

Chapter 7

Education

The Government is aware of the ever increasing importance of education in today's fiercely competitive, knowledge-based world. It, therefore, keeps a vigilant eye on changing trends and introduces reforms whenever needed to ensure Hong Kong is in step with global dynamics. The new academic structure for senior secondary education and higher education, which is about to be launched, is a clear example of this vigilance.

Key Achievements in 2007

Increased Investment in Pre-primary Education

The Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme, introduced in 2007-08, is progressing smoothly. About 90 per cent of kindergarten students and 85 per cent of kindergartens are benefiting from this scheme which provides direct fee subsidy for parents and financial support for teachers for professional upgrading. Each child older than two years and eight months attending a local non-profit-making (NPM) kindergarten began receiving a subsidy of \$10,000 since the start of the 2007-08 school year. The subsidy will increase in stages to \$16,000 by 2011-12. Kindergarten teachers and principals will also receive financial assistance up to that time to help them develop professionally. The aim is to support teachers to obtain a certificate qualification in early childhood education and to encourage principals to attain a bachelor's degree in early childhood education by the end of the 2011-2012 school year.

Implementation of the New Academic Structure and Higher Education

The Government is preparing vigorously for the implementation of the new academic structure which goes into effect in 2009, with the first Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination to be held in 2012. Professional development programmes and school-based support are being expanded to help teachers and school leaders to implement the new curriculum effectively. The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) is working closely with overseas examination authorities and universities to secure international recognition of the HKDSE. Additional resources will be provided for schools to cater for a diversified senior secondary curriculum and enhance flexible use of teaching space. Steps are being taken to strengthen communication with parents of students enrolled

under the new system to make sure they understand the new senior secondary (NSS) system and support it.

Establishment of the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education

The academy was set up with a \$100 million donation from Sir Joseph Hotung and a matching sum from the Government. It is expected to be in operation by the 2007-08 school year. The academy will coordinate programmes to enable gifted students to take part in a wide range of learning domains. It will also support parent and teacher education and promote best practice in the teaching of talented students.

Student Achievements

In the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2006, Hong Kong students ranked second among 45 participating jurisdictions, up from 14th place in 2001. In the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2006, Hong Kong students ranked second in scientific literacy, up from third place in 2003, and remained in the top slot in mathematical literacy, which it shared with three other jurisdictions in 2006 and with two others in 2003. In reading literacy, Hong Kong came third in PISA 2006, up from 10th place in 2003.

As in previous years, Hong Kong students continued to shine in international competitions. Hong Kong teams garnered eight silver and 12 bronze medals in the International Mathematical Olympiad and International Physics Olympiad, International Junior Science Olympiad and International Olympiad in Informatics. A Hong Kong team was the champion in the International Johannes Brahms Choir Festival and Competition. Hong Kong students also won top prizes in the United Nations Art Competition on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty and the International Drawing and Painting Contest, and won Grand Awards and Special Awards in the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair.

Medium of Instruction and Secondary School Places Allocation System

Under the revised medium of instruction (MOI) arrangements, promulgated in late 2005, mother tongue will continue to be used as the principal MOI in secondary schools, while efforts to improve students' English will continue to be supported. Schools wishing to use English as the MOI must fulfil the three prescribed criteria of student ability, teacher capability and support measures. In 2007, the Government processed some 200 applications from secondary schools under two English enhancement schemes, approving additional funding and giving professional advice to the schools to boost the English proficiency of students.

The revised Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System has been applied to students proceeding to Secondary One from the 2007-08 school year onwards. The quota of discretionary places for each secondary school has increased from 20 per cent to 30 per cent and the number of schools that students may apply for admission has increased from one to two, unrestricted by school nets. At the Central Allocation stage, students may choose a maximum of three secondary schools from any school net, in addition to a maximum of 30 schools within their own school net.

These revisions have increased the choices for parents and facilitated the diversified development of schools.

Further Development of Qualifications Framework

The Executive Council approved the establishment of a cross-sectoral Qualifications Framework (QF) in February 2004 to improve the quality of manpower through promoting lifelong learning. The framework provides a seven-level hierarchy against which qualifications can be benchmarked.

The Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance, which provides the legislative framework for the cross-sectoral Qualifications Framework, was enacted in May 2007. The Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) is responsible for ensuring the quality of qualifications under the QF other than those awarded by the self-accrediting institutions.

The HKCAAVQ is also responsible for maintaining the Qualifications Register (QR), a web-based database on qualifications, learning programmes and providers recognised under the QF. A Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism will be introduced to recognise the skills, knowledge and experience of in-service and experienced workers to facilitate their further training and studies.

So far, 12 Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs), which are responsible for developing Specifications of Competency Standards (SCSs) for the relevant industries, have been established. Starting from early 2007, SCS-based skills upgrading courses have also been organised on a pilot basis with an enrolment of over 2 000 learners. More industries will be assisted to set up ITACs in the coming year.

Education Hub

Hong Kong is well positioned to provide quality higher education in the region because of its cosmopolitan outlook, strong links with the Mainland, world-class universities and diversified system of education. It is Hong Kong's stated intention to become a regional education hub. A basket of measures have been introduced to attract quality non-local students to study in Hong Kong, and this process will further internationalise the city's higher education sector and increase local students' exposure to the world. It is also the Government's aim to persuade non-local students to live and work in Hong Kong after they have graduated. This addresses Hong Kong's immediate manpower needs and enhances its competitiveness in the long run.

Major Challenges Ahead

12-year Free Education

The Government has been providing nine-year free and universal basic education through public sector primary and secondary schools. Free education will be extended to include senior secondary education provided by public sector secondary schools starting from the 2008-09 school year. The beneficiaries will include Secondary 4 to Secondary 7 students under the current secondary school structure and Senior

Secondary 1 to Senior Secondary 3 students under the New Senior Secondary structure to be introduced from the 2009-10 school year. With effect from the 2008-09 school year, the Government will also provide full subvention for full-time courses run by the Vocational Training Council for Secondary 3 school leavers, hence offering an alternative free avenue for senior secondary students outside mainstream education.

Small Class Teaching

The Chief Executive announced in his 2007-08 Policy Address the implementation of small class teaching in public sector primary schools by phases, starting from Primary One in the 2009-10 school year. By the 2014-15 school year, this initiative will be extended from Primary One to Primary Six. Schools will be given the choice of whether they wish to reduce their class size to 25 or to keep a class size of 30, and the Government would facilitate as far as possible by making available the infrastructure and manpower required.

Progress of New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education

The Education Bureau (EDB) has published the Curriculum and Assessment Guides of the 24 NSS subjects to help schools prepare for a NSS academic structure which goes into effect in September 2009. The NSS operates under a '3-3-4' system, which provides students with three years of junior secondary schooling and three years of senior secondary schooling. In addition, the two existing public examinations will be replaced by the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination, and university undergraduate courses will be extended from three years to four. The eight tertiary institutions funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC) have also announced in July 2006 the general admission requirements under the NSS structure.

Development of Post-secondary Education Sector

Phase Two of the Government's review of post-secondary education is progressing smoothly. The review's aim is to come up with a package of proposals to promote the long-term, sustainable development of post-secondary education, addressing public concern on aspects such as quality, recognition, employment, further studies and financial assistance for students.

Upgrade Teacher Status and Professionalism

The Chief Executive announced in the 2007-08 Policy Address to increase the respective ratio of graduate teacher posts in public sector primary and secondary schools by two phases — to 45 per cent and 80 per cent in the 2008-09 school year and to 50 per cent and 85 per cent in the 2009-10 school year to raise the status and professional standards of teachers for enhancement of the overall quality of education. A deputy head rank in public sector primary schools will also be created to enhance the quality of primary school education services. The Education Bureau will continue to organise the Chief Executive's Award for Teaching Excellence to give recognition to accomplished teachers and to foster a culture of excellence in the teaching profession.

Overall Education Landscape

Expenditure on Education

For the 2007-08 financial year, the approved estimate for recurrent government expenditure on education was \$50.1 billion, equivalent to 24.4 per cent of all recurrent government expenditure, while the total estimate for government spending on education amounted to \$57.2 billion, or 23 per cent of total government expenditure.

Education Commission

The Education Commission is responsible for advising the Government on education objectives and policies, and coordinating the work of all major education-related advisory bodies on the planning and development of education at all levels. The commission also advises the Government on important implementation issues to ensure better synergy between policy formulation and implementation.

The commission has a chairman, a vice-chairman who is the Permanent Secretary for Education, seven ex-officio members and a number of non-official members. The seven ex-officio members comprise the chairmen of the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications, the Curriculum Development Council, the HKEAA Council, the Quality Education Fund Steering Committee, the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research, UGC and the Vocational Training Council (VTC). The non-official members come from both education and non-education fields.

Early Childhood Education

All kindergartens and kindergarten-cum-child care centres are required to register under the Education Ordinance. Since 2004, all kindergartens have been required to employ Qualified Kindergarten Teachers. The aim is to upgrade the professional qualifications of all kindergarten teachers and principals to the certificate and bachelor's degree levels by the end of the 2011-12 school year.

The Government implemented in September 2007 the revised 'Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum' which provides the basic principles and direction for pre-school educators to develop their own curriculum.

Meanwhile, the Government has steadily improved the teacher-pupil ratio in kindergartens to 1:15.

The Government has further enhanced the quality assurance system for kindergartens. Instead of conducting inspections, the Government has introduced a self-evaluation system, supported by an external review process. Kindergartens and kindergarten-cum-child care centres are encouraged to conduct annual self-evaluations based on common indicators developed for this purpose. The EDB will carry out external reviews to validate the results of these self-evaluations.

School Education

Nine-year free and universal basic education is provided for children aged 6 to 15 — six years of primary education plus three years of junior secondary education.

With effect from the 2008-09 school year, senior secondary education will also be provided free. As regards admission to schools, admissions to Primary 1 and Secondary 1 in public sector schools are administered through centralised systems. Currently all Secondary 3 students who are willing and able to continue with their studies are given the opportunity to receive subsidised Secondary 4 education or vocational training, whereas about one-third of Secondary 5 leavers may further their studies in subsidised Secondary 6 and 7 school places. With the implementation of the NSS curriculum from the 2009-10 school year, in principle all students would be given the opportunities to complete six years of secondary education (three-year junior and three-year senior secondary education) in the same school.

In September 2007, a total of 332 800 children were enrolled in public sector primary schools and 415 900 children in public sector secondary schools. Public sector school places made up about 85 per cent of school places. In addition, there were 66 Direct Subsidy Scheme schools, offering about 6 per cent of the school places.

As at September, there were 53 international schools, including 15 schools run by the English Schools Foundation. These schools form an important part of Hong Kong's make-up as an international business centre and a vibrant cosmopolitan city. They offer different non-local curricula, including American, Australian, British, Canadian, French, German-Swiss, Japanese, Korean and Singaporean, and provide 35 100 school places. To facilitate the development of a vibrant international school sector, the Government is offering a number of 'greenfield' sites at nominal prices for new international schools to be built on them, or for expanding existing ones.

Special Education

Children with special educational needs (SEN) who can benefit from attending ordinary schools are given places in these schools with additional support and services. Schools are encouraged to adopt a whole-school approach to support children with SEN. In the 2007-08 school year, some 13 000 students with SEN were studying in public sector primary and secondary schools.

There were, during the same period, 60 special schools for students with severe SEN, or multiple disabilities. Nineteen of these have boarding facilities. Together, they provided around 8 400 school places and 1 000 boarding places for these children.

The Government also helps gifted students to develop their capabilities through different programmes. The Government has set up a thematic support network on gifted education consisting of 73 schools to facilitate sharing of experiences and resources.

Project Yi Jin

There were around 8 700 full-time and part-time students joining the Government's Yi Jin programme in 2007-08. The programme was launched in 2000 to provide an alternative route to continuing education for secondary school leavers and adult learners. Successful completion of the programme earns the student a qualification comparable to five passes in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education

Examination for employment and continuing education purposes. The programme is run by member institutions of the Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions and has both full-time and part-time modules.

Drawing on the success of the project, the Government introduced a pilot scheme, the Yi Jin/Secondary Schools Collaboration Project, to 10 secondary schools in 2004. As at September 2007, 585 students in 13 secondary schools were taking part in the scheme.

Vocational Education and Training

The Vocational Training Council is a statutory body established in 1982 to provide a comprehensive system of vocational education and training (VET) for school leavers and adult learners to acquire the values, skills and knowledge for lifelong learning and enhanced employment.

The VTC provides a range of quality, internationally recognised full-time and part-time courses which vary from those designed for craftsmen to those for students seeking higher diplomas. They are offered through the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education, VTC School of Business and Information Systems, Hong Kong Design Institute, Institute of Professional Education and Knowledge, Youth College, training and development centres and skills centres for people with disabilities. It also provides services such as the administration of the apprenticeship scheme, trade-testing and certification.

The VTC provided some 160 000 full-time and part-time places during the 2007-08 academic year.

Post-secondary Education

During the 2007-08 academic year, some 330 full-time accredited self-financing programmes were offered by 20 post-secondary institutions, providing about 26 000 and 3 000 full-time places for students taking sub-degree and degree courses respectively. These were in addition to some 7 700 publicly-funded places for sub-degree level courses offered by the City University of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the Hong Kong Institute of Education, the VTC and the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts.

Higher Education

Hong Kong has 12 degree-awarding higher education institutions, eight of which are funded by the public through the University Grants Committee. The other four are the publicly-funded Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts and the self-financing Open University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Shue Yan University and Chu Hai College of Higher Education.

The UGC is a non-statutory advisory body appointed by the Chief Executive to advise on the development and funding of higher education and to administer public grants to the eight higher education institutions. It also plays a major role in quality assurance and in promoting research. It comprises local and non-local academics, professionals and community leaders.

Each of the eight higher education institutions funded through the UGC is an autonomous statutory body with its own ordinance and governing body. They enjoy a high degree of academic and institutional autonomy, and are free to manage their own affairs within the parameters of the law.

Seven of the eight institutions are universities and the remaining one is a teacher education institution. All have distinctive and complementary roles that reflect their different origins, missions and the way they have responded to Hong Kong's complex and evolving needs. The UGC is committed to taking a more strategic approach by developing an interlocking yet individually different higher education system, with each institution fulfilling a unique role based on its strengths.

The administration has launched three rounds of matching grant scheme (MGS), each costing \$1 billion, since 2003 to broaden the funding sources of the eight UGC-funded institutions and to strengthen their fund-raising capabilities. As a result, the eight UGC-funded institutions have altogether secured additional resources amounting to \$7.7 billion, comprising about \$2.9 billion of government matching grants and close to \$4.8 billion of private donations.

At present, 14 500 first-year-first-degree places are available in institutions funded by the UGC, or about 18 per cent of people aged between 17 and 20 in Hong Kong. For the 2007-08 academic year, the UGC-funded institutions provided a total of 1 934 senior year undergraduate places for graduates of sub-degree programmes and students with other qualifications. A further 46 per cent in the same age group enjoyed access to post-secondary education through self-financing sub-degree and degree programmes and overseas university programmes. The overall post-secondary participation rate for the 17 to 20 age group increased from 33 per cent in the 2000-01 academic year to over 60 per cent in the 2006-07 academic year.

Degrees, up to doctoral level, awarded locally are widely recognised by institutions of higher learning around the world. All UGC-funded institutions have self-accrediting status and well-established quality assurance mechanisms. The UGC set up in April 2007 a semi-autonomous Quality Assurance Council under its aegis to provide third party assurance of quality. The HKCAAVQ validates courses and programmes offered by higher education institutions that are not self-accrediting.

Adult Education

The Financial Assistance Scheme for Designated Evening Adult Education Courses introduced for adult learners attending evening senior secondary courses (Secondary 4 to 7) at designated centres saw a total of 1 119 students enrolled in the 2006-07 school year.

The VTC launched in January 2007a pilot, tailor-made education programme, the Certificate in Foundation Studies, for adult learners with low education standards (below Secondary 3), in which 75 students enrolled.

Quality Education Fund

Up to the end of the 2006-07 school year, the Quality Education Fund (QEF) had provided \$3.47 billion for the execution of 6 931 projects. The QEF was established

in 1998 with an allocation of \$5 billion to support initiatives that promote quality education and schemes that recognise excellence in schools and teachers. The QEF also identifies good practices, which are adopted while carrying out QEF projects, for schools to use them.

School-based Support Services

The EDB extended its support services to 312 secondary schools, 463 primary schools, 22 special schools and 12 kindergartens and kindergarten-cum-child care centres through the School-based Support Services Office in 2007 after receiving funds from the Education Development Fund (EDF), which was set up in 2004 with an allocation of \$550 million to support educational reforms.

Professional support services are also offered to individual schools through the school development officers of the Regional Education Offices (REOs). They worked with school heads and teachers on new learning and teaching methods.

Support Measures for Non-Chinese Speaking Students

The EDB has put in place various support measures to facilitate integration of non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students in the education system and the wider community. The measures include the provision of intensive on-site support to 14 primary and 5 secondary schools designated in the 2007-08 school year to enhance learning and teaching of the Chinese language for NCS students. A supplementary guide is being developed for teaching Chinese language to NCS students. At the same time, tertiary institutions have been invited to run Chinese Language Learning Support Centres to offer further support to NCS students after school and to train Chinese language teachers of the designated schools.

Support Programmes for Needy Students

Under the School-based After-school Learning and Support Programmes, 939 schools and 217 non-governmental organisations received grants in the 2007-08 school year for organising after-school activities to help some 178 000 needy students improve their learning effectiveness, broaden their learning experience outside the classroom and raise their understanding of the community and sense of belonging.

Funding is also available to the needy student members of the Uniformed Groups and the Hong Kong Award for Young People to help them buy uniforms, or join training courses. Some 4 500 students receive help from this fund each year.

Regulatory Framework and Governance Structure

The Government's Role and Organisation

The Secretary for Education, who heads the EDB, formulates, develops and reviews educational policies, secures funds from the government budget, and oversees the implementation of educational programmes with the assistance of the Permanent Secretary for Education.

Education Ordinance

School education services are regulated by the Education Ordinance. School operators must comply with its provisions and the subsidiary legislation relating to areas such as registration of schools, teachers and managers, health and safety requirements, fees and charges, teacher qualifications.

Vocational Training Council Ordinance

The Vocational Training Council Ordinance provides for the establishment, functions and management of the council, which is the main body responsible for vocational education and technical training. Its members comprise representatives of industry, commerce, service sectors, employees and government.

Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance

The Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance governs institutions offering post-secondary courses. There are currently three approved post-secondary institutions registered under the ordinance, namely the Hong Kong Shue Yan University, the Caritas Francis Hsu College and the Chu Hai College of Higher Education.

Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance

The Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance protects Hong Kong consumers by guarding against the marketing of substandard non-local courses conducted in Hong Kong. It provides a system of registration for regulating these courses.

Management of Schools and Tertiary Institutions

School-based Management

All aided schools are required to set up by 2009 an incorporated management committee comprising sponsoring body managers, the principal, parent managers, teacher managers, alumni manager(s) and independent manager(s) to run the school. With the participation of these key stakeholders in the school decision-making process, the operation of the school will be more transparent, accountable and tailored to the needs of the students.

External School Review

With the introduction of the School Development and Accountability Framework in May 2003, quality assurance inspections conducted by EDB were transformed into a new mode of external school review (ESR) to validate school self-evaluation and provide an external impetus for schools to set priorities for self-improvement. The first ESR cycle, covering some 700 schools, will be completed before the end of the 2007-08 school year. EDB is currently reviewing the framework and practice in preparation for the second ESR cycle.

Governance of Tertiary Institutions

Each tertiary institution has its own structure of governance, set out in its ordinance. The structure includes a governing body, called the council or the court, and a body to regulate academic affairs, called the senate or the academic board. All

eight UGC-funded institutions have conducted reviews of their governance structures to ensure that they stay effective.

Curriculum Development

Curriculum Development Council

The Curriculum Development Council (CDC) is an advisory body that makes recommendations to the Government on all matters relating to school curriculum development — from kindergarten to senior secondary levels. Its members include heads of schools, practising teachers, parents, employers, academics from tertiary institutions, professionals from related fields or related bodies, representatives from the HKEAA and the VTC, as well as EDB officers.

The Curriculum

The school curriculum provides five essential learning experiences: moral and civic education, intellectual development, community service, physical and aesthetic development, and career-related experiences for lifelong learning and the whole-person development of students.

Curriculum reform progresses with schools adapting to the central curriculum to raise the quality of learning and teaching. Improvements in students' generic capabilities, values and attitudes are noted and students are becoming independent learners.

Applied Learning

Applied Learning (ApL) is an integral part of the new senior secondary curriculum. It aims at enabling students to understand fundamental concepts and theories through application and practice, and to develop their generic skills in authentic contexts. ApL courses can be developed in one of the six areas of studies — 'Applied Science', 'Business, Management and Law', 'Creative Studies', 'Engineering and Production', 'Media and Communication' and 'Services'. Through the development of foundation skills, thinking skills, people skills, values and attitudes, and career-related competencies, ApL prepares students for further study, work, and lifelong learning. The performance of students in ApL courses under the '3-3-4' academic structure will be credited to the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education.

Promotion of National Education

The promotion of national education is an established education policy and one of the priority areas in the curriculum reform. Apart from enriching school curricula with national education elements, the Government has made extra efforts to enhance students' understanding of the motherland through the national education courses in Beijing. There were 510 secondary 6 student leaders from 450 schools participated in this flagship national education activity. To provide students with authentic learning experience on the Mainland, the Government also subsidised schools to organise exchange activities with their counterparts on the Mainland.

During the year, the Government organised a series of programmes to further strengthen students' and teachers' sense of national identity. These included a national education symposium, flag raising training for students, and the First Hong Kong Cup Diplomatic Knowledge Contest. In the light of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, the Government will further strengthen national education by organising Olympic-related competitions, dialogues between students and national athletes, interflow activities on the Mainland, and national day extravaganza, and producing relevant learning and teaching materials.

Information Technology in Education

The Government is committed to promoting the use of information technology (IT) to improve learning and to equip students with necessary IT skills to meet the challenges of the information age and to become lifelong learners. All schools are connected to the Internet. The student-to-computer ratios are 4:1 in secondary schools and 6:1 in primary schools.

Language Education

The Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) was set up in 1996 on the recommendation of the Education Commission to advise the Government on language education matters. It also advises the trustee of the Language Fund on the policy and procedures governing the fund's operation. The fund was set up in 1994 to provide financial support for initiatives to improve Hong Kong people's proficiency in Chinese, including Putonghua and English.

Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme

The Native-speaking English Teacher (NET) Scheme is implemented in all public sector primary and secondary schools. Native-speaking English teachers work with local English teachers to enhance teaching practices and make learning English more interesting for students. At present, there are about 440 NETs in secondary schools, and some 470 in primary schools.

Professional Development at Schools

Teachers' Professional Development

Following the introduction of the policy framework for teachers' continuing professional development (CPD) in 2003, the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications has been reviewing the implementation of teachers' CPD and will provide further recommendations.

Principals' Professional Development

The Government offers wide-ranging activities to enhance the leadership and professionalism of school principals. In addition, aspiring principals have to attain a Certification for Principalship if they wish to be considered for appointment as principals.

Hong Kong Teachers' Centre

The Hong Kong Teachers' Centre was set up in 1989 to promote continuous professional development of teachers. Conferences, seminars, workshops and

experience-sharing sessions are regularly organised for teachers. Physical and mental health activities are also arranged to help teachers maintain a better work-life balance.

Council on Professional Conduct in Education

The Council on Professional Conduct in Education was established in 1994. It comprises 25 elected members from schools and educational organisations, and three members nominated by the Permanent Secretary for Education. The council draws up operational criteria defining the professional conduct expected of an educator and advises the Permanent Secretary on ways to promote professional conduct and on cases of alleged professional misconduct involving educators.

Student Finance

To ensure that no student is deprived of education due to lack of means, the Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA) provides means-tested and non-means-tested financial assistance to students at various study levels. SFAA also administers a number of privately funded scholarships schemes.

Means-tested Financial Assistance

At the pre-primary education level, means-tested assistance covers the fees for attending kindergartens, kindergarten-cum-child care centres or child care centres. In the 2006-07 school year, fee remission totalling \$630.3 million was granted to 59 119 students.

At the primary and secondary school levels, means-tested assistance covers grants for the purchase of textbooks, travel subsidies and remission of tuition fees for senior secondary students in public sector schools. In the 2006-07 school year, \$465.7 million was disbursed to 327 429 students for purchasing textbooks, \$271.3 million to 216 270 students as travel subsidies and 91 339 senior secondary students were granted tuition fees remission. In addition, 12 438 students taking Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination or Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination had their examination fees waived at a cost of \$14.7 million.

At the post-secondary and tertiary level, means-tested assistance for full-time students pursuing eligible courses at UGC-funded institutions, the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education of the VTC, the Prince Philip Dental Hospital and the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts includes grants and low-interest loans. In the 2006-07 academic year, \$840.9 million of grants and \$397.2 million of loans were provided to 31 128 students.

Eligible students pursuing accredited, self-financing full-time post-secondary programmes leading to a sub-degree or higher qualification are provided with grants to cover tuition fees and academic expenses. In the 2006-07 academic year, \$433.5 million in grants were provided to 13 771 students.

Travel subsidies totalling \$98.8 million were provided to 38 977 students of all post-secondary institutions.

Non-means-tested Financial Assistance

Starting from the 2007-08 school year, non-means-tested fee subsidy under the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme is provided to parents of eligible children receiving pre-primary education in kindergartens.

Non-means-tested loans, which are interest-bearing on a no-gain-no-loss basis to the Government, are available to students pursuing eligible publicly funded or self-financing local award-bearing programmes and professional or continuing education courses provided in Hong Kong by registered schools, non-local universities and recognised training bodies. In the 2006-07 academic year, 23 979 people received loans amounting to \$900 million.

Scholarships

SFAA administers a number of privately funded scholarships. Scholarships are mainly merit-based and provided for both local and overseas studies.

Tuition Fee Reimbursement for Project Yi Jin Students

The Government provides all Project Yi Jin students with a 30 per cent tuition fee reimbursement for each successfully completed module. For students who passed the means tests, the tuition fees paid are fully reimbursed.

Community Participation in Education

Home-school Cooperation

The Committee on Home-school Cooperation (CHSC) was set up in 1993 to promote positive attitudes towards home-school cooperation and to encourage the establishment of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs). Up to 2007, more than 1 300 PTAs had been established to foster home-school cooperation in a sustained way. In the 2007-08 school year, the EDB had funded the PTAs to organise about 2 550 school-based and district-based parent education activities.

School Business Partnership

In 2005, the EDB launched the Business-School Partnership Programme to lead students out of the classroom to gain a wider perspective of society and hands-on business learning experience. In 2007, more than 150 business firms participated in the programme, organising more than 260 activities, such as workplace visits, workshops on entrepreneurship, trade fairs, job shadowing and work attachment, benefiting more than 16 000 students.

Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education

The Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education was set up to advise on civic education and to implement activities in conjunction with the Government and parties concerned to promote civic education outside schools. In 2007, the committee concentrated its efforts on good citizenship, civic responsibilities, building an integrated and harmonious society, family cohesiveness, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and enhancing a sense of national identity and understanding of the Basic Law.

The committee ran a website to promote various civic education themes. Other promotional activities included manning a telephone hotline to relay stories about good civic practices and holding an exhibition of literature and other publicity materials on themes such as 'harmonious society' and 'Olympic spirit' as well as civic education materials.

During the year, the committee completed a survey on Hong Kong companies' corporate culture and values, their policies and practices, as well as their awareness of, and views on, corporate citizenship. The committee also organised a meeting, entitled 'Adding Value to Your Business — Seminar on Corporate Citizenship 2007', which was attended by representatives from business associations, corporations and non-governmental organisations.

The Working Group on National Education, comprising members of the committee and the Commission on Youth, produced the fourth series of TV APIs (Announcements in the Public Interest) entitled 'Our Country Our Glory' which used the national anthem as the theme music. In addition, the committee organised a territory-wide Basic Law Video Production Contest, jointly with the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, Department of Justice, Education Bureau and Radio Television Hong Kong, which carried the slogan 'learn the Basic Law, know your rights and duties'. These events were complemented by a series of workshops.

The committee also continued to run the Community Participation Scheme to encourage community organisations to carry out civic education activities at the district level. To create a stronger impact, the scheme adopts a new topical theme each year. The theme for 2007 was 'harmonious community'.

Commission on Youth

The main task of the Commission on Youth is to give advice on matters concerning young people. It initiates studies about them, helps improve services provided for young people and serves as a point of contact for exchange programmes with international youth organisations. The Government works closely with the commission to achieve these objectives.

The commission has published a report entitled *Youth in Hong Kong — A Statistical Profile 2005* which provides a broad range of data and useful material on matters such as poverty, substance abuse, unemployment, human capital, cultural capital and social capital.

To follow up on the findings of the first-ever benchmarking survey of the civic engagements and social networks of Hong Kong's young people, a further study was conducted to track Hong Kong young people's accumulation and development of social capital.

The commission continued to implement youth programmes to bring out and cultivate young people's potential. These included the International Youth Exchange Programme aimed at broadening young people's outlook and world perspective. During the year, three groups comprising 51 youth delegates visited Britain, Ireland

and Singapore under the programme. The commission played host to 46 young people from Britain, Ireland and Singapore who made reciprocal visits to Hong Kong.

The commission continued to run the Community Participation Scheme for Organising Study Tours to the Mainland to enhance young people's awareness and understanding of their home country, foster exchange with Mainland people and strengthen their sense of national identity. In 2007, the commission sponsored 169 study tours to the Mainland.

The Charter for Youth spells out clearly the principles and ideals of youth development.

Websites

Education Bureau: www.edb.gov.hk

Home Affairs Bureau: www.hab.gov.hk