

16 January 2015
For Discussion

Legislative Council Panel on Education

2015 Policy Address Education Bureau's Policy Initiatives

The Chief Executive delivered his 2015 Policy Address on 14 January 2015. This paper sets out the major education-related initiatives in the Policy Address.

2. Nurturing of talent starts with education. The vision and mission of our education policies is to offer all-round and balanced learning opportunities for our students, so as to tap their potential for whole person development and lay the foundation for lifelong learning, so that they can learn successfully and apply what they have learnt.

3. The Committee on Free Kindergarten Education is studying the practicable way of achieving the objective of implementing free kindergarten (KG) education. The Committee is expected to make its recommendations in 2015. Primary and secondary education is an important stage for students to accumulate knowledge, develop personal character and equip themselves for challenges ahead. We will enhance the support for secondary schools to provide life planning and career guidance services to help young people better understand themselves and plan for their future. At the same time, we will provide flexible and diversified study pathways with multiple entry and exit points, and promote life-long learning so as to equip young people in pursuing their dreams and strengthening their confidence in the future. We will provide more opportunities for young people to enroll on quality post-secondary education programmes, and further develop and promote vocational education to cater for their diversified interests.

4. Poverty alleviation is one of the priority policy areas of the current-term Government. The Commission on Poverty (CoP) will continue to consider policies and measures in its new term to prevent and alleviate poverty and social exclusion, as well as to promote social mobility. Education is an effective means to facilitate upward social movement. We will ensure that children and young people enjoy opportunities to quality education and training

irrespective of their background. We will also strengthen the support for persons with special needs, including students with special educational needs (SEN) and ethnic minority students. The aim is to remove the barriers that hold them back from realising their potential.

New Initiatives

A. Kindergarten Education

5. The Committee on Free Kindergarten Education set up in April 2013 has been actively conducting in-depth studies on various issues regarding KG education. The Committee has also gauged views from various stakeholders through extensive consultation and sharing sessions. Based on the principle of preserving the characteristics of great flexibility and diversity in kindergarten education, the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education has looked further into such issues as whether to offer basic subsidies to all eligible children who are taking half-day places and whether to adopt a mandatory salary scale for teachers. Moreover, the Committee will study ways to encourage kindergartens to provide more full-day services and consider providing needy families with subsidised whole-day and long whole-day services. For proper use of public resources, the Committee considers that the provision should only cover the basic expenses directly attributable to children's learning and school operation. It is expected that the Committee would submit its report to Education Bureau (EDB) in mid-2015. EDB would then examine the recommendations of the Committee for formulating the policy and specific measures as well as estimate the resources and necessary arrangements required for the implementation of free KG education. We endeavor to strike a reasonable balance amongst the Government's financial commitment, parents' choice and financial capacity as well as the sustainable and quality development of the KG sector.

B. Increasing the Ratio of Graduate Teacher Posts in Public Sector Primary Schools

6. Primary education is an important stage of basic education. Quality primary education helps students lay a solid foundation for knowledge building, extend their various generic skills and develop positive values. EDB had increased the ratio of graduate teacher posts in the teacher establishment of public sector primary schools from the original 35% to 45% in the 2008/09 school year and 50% in the 2009/10 school year respectively.

7. To attract more talents to join the teaching force of primary education so as to enhance the quality of teaching, from the 2015/16 school year, we

propose to further increase the ratio of graduate teacher posts in public sector primary schools by phases in three years, from the current 50% to 65% in the 2017/18 school year.

C. Enhancing Support for Students with Special Educational Needs

(i) Designated Teacher to Coordinate Support on Special Educational Needs in School

8. As mentioned in the Policy Address, the Government would invite the Community Care Fund (CCF) Task Force to consider enhancing the support for students with SEN in two aspects.

9. The first proposal is to provide a cash grant on a pilot basis for ordinary schools with relatively more students with SEN and financial needs to strengthen the teaching team of the schools so that a designated teacher can be deployed to coordinate matters relating to SEN support.

10. In Hong Kong, we adopt the Whole School Approach (WSA) to integrated education (IE), which is in line with the global development of IE. EDB implements IE in accordance with five basic principles, namely, early identification, early intervention, WSA, home-school co-operation and cross-sector collaboration. Under these basic principles, schools provide appropriate learning environment and teaching adaptations for their students in the light of their learning needs, and cultivate an inclusive school culture.

11. To help ordinary schools cater for their students with SEN, EDB has been providing schools with additional resources, professional support and teacher training. EDB has also been keeping in view the implementation of IE and seeking views from different stakeholders on an ongoing basis with a view to ameliorating the implementation of various measures and making improvements where necessary and feasible. To enhance the support for ordinary schools to cater for students with SEN, EDB has raised the ceiling of the Learning Support Grant (LSG) to \$1.5 million per school per year with effect from the 2013/14 school year. Starting from the 2014/15 school year, the grant rates have been increased by 30%. In subsequent years, the grant rates and the ceiling will be adjusted annually according to the change in the Composite Consumer Price Index. The estimated expenditure incurred on additional support and services under IE in the 2014/15 school year is about \$1,235 million, representing an increase of about 40% as compared to \$878 million in the 2009/10 school year.

12. Following discussion on the existing support for students with SEN in

the CCF Task Force and the Working Group of Special Needs Groups Task Force under CoP, it was suggested that pilot projects could be implemented with CCF to assess the effectiveness of some recommendations. We understand the challenges faced by ordinary primary and secondary schools, especially those admitting more students with SEN, in catering to the needs of these students. As such, we will invite CCF to consider providing a cash grant for ordinary schools admitting relatively more students with SEN and financial needs so that the schools could strengthen the teaching team and arrange a dedicated teacher with relevant knowledge and experience to coordinate matters relating to SEN support. Besides taking on certain teaching load, the coordinator should take a leading role in coordinating the planning, implementation and evaluation of IE policy and support strategies in the school. In addition, the coordinator will, having regard to the needs of students with SEN, devise individual education plan, curriculum and teaching adaptations, special examination and assessment arrangement; as well as plan and oversee the proper deployment of related resources in the school to render appropriate support for these students. Furthermore, the coordinator should plan training activities for the school teachers and promote home-school cooperation, etc. The implementation details of the pilot project will be subject to detailed discussion in the CCF Task Force and approval by CoP.

(ii) Increasing the Academic Expenses Grant for Post-secondary Students with Special Educational Needs and Financial Needs

13. The Policy Address also stated that the Government would invite the CCF Task Force to consider enhancing support to post-secondary students with SEN and financial needs.

14. At present, eligible students pursuing publicly-funded and locally-accredited self-financing full-time sub-degree and first degree programmes may apply for financial assistance through the Tertiary Student Finance Scheme or the Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students. Eligible students are provided with grants to cover tuition fees and academic expenses, and a low-interest loan to meet living expenses. Apart from those receiving Disability Allowance who may receive extra discretionary loan, there is no difference between the subsidy received by post-secondary SEN students and other post-secondary students.

15. Post-secondary SEN students generally face a greater challenge than other students in their studies. They need to purchase equipment to assist in their learning, thus incurring greater academic expenses than other students, placing an extra financial burden on them. To ensure their learning will not be affected due to financial difficulties, EDB will invite CCF to consider launching

an assistance programme to enhance the academic expenses grant for the post-secondary SEN students. The implementation details are subject to deliberations by the CCF Task Force and approval by CoP.

(iii) Pilot Projects on Career Exploration and Related Experiences for Students with Specific Learning Difficulties and Non-Chinese Speaking Students in Secondary Schools

16. Over a three-year period as from the 2015/16 school year, EDB plans to commission non-government organisations (NGOs), on a pilot basis, to organise work experience programmes for students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) and Non-Chinese Speaking (NCS) students in secondary schools to enhance their knowledge about different jobs and essential work attitude and skills. Participating students could explore different variety of jobs and their articulation pathways so as to get prepared for further studies or employment. To strengthen the support for students with SpLD and NCS students, EDB will consolidate and disseminate experiences of the pilot projects, expand the support network and provide feedback for the life planning development strategy.

(iv) Extra Travel Subsidy for Special School Students with Financial Needs

17. Starting from the 2015/16 school year, we will regularise the “CCF programme of Extra Travel Subsidy for Needy Special School Students” into Government’s regular assistance programme.

18. Unlike ordinary students, the majority of special school students are unable to travel to school by public transport due to physical limitations or safety concerns. Consequently, they need to take rehabilitation buses or other non-public modes of transport. Seating capacity for rehabilitation buses is limited and they do not serve only students. There are restrictions on service flexibility and some categories of SEN students (including the mildly and moderately intellectually disabled students and students with hearing impairment) are not eligible for rehabilitation buses. Thus, many SEN students need to take non-public modes of transport to travel between home and school, incurring higher transport fees. The current Student Travel Subsidy Scheme provides travel subsidies for the financially needy students and the subsidy amount is calculated on the basis of the fee level of public transport. The annual transport expenses incurred by SEN students to travel between home and school are often higher than the travel subsidy they receive.

19. In view of the above, starting from the 2013/14 school year, the CCF

launched a pilot scheme to provide an extra 50% travel subsidy for SEN students studying in special schools, subsidising their school travels. The beneficiaries are primary 1 to secondary 6 special school students who receive full-grant or half-grant assistance from the Student Travel Subsidy Scheme, including the physically handicapped, visually impaired, hearing impaired, mildly, moderately and severally intellectually disabled, but do not include students of hospital schools or schools for social development.

D. Enriching Science, Technology and Mathematics Education

20. We are actively strengthening the Science, Technology and Mathematics Education to nurture diversified talents in the science and technology fields with a view to enhancing the international competitiveness of Hong Kong. In respect of curriculum development, we are renewing and enriching the curricula of the Key Learning Areas (KLAs) of Science, Technology and Mathematics Education and the primary General Studies curriculum, and also strengthening the pedagogical approaches to integrative learning and application skills. These measures aim to promote students' interest in the subjects and strengthen their knowledge foundation of relevant disciplines, so as to enable them to connect knowledge of the subjects, and develop their creativity and problem-solving skills.

21. EDB is planning to organise a cross-disciplinary symposium with seminars on various themes for teachers of Science, Technology and Mathematics Education KLAs and those of primary General Studies. It will enable teachers to understand how to promote Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education and collaborate among themselves to strengthen the integrative learning and application skills of students. We will also enhance teacher training and arrange professional exchange sessions for schools with good practices in learning and teaching to share their experience, to enhance teachers' professional capacity and to build up learning communities within and across schools to benefit student learning.

22. Regarding student activities, EDB will organise an integrative STEM Education Fair to promote a culture of cross-disciplinary learning in primary and secondary schools. The event aims to enhance students' interest and creativity in STEM, and to strengthen their integrative learning and application skills, so as to pave the way for their future multiple pathways in related areas. In addition, we will continue to strengthen the collaboration among schools, tertiary institutions, professional bodies and the industries concerned so as to enhance stakeholders' understanding of the development of STEM. We will also regularly review STEM education and continuously refine its implementation strategies.

E. Renewing the Chinese History and World History Curricula

23. EDB will also renew the content of Chinese History and World History curricula, enliven classroom learning and teaching, and provide rich learning experiences so as to enhance students' interest in and understanding of Chinese history and culture, and to broaden their global outlook. Through providing professional development programmes for teachers, we will gradually enhance schools' curriculum leadership in Chinese history and world history education, and refresh teachers' disciplinary knowledge as well as pedagogy. Learning activities such as visiting historic sites and museums etc. will be organised at the same time to enhance the quality and learning effectiveness of the two history subjects.

24. The Curriculum Development Council set up an ad hoc Committee in May 2014 to review the junior secondary curricula of the two Chinese History and History subjects. Its members include academics in the tertiary sector, practising teachers and professionals of relevant subjects, and personnel from the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority and EDB. It is expected that the committee will come up with reform proposals in the middle of 2015, to be followed by consultations with stakeholders.

F. Strengthening the Implementation of Various Mainland Exchange Programmes

25. In view of the rapid developments of our country, we recommend to subsidise every student to join at least one Mainland exchange programme during each of their primary and secondary school stage, so that they could reinforce and consolidate the knowledge acquired in classrooms and gain first-hand experience of our country's development in different areas. Building on the experience of implementing various Mainland exchange programmes, we will further collaborate with schools, government departments concerned and NGOs, and adopt a variety of strategies to complement the curricula and the learning elements in different areas and align with their articulation and employment prospects as well as major cultural and economic events of our country, in order to provide more opportunities for students to pursue life-wide learning and exchanges.

G. Promoting Interflow between Sister Schools in Hong Kong and the Mainland

26. Since 2004, about 300 primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong have formed a total of 441 pairs of sister schools with their counterparts in

different Mainland provinces and cities through the Sister School Scheme implemented by EDB. Sister schools, having regard to their own development planning and objectives, have accumulated substantial experiences in organising exchange activities including school visit, lesson observation and evaluation, lesson demonstration, variety show, cultural study etc. at various levels (including student, parent, teacher, principal and school management).

27. Sister schools have served as a platform and network for professional interflow and cooperation between local and Mainland schools. To further promote sister school exchanges between Hong Kong and the Mainland, we propose, through a three-year pilot scheme launched from the 2015/16 school year, to provide an annual grant of \$120,000 to each public sector or Direct Subsidy Scheme school having formed sister school(s) with the Mainland to support the multi-facet development of sister school activities. The number of Hong Kong-Mainland primary and secondary sister schools is expected to increase progressively to about 600 in three years starting from the 2015/16 school year. We will collect and disseminate good practices to enhance the breadth and depth of co-operation between sister schools and promote exchanges in areas such as school management, lesson demonstration, lesson evaluation and video conferencing etc. with a view to enhancing experience sharing and teaching effectiveness.

H. Promoting Business-School Partnership Programme to Enhance Life Planning

28. Starting from the 2014/15 school year, EDB has provided each public sector school operating classes at senior secondary levels with a recurrent cash grant at about \$500,000 per annum with a view to strengthening the provision of life planning education and career guidance services. Apart from issuing the “Guide on Life Planning Education and Career Guidance for Secondary Schools” for schools and teachers, EDB also provides professional support, including experience sharing by selected Professional Development Schools; more training places for teachers; collaboration with the business sector, tertiary institutions and Qualifications Framework (QF) Secretariat in organising activities for principals, teachers and parents; enhancement of the Business-School Partnership Programme (BSPP) to provide more opportunities for career-related experience for students; advice on life planning education through school visits and revamping the career guidance website to provide teachers, students and parents with more information on life planning.

29. Since 2005, EDB’s BSPP has been in collaboration with over 170 business entities/organisations in providing students with knowledge of different jobs, and helping them develop positive work attitude and values via talks,

workshops, workplace visits and career exploration activities to facilitate their life planning.

30. We will strengthen partnership between schools and business organisations in the next three years with a view to enhancing students' understanding of different trades and preparing them for employment in the future through activities such as mentorship, career exploration and business-school pairing programmes, etc. To facilitate life planning for students, we will review and consolidate key elements of effective practices to facilitate the setting up of a platform to showcase exemplars of business-school partnership, thereby attracting participation of more schools and businesses.

I. Strengthening Support for the Financially Needy Students

31. The Policy Address stated the Government would invite the CCF Task Force to consider the provision of a one-off special subsidy for primary and secondary students on full-grant under the School Textbook Assistance Scheme (STAS). As stated by the Chief Executive in the 2014 Policy Address, the Government will launch the Low-income Working Family Allowance (LIFA). In view of the fact that LIFA will only be implemented in 2016, we will invite the CCF Task Force to consider the provision of a one-off special subsidy for primary and secondary students on full-grant under STAS in the 2015/16 school year through the existing mechanism of the Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA), so as to provide timely assistance to these families. It is estimated that over 130 000 primary and secondary students on full-grant will benefit. The CoP and CCF Task Force will consider and deliberate the details.

32. For the post-secondary sector, the Government has implemented different subsidy schemes to cater for students with financial needs. We observe that for the self-financing post-secondary sector, there has been rapid development of community colleges established under the University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions, and individual colleges have accumulated substantial financial surplus. We would request each and every college to seriously review its financial situation and consider different means to benefit students where possible, such as lowering tuition fees, offering scholarship or bursaries for students with financial needs, etc.

On-going Initiatives

A. Kindergarten Education

33. Last year, the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education recommended some short-term measures to provide the KG sector and parents

with immediate support. The short-term measures included increasing the voucher subsidy under the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme (PEVS) in the 2014/15 and 2015/16 school years (by \$2,500 per year) and lifting the fee remission ceilings under the KG and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme from the weighted average school fees to 75th percentile of the school fees of KGs joining the PEVS, so as to provide further financial support to children from needy families. EDB has put in place the respective measures. In the 2014/15 school year, the voucher subsidy has been increased to \$20,010 per student per annum (pspa). The fee thresholds for half-day (HD) and whole-day (WD) KG classes under the PEVS have also been adjusted to \$30,020 and \$60,040 pspa respectively in accordance with the established mechanism¹. The fee remission ceilings for HD and WD KG classes are set at \$26,500 and \$40,500 pspa respectively. Since the increase in the voucher subsidy could offset the increase in school fees, the short-term measures not only allow KGs to suitably adjust their school fees so that they could have more resources to alleviate the pressure in meeting the increasing operating costs, but also help to maintain the affordability of KG education for parents. In the 2014/15 school year, after redemption of voucher, the average actual amount of school fees paid by parents for a HD and a WD KG place is \$3,590 and \$17,590 respectively. As compared with the situation in the 2013/14 school year, the actual amount of school fees for a HD place paid by parents has decreased by 5.2% and the rate of increase of school fees for a WD place decreased by around 40%.

34. In the 2015/16 school year, we will further increase the voucher subsidy to \$22,510 pspa in accordance with the recommendation. The fee threshold for HD and WD KG places will also be adjusted to \$33,770 and \$67,540 respectively.

B. Information Technology in Education

35. EDB released the consultation document on the Fourth Strategy on Information Technology in Education (ITE4) in mid-2014 for a two month public consultation. The major initiative is the phased provision of wireless network services in all public sector schools to facilitate the use of mobile computing devices for e-learning. There is general support from the education sector and other stakeholders on the goal, direction and proposed actions under ITE4. We also obtained agreement from the Panel on Education on 9 June 2014 for submission of the funding proposal at \$105 million to the Legislative Council Finance Committee (FC) for approval. We have already revised the proposed actions and implementation details under the ITE4 in accordance with the consultation outcomes, and have made all necessary preparation for

¹ According to the prevailing mechanism, the fee threshold for HD KG classes is set at 1.5 times of the voucher subsidy. As for WD KG classes, the fee threshold is set at two times that for HD classes.

implementation of various measures as scheduled upon funding approval is given by FC.

C. Pilot Project on Strengthening Schools' Administration Management

36. The Pilot Project on Strengthening Schools' Administration Management aims at assisting schools to examine their current operation and practices in order to improve or streamline the relevant structures and procedures for strengthening school administration management. Up to the current school year, 96 public sector schools (including government and aided schools) have participated in the pilot project. With a view to consolidating more good practices and experiences, including the synergy and leverage effects generated among participating schools under the lead of school sponsoring bodies, the pilot project will be extended to a new batch of public sector schools in the 2015/16 school year.

D. Post-secondary Education

37. In the 2014 Policy Address, the Chief Executive announced a series of initiatives in a bid to provide school leavers with broader and more diversified articulation pathways both in and outside Hong Kong.

(i) Increasing the Number of Subsidised Senior Year Undergraduate Intake Places

38. We will progressively increase the number of UGC-funded senior year undergraduate intake places by 1 000 places, i.e. to 5 000 per annum, starting from the 2015/16 academic year and the triennium that follows. In the 2015/16 academic year, there will be an increase of 265 places. The additional intake places will provide meritorious sub-degree graduates with more opportunities for articulation to the last two years of a publicly-funded undergraduate programme. The initiative will also help foster a flexible, diversified and multiple-entry multiple-exit education framework with greater inter-flow between the self-financing and publicly-funded sectors, and between the sub-degree and degree sectors.

(ii) Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors

39. With the approval of FC in July 2014 for a commitment of some \$960 million, the Government will, starting from the 2015/16 academic year, introduce the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors (SSSDP) to subsidise up to 1 000 students per cohort to pursue designated full-time locally-accredited self-financing undergraduate programmes in

selected disciplines to nurture talents to meet Hong Kong's social and economic needs. In consultation with other bureaux, selected disciplines for the first cohort of students to be admitted in the 2015/16 academic year include health care, architecture and engineering, testing and certification, creative industry, logistics, and tourism and hospitality, involving 940 subsidised places of 13 programmes offered by five post-secondary institutions. SSSDP will be implemented on a pilot basis for three cohorts of students, and then subject to a review on its effectiveness.

(iii) Hong Kong Scholarship for Excellence Scheme

40. FC approved a funding of about \$350 million in July 2014 for implementing the Hong Kong Scholarship for Excellence Scheme (HKSES) to support three cohorts of outstanding local students, with initially up to 100 students per cohort, to pursue studies in world renowned universities outside Hong Kong starting from the 2015/16 academic year. All awardees will receive a scholarship to cover their tuition fees, subject to a ceiling of \$250,000 pspa, whichever is lower. Financially needy students may also apply for a means-tested bursary, subject to a ceiling of \$200,000 pspa.

41. The HKSES was launched on 25 November 2014. Eligible Hong Kong students who intend to pursue undergraduate or postgraduate studies in world renowned universities outside Hong Kong starting from the 2015/16 academic year are invited to submit application on or before 31 January 2015. Selection will take a three-stage process - preliminary screening (from February to April 2015), shortlisting (from April to May 2015) and interview (from May to August 2015). Results will be announced and disbursement of the scholarship and bursary will be arranged in August 2015.

(iv) Mainland University Study Subsidy Scheme

42. FC approved a funding of about \$105 million in July 2014 for implementing the Mainland University Study Subsidy Scheme (MUSSS) to support needy Hong Kong students pursuing undergraduate studies in the Mainland under the Scheme for Admission of Hong Kong Students to Mainland Higher Education Institutions. The MUSSS will benefit three cohorts of students starting from the 2014/15 academic year and then its effectiveness will be reviewed. The MUSSS is not subject to any quota. Students who pass a means test will receive either a full-rate subsidy of \$15,000 or half-rate subsidy of \$7,500 per student per year, depending on their needs.

43. The Government launched the MUSSS on 31 July 2014. By the closing of the application period for the 2014/15 academic year, 448

applications were received. Of them, as at end 2014, 263 applicants were verified with the concerned Mainland institutions to have enrolled in the first year of undergraduate studies in the institutions and passed the means test conducted by the SFAA, and hence eligible to receive the subsidy under the MUSSS. The total amount of subsidy to be granted in the 2014/15 academic year is over HK\$3 million.

E. Vocational Education

44. Vocational education plays a pivotal role in broadening the learning opportunities for school leavers and in-service personnel as well as nurturing the requisite human capital in support of Hong Kong. In the 2014 Policy Address, the Chief Executive announced a series of measures to strengthen vocational education and support its development alongside academic education.

(i) Pilot Training and Support Scheme

45. With the approval of FC in July 2014 for a commitment of \$144 million, the Vocational Training Council (VTC) has started to implement the Pilot Training and Support Scheme which aims to integrate structured apprenticeship training programmes and clear career progression pathways to attract and retain talent for specific industries with a keen demand for labour. Under the Pilot Training and Support Scheme, apprenticeship training for targeted industries will be provided to students alongside a guaranteed level of salary and incentive allowance. The electrical and mechanical trades of the construction industry, printing industry, clock and watch industry and automobile industry have joined the Pilot Training and Support Scheme so far. The Scheme will benefit 2 000 students in total.

(ii) Industrial Attachment

46. Starting from the 2014/15 academic year, the Government has allocated recurrent funding of about \$18 million to VTC to provide industrial attachment opportunities for about 9 000 students mainly studying Higher Diploma programmes and certain Diploma in Vocational Education programmes. Industrial attachment, which provides a real-life organisational context for students to develop specific or generic skills, could effectively enhance students' employability and allow them to better adapt to work environment after graduation.

(iii) Enhancing the Image of Vocational Education

47. The setting up of the Task Force on Promotion of Vocational Education

aims to step up efforts in promoting vocational education in Hong Kong, given the entrenched bias among some towards traditional academic pursuits and the pivotal role played by vocational education in integrating education and employment in support of Hong Kong's development. The Task Force on Promotion of Vocational Education was set up in June 2014 with view to mapping out a strategy to promote vocational education and raise the public awareness and recognition towards vocational education. Its members are drawn from a mix of expertise and backgrounds, including those from the vocational education and training sector, various businesses and industries, as well as those possessing good knowledge of education, parent education, youth and public relations. The Task Force on Promotion of Vocational Education will submit a report to the Secretary for Education by mid-2015.

48. VTC has been invited to draw up a strategic development plan for its campuses to foster synergy and provide state-of-the-art facilities pivotal to enhancing the image and quality of vocational education. The Government will consider the strategic campus development plan to be submitted by VTC in due course.

F. Qualifications Framework

49. The Qualifications Framework (QF) Fund of \$1 billion was established on 1 September 2014 to provide a steady source of income to support the sustainable development and implementation of QF. The QF Fund will further encourage relevant stakeholders to participate in QF. Relevant details will be reported to the Panel on Manpower of the Legislative Council.

G. Enhancing Support for Ethnic Minority Students in Learning Chinese Language

50. To help NCS students (notably the ethnic minority students) learn Chinese, we have put in place the implementation of the "Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework" (Learning Framework) in primary and secondary schools in the 2014/15 school year with a view to facilitating NCS students to bridge over to mainstream Chinese Language classes. In brief, all schools (public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools offering the local curriculum) admitting 10 or more NCS students have devised their school plan including the use of the enhanced additional funding provided since the 2014/15 school year. They will make reference to the learning progress at different learning stages as described under the Learning Framework to adjust the learning targets and adopt appropriate teaching strategies, including different intensive teaching and learning modes like pull-out teaching, split-class / group learning, after-school consolidation, etc., to help their NCS students

overcome the difficulties in learning Chinese as a second language, and create an inclusive learning environment in school. Schools admitting a handful of NCS students (i.e. fewer than 10) will continue to benefit their NCS students with provision of an immersed Chinese language environment. These schools may also apply for additional funding on a need basis to provide after-school support to help their NCS students consolidate the Chinese learning in class. Besides, Applied Learning Chinese Course (for NCS students) has been implemented at the senior secondary level in phases from the 2014/15 school year to provide NCS students with an additional channel to acquire an alternative recognised qualification, which would enhance the students' further studies opportunities and employability.

51. We will continue to facilitate schools to implement the Learning Framework by refining the supporting teaching and learning resources. We will also enhance Chinese Language teachers' professional capability in teaching NCS students through diversified modes of professional development programmes (including the Professional Enhancement Grant Scheme under the Language Fund (LF), different thematic seminars, workshops, etc.) and school-based professional support services provided (including on-site support by EDB, Professional Development Schools Scheme, the University-School Support Programmes, School Support Partners (Seconded Teacher), etc.). In parallel, we will continue to encourage NCS parents to send their children to KGs offering a local curriculum and enhance the school-based support services for KGs admitting NCS children for consolidation and sharing of experiences.

52. We have, starting from the 2014/15 school year, allocated \$200 million per year to enhance the support for NCS students to facilitate their effective learning of Chinese. A dedicated team has been set up in EDB to step up the monitoring of the enhanced funding support for schools. We have also finalised the research framework to evaluate the effectiveness of various support measures for NCS students to ensure the quality of the support measures and refine individual measures.

53. In addition, we will continue to provide funding from LF for NGOs to offer district-based projects/ programmes with a view to motivating NCS students aged between three and nine to learn Chinese through fun activities.

54. We are exploring to develop Vocational Chinese Language courses with funding from LF. These courses will be recognised under QF for NCS school leavers to enhance their employability.

H. Continuing Support for Financially Needy Students

55. The Government will continue to implement various student financial assistance programmes to ensure that no student in Hong Kong will be denied access to education due to a lack of means. Starting from the 2014/15 school year, the CCF has implemented three-year pilot schemes to provide hostel subsidy of a maximum of \$8,000 each year for needy undergraduate students staying in hostels, and to increase the academic expenses grant for students pursuing eligible self-financing post-secondary programmes (an increase from the current \$4,940 per year to \$6,960 per year, in addition to a tuition fee grant of a maximum of \$71,580). Moreover, starting from the 2014/15 school year, EDB has incorporated three CCF programmes into the Government's regular assistance programme. These include the provision of free lunch at schools for primary students receiving full grant assistance, enhancement of the flat-rate grant under STAS and enhancement of the financial assistance for needy students pursuing eligible programmes below sub-degree level. We will continue to support students in need in participating in after-school activities including after-school support on learning through schools and NGOs. In addition, starting from the 2014/15 academic year, we will provide a subsidy of up to \$15,000 for needy students pursuing full-time locally-accredited undergraduate degree or sub-degree programmes and receiving student financial assistance as an incentive for them to participate in exchange programmes outside Hong Kong.

Education Bureau
15 January 2015