

The total budgeted government expenditure on education in the 2016-17 financial year is \$84.0billion, representing 17 per cent of total government 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 conventional 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 51 international schools (including 15 schools operated by the English Schools Foundation) offering non-local curricula mainly to children of overseas families living in Hong Kong and coming to Hong Kong for work or investment.

Kindergartens: Kindergarten education is offered to children in the 3-5 age group in kindergartens which are privately run by voluntary organisations or private bodies. These kindergartens are registered with, and supervised by the Education Bureau (EDB). In September 2015, about 185 400 pupils were enrolled in 1 000 kindergartens/kindergarten-cum-child care centres.

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, which also enhances the quality of kindergartens.

The “Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum” issued by Curriculum Development Council has been implemented since September 2007. It provides the basic principles and direction for kindergartens to develop their school-based programmes.

Primary Education: Primary schooling starts at the age of around six and there are 6 years of schooling at the primary level. There are three modes of operation in the primary schools, namely AM, PM and whole-day. Encouraged by 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 for admission to only one government or aided primary school of their preference, and admission is based on the criteria prescribed by the EDB. At the CA stage, P1 places are centrally allocated by the EDB according to the school net, parents’ choice of schools, and a given random number. Chinese is the language of instruction in most schools with English taught as a second language.

In September 2015, about 273 006 children were enrolled in 454 public sector 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 now enjoying a wide range of learning activities and there are improvements in students’ generic skills, values and attitudes. They are becoming independent learners. Schools continue to adapt the central curriculum to meet students’ needs. By building on their strengths and experiences, schools further strengthen their curricula to help students better develop their lifelong learning capabilities and nurture their whole-person development.

Secondary Education: On completion of primary education, all eligible pupils studying in participating primary schools are allocated subsidised Secondary 1 places through participation 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, each student may apply to not more than two participating secondary schools and 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 a given random number.

In September 2015, 393 public sector secondary schools had a total student enrolment of about 282 525.

The new academic structure (NAS) has been implemented smoothly since September 2009 in Secondary 4. All students can now benefit from 6 years of secondary education (i.e. 3 years of junior secondary and 3 years of senior secondary education). On completion of Secondary 6, students take one public examination - the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination, which replaces the former Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination and Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination. The flexible, coherent and diversified senior secondary curriculum under the NAS aims at catering for students’ varied interests, needs and abilities, as well as nurturing students’ whole-person development and lifelong learning capabilities for them to proceed, through multiple pathways, to further studies, training and employment.

Special Education: Under the prevailing policy, subject to the assessment and recommendation of the specialists and with parents' consent, children with more severe or multiple disabilities are placed in special schools for intensive support. Other children with special educational needs (SEN) may attend ordinary schools. There are 60 aided special schools (including a hospital school operating classes at 18 public hospitals) in the 2015/16 school year, providing education services for children with visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical disability, intellectual disability, and emotional and behavioural difficulties. These special schools are subvented by the Government and operated by non-governmental organisations. Some of the schools are serving as resource centres to support ordinary schools in catering for students with SEN.

The EDB provides additional resources and professional support for public sector ordinary schools to help them cater for students with SEN. Schools should pool and deploy the resources flexibly and adopt a Whole School Approach to provide appropriate support for these students. Besides, since the 2007/08 school year, the EDB has been providing structured training courses pitched at the basic, advanced and thematic levels for serving teachers to enhance their capacity in catering for students with SEN.

Language Policy: To facilitate effective learning, the Government has been promoting the use of the mother tongue, Chinese, as the principal medium of instruction (MOI) for local schools. But as both Chinese and English are the official languages in Hong Kong, the Government invests heavily in training students to be biliterate (Chinese and English) and trilingual (Cantonese, Putonghua and English). The fine-tuned MOI arrangements for secondary schools have been implemented from Secondary 1 since the 2010/11 school year and progressed each year to a higher form to cover the entire junior secondary level. The fine-tuning enables schools to enhance students' English proficiency through devising school-based MOI arrangements professionally with regard to their school context, students' needs and teachers' readiness to increase students' opportunities to be exposed to and to use English.

Information Technology (IT) in Education: The Government launched the "Fourth Strategy on Information Technology in Education" (ITE4) in the 2015-16 school year with six actions covering the areas of upgrading of WiFi infrastructure in all public sector schools, enhancing the supply of quality e-learning resources; curriculum renewal and transformation of pedagogical and assessment practices; building professional leadership and capacity; community involvement; and conduct of on-going research and evaluation studies for coherent and sustainable development of IT in education.

Teacher Preparation: The Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd), under the aegis of the University Grants Committee (UGC), aims to develop the professional knowledge, pedagogy and attributes of teachers. Being the key teacher education provider in Hong Kong, it offers a range of sub-degree, degree and postgraduate programmes for pre-service and in-service teachers. In the 2015/16 academic

year, there were about 4 400 full-time and 4 400 part-time students enrolling for the UGC-funded programmes offered by the HKIEd.

The Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU), the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), and the University of Hong Kong (HKU) also offer UGC-funded degree programmes for pre-service teachers and postgraduate programmes for pre-service and in-service teachers. The Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) which is self-funded, offers degree and postgraduate programmes for pre-service and in-service teachers.

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

Post-secondary Education: In the 2015/16 academic year, there were 29 institutions offering self-financing locally-accredited sub-degree, undergraduate and top-up degree programmes providing around 46 600 full-time intake places.

The VTC, the City University of Hong Kong (CityU), the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) and HKIEd also offer publicly-funded sub-degree programmes, providing around 11 000 full-time student places in the 2014/15 academic year.

Higher Education: Hong Kong has 20 local 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.

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 2015/16 academic year, a total of 89 600 full-time students and 3 800 part-time students enrolled for publicly-funded undergraduate and postgraduate courses. The other 12 degree-awarding tertiary institutions not funded by the UGC include the publicly-funded Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA), the self-financing OUHK, Hong Kong Shue Yan University (HKSYU), Chu Hai College of Higher Education, Hang Seng Management College, Tung Wah College, Caritas Institute of Higher Education, Centennial College, the Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong (THEi) of the VTC, Hong Kong Nang Yan College of Higher Education, HKCT Institute of Higher Education and Gratia Christian College.

The HKAPA offers academic programmes from Diploma to Master Degree level in Dance, Drama, Film and Television, Music, Theatre & Entertainment Arts and Chinese Opera. In the 2015/16 academic year, the Academy enrolls about 880 students for its full-time programmes.

Adult Education: The EDB implements the Financial Assistance Scheme for Designated Evening Adult Education Courses to provide financial assistance to 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 services for NAC, including NAC from the Mainland, and newly arrived non-Chinese speaking children and returnee children. Students may attend the full-time six-month Initiation Programme that helps them integrate into the community and education system before their admission to local mainstream schools. For those newly arrived students who choose to enter public sector schools and schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) direct, the EDB provides schools with the School-based Support Scheme Grant for arrangement of support programmes for NAC. The 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 a series of education support measures to help NCS students master the Chinese language and integrate into the community. The support measures include, among others, implementing the “Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework” (“Learning Framework”) in primary and secondary schools complemented with module exemplars, assessment tools and supporting learning and teaching materials; introducing Applied Learning Chinese (for NCS students) courses pegged at the Qualifications Framework Levels 1 to 3, at senior secondary levels by phases starting from the 2014/15 school year to provide NCS students with an additional channel to acquire recognised alternative Chinese qualification, preparing them for further studies and work; providing an additional recurrent funding ranging from \$0.8 million to \$1.5 million to all schools admitting 10 or more NCS students (197 schools received the funding in the 2015/16 school year) to facilitate schools’ implementation of the “Learning Framework” and creation of an inclusive learning environment in schools; providing school-based professional support and diversified professional development programmes for teachers teaching NCS students; operating Chinese Language Learning Support Centres and providing additional funding to schools admitting a handful of NCS students on a need basis to offer after-school support to consolidate the learning of the Chinese Language during lessons; and offering the Summer Bridging Programme which was refined in 2013 to allow NCS parents to accompany their children with a view to enhancing their exposure to, and use of, Chinese and support for their children. To address the aspirations of NCS students for higher education, the University Grants Committee-funded institutions have, starting from 2008, accepted alternative Chinese Language qualifications including General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and General Certificate of Education (GCE) AS-Level and A-Level for applications under specified circumstances under the Joint University Programmes Admissions System. Eligible NCS school candidates sitting for Chinese Language examinations under the GCSE, IGCSE and GCE are subsidised to the effect that the subsidised fee is on par with the Chinese Language paper in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination.

Besides, NCS parents have been provided with information of the local education system and the educational support measures for NCS students. Relevant information and leaflets have been translated into major ethnic minority languages. The EDB also organises dedicated briefing sessions with simultaneous interpretation services for NCS parents. To help NCS parents grasp the basic information of all public sector schools, starting from the 2015/16 school year, the EDB has distributed the English version of the School Profiles to each NCS student.

Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET): The VTC advises the Government on measures to ensure a comprehensive system of VPET suited to the development and manpower needs of Hong Kong. VPET programmes are provided at THEi, School for Higher and Professional Education (SHAPE), Institute of Professional Education And Knowledge (PEAK), Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (IVE), Hong Kong Design Institute (HKDI), International Culinary Institute (ICI), Hotel and Tourism Institute (HTI), Chinese Culinary Institute (CCI), Maritime Services Training Institute (MSTI), Youth College (YC), Pro-Act by VTC, Integrated Vocational Development Centre and Shine Skills Centre.

YC offers various programmes for Secondary 3 and Secondary 6 school leavers, including the credit-based Diploma of Vocational Education programme for school leavers at or above Secondary 3 level. IVE offers programmes at higher technician and technician levels leading to the awards of Higher Diploma and Diploma of Foundation Studies, etc. In order to meet the development needs of the creative industries, the VTC established HKDI in 2007 to offer design and related programmes. Starting from the 2012/13 academic year, THEi offers vocationally-oriented bachelor’s degree programmes suiting the needs of the industries, providing more diversified progression pathways for young people.

The VPET programmes provided by these VTC institutions aim to lay a foundation for the students’ continued personal and professional development and to prepare them for employment and/or further education. In the 2015/16 academic year, the VTC is offering about 44 900 full-time and 21 500 part-time study places through its member institutions.

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.

Qualifications Framework (QF): The QF launched in 2008 provides a transparent and accessible platform to promote lifelong learning and hence enhancing the competitiveness of the workforce in Hong Kong. The QF is a seven-level hierarchy that orders and supports the qualifications of academic, VPET and continuing education sectors, and is underpinned by a robust quality assurance mechanism. All qualifications recognised under the QF are quality-assured.

