



## Education

In 2009-10 the approved public spending on education amounted to \$61.7 billion, representing 19.3 per cent of the total public expenditure.

The Government has extended free education in public sector schools from nine years to 12 years as from the 2008/09 school year. In addition, full subvention has been provided for full-time courses run by the Vocational Training Council (VTC) for Secondary 3 school leavers, giving senior secondary students an alternative free avenue to mainstream education.

There are three main types of local schools – government schools which are operated by the Government; aided schools which are fully subvented by the Government but run by voluntary bodies; and private schools, some of which receive financial assistance from the Government. Government and aided schools deliver a curriculum recommended by the Government. They offer free primary and secondary education.

Besides, there are 15 schools operated by the English Schools Foundation offering education to English-speaking children. There are also some international schools which offer non-local curricula and serve primarily non-Chinese speaking students and foreign nationals.

**Kindergartens:** Kindergarten education is offered to children in the 3-5 age group in private kindergartens which are run by voluntary organisations or private bodies. These kindergartens are registered with, and supervised by the Education Bureau (EDB). In September 2008, 137 630 pupils were enrolled in 964 kindergartens.

Existing government assistance to kindergartens includes rent, rates and government rent reimbursement to non-profit-making kindergartens, allocating purpose-built kindergarten premises in public housing estates, the remission of fees to needy parents through the Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme and provision of training programmes for teachers and principals. The Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme, introduced in the 2007/08 school year, provides direct fee subsidy for parents to meet towards schools fees for pre-primary education of their children and financial support for kindergarten teachers' professional upgrading.

In view of the curriculum reform and changes in learning and teaching culture, the EDB has introduced the revised 'Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum' in September 2007, providing the basic principles and direction for pre-school educators to develop their school-based programmes.

**Primary Education:** Primary schooling starts at the age of around six and there is 6 years of schooling at the primary level. There are three modes of operation in the primary schools, namely AM, PM and whole-day. Under the encouragement of the Government, most primary schools are adopting whole-day operation. All eligible children are,

on application, allocated Primary 1 places in government and aided primary schools through the Primary One Admission System. The system consists of the Discretionary Places (DP) stage and the Central Allocation (CA) stage. At the DP stage, parents can apply to only one government or aided primary school of their preference, and admission is based on EDB's prescribed criteria. At the CA stage, P1 places are centrally allocated by EDB according to school net, parents' choice of schools, and random number. Chinese is the language of instruction in most schools with English taught as a second language.

In September 2008, 310 400 children were enrolled in 490 government and aided primary schools.

Since the curriculum reform at the basic education level in the 2001/02 school year, there has been enhanced learning and teaching in classrooms. Students are enjoying a wide range of learning activities and there is evidence to show improvement in students' overall learning performance.

**Secondary Education:** On completion of primary education, pupils are allocated subsidised Secondary 1 places through participating in the Secondary School Places Allocation System. The system consists of the Discretionary Places (DP) stage and the Central Allocation (CA) stage. At the DP stage, secondary schools may admit students in accordance with their admission criteria. At the CA stage, S1 places are allocated according to individual student's allocation band, parental choice of schools and random number.

The Secondary Four Placement Mechanism is in place to arrange subvented Secondary 4 places to a small number of Secondary 3 students who cannot obtain Secondary 4 places in their own schools. The academic performance of students in the school and parental choices form the basis for placement. Students may also choose to further their studies in full-time courses offered by the VTC and the Construction Industry Council Training Academy.

Currently, most secondary schools offer three-year junior secondary and two-year senior secondary courses leading to the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), to be followed by a two-year sixth-form course leading to the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE) for admission to tertiary institutions.

In September 2008, 402 government and aided secondary schools had a total enrolment of 401 200.

The implementation of a three-year senior secondary academic structure will commence at Secondary 4 in September 2009. The senior secondary curriculum which is of a 3-year duration will be introduced at Secondary 4 leading to the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE). The HKDSE will replace the present Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) and Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination

(HKALE). Under the new system, all students will be benefited from 6 years of secondary education (i.e. 3 years of junior secondary and 3 years of senior secondary education). This flexible, coherent and diversified senior secondary curriculum as proposed by the EDB aims at catering for students' varied interests, needs and abilities. The first cohort of students under the new senior secondary education will be graduated in 2012.

**Special Education:** In the 2008/09 school year, there are 60 special schools, including a hospital school (operating classes at 18 hospitals), providing places for children with visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical disability, maladjustment and intellectual disability. These special schools are subvented by the Government and operated by non-governmental organisations involved in this work. Some are serving as resource centers to support ordinary schools admitting students with special educational needs.

The EDB currently runs two special education services centres to coordinate and provide appropriate services for children with special educational needs. Additional resources and professional support are provided for public sector primary and secondary schools to support students with special educational needs. Schools are required to deploy the resources flexibly and adopt a Whole School Approach to provide appropriate school-based support services for these students. To build up teachers' professional capacity in catering for students with special educational needs, a 5-year Teacher Professional Development Framework on Integrated Education has been put in place starting from the 2007/08 school year.

With the implementation of the New Senior Secondary Structure starting from the 2009/10 school year, students with intellectual disabilities will be given 12 years of education. Under the principle of "one curriculum framework for all", the curriculum content and learning outcomes will be adapted and revised to enrich students' learning experiences with due considerations on their learning needs.

**Language Policy:** To facilitate effective learning, the Government has been promoting the use of the mother tongue (Chinese, in the context of Hong Kong) as the principal medium of instruction for local schools. With both Chinese and English as the official languages in Hong Kong, the Government also invests heavily in training students to be biliterate (Chinese and English) and trilingual (Cantonese, Putonghua and English). The Government will fine-tune the medium of instruction arrangements for secondary schools with effect from the 2010/11 school year progressively to provide students with more opportunities to get exposed to and use English with a view to enhancing their English proficiency.

**Information Technology (IT) in Education:** The Government launched the first and second IT in Education Strategies in 1998 and 2004 respectively, focusing on the enhancement of IT infrastructure and empowering learning and teaching with IT.

To meet the changing needs of schools, teachers and students as their capacity of using IT in learning and teaching develops, the third IT in education strategy was launched in 2008. The new strategy, entitled "Right Technology at the Right Time for the Right Task", aims to reduce the burden on teachers in integrating IT into their core activities from lesson planning to assessment of students, continue to sharpen teachers' IT pedagogical skills, enhance students' information literacy, generate a favourable IT environment at the school level, and equip parents with the skills to guide their children to use IT to learn at home.

**Professional Teacher Preparation:** The Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd), under the aegis of the

University Grants Committee (UGC), aims at upgrading the quality of the teacher education. It offers a range of sub-degree, degree and postgraduate programmes for pre-service and in-service teachers. In the 2008/09 school year, there were about 6 700 full-time and part-time students enrolling on UGC-funded programmes offered by HKIEd.

The Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU), the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), and the University of Hong Kong (HKU) also offer degree and postgraduate programmes for pre-service and in-service teachers. The Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) offers in-service Bachelor of Education (Honours) degree programmes, and in-service and pre-service Postgraduate Diploma in Education programmes, for primary and secondary school teachers.

To cater to the community's demand, these institutes also offer short courses for in-service education practitioners from time to time upon requests from the EDB.

**Post-secondary Education:** In the 2008/09 academic year, there are 21 institutions offering self-financing locally accredited sub-degree, degree and top-up degree programmes providing more than 31 000 student places.

The VTC, the City University of Hong Kong (CityU), the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU), Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA) and HKIEd also offer publicly-funded sub-degree programmes, providing some 8 300 student places in the 2008/09 academic year.

**Higher Education:** Hong Kong has 12 degree-awarding higher education institutions, eight of which are funded through the UGC. Seven of the eight are universities and the remaining one is a teacher training institution. Four other degree-awarding tertiary institutions are not funded by the UGC. They are the publicly-funded HKAPA, the self-financing OUHK, Hong Kong Shue Yan University (HKSJU) and Chu Hai College of Higher Education.

The eight UGC-funded institutions are CityU, HKBU, Lingnan University, CUHK, HKIEd, PolyU, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) and HKU. In the 2008/09 academic year, a total of 60 512 full-time students and 4 506 part-time students enroll on publicly-funded undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

The OUHK offers degree, non-degree and postgraduate programmes principally through open access and distance education to working adults aged 17 and above. In the 2008/09 academic year, over 17 000 students – including about 3 500 students enrol on its face-to-face programmes.

The HKAPA offers academic programmes from Diploma to Master Degree level in Dance, Drama, Film and Television, Music, Theatre and Entertainment Arts as well as Chinese Traditional Theatre. Every year, the Academy enrolls about 750 students for its full time programmes and around 760 students for the junior programmes.

**Adult Education:** The EDB implements the Financial Assistance Scheme for Designated Evening Adult Education Courses to provide financial assistance for adult learners attending evening secondary courses at designated centres. Adult education courses are also provided by the VTC, the various universities and private institutes.

**Education for Newly Arrived Children (NAC):** The EDB provides school placement service to the newly-arrived children, including newly arrived children from the Mainland, returnee children, and newly arrived non-Chinese speaking children. Students may attend a six-month full-time Initiation Programme that helps them integrate into the community and education system before their admission to the public sector schools. For those

newly arrived students who enter public sector schools direct, EDB provides schools with a School-based Support Scheme Grant for the students concerned. EDB also provides subsidies for non-governmental organisations to run a 60-hour Induction Programme which covers personal development, social adaptation as well as basic learning skills for these students.

**Education for Non-Chinese Speaking (NCS) Children:**

The Government has put in place various support measures to enhance the learning and teaching of NCS students which include inter alia, providing onsite focused support and special grant to 16 primary and 6 secondary schools designated in the 2008/09 school year, providing a supplementary guide to the Chinese Language curriculum alongside a series of curriculum resources, operating Summer Bridging Programme and Chinese Language Learning Support Centres. To address the aspirations for higher education of those NCS students studying in the local schools and who are prepared to learn the Chinese Language for better integration into the wider community, the UGC-funded institutions have taken a significant step and have, starting from the admission in 2008, considered the alternative Chinese Language qualification(s) (such as those under the General Certificate of Secondary Education/International General Certificate of Secondary Education/General Certificate in Education 'O' Level), in lieu of the general Chinese Language requirement based on the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination for the Joint University Programmes Admissions System applicants. Besides, NCS parents have been informed of the local education system and the educational support services for NCS students through the Parent Information Package and relevant leaflets in the major ethnic minority languages.

**Vocational Education:** The VTC advises the Government on measures required to ensure a comprehensive system of vocational education and training suited to the development and manpower needs of Hong Kong. Vocational education and training services are provided at the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (IVE), the Hong Kong Design Institute (HKDI), the School of Business and Information Systems (SBI), the Youth College (YC), the Hospitality Industry Training & Development Centre (HITDC), Chinese Cuisine Training Institute (CCTI), Maritime Services Training Institute (MSTI), the Institute of Professional Education and Knowledge (PEAK) and Training and Development

Centres. The VTC also institutes, develops and operates various schemes for training operatives, craftsmen, technicians and technologists (including the Apprenticeship Scheme) to sustain and improve industry, commerce and services

IVE offers courses at higher technician, technician and craft levels leading to the awards of higher diploma, higher certificate, diploma and certificate etc. In response to the Government's initiative to increase the provision of post-secondary education for senior secondary school leavers, the VTC set up SBI in 2001 to run self-financing Higher Diploma programmes. In order to meet the development needs of the creative industries, the VTC established HKDI in 2007 to bring together the design and related courses of the academic departments of IVE with a view to fostering cross fertilization and synergy. YC mainly offers Diploma in Vocational Studies courses for Secondary 3 and Secondary 5 school leavers. To align with the new senior secondary academic structure, YC will introduce a credit-based programme, namely Diploma in Vocational Education, in 2009/10 school year for school leavers at or above Secondary 3 level. The education and training provided by these VTC institutions aims to lay a foundation for the students' continued personal and professional development and to prepare them for employment and/or further education. In the 2008/09 academic year, nearly 45 000 students enroll on full-time courses and more than 27 000 on part-time courses offered at IVE, HKDI, SBI and YC.

Furthermore, in order to support the provision of a seamless higher education for young people in Hong Kong, the VTC has collaborated with a number of overseas and local universities to offer top-up degree programmes in various study areas to its Higher Diploma graduates.

In the 2008/09 academic year, over 35 000 full-time and part-time places are offered in the HITDC, CCTI, MSTI and 12 Training and Development Centres of the VTC which provide basic and upgrading courses for trainees at all levels.

**Qualification Framework (QF):** The QF was officially implemented in May 2008. It is a seven-level hierarchy against which academic, vocational and continuing education qualifications can be benchmarked. The QF provides learners with flexible and diversified articulation pathways. In the long-run, the QF facilitates lifelong learning, hence enhancing the capability and competitiveness of Hong Kong's human capital.