
Chapter 4

Optimising Our Demographic Structure And Attracting Talents

Preamble

Advanced economies around the world face the common problem of an ageing population. Hong Kong is no exception. While the birth rate in Hong Kong is the world's lowest, our people's life expectancy is one of the world's longest. As the generation born in the post-war "baby boom" is entering old age, the proportion of the old-aged population in Hong Kong will continue to rise over the next two decades. An ageing population will have a far-reaching impact on the economy, health care, welfare, retirement protection, education and public finance. We need to prepare for this challenge with early planning. Therefore, we will take prompt action to promote health care reform, devote more resources to health care and tackle the issue of long-term health care financing.

On education, we will continue to raise the quality of education and upgrade our human capital, encourage more outstanding non-local students to study in Hong Kong and work here after graduation, and attract more talents to Hong Kong with a view to optimising our demographic structure.

New Initiatives

We will:

- Provide free senior secondary education for all students in public sector schools with effect from the 2008-09 school year. By the time the New Senior Secondary academic structure is implemented, public sector schools will be providing 12 years of free education. We will also provide, with effect from the 2008-09 school year, full subvention for full-time courses offered by the Vocational Training Council for Secondary 3 school leavers. This will provide senior secondary students with the avenue to pursue, free of charge, an alternative pathway outside mainstream education.
- Implement small class teaching having regard to prevailing circumstances, starting from Primary 1 in public sector primary schools from the 2009-10 school year and extending to higher levels progressively up to Primary 6 in the 2014-15 school year. We will consult stakeholders on the implementation details and finalise the arrangements before September 2008.
- Increase the respective ratios of graduate teacher posts in public sector primary and secondary schools by two phases, i.e. to 45% and 80% in the 2008-09 school year and to 50% and 85% in the 2009-10 school year to raise the status and professional standards of teachers for enhancement of the overall quality of education.
- Create a new deputy head rank in public sector primary schools as soon as possible to enhance the quality of primary school education services.

- Implement measures to develop Hong Kong as a regional education hub to attract and retain non-local talents. These include increasing the non-local student quota for publicly-funded programmes, allowing admission of non-local students for short-term studies at Hong Kong higher education institutions, establishing a scholarship endowment fund of \$1 billion, allowing non-local students to take up part-time work, internships and summer jobs, and facilitating non-local students to stay and contribute to the Hong Kong community upon graduation.
- Make available a number of greenfield sites for the development of new international schools or the expansion of existing schools.
- Conduct a pilot project to purchase primary care services from the private sector in Tin Shui Wai North for certain patient groups to enhance the existing provision of public general out-patient services and explore the feasibility of Public-Private-Partnership.
- Develop a comprehensive strategy to prevent and control non-communicable diseases and enhance health education to improve the population's health.
- Study how to enhance professional training and improve working conditions for medical and health care practitioners, and facilitate professional development.
- Strengthen the regulation of Chinese medicine, and enhance the integration of the Chinese medicine profession into the public health care system.

- Explore other Public-Private-Partnership initiatives to facilitate integration of the public and private health care sectors, promote healthy competition for service quality and professional standards, and provide more choices for the public.
- Review the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme and put in place the review recommendations.
- Step up the promotion of various talent admission schemes and streamline their application procedures.

On-going Initiatives

We are:

- Reviewing the population policy in the light of advice from the Council for Sustainable Development and the Hong Kong Population Projections 2007-2036.
- Encouraging and promoting public policy research in higher education institutions as a means to improve our policy-making capabilities, in particular the quality of policy research. We will extend the Public Policy Research Funding Scheme for four years until 2011-12.
- Making substantial investment in education (accounting for 23% of total government expenditure in 2007-08) to enhance the quality of our young generation, promote social mobility, and meet the needs and challenges of a changing economy.
- Enhancing the quality of pre-primary education by progressively increasing the level of direct fee subsidy for eligible parents and providing financial support for teachers' professional upgrading through the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme which has been up and running starting from the 2007-08 school year.
- Planning with four remaining primary schools to turn into whole-day schooling.

- Implementing the revised Secondary School Places Allocation System to students proceeding to Secondary 1 in September 2007 and thereafter. Preparing for the implementation of the revised Medium of Instruction arrangements for secondary schools from September 2010.
- Implementing specialised teaching in English, Mathematics and Chinese subjects from the 2007-08 school year onwards after the creation of permanent teaching posts in public sector primary schools in the 2006-07 school year.
- Broadening the range of school-based professional support programmes for kindergartens, primary and secondary schools to help them take forward education reform initiatives.
- Transforming senior secondary and higher education through professional capacity building and supporting institutional preparation to implement the changes from 2009.
- Implementing a qualifications framework by phases through the formation of industry training advisory committees to develop competency-based qualifications for individual industries, and developing a quality assurance mechanism to underpin the qualifications framework.
- Establishing the Academy for Gifted Education to develop the potential of students with exceptional talent by providing more structured, articulated and challenging off-site programmes and promoting the concepts and practices of gifted education.

- Improving the language standards in Hong Kong by implementing the Action Plan recommended by the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research, including professional upgrading of language teachers, enhancing the quality of English teaching at pre-primary level, and creating a conducive language learning environment in collaboration with the mass media.
- Strengthening support to teachers through the provision of professional development opportunities and a professional preparation grant for creating space for teachers to attend professional development programmes for the New Senior Secondary Curriculum.
- Promoting overseas exchange programmes to nurture students' global perspective and encouraging their participation in international events and activities.
- Participating in the work of the Standing Committee on Legal Education and Training to keep under review and make recommendations on the system and provision of legal education and training in Hong Kong, including the provision of vocational training of prospective legal practitioners.
- Updating and enhancing our work in the prevention and control of infectious diseases through amending the Quarantine and Prevention of Disease Ordinance and seeking continuous improvement to our infectious disease surveillance, control and notification system.
- Developing a multi-pronged strategy to minimise the risk of avian influenza outbreaks, including the development of a poultry slaughtering and processing plant.

- Continuing our efforts in tobacco control through the multi-pronged approach of publicity, promotion, education, legislation and taxation, and introducing a draft legislation to provide for a fixed penalty system to strengthen enforcement of the smoking prohibition under the Smoking (Public Health) Ordinance.
- Promoting healthy eating habit among school children to protect the public from life-style diseases.
- Enhancing the cancer surveillance regime.
- Further to the consultation after issuing the discussion paper “Building a Healthy Tomorrow” in 2005, planning to further consult the public on proposals for health care reform including financing arrangements in late 2007. These proposals include enhancing primary health care; addressing the present imbalance in the public and private health sectors; exploring Public-Private-Partnership both in care services and in the development of medical centres of excellence; developing a territory-wide patient-oriented electronic health record; proposing supplementary financing arrangements such as medical savings and medical insurance in addition to Government’s commitments to increase health care spending to ensure the sustainable development of our health care system.
- Working out a sustainable long-term funding arrangement for the Hospital Authority (HA) to ensure the continual provision of quality public health care services.
- Further expanding the HA’s “Electronic Patient Record Sharing Pilot Project” to allow more private hospitals, practitioners, residential care homes for the elderly and other relevant institutions

to view their patients' medical records kept at HA upon the patients' consent with a view to promoting sharing of patients' records.

- Enhancing primary medical care for the public through the introduction of family medicine in public general out-patient clinics and the promotion of the family-doctor concept in the community.
- Preparing for the establishment of five more public Chinese Medicine clinics before early 2009.
- Enhancing community mental health support and outreach to raise general awareness of mental health and to promote early intervention of mental health problems.
- Launching a Central Organ Donation Register (a centralised and computerised database for voluntary registration by organ donors of their wish to donate organs after death) and promoting registration for organ donation among the public through collaboration with relevant organisations.
- Conducting a regulatory impact assessment on the statutory framework in respect of regulating medical devices and consulting stakeholders in the process.
- Exploring the establishment of multi-partite medical centres of excellence in paediatrics and neuroscience, which would raise professional standards and enhance patient care through cross-fertilisation of expertise, enhanced research and training.