment or in-service training, and duly recognised under the QF in close partnership with the industries.

### **Future Promotion of VPET**

- (l) The Task Force considered that the public's understanding of VPET should be enhanced to highlight the diverse opportunities available for a career in different professions through professional skills training.
- (m) The Task Force suggested that more aspects of the benefits of pursuing

VPET should be promoted to the public, with the meaning of VPET enriched to emphasise how VPET is associated to work skills for the future.

- (n) The Task Force considered it necessary for the Government to step up measures to facilitate industries to play a greater and more strategic role in areas such as programme development and conduct of workplace assessment to enrich VPET courses and programmes in ApL courses and at the post-secondary level. Incentive programmes can be considered to give recognition to encourage employers to champion the Government's VPET initiatives.
- (o) The Task Force considered that VPET should be promoted in society through more innovative and interactive approaches with a view to raising community-wide awareness. The Task Force agreed that hands-on skills, work competence, application of innovation and technology, etc. are some important concepts of VPET which require more promotion through the mass media. On the other hand, the attractiveness and positive image of VPET can be further projected by promoting success stories of VPET students through online media.
- (p) The Task Force suggested enhancing communication between parents and secondary schools as well as formulating more targeted promotion measures for parents to help parents understand more about VPET.
- (q) The Task Force suggested raising community awareness on VPET by organising large-scale skills events on a regular basis. In addition, secondary schools can be engaged more extensively in such events to cultivate a culture that promotes skills and VPET.

**List of Participants at the Consultation Sessions**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Participants</b>
1	3 June 2019	Caritas Institute of Community Education
2		Chu Hai College of Higher Education
3		Federation for Self-financing Tertiary Education
4		HKU School of Professional and Continuing Education
5		HKU SPACE Po Leung Kuk Stanley Ho Community College
6		Hong Kong College of Technology
7		Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications
8		Hong Kong Institute of Technology
9		Hong Kong Nang Yan College of Higher Education
10		Hong Kong Shue Yan University
11		Lingnan Institute of Further Education
12		Savannah College of Art and Design
13		School of Continuing Education and College of International Education, Hong Kong Baptist University
14		Li Ka Shing Institute of Professional and Continuing Education, The Open University of Hong Kong
15		Tung Wah College
16		Vocational Training Council
17		YMCA College of Careers

No.	Date	Participants
18	17 June 2019	Arboriculture and Horticulture Industry Training Advisory Committee
19		Banking Industry Training Advisory Committee
20		Beauty and Hairdressing Industry Training Advisory Committee
21		Catering Industry Training Advisory Committee
22		Electrical and Mechanical Services Industry Training Advisory Committee
23		Fashion Industry Training Advisory Committee
24		Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions
25		Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants
26		Human Resource Management Industry Training Advisory Committee
27		Information and Communications Technology Industry Training Advisory Committee
28		Institution of Dining Art
29		Insurance Industry Training Advisory Committee
30		Jewellery Industry Training Advisory Committee
31		Logistics Industry Training Advisory Committee
32		Manufacturing Technology (Tooling, Metals and Plastics) Industry Training Advisory Committee
33		Printing and Publishing Industry Training Advisory Committee
34		Property Management Industry Training Advisory Committee
35		Retail Industry Training Advisory Committee
36		The Hong Kong Association for the Advancement of Science and Technology
37		The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups

<b>No.</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Participants</b>
38	17 June 2019	The Hong Kong Institution of Engineering Surveyors
39		Travel Industry Training Advisory Committee
40		Watch and Clock Industry Training Advisory Committee
41	24 June 2019	CLP Power Hong Kong Limited
42		Federation of Hong Kong Industries
43		Hong Kong Institute of Construction Construction Industry Council
44		Hong Kong International Aviation Academy
45		MTR Corporation Limited
46		The Chinese General Chamber of Commerce
47		The Hong Kong and China Gas Company Limited
48		The Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce
49	25 June 2019	Grant Schools Council
50		Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union
51		Hong Kong Subsidized Secondary Schools Council
52		30 Secondary Schools



**List of Respondents to the Consultation Document**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
1	4 June 2019	P OR
2	10 June 2019	(A respondent requesting anonymity)
3	14 June 2019	王曲彪
4	18 June 2019	Quinais YU
5	18 June 2019	翟博士
6	27 June 2019	Hong Kong Institute of Construction Construction Industry Council
7	2 July 2019	MTR Academy
8	4 July 2019	Fred KWAN
9	5 July 2019	CLP Power Hong Kong Limited
10	8 July 2019	Henry TONG
11	9 July 2019	Corporate Tech Academy Network
12	9 July 2019	MAK King-tong
13	9 July 2019	MWYO
14	9 July 2019	Teddy WU
15	9 July 2019	Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union
16	10 July 2019	Dr Ella CHAN
17	10 July 2019	(A respondent requesting anonymity)
18	10 July 2019	(A respondent requesting anonymity)
19	10 July 2019	香港社區組織協會 新青權利關注會

<b>No.</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
20	11 July 2019	Alex NG
21	11 July 2019	Andrew LI
22	11 July 2019	(A respondent requesting anonymity)
23	11 July 2019	The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers
24	12 July 2019	80/90 青年聚焦小組
25	12 July 2019	Federation of Hong Kong Industries
26	12 July 2019	Liberal Party
27	12 July 2019	Our Hong Kong Foundation
28	12 July 2019	Quince CHONG
29	12 July 2019	Vocational Training Council
30	12 July 2019	Vocational Training and Employment Acceleration Committee, The Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions
31	12 July 2019	Hong Kong Retail Management Association
32	12 July 2019	Grand Aesthetic Academy
33	12 July 2019	Employees Progressive Educational Center, The Federation of Hong Kong & Kowloon Labour Unions
34	12 July 2019	黃妙送
35	12 July 2019	職業專才教育發展關注組
36	15 July 2019	Carrie CHENG
37	16 July 2019	Practice Perfection Consulting Limited
38	18 July 2019	HKU School of Professional and Continuing Education
39	19 July 2019	Hong Kong Association of Career Masters and Guidance Masters

**Recommendations of the 2014 Task Force on  
Promotion of Vocational Education**

**Strategy 1: Rebranding VET**

1. the Government to rebrand “VET” in Hong Kong as “VPET” covering programmes up to degree level with a high percentage of curriculum consisting of specialised contents in vocational skills or professional knowledge;

**Strategy 2: Strengthening Promotion**

***(a) Promotion of Professional Image of VPET***

**(i) Publicity Campaign**

2. the Government to produce Announcement in Public Interest (API) on TV/radio by involving industry role models where appropriate. The API may also be broadcast on Facebook, YouTube, dedicated portal for VPET and other online media;
3. the Government to produce TV drama series (including related publicity and production of DVDs), presenting real success stories of persons graduated from VPET programmes and make them continuously accessible to the public through the VPET portal which facilitates guidance to students;
4. the Government to continue to support major VPET provider(s) to organise large-scale skills competitions to showcase VPET students’ achievement and provide interactive activities for secondary school students’ experience, or even consider bidding for the hosting of such competitions in Hong Kong in due course with a view to raising public awareness of the professionalism of VPET and related industries as well as enhancing the skill level of local talent;

### **(ii) Campus Facilities of VPET Providers**

5. the Government to facilitate the provision of state-of-the-art facilities to VPET providers in order to provide conducive learning environment to VPET students and enhance the professional image of VPET riding on the existing support schemes or otherwise;

### **(iii) Quality of Programmes Offered by VPET Providers and Research Capability**

6. VPET providers to enhance quality of their VPET programmes, and strengthen the support services to students where possible;
7. VPET providers to consider whether it is appropriate for them to engage in (more) research activities (which could be action research, applied research, technology-oriented research other than academic research) to inform teaching and learning, etc.;

### ***(b) Provision of More Information about VPET and Related Career***

#### **(i) VPET Portal**

8. the Government to develop and maintain a VPET portal which gathers comprehensive and impartial information on VPET programmes and related industries in Hong Kong, as well as links up other relevant portals;

#### **(ii) VPET Forum**

9. the Government, VPET providers and industry sectors to attend international VPET forums from time to time to keep abreast of the latest development of VPET worldwide;
10. the Government or VPET providers to organise local VPET forums from time to time with the participation of the industry sectors, in order to provide up-to-date industry and career information to secondary school

students, parents and teachers;

**(c) Promotion of VPET through Career and Life Planning Education**

11. EDB to encourage secondary schools to adopt a whole school approach in career and life planning education and enhance individual guidance and support to students to facilitate self-understanding and exploration of multiple pathways including VPET;
12. VPET providers and major chambers of commerce to arrange (more) training workshops cum visits for principals, teachers and career masters in secondary schools, with the facilitation of EDB through the BSPP so as to provide them with the latest developments of VPET in Hong Kong and the related careers. Such training workshops cum visits should also be extended to prospective secondary school teachers pursuing teaching programmes in tertiary institutions as well as non-governmental organisations which play a role in offering articulation and career advice to students;
13. VPET providers and major chambers of commerce to arrange (more) taster programmes for secondary school students with the facilitation of EDB through BSPP;
14. VPET providers and major chambers of commerce to organise seminars and visits for parents of secondary school students for their better understanding of VPET and the related careers as well as the progression pathways, with the facilitation of EDB;

**(d) More Contribution from Industries**

**(i) Closer Collaboration with VPET Providers**

15. the major chambers of commerce and VPET providers to have closer collaboration on the design and development of VPET programmes (including the curriculum, industrial attachment, etc.) such that the learning outcome could fulfill employers' needs and expectation;

16. VTC to regularly review the list of Training Boards to cover emerging industries so that manpower surveys would be conducted to better inform VPET training providers and prospective students of the areas with growing manpower demand;

**(ii) Remuneration, Working Conditions and Progression Pathways**

17. the major chambers of commerce to encourage their members to devise comprehensive human resource strategy to attract and retain staff, covering the remuneration package, working conditions and progression pathways, etc.;

***(e) Promotion of ApL***

18. EDB to encourage course providers to arrange accreditation of more ApL courses under the QF where appropriate so that apart from the HKDSE, students completing ApL courses may obtain a separate QF-recognised qualification for further studies in the relevant fields or entry into the industries concerned;
19. post-secondary education institutions in Hong Kong to give due consideration of the results of ApL courses attained by students in the HKDSE Examination in student admission as an incentive for students to take ApL and benefit from the experiences and also an incentive for their parents to support them to do so;
20. the Government to consider providing 100% grant subsidies to schools for the ApL course fees and encourage more schools to offer ApL courses based on their student profiles;

***(f) Provision of Financial Support by the Government***

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

21. the Government to consider extending the Pilot Training and Support Scheme to benefit more students pending a review;

**(ii) IA**

22. the Government to extend the IA initiative to benefit students pursuing full-time locally-accredited self-financing sub-degree and undergraduate programmes where applicable;

**(iii) SSSDP**

23. the Government to consider extending the SSSDP if it is proven effective;

**Strategy 3: Sustaining Efforts**

***(a) Influence by the Government***

24. the Government to encourage the senior Government officials to seize every opportunity to promote and support VPET on different occasions so as to demonstrate the Government's support and recognition of VPET as an integral part of the community;

***(b) Promotion of the QF***

25. EDB to enhance the publicity efforts on the QF targeting at employers and the general public. Articulation pathways for lifelong learning and progression pathways for different industries under the QF should also be further promoted;
26. the major chambers of commerce to encourage their members to make reference to the QF in recruitment and promotion, so as to increase the relevance of the QF to learners and practitioners which would in turn help promote VPET; and

***(c) Tracking Surveys on Attitude Change***

27. the Government to conduct tracking surveys by involving relevant stakeholders to keep track of any changes in their attitude towards VPET.

**Review Report of the Task Force on Promotion of Vocational and Professional Education and Training  
The Education Bureau (EDB)’s Response to Recommendations**

Recommendation	Way Forward
<p>1. Facing the challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the education system needs to nurture <b>applied skills</b> to integrate different knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes. <b>The Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET) pathways should be expanded and enriched</b> to offer more programmes with greater flexibility as well as an emphasis on application and industry input, while underpinned by a robust qualifications system, with a view to enabling young people to acquire professional work skills, applied knowledge in innovation and technology, as well as critical soft skills for career progression in the new digital age.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDB agrees with the need to reaffirm VPET’s integral role in Hong Kong’s education system to equip students with work skills for the future. This will be the backbone of the future direction of VPET.</li> </ul>
<i>Promotion of VPET in Secondary Education</i>	
<p>2. To <b>improve the overall quality of VPET programmes and activities</b> in secondary schools through the existing platforms, including the Business-School-Partnership Programme, by strengthening coordination, fostering wider industry collaboration, and formulating an incentive mechanism for industry partners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In consultation with the proposed steering committee on VPET promotion (see item 17), EDB will explore ways to enhance VPET programmes and activities in secondary schools, including engaging wider industry collaboration, expanding the opportunities for junior secondary students, parents, and teachers to participate in these activities, etc.</li> </ul>
<p>3. To <b>encourage more industry partners to provide VPET-related activities for junior secondary students and involve more teachers and parents</b> in these activities through the existing platforms.</p>	



Recommendation	Way Forward
<p>4. To <b>provide external advisory service on VPET for teachers and career masters</b> of secondary schools under a pilot scheme to offer one-stop professional service for teachers on a wide array of issues pertaining to VPET, including on-demand consultation service, an online teachers' kit, professional development workshops, on-site VPET activities for students, and consolidation of related online resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDB agrees that secondary school teachers and career masters, who might not have personal experience of VPET pathways, should be better supported when providing career guidance to students on VPET pathways so as to enable the latter to make informed choices in accordance with their orientations, abilities, and interests. EDB plans to launch a pilot scheme to engage external consultant(s) for offering one-stop professional services on VPET for teachers of a selected number of secondary schools in the 2020/21 academic year, with a view to testing out its operational mode and effectiveness.</li> </ul>
<p>5. To <b>encourage parent-teacher associations (PTAs) and federations of PTAs (FPTAs) to organise more VPET promotion activities</b> at the school and/or district level, making good use of the increased funding for parent education programmes or activities which is available to PTAs and FPTAs, starting from the 2019/20 school year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDB plans to start enhancing parent education in 2020-21, covering topics such as refraining from making comparisons and respecting the choices of children, with a view to facilitating parents' acceptance of their children's decisions to pursue VPET pathways.</li> <li>• EDB will also encourage PTAs and FPTAs to organise more VPET promotion activities at the school and/or district level.</li> </ul>
<p>6. To continue the Government's efforts to <b>promote VPET through Applied Learning (ApL), by strengthening the engagement of industrial partners, enhancing workplace experience, and piloting the development of VPET learning pathways</b> starting with ApL courses and providing articulation opportunities to Higher Diploma (HD) and top-up degree programmes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDB agrees that ApL is one of the key channels to provide students with an early exposure to VPET and more vocationally-related elements could be integrated in to VPET-related ApL courses.</li> <li>• EDB will liaise with course providers to make the engagement of industry partners a necessary condition in the development of VPET-related ApL courses as far as possible.</li> </ul>

Recommendation	Way Forward
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDB will open up ApL extension programmes, currently targeted at Secondary 6 students, to Secondary 5 students as well, to provide more opportunities and flexibility for interested students to participate.</li> <li>• In the long term, EDB will continue supporting the pilot development of VPET learning pathways with clear articulation opportunities with reference to the “CLAP-TECH” model.</li> </ul>
<p>7. To <b>strengthen support for secondary schools to develop school-based vocational training courses</b> recognised under the Qualifications Framework (QF) by offering sharing sessions, advice, and facilitation in the accreditation process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDB agrees that the development of school-based vocational training courses should be encouraged and supported as it could better cater for the unique situation and needs of each school and its students. EDB and the QF Secretariat (QFS) will step up support to facilitate the development of QF-recognised school-based vocational training courses in more secondary schools.</li> </ul>
<i>Promotion of VPET in Higher Education</i>	
<p>8. To <b>reiterate the value and positioning of VPET in higher education</b>, and provide a clearly defined and differentiated VPET pathway from the academic route while upholding their parity in terms of both quality and recognition.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDB agrees that the value and positioning of VPET in higher education should be reiterated to support the parallel development of the VPET and academic education pathways.</li> </ul>
<p>9. To explore ways to facilitate the development of applied degrees at the Bachelor’s degree level, by ensuring that the <b>qualifications systems and other infrastructure can accommodate</b> the future development of applied degrees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDB agrees that the development of applied degrees should be carefully studied with a view to encouraging more young people to pursue VPET. As the concept of applied degrees is rather new to Hong Kong and this is a complicated issue that affects the higher education system as a whole, it should be handled in a cautious and gradual manner.</li> </ul>

Recommendation	Way Forward
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EDB will launch a pilot project in close liaison with relevant stakeholders to explore the practical details involved in the development of these programmes with distinctive features in selected VPET disciplines. The pilot project is planned to commence in 2021. At the same time, EDB will, together with the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications, jointly consider how the current higher education system can accommodate the development of these programmes in the future.</li> </ul>
<p>10. As part of the sub-degree review, to <b>conduct a comprehensive review on the HD qualification</b>, with a view to reinforcing its role as a key VPET pathway at the post-secondary level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EDB agrees that the HD qualification should be enhanced and reaffirmed as a key VPET pathway at the sub-degree level, and plans to commence a review of sub-degree education in late 2020.</li> </ul>
<p>11. To <b>conduct a comprehensive review on the Training and Support Scheme</b> implemented by the Vocational Training Council (VTC) (also known as the VTC Earn and Learn Scheme) <b>to enhance apprenticeship training</b>, including increasing incentives for employers, strengthening its dual-track learning mode, and enhancing its workplace learning and assessment (WLA).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EDB agrees that the collaboration with industries should be deepened to enhance the quality and diversity of VPET programmes at the post-secondary level.</li> <li>EDB has invited the VTC to conduct a review on the TSS with a view to strengthening apprenticeship training and implementation of WLA.</li> </ul>
<p>12. To <b>formulate more robust policies to encourage, coordinate, support, and facilitate the post-secondary education sector</b>, including the self-financing post-secondary institutions, <b>to incorporate work-based learning and assessment in their VPET programmes</b> at both the sub-degree and degree levels through close partnership with industries, including considering <b>extending the Pilot</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EDB will consider measures to encourage and support the post-secondary education sector to incorporate WLA in their VPET programmes.</li> </ul>

Recommendation	Way Forward
<p><b>Incentive Scheme to Employers to include institutions other than the VTC.</b></p>	
<p><i>Development of Vocational Progression Pathways</i></p>	
<p>13. To <b>explore the development of a vocational route whereby professional skill-based vocational qualifications can be acquired flexibly</b> through an appropriate combination of vocational training at schools, workplace assessment, or in-service training, and duly recognised under the QF in close partnership with the industries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDB agrees that in-service practitioners should be better supported in their career development by exploring the development of vocational routes, such that they could acquire professional skill-based vocational qualifications through workplace experience and continuing education.</li> </ul>
<p>14. To <b>reaffirm the QF’s role in supporting VPET development by encouraging more stakeholders, including Government departments and industry partners, to adopt the QF.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In collaboration with relevant stakeholders, EDB will explore the development of QF-recognised professional progression pathways in selected industries.</li> </ul>
<p>15. To <b>consider expanding the Pilot Subsidy Scheme for Students of Professional Part-time Programmes</b> to include students pursuing a wider range of dedicated part-time programmes, with a view to encouraging working adults to pursue higher VPET qualifications.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In consultation with the proposed steering committee (see item 17), EDB and the QFS will step up the promotion of the QF in close connection with VPET.</li> <li>• Having regard to the experience and evaluation of the Pilot Subsidy Scheme for Students of Professional Part-time Programmes operated by the VTC, EDB will consider expanding the scheme to cover a wider range of dedicated part-time programmes in the future.</li> </ul>

Recommendation	Way Forward
<i>Future Promotion of VPET</i>	
<p>16. To <b>formulate a coherent message in the publicity of VPET in order to highlight VPET’s association with work skills for the future.</b> The message should be able to convey the diversity and prospects of VPET as well as its appeal to the younger generation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDB will strengthen promotion of VPET through a more innovative approach to appeal to students and young adults. An online publicity campaign under the theme of “My Superpower” was launched in June 2020.</li> </ul>
<p>17. To <b>adopt a more innovative, targeted, and coordinated approach in the publicity on VPET</b> with a view to raising the public awareness, including <b>establishing a standing steering committee to oversee the overall VPET promotion strategy</b>, promoting success stories of past VPET students, enhancing the transparency of VPET-related statistics and articulation opportunities, and continuing to conduct tracking surveys on key stakeholders’ attitudes towards VPET in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the Government’s initiatives in promoting VPET.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDB will set up a steering committee in the second half of 2020 to oversee the overall VPET promotion strategy, strengthen coordination, and foster closer industry partnership.</li> <li>• EDB will continue to conduct regular tracking surveys on key stakeholders’ attitudes towards VPET.</li> </ul>
<p>18. To continue supporting the VTC and other VPET bodies <b>organising and participating in large-scale VPET events on a regular basis</b> to raise the public awareness and understanding of the significance of professional skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDB will continue to support the VTC and other VPET bodies to organise and participate in large-scale VPET events, such as the WorldSkills Competition.</li> <li>• EDB and the VTC co-organised the first online VPET International Conference on 15 May 2020.</li> </ul>