Hong Kong : The Facts

Education

Hong Kong has sound education infrastructure, world-renowned universities, outstanding research talents, as well as diverse and quality basic education. The quality of teaching and learning is ranked among the top in various international comparative studies. Hong Kong's post-secondary education is internationalised and highly diversified. It is the only city with five universities in the world's top 100 and is ranked fourth globally for education competitiveness. The Government is committed to building Hong Kong into an international education hub and a cradle of future talents.

The Government strives to nurture young people into quality citizens with a sense of national identity and social responsibility, an affection for Hong Kong as well as an international perspective. In an increasingly competitive and connected world, education is of vital importance. In view of this, the Government's expenditure on education keeps increasing. The recurrent expenditure on education has, over the past ten years (i.e. from 2015-16 to 2024-25 financial years), increased by 48% with an average growth rate of 4.4% per annum. This demonstrates the Government's determination and commitment to investing in education.

Hong Kong Education System: Kindergarten education in Hong Kong is for children from three to six years old. Local non-profit-making kindergartens joining the Kindergarten Education Scheme are provided with direct subsidies from the Government.

Learn more: https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system-policy/kindergarten/index.html

Public sector schools form the majority in the six-year primary and six-year secondary basic education. These consist of government schools operated directly by the Government, and aided and caput schools (mostly run by religious, charitable or clan organisations) fully subvented by the Government, and managed by incorporated management committees or school management committees. In addition, there are Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools, which can charge school fees and receive Government subvention based on enrolment, as well as self-financed private schools and international schools providing alternatives to parents.

Learn more: https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system-policy/primary-secondary/index.html

Hong Kong has a cosmopolitan population and the vibrant international school sector meets the demand of non-local families living in Hong Kong and families coming to Hong Kong for work or investment. There are 54 international schools (including one special school) in Hong Kong, providing different non-local curricula, including those of Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Korea, Singapore, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as the International Baccalaureate programme.

Learn more: https://internationalschools.edb.gov.hk/

At the post-secondary level, publicly-funded and self-financing programmes at sub-degree, undergraduate and above levels are available in Hong Kong. Publicly-funded programmes are provided by the eight University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded universities, the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts and the Vocational Training Council (VTC). The post-secondary institutions offer a wide range of publicly-funded and self-financing post-secondary programmes, providing articulation pathways with multiple entry and exit points.

Kindergarten Education: Kindergarten education in Hong Kong is optional, but virtually all children aged three to five attend kindergartens. In the 2023-24 school year, the enrolment was about 136,100. Since 2017-18, a subsidy sufficient for the provision of good quality half-day kindergarten education to all eligible children aged three to six is provided to local non-profit-making kindergartens joining the Kindergarten Education Scheme. In the 2023/24 school year, about 740 kindergartens (about 95% of eligible kindergartens) have joined the Scheme. Around 90% of the half-day kindergartens joining the Scheme provide free services, and the fees for whole-day kindergartens are generally at a low level.

Learn more: https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/about-edb/publications-stat/figures/index.html

Kindergarten Curriculum: The child-centred kindergarten education curriculum places emphasis on fostering children's learning interest, cultivating proper values and attitudes, and enhancing self-confidence as well as self-care abilities. Based on the principle of fostering children's all-round and balanced development, the kindergarten education curriculum aims to help children attain development in the domains of ethics, intellect, physique, social skills and aesthetics. The kindergarten education curriculum also covers three interconnected components, namely "Values and Attitudes", "Skills" and "Knowledge", to keep in line with the primary and secondary education curriculum forming a coherent curriculum system.

Learn more: http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/major-level-of-edu/preprimary/index.html

Primary and Secondary Education: The Government provides 12 years of free primary and secondary education to students studying in public sector schools. Starting from the 2009/10 school year, senior secondary education, which is

leading to the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination taken by Secondary 6 students, is provided free through government, aided and caput secondary schools, and the Government provides full subvention for full-time courses run by the VTC for Secondary 3 leavers to offer them an alternative free avenue for them outside mainstream education.

As at November 2023, there were 594 primary schools (including 34 government primary schools, 422 aided primary schools, 21 DSS primary schools and 117 private primary schools), and 512 secondary schools (including 31 government secondary schools, 358 aided secondary schools, two caput schools, 59 DSS secondary schools and 62 private secondary schools)[1].

Learn more: https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/about-edb/publications-stat/figures/index.html

Primary and Secondary Curriculum: To foster students' whole-person development and lifelong learning, the broad and balanced primary and secondary curricula offer diversified learning experiences within and beyond the classroom, enabling students to realise their potential in the domains of ethics, intellect, physique, social skills and aesthetics to achieve the seven learning goals. The Government actively promotes the ongoing renewal of the school curriculum with the aim of cultivating students' proper values, attitudes and behaviour, and developing their generic skills and self-directed learning capabilities. Schools are recommended to incorporate the major renewed emphases[2] into their curriculum development plans, such as strengthening values education (including national education) and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics) education, to prepare students for future challenges and nurture them into informed and responsible citizens who will make contributions to society, the country and the world in the future.

Learn more: https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/renewal/framework.html

Education of Students with Special Educational Needs: Students with special educational needs (SEN) refer to students who need special educational support because of certain learning or adjustment difficulties. At present, SEN are mainly categorised into nine types, including intellectual disability, autistic spectrum disorder, attention deficit/ hyperactivity disorder, mental illness, specific learning difficulties, physical disability, visual impairment, hearing impairment, and speech and language impairment. At the primary and secondary levels, the Government adopts a dual-track mode in providing special education. Subject to the assessment and recommendation of specialists and the consent of parents, the Education Bureau (EDB) will refer students with more severe or multiple disabilities to special schools for intensive support services. Meanwhile, the EDB implements the integrated education (IE) policy, thus the other students with SEN will attend ordinary schools.

To cater for the diverse needs of students, the Government provides respective categories of special schools with additional teachers, specialists and resources. Some special schools operate a boarding section to provide boarding service to students in need. The Government also provides public sector ordinary schools with additional resources, professional support and teacher training to help them cater for students with SEN. Each public sector ordinary school is provided with a SEN Coordinator who is tasked with leading the adoption of the Whole School Approach to IE.

Learn more: https://sense.edb.gov.hk

Education and Support Services for Newly-arrived Children: The EDB provides a series of support services for newly-arrived children, including the six-month full-time Initiation Programme and the 60-hour Induction Programme, and provides public sector schools and DSS schools admitting these students with a School-based Support Scheme Grant to run school-based support programmes for them, so as to help them better integrate into the local community and overcome learning difficulties. All these support services are available to newly-arrived children from the Mainland, non-Chinese speaking (NCS) children and returnee children. In addition, placement service and information on study pathways are also provided for them as appropriate.

Learn more: http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/student-parents/newly-arrived-children/overview/index.html

Education Services for Non-Chinese Speaking Students: The Government ensures equal opportunities for school admission for all eligible children (including NCS children) in public sector schools, regardless of their races. The Government is committed to encouraging and supporting the integration of NCS students into the community, including facilitating their early adaptation to the local education system and mastery of the Chinese language. The EDB has provided all-encompassing support for NCS students through a series of measures.

Learn more: http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/student-parents/ncs-students/about-ncs-students/index.html

Post-secondary Education: Hong Kong provides quality, diverse and flexible articulation pathways with multiple entry and exit points for students to pursue post-secondary education. There are 22 local degree-awarding post-secondary education institutions in Hong Kong, nine of which are publicly-funded and the other 13 are self-financing.

Learn more: http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/postsecondary/index.html

The Government provides 15,000 publicly-funded first-year-first-degree places per annum through the UGC-funded universities. There are also around 7,000 self-financing undergraduate programme places offered by various

[1] Private schools comprise local private day schools and international schools.

[2] The major renewed emphases of the primary curriculum: values education, making good use of learning time, life-wide learning, catering for learner diversity, STEAM education, media and information literacy, learning and reading across the curriculum, and assessment literacy. The major renewed emphases of the secondary curriculum: strengthening values education (including national education), reinforcing the learning of Chinese history and Chinese culture, extending "Reading to Learn" to "Language across the Curriculum", promoting STEAM education and information technology in education, fostering an entrepreneurial spirit, diversifying life-wide learning experiences (including those for vocational and professional education and training), stepping up gifted education, and enhancing the learning and teaching of Chinese as a second language.

institutions. Besides, there are subsidised senior-year undergraduate places and self-financing top-up degree places for sub-degree graduates. At the sub-degree level, there are around 16,000 and 565 intake places for self-financing and publicly-funded programmes respectively. The Government also provides 6,400 research postgraduate places (to be increased to 7,200 places in 2024/25 academic year) per annum through the UGC-funded universities.

Learn more: https://www.ugc.edu.hk

Starting from the 2017/18 academic year, the Government provides a non-means-tested annual subsidy of around $30,000 for eligible students pursuing full-time locally accredited local and non-local self-financing undergraduate (including top-up degree) programmes (save for those enrolled in places already supported under the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors (SSSDP)) offered by eligible institutions in Hong Kong. With effect from the 2023/24 academic year, the eligibility criteria of the subsidy scheme is rationalised to benefit students from different backgrounds, including those with vocational and professional education and training (VPET) qualifications.

Learn more: https://www.cspe.edu.hk/nmtss

The Government launched the SSSDP to subsidise students to pursue designated self-financing programmes in selected disciplines with a view to nurturing talents for industries with keen human resource demand. From the 2023/24 academic year, the SSSDP is expanded to cover top-up degree programmes. In the 2023/24 academic year, the SSSDP subsidises about 4,000 places and 2,000 places per cohort in undergraduate programmes (including top-up degree) and sub-degree programmes respectively.

Learn more: https://www.cspe.edu.hk/sssdp

The Government launched the Diploma of Applied Education (DAE) Programme in the 2023/24 school year to provide an alternative pathway for Secondary 6 school leavers as well as adult learners to obtain a formal qualification for the purposes of employment and further study. The contents and design of the DAE Programmes incorporate substantial VPET elements, including a brand new VPET stream, as well as communications and information technology related contents to facilitate DAE students to articulate to other VPET programmes and enhance their employability.

Learn more: https://www.dae.edu.hk

International Education Hub: Hong Kong aspires to become an international education hub, with world-renowned universities and outstanding research talents. In this regard, the Government has introduced a series of measures to attract more outstanding talents to study and conduct researches in Hong Kong. These measures include increasing the non-local student admission quota, expanding scholarship schemes, increasing hostel places, encouraging publicly-funded universities to offer students with more exchange and learning opportunities outside Hong Kong, temporarily exempting non-local postgraduate students from restrictions on taking up part-time jobs, allowing non-local students to stay in Hong Kong without condition for 24 months after graduation, developing the Northern Metropolis University Town, and etc.

Learn more: https://www.studyinhongkong.edu.hk

Vocational and Professional Education and Training: The Government has all along been committed to promoting VPET, and encouraging young people to pursue education pathways and join industries that best suit their abilities and interests. The Government will, through the strategy of fostering industry-institution collaboration and diversified development, adopt a multi-pronged approach on various fronts to further promote VPET as a pathway parallel to conventional academic education, and encourage the alignment of classroom education with industry needs and collaboration between businesses and education institutions, with a view to providing diversified learning and employment opportunities and nurturing more quality talents with applied skills. Moreover, the Government will continue facilitating the development of Universities of Applied Sciences, and strive to raise the status of VPET at degree level, providing an alternative pathway to success for young people who aspire to pursue a career in professional skills sectors.

The VTC is a statutory body and also the largest VPET provider in Hong Kong. The VTC offers a wide range of full-time and part-time vocational education programmes which lead to formal qualifications from post-secondary 3 up to degree levels. It provides valuable credentials for some 200,000 students each year through a full range of pre-employment and in-service programmes with internationally recognised qualifications.

Learn more: https://www.vtc.edu.hk

Professional Development of Educators: The EDB has established the Professional Ladder for Teachers in Hong Kong with an aim to promote teachers' professional growth and enhance teachers' professional status. Starting from the 2020/21 school year, the EDB has provided core training programmes for newly-joined teachers, training programmes and resources for in-service teachers, and training programmes on enhanced training requirements for promotion with a view to providing teachers with more systematic and focused professional development opportunities.

Professional development requirements are in place to help aspiring, newly appointed and serving principals enhance their leadership knowledge and address their developmental needs at different career stages. So far, some 2,100 aspiring principals have attained the Certification for Principalship and more than half of them have become principals.

Learn more: https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/teacher/qualification-training-development/development/cpd-teachers/index.html

The Chief Executive's Award for Teaching Excellence, organised by the EDB every year, aims to recognise accomplished teachers who demonstrate exemplary teaching practices and foster a culture of excellence in the teaching profession.

Learn more: https://www.ate.gov.hk