

## **Legislative Council Panel on Education**

### **2008-09 Policy Agenda: Education**

#### **Introduction**

This paper reports progress with the implementation of new education initiatives included in the 2007-08 Policy Agenda, and introduces new items for the 2008-09 Policy Agenda. It also reports progress with our preparation for a major challenge – implementation of the new academic structure for senior secondary and university education.

#### **New Initiatives in the 2007-08 Policy Agenda**

##### Free senior secondary education

2. The Government announced last year the provision of free senior secondary education in all public sector schools with effect from the 2008/09 school year. This new initiative involves the investment of an additional \$1.2 billion in education in a full year. The initiative has already taken effect – all Secondary 4 to Secondary 7 students currently enrolled in our public sector schools do not have to pay tuition fees. In addition, we have started, also with effect from the 2008/09 school year, to provide full subvention for full-time courses offered by the Vocational Training Council for Secondary 3 school leavers, involving an additional expenditure of around \$30 million.

##### Small Class Teaching

3. We are getting ready for the progressive implementation of small class teaching (SCT) in public sector primary schools. Schools implementing SCT will be allocated 25 students per class under the Primary One Admission System while other schools will be allocated 30 students per class. Taking into consideration the preference of individual schools for SCT and the projected demand and supply of school places, 302 (or 65%) public sector primary schools will be implementing SCT starting from Primary One in the 2009/10 school year. The remaining 159 (or 35%) schools may apply for 2 to 4 additional teachers, depending on the number of approved classes, to adopt alternative measures to enhance effectiveness of classroom teaching before their transition to SCT. Based on the situation of the 2009/10 school year, it is estimated that an additional recurrent funding of some \$1.7 billion would be incurred by the

2014/15 school year for implementing the two afore-mentioned measures. We expect a further increase in the funding to be required when more schools switch to SCT after 2009/10.

4. To support schools' preparation for SCT, particularly on how to make good use of a smaller class size to enhance the quality of classroom teaching and learning, we have provided schools with some 700 time-limited teaching posts starting from this school year. We have also started to roll out professional development activities and set up school-based support networks. Further plans on professional development activities will be drawn up with reference to the recommendations of the SCT Study, which will be completed in end 2008.

#### Regional education hub

5. Attracting non-local students to study in Hong Kong is beneficial to both our local students and the community as a whole. It increases the exposure of our local students and stimulates friendly competition. It will also enhance our talent pool, maintaining Hong Kong's overall competitiveness and supporting development of our economy in the long run. Beginning from the 2008/09 academic year, we have increased the non-local student quota for full-time programmes at sub-degree, degree and taught postgraduate levels. To attract more outstanding local and non-local students to study in Hong Kong, we have established a \$1 billion scholarship endowment fund, and we will award the first batch of government scholarships this academic year. As for student hostels, we have considered together with the institutions the feasibility of constructing joint hostels, and have initially identified two potential sites for development, providing an estimated 2 500 hostel places.

6. Since 19 May 2008, we have relaxed various employment- and immigration-related restrictions for non-local students. Eligible non-local students can take up study-related internships, on-campus part-time jobs for not more than 20 hours per week, and off-campus summer jobs. Additionally, non-local graduates of degree or above level programmes can take up employment in Hong Kong so long as the job is at a level commonly taken up by degree holders and the remuneration package is set at market level. Non-local fresh graduates of degree or above level programmes can also stay in Hong Kong with no restriction for an initial period of one year. By the end of September 2008, four months since the measures have been implemented, more than 2,200 applications to stay in Hong Kong have been approved, among which more than 1,500 are applications from non-local fresh graduates.

## International schools

7. We are taking measures to expand the international school sector, in order to address the demand for international school places among families coming to Hong Kong for work or investment and to promote diversity in the education sector. We have earmarked a number of greenfield sites and vacant school premises for the purpose. With the recent completion of the allocation process in respect of the vacant premises, we expect that there will be an increase in the number of international school places on a progressive basis with effect from the 2009/10 school year.

8. At present, most of the international schools are situated on Hong Kong Island where there is a lack of sites for development. We believe that it is more pragmatic for the international school sector to expand outside Hong Kong Island and are glad that many school operators have an open mind towards such a suggestion. We are planning to launch the exercise for allocation of the four greenfield sites (in Kowloon Bay, Lai Chi Kok, Sai Kung and Tuen Mun) earmarked for international school development towards the end of 2008. We will invite all 31 parties who had previously expressed interest in these sites in March 2008 to submit formal applications and detailed school proposals.

## **New Initiatives in the 2008-09 Policy Agenda**

### Keeping teaching resources up-to-date

9. There is a very close link between student learning and the use of learning resources. Following rapid developments in the Internet and information technology, student learning resources and modes of learning have also undergone vast changes. In the longer run, we expect e-learning resources to play a more important role in teaching and learning. For instance, an electronic platform would provide students with more opportunities to interact and collaborate in the learning process, raise their interest in learning and better engage them for more effective learning. We have also noted that the public generally see considerable merits with e-textbooks, such as saving paper and reducing pollution from paper production, hence satisfying environmental protection needs, as well as reducing the weight of students' schoolbags. Furthermore, updating of textbook content could be effected electronically without the need for reprinting. In recent years some parents have also expressed concern over the financial burden arising from the need to purchase

new textbooks. In the circumstances, the Bureau will continue to look into the promotion of e-learning resources and other measures that would help to reduce expenditure on textbooks in an open-minded and positive manner. We have invited stakeholders including information and technology experts, parents, school principals and publishers etc to form a working group to deliberate on the future development of textbooks and e-learning resources. The working group will formulate, with reference to practices and experiences in other jurisdictions, practical and widely accepted proposals and make its recommendations to the Bureau within 9 to 12 months.

### National Education

10. The HKSAR Government will continue to adopt a “multi-pronged approach” in the promotion of national education which aims to enhance students’ understanding of our country and to nurture their national identity. Hitherto we have earmarked about \$46 million of recurrent funding for promoting national education in the school sector.

11. This year marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of China’s opening up and reform. To further the promotion of national education, we plan to invest an additional \$21 million on a recurrent basis to subsidise over 30,000 primary school and secondary school students to participate in study tours in the Guangdong Province and the Pearl River Delta conducted by non-government organizations. The study tours aim to develop students’ affection towards our country through learning about the integration between these regions and Hong Kong and to complement the school curriculum at primary and secondary levels. We will also increase student exchange opportunities in Beijing for our secondary school students, so that they would in turn help to promote national education in schools.

12. The majority of our schools have been displaying the national flag on a regular basis and have formed flag guard teams. In addition, we will soon complete the training of flag guard teams for all schools.

13. 2009 marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China. To better equip students to contribute to our country, we will launch “The 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the People’s Republic of China” national education series to encourage students to understand the challenges faced by our country in the past, the achievements of today and the development of the future.

## **Preparation for “334”**

14. To prepare for the launch of the new academic structure that aims to promote whole-person development and learning to learn capabilities for our students, the Education Bureau has provided schools with a wide range of support measures. These include the provision of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) Curriculum and Assessment Guides, recommended textbook lists and time-tabling tools; different grants including the Teacher Professional Preparation Grant, NSS Curriculum Migration Grant, Senior Secondary Curriculum Support Grant and Diversity Learning Grant to enable schools to develop a diversified NSS curriculum, employ staff and improve school facilities; workshops for preparation of “334” for school leaders and middle managers, and professional development programmes on NSS subjects and assessment for frontline teachers. All these aim at facilitating the smooth implementation of NSS at S4 in the coming school year.

15. We have also taken active steps to enhance our communication with different stakeholders, especially parents and employers, and will continually update the “334 Web Bulletin” on the Education Bureau webpage to disseminate the most up-to-date information on “334” to the public. In addition, we are helping parents gain a better understanding of how to help their children select elective subjects and how to support their children’s learning under the NSS, through district-based parents’ seminars, roving exhibitions, promotional videos, DVDs, FAQ pamphlets, etc.

16. The Education Bureau and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) have joined hands in maintaining close liaison with local universities, post-secondary institutions, employer organisations (including the Civil Service Bureau), and overseas educational organisations to brief them on the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) qualifications in order to facilitate their planning of the entry requirements for further studies and employment. In addition, HKEAA is actively seeking international recognition of the HKDSE to ensure that NSS graduates will enjoy smooth articulation to further studies abroad.

17. The University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions are focusing on student admission issues, curriculum changes, improvements in teaching and in the student learning experience, recruitment and training of their teaching and related staff, preparation for accommodating the double cohort, and

capital works. On curriculum change, institutions are planning ahead to prepare for a smooth transition to the four-year undergraduate system. Some elements of the new curriculum will be phased in during the 2009/10 – 2011/12 triennium, so that students enrolling on the current three-year curriculum will also benefit from changes arising from “334”.

18. The UGC will support institutions through the provision of adequate funding support and appropriate co-ordination. To strengthen monitoring and support, the UGC established the “334” group, hence consolidating all “334” matters in one forum for better management.

19. On capital works, as the overall undergraduate enrolment will increase, institutions will need to expand their campus facilities correspondingly. The Government has earmarked funding of about \$6 billion for 12 projects. Amongst these projects, funding for the project “Extension to the Existing Academic Building” of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology has been approved by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council. The institutions are now working on the detailed design of the remaining 11 projects and will submit them to the Public Works Subcommittee and Finance Committee of the Legislative Council for funding approval in the 2008/09 and 2009/10 legislative sessions.

## **Conclusion**

20. In recent years we have introduced a number of measures to improve the curriculum and the academic structure; raise the professional standards of teachers; strengthen school-based support; enhance the quality assurance mechanism; improve the teaching and learning environment, etc. These measures are all in line with international trends, with the ultimate goal of increasing the effectiveness of teaching and learning and in the long run raising the quality of Hong Kong’s manpower. While introducing new initiatives, we have to allow time for these ongoing measures to take root and achieve the desired results. We also have to take into account the need for prioritization among different policies and the overall deployment of public resources. We look forward to maintaining good communication and effective co-operation with stakeholders in taking forward various education policies in the coming year.

Education Bureau  
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