Hong Kong Policy Address 2011-12 – Education Related Initiatives

The Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR Government delivered the 2011-12 Policy Address entitled “From Strength to Strength” on 13 October 2011. In this last policy address of his tenure, Chief Executive Donald Tsang put the focus squarely on pressing livelihood issues such as housing, wage disparity and an aging population.

In connection with education, he also announced a range of initiatives to help nurture local talent and promote social mobility, which included the following new and ongoing initiatives that may interest Australian education stakeholders.

New Initiatives include:

1. Building on the success of the Chinese Cuisine Training Institute, the HK SAR Government proposes to set up an International Cuisine College under the Vocational Training Council (VTC). The college will provide training for people aspiring to become professional chefs proficient in international cuisines. It will attract outstanding members of the culinary profession from around the world, and promote the development of related sectors, such as tourism, catering, retail and wine trading. It is expected to be established in 2014.

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

3. To promote the research and innovation capabilities of tertiary institutions, the Chief Executive proposes injecting HK$5 billion into the Research Endowment Fund. Of which, HK$3 billion would be used to provide research funding for self-financing tertiary institutions on a competitive basis.

For the remaining HK$2 billion, the investment income of the sum will replace the recurrent provision of HK$100 million to the Research Grants Council to provide stable research funding for UGC-funded institutions.

4. To internationalise and diversify the higher education sector, the Government will attract more overseas students to Hong Kong, and:

   a) extend student exchange programmes to cover the sub-degree level
   b) provide more hostel places through active collaboration with local institutions
   c) support the construction of college premises by post-secondary institutions through granting land and loans
   d) The Queen's Hill site is expected to be put up for application in 2012
   e) a HK$2.5 billion Self-financing Post-secondary Education Fund will be launched to provide scholarships and enhance the quality of teaching and learning
   f) extend the ambit of the Start-up Loan Scheme to support the development of student hostels by self-financing degree awarding institutions. The total commitment of the Scheme will be increased by HK$2 billion.
5. An additional HK$200 million to increase the number of degree places in medicine, nursing and other allied health professions.

6. With four international schools coming on stream, the Government estimates that some 5 000 additional international school places will be provided in the next few years. It will continue to support the expansion of individual international schools or allocate suitable vacant school premises to them for short-term use.

Other relevant initiatives:

1. Enhance support for the Hong Kong Design Centre and designate 2012 as "Hong Kong Design Year".

2. The Education Bureau (EDB) will extend the School-based Educational Psychology Service, giving secondary and primary schools greater support to help students with dyslexia and other special educational needs. The service, now covering 55% of schools, will be extended progressively to cover all public sector secondary and primary schools by the 2016-17 school year.

3. Develop e-learning resources - an EDB task force set up in mid-2011 will review teaching and learning materials and explore ways to better utilise the advantages of e-learning and improve the provision of textbooks.

4. In response to community concerns about interest rate and repayment arrangements for loans to post-secondary students, the HK SAR Government has commenced a review of non-means-tested loan schemes. The review covers the scope of eligible programmes, loan amounts, interest rates and repayment arrangements under the schemes, as well as measures to reduce the default rate.

5. Capitalise on the opportunities presented by the Chinese Government’s National 12th Five-Year Plan in science and technology collaboration with the Mainland. Providing financial assistance to Partner State Key Laboratories in Hong Kong to enhance their research capability.

6. Implement the Three-Year Action Plan under the "Shenzhen-Hong Kong Innovation Circle" and promoting closer co-operation between Hong Kong and Shenzhen in innovation and technology.

7. Public expenditure on infrastructure will remain high over the next few years. The construction output of the private sector will also increase as a result of additional land supply. This will present opportunities for the construction industry but will also pose a challenge to its manpower. Last year, the HKSAR Government earmarked HK$100 million for the Construction Industry Council to take forward initiatives such as upgrading the skills of workers through training and trade tests, and attracting more people to join the industry through public education. These efforts have started to deliver results. If necessary, it will allocate more resources to strengthen such training.

8. Continue to work closely with the arts sector to strengthen the cultural software, including arts programme development, audience building, arts education and manpower training, to support the development of the West Kowloon Cultural District\(^1\) (WKCD).

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\(^1\) Mr Michael Lynch, an Australian who was previously the Chief Executive of Sydney Opera House and General Manager of Australia Council, is now the Chief Executive Officer of West Kowloon Cultural District
9. Promote the development of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong by collaborating with experts from the Mainland, regional and international arena in the research and development of standards for 200 Chinese herbal medicines.

10. Progress the establishment of an education centre to step up the promotion of water conservation through the provision of education resources to the community.

On-going Initiatives include:

1. Continuing to implement small class teaching in public sector primary schools starting from Primary 1 in the 2009-10 school year.

2. Continuing to implement measures to enhance the learning and teaching of English in primary schools including attracting talent to the teaching profession, enhancing the professionalism of serving teachers, and providing additional resources for primary schools to develop school-based enhancement measures and to enrich the English language environment in schools.

3. Continuing to implement the recommendations made by the Working Group on Textbooks and E-learning Resources Development, including debundling the pricing of textbooks and teaching materials, implementing the pilot scheme on E-learning in schools launched in April 2011, and developing the online depository of curriculum-based learning and teaching resources, to enhance learning and teaching effectiveness.

4. Continuing to implement the New Academic Structure (NAS) through professional capacity building and supporting secondary schools and tertiary institutions, as well as to conduct evaluation studies on NAS to collect feedback from different stakeholders and inform future planning.

5. Phased implementation of the Qualifications Framework through the formation of industry training advisory committees to develop competency-based qualifications for individual industries, and developing a quality assurance mechanism to underpin the Qualifications Framework.

6. Continuing to implement measures to develop Hong Kong as a regional education hub to attract and retain non-local students. These include awarding government scholarships to outstanding students from the HKSAR Government Scholarship Fund, relaxing employment and immigration restrictions for non-local students, and increasing promotion in the region.

7. Continuing to explore the possibility of allowing more Mainland students to study in Hong Kong.

8. Promoting overseas exchange programmes to nurture students’ global perspective and encouraging their participation in international events and activities.

9. Continuing to administer the Land Grant Scheme for the allocation of earmarked sites to support the development of self-financing degree programmes by interested sponsoring bodies.

Authority (WKCD). WKCD is a project to boost cultural and entertainment establishments in Hong Kong.
10. Reviewing the Post-Secondary Colleges Ordinance to provide a legal framework to facilitate the development of self-financing post-secondary education institutions with potential and capabilities.

11. The Government set up an HK$18 billion Research Endowment Fund in 2009 as a long-term commitment to promoting academic research in tertiary institutions. With the support of the fund, it has introduced the Theme-based Research Scheme to finance research projects of strategic importance to the long-term development of Hong Kong.

12. Increasing publicly-funded first-year-first-degree places to 15,000 for each cohort and doubling progressively senior year intake places to 4,000 each year, from the 2012-13 academic year.

13. Participating in the work of the Standing Committee on Legal Education and Training to keep under review and make recommendations on the system and provision of legal education and training in Hong Kong, including the provision of vocational training of prospective legal practitioners.

For full version of the Policy Address 2011-12 and its agenda, please visit the following website: http://www.policyaddress.gov.hk/11-12/eng/index.html