

Message

The past year has seen the launching of a wide range of initiatives and reforms by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government to enhance the quality of education in Hong Kong. We are fully committed to maintaining the momentum of these new initiatives in the coming year. We will take further steps to achieve our targets in various domains.

This booklet describes in clear and concise terms a package of measures in pursuit of our Policy Objective of providing quality education. These include our efforts in promoting the application of information technology in schools, improving the learning environment, enhancing the professionalism of our teaching force, enabling students to obtain better language skills, improving the system of student assessment, and enhancing financial support for needy students. The Quality Education Fund will continue to function as an efficient channel of resources for innovative initiatives, and we will devote new efforts to improve the management of the Education Department and to review the entire academic structure of Hong Kong, so as to ensure continuous improvement to our education system.

Education is the single most important investment we can make for our future, and one that is sure to bring fulfilling rewards in the years to come. I hope that the education sector, the teaching profession, parents, the business sector, and the whole community will join hands with us to deliver the programmes set out in this booklet, and to give our young people the education they deserve.

I and my colleagues in the Education Department, the Secretariat of the University Grants Committee and the Student Financial Assistance Agency, with the support of the Vocational Training Council, the Hong Kong Examinations Authority and all relevant advisory boards and committees, are determined to meet the targets for the Key Result Areas set out in this document.

I welcome your comments and suggestions on this document.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W P Wong', with a small flourish at the end.

(Joseph W P Wong)
Secretary for Education and Manpower

Quality Education

Our Policy Objective is to ensure that young people in Hong Kong receive an all-round quality education to prepare them for life and work and to provide them with an aptitude towards lifelong learning.

Our indicators in pursuing this Policy Objective are the result of periodic surveys, assessments and other feedback on the performance of our students and graduates in all the major domains of education.

Key Result Areas (KRAs)

To ensure that this Policy Objective can be achieved, we must deliver results in a number of key areas, that is, we must –

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The following sections of this booklet explain the importance of these KRAs, describe the broad thrust of our efforts, and outline the indicators which we are using to assess progress. Each section lists the new key initiatives being taken to achieve our objectives and pinpoints the agency accountable for each initiative and the specific targets which we intend to meet.

I

Support school-based management and innovative initiatives

Our education system has served us well but as we move into a new era, we must be responsive to changing needs. This requires us to be innovative about our teaching methods and management.

In January 1998, we set up a \$5 billion Quality Education Fund (QEF) which finances worthwhile one-off projects for the promotion of quality education in schools. A QEF Steering Committee, under the Education Commission, manages the Fund. As at end August 1998, 510 projects involving grants totalling \$333 million have been approved. The projects seek to promote the quality of teaching and learning, develop all-round education and improve school-based management, benefiting more than 500 000 students.

Since 1991, we have been encouraging all schools to practise school-based management to enhance quality culture, flexibility, transparency and accountability. At present, 365 or 30% of all schools practise school-based management. They are provided with additional resources to cover expenses on launching management changes, conducting staff development programmes, and producing school documents.

Indicators

The indicators we will use to measure progress in this area are –

- the number and effectiveness of ongoing QEF projects; the effectiveness will be measured by achievement of goals set by the applicants
- the number and percentage of schools practising school-based management

Initiative	Target
<p>To provide each public sector school with an annual supplementary grant (on average, \$120,000 per primary school and \$155,000 per secondary school) to cope with the additional administrative work arising from school-based management <i>(Education Department)*</i></p>	<p>To have all schools practising school-based management by 2000</p>

* the brackets denote the agency with lead responsibility for the initiative

II

Provide a quality learning environment for our children

To ensure that the potential of our young people can develop to the full, we must provide them with an environment conducive to an all-round education. We seek to ensure that all students have access to quality learning facilities and equipment.

We are pressing ahead with the implementation of whole-day primary schooling. We are progressively converting uni-sessional/bi-sessional schools to whole-day operation through building new schools or administrative measures, with a view to enabling 60% of our primary school pupils to study in whole-day schools by September 2002. Five new primary schools have commenced/will commence operation in the 1998-1999 school year. Through administrative measures, 23 uni-sessional / bi-sessional schools have commenced operation as 15 whole-day schools in September 1998.

In conjunction with the Architectural Services Department, we have revised the designs of secondary and primary schools to suit new developments such as the enhancement of IT in education and language training. The improved designs will be adopted for all new schools commencing operation from September 2000 where technically feasible. We are on target to abolish floating classes in Secondary 1 to 5 by the 2000-2001 school year, and continue to upgrade the facilities of existing schools under the School Improvement Programme.

Indicators

The indicators we will use to measure progress in this area are –

- the number of schools which have substantially improved their facilities in comparison with current standards
- the proportion of government and aided primary school pupils studying in whole-day schools

Initiatives

Targets

To implement whole-day primary schooling

(Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB))

- To enable 60% of primary school pupils to study in whole-day schools by September 2002
- Subject to regular review of a number of constraints (e.g. availability of sites and population changes), to work towards a tentative target of full implementation by the commencement of the 2007-2008 school year

To provide air-conditioning for schools for physically and severely mentally handicapped children

(EMB)

Subject to feasibility studies, to proceed with installation once resources are to hand



Develop and maintain a dedicated and professional teaching force

We must ensure that our principals and teachers have a strong sense of mission and suitable academic and professional qualifications to deliver quality education. We should also encourage and support continuous professional development in the teaching profession. To this end, we are providing training in IT for teachers. We are also setting language benchmarks and will be providing the necessary training to enable teachers to attain standards equivalent to or above these benchmarks. Our target is for all new teachers reaching the benchmarks by September 2000, all serving language teachers by 2005 and all other serving teachers all by 2008.

To improve the professional training and standards of teachers, we will develop the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) into a degree-awarding teacher training institute. As a first step, starting from the 1999-2000 academic year, we will progressively upgrade the 2 400 sub-degree pre-service teacher training places at the Institute to degree or above level in HKIEd or other tertiary institutions. In the current triennium, the reduction of some 900 sub-degree places will be met by a corresponding increase in degree or above level training places.

To give proper recognition to outstanding performance, we have proposed an award scheme for teachers and principals under the QEF. We hope that through the sharing of knowledge and experience of these outstanding practitioners, we can develop and nurture a quality culture. At the same time, as part of the implementation of school-based management, schools will be asked to introduce proper performance appraisal systems for principals and teachers to ensure appropriate feedback and enhanced accountability.

To further improve the quality and professionalism of teachers, the Government has undertaken to establish a General Teaching Council, a professional body for teachers.

Indicators

The indicators we will use to measure progress in this area are –

- the ratio of teachers who are professionally trained and/or degree holders
- the turnover rate of teachers
- percentage of teachers having attended in-service development courses

Initiatives

Targets

To upgrade teacher training by developing the HKIED into a degree-awarding teacher training institute

(Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB))

In the current triennium (i.e. from 1998-2001), the reduction of some 900 sub-degree places will be met by a corresponding increase in training places at degree or above level

To accelerate the provision of graduate posts in primary schools

(Education Department (ED))

- Provision of 1 640 posts each year from the 1999-2000 to 2001-2002 school years
- To achieve 35% graduate primary posts by the 2001-2002 school year

Initiatives	Targets
<p>To set up an award scheme for outstanding schools and teachers to be funded by QEF <i>(EMB)</i></p>	<p>To implement in 1998-1999</p>
<p>To provide a one-off grant of \$20 million for the setting up of the GTC <i>(EMB)</i></p>	<p>To have the grant ready in time to tie in with the establishment of the Council</p>
<p>To improve subject training in cultural subjects <i>(ED)</i></p>	<p>To provide subject training to 600 in-service teachers in the Music and Art and Craft subjects each year</p>

IV

Maximise the benefits of IT in education to enhance effectiveness of teaching and learning

IT in education has a key role to play in Hong Kong's pursuit of being a leader in the information age. Also, IT has tremendous potential to transform the way education is conducted, and to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning. We have therefore proposed a five-year strategy of applying IT in teaching and learning to ensure Government, schools, teachers, the IT sector, parents and the community can collaborate effectively to enable our students to benefit the most from the use of IT in the next few years. We will soon finalise the strategy and formulate an implementation plan in the light of comments received during public consultation.

To implement the measures already announced, we are working closely with the schools to overcome any technical problems in adopting more IT-based teaching and learning. We are carrying out site preparation works, and in accordance with the schools' readiness, installing additional IT facilities in schools and providing training to teachers in the use of IT by 2000. We will also set up a multi-media learning centre in about 100 secondary schools by 2000. An Information Technology Education Resource Centre has commenced operation in September 1998 to provide professional and technical support for schools and teachers. We will commission a consultancy study on the establishment of an education-specific Intranet by December 1998, and will evaluate the pilot scheme being carried out in 20 schools with a view to disseminating best practices in teaching and learning through IT. In due course, we will review the effectiveness of IT in education in enhancing the overall quality of teaching and learning.

Indicators

The indicators we will use to measure progress in this area are –

- percentage of students who achieve the attainment targets for their respective learning stages
- percentage of school curriculum delivered with assistance of IT
- percentage of teachers achieving competence at various levels

Initiatives

Targets

To formulate and implement a five-year strategy on the application of IT in education

(Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB))

Following public consultation on a proposed five-year strategy, we will finalise the strategy and formulate an implementation plan by December 1998

To enable the more IT ready and willing schools to progress at a faster pace

(Education Department (ED))

To provide an IT Co-ordinator for up to 120 schools from the 1999-2000 school year and up to another 130 schools from the 2000-2001 school year

Initiatives	Targets
<p>To enhance technical and training support for schools and teachers (ED)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To provide technical assistance to all schools on a contract basis ● To provide more training in IT for teachers
<p>To enhance students' access to computers (ED)</p>	<p>To provide an incentive grant for schools to make available their computers for use by students after the normal school opening hours</p>
<p>To enhance “connectivity”, including on-line communications and access to the Internet, for students and teachers (EMB)</p>	<p>To formulate proposals on IT networking for education purposes following completion of a consultancy study</p>

V

Enable our students to be bi-literate and tri-lingual

Confidence and competence in the use of Chinese and English are vital to maintain and improve Hong Kong's competitive edge regionally and internationally.

We are developing language benchmarks for all new and serving teachers. We are also exploring the development of language attainment targets for students. Additional native English-speaking teachers (NET) are being provided for public sector secondary schools, and up to two NET posts are being provided for secondary schools adopting Chinese as a Medium of Instruction (CMI). These schools are also provided with a one-off grant and a recurrent English language grant from the 1998-1999 school year. Putonghua will become a core subject in the curriculum starting from this school year and language improvement measures are being implemented in primary schools, secondary schools and UGC-funded institutions.

Indicators

The indicators we will use to measure progress in this area are –

- all language teachers to reach the established benchmarks by a specified date
- students to achieve higher standards in languages in examinations
- employers' feedback on language proficiency of school leavers and graduates, to be measured by regular opinion surveys

Initiatives	Targets
<p>To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the NET Scheme in public sector secondary schools <i>(Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB))</i></p>	<p>To provide an interim report on the effectiveness of the Scheme by 1999-2000 school year and a final report by 2000-2001 school year</p>
<p>To establish a Support Centre for teachers using Chinese as a Medium of Instruction <i>(EMB)</i></p>	<p>Centre to start operation by March 1999</p>
<p>To invite the Board of Education and Standing Committee on Language Education and Research to jointly consider how to further promote mother-tongue teaching and enable students to be proficient in both Chinese and English <i>(EMB)</i></p>	<p>To receive initial proposals by September 1999</p>



Improve the system of assessing students

Examinations and assessments play an integral part in education by measuring both performance and comparability with standards world-wide.

Our aim is for young people to have all-round development covering ethics, the intellect, the physique, social skills and aesthetics. Starting from the 1998-1999 academic year, our tertiary institutions have introduced a pilot scheme to admit a certain number of students who excel in areas other than academic performance. This will have a positive effect in encouraging schools to assess the all-round development of students. We will also ask the Education Commission, in its review of the academic structure, to have regard to and if necessary, make proposals for a system to assess the performance of students at various stages of education.

We are considering the replacement of the Academic Aptitude Test (AAT) as a means to enhance teaching and learning at primary level. Together with the Hong Kong Examinations Authority, we are reviewing the public examination system so that students' achievement will not be determined in a single examination. We are pursuing a balanced assessment of students' abilities conducted on a continuous basis including not only the acquisition of knowledge but also the attitude and behaviour of students. We will try to foster a proper appreciation of the aims of all-round education and the importance of comprehensive quality education.

Indicators

The indicators we will use to measure progress in this area are –

- an improved assessment system which gives proper recognition to the objective of all-round quality education
- all reviews completed and agreed changes implemented in time

Initiatives	Targets
<p>To further develop and test the feasibility of replacing the Academic Aptitude Test (AAT) with an Academic Ability Assessment (AAA), which puts more focus on the curriculum and higher order thinking</p> <p><i>(Education Department)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To develop a prototype for the proposed AAA by October 1999 ● To conduct parallel run of AAA and AAT in 2000 and 2001
<p>To review the public examination system to take account of students' performance at schools</p> <p><i>(Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB))</i></p>	<p>Hong Kong Examinations Authority (HKEA) to submit recommendations to EMB by early 1999</p>
<p>To ask the Education Commission to develop proposals for a system to assess the performance of students at various stages of education</p> <p><i>(EMB)</i></p>	<p>To receive preliminary proposals by 1999-2000</p>



Develop Hong Kong into a regional centre of excellence for higher education

It is important to Hong Kong's standing, both economically and culturally, that the higher education system and the graduates from that system should be of high quality. Our aim is to assure the quality, diversity and flexibility of the higher education system and to ensure its relevance to the changing needs of the community. We also aim at providing the working population with further opportunities for life-long continuing and professional education.

18% of the 17-20 age group now have access to first-year first-degree places and a further 6% have access to first-year sub-degree places. In the 1998-1999 academic year, the tertiary institutions have launched a pilot scheme to admit students based on their non-academic achievements as recommended by their school principals. Some 180 students were admitted under the Scheme.

In particular, we are aiming to build upon current strengths in tertiary institutions to develop "areas of excellence" which would be recognised internationally and which would justify substantial investment in state-of-the-art facilities. Such developments will enable our institutions to achieve and maintain recognition as world-class research centres in the international community and keep pace with rising international standards.

In the coming years, we will build 11 000 additional student hostel places so that undergraduate students can have the opportunity to stay in hostel for at least one year. This will enable the students to identify with their academic community and participate more in activities and will in turn sharpen their communication skills, nurture their leadership qualities and encourage independent thinking.

Indicators

The indicators we will use to measure progress in this area are –

- pace and extent in developing centres of excellence on a par with world standards
- recognition by regional or international academic and professional communities of the achievements in teaching and research in Hong Kong's higher education institutions
- number of non-local students, overseas academics, experts and professionals attracted to Hong Kong

Initiatives

Targets

To develop tertiary institutions further into centres of excellence
(*University Grants Committee (UGC)*)

UGC to consider detailed proposals from tertiary institutions in early 1999

To recruit 150 outstanding Mainland students to join the undergraduate programmes of the UGC-funded institutions
(*UGC*)

Recruitment in the 1998-1999 academic year for admission to the undergraduate programme in the 1999-2000 academic year



Ensure students do not have to worry about financial support in their studies

We aim to ensure that no student will be deprived of education for lack of means. We provide direct subsidies to kindergartens, free and universal education at primary and junior secondary levels, and heavily-subsidised senior secondary and tertiary education. While a substantial part of the cost of education is borne by the Government, there remain expenses that individual families are expected to contribute towards educating their children. For families which have financial difficulties, we provide assistance in meeting their share of the costs.

The Student Financial Assistance Agency provides financial assistance to needy students at all levels. Assistance for primary and secondary school students is in the form of remission of school fees, grants for the purchase of textbooks and/or subsidies for travel expenses. Eligible tertiary students are provided with grants and loans for their tuition fees, academic expenses and/or living expenses during the academic year. We are continually improving our administrative processes to ensure we provide timely, efficient and cost-effective assistance to eligible students.

Indicator

The indicator we will use to measure progress in this area is a system which provides timely and effective assistance to needy students.

Initiatives	Targets
<p>To extend the non-means tested loan scheme to students of the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK), part-time students pursuing publicly-funded programmes offered by University Grants Committee-funded institutions, Vocational Training Council-funded Technical Colleges, Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts and the Prince Philip Dental Hospital and full-time students of the Hong Kong Shue Yan College</p> <p><i>(Student Financial Assistance Agency)</i></p>	<p>Commencement in the 1998-1999 academic year, an additional 60 000 students will be eligible under the scheme</p>
<p>To relax the criteria of the means test of the student financial assistance schemes for pre-primary, primary and secondary school students to alleviate the financial hardship of very low income families in educating their children</p> <p><i>(Student Financial Assistance Agency)</i></p>	<p>Relaxation of the criteria to take effect from the 1999-2000 school year; an additional 22 000 students are expected to benefit</p>
<p>To make a one-off grant of \$50 million to the existing means-tested student loan scheme of the OUHK to meet increase in demand</p> <p><i>(Education and Manpower Bureau)</i></p>	<p>To disburse the grant to OUHK in the 1998-1999 academic year</p>

IX

Ensure continuous improvement to the education system

In order to improve the quality of education and to respond more effectively to the changing demands of the community, we are seeking to put in place an education structure which will meet the needs of Hong Kong for the 21st century.

Drawing on a wide range of expert advice, we recently completed a review of the education-related executive and advisory bodies, and of the Education Department. We have also set aside resources for the Education Commission to conduct research for the comprehensive review of academic structure in Hong Kong. Reference will be made to global education developments and experience drawn from education reforms in various parts of the world. We have also reviewed our private school policy with the aim of fostering a more vibrant and diverse private school sector and providing parents with greater choice.

Indicators

The indicators we will use to measure progress in this area are –

- a rationalised and effective system to deliver quality education
- all reviews completed and agreed changes implemented in time

Initiatives

To implement detailed proposals following the organisational and management review of the Education Department

(Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB)/Education Department (ED))

Targets

To start implementing proposals in early 1999

Initiatives	Targets
<p>To review the structure of all stages of education (<i>EMB</i>)</p>	<p>To complete the study by 1999-2000</p>
<p>To facilitate the development of a vibrant private school sector through enhancing assistance for private schools (<i>EMB</i>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To make available, on a pilot basis, land grant at nominal premium and interest-free capital assistance loan in 1999 for non-profit-making private schools which do not receive recurrent subsidy from Government ● To enhance capital and recurrent assistance for private schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) from the 1999-2000 school year ● To allocate to sponsoring bodies, on a pilot basis, government-built school premises for the operation of new DSS schools from the 2000-2001 school year
<p>To consider recommendations of a pilot study on the long-term integration policy for students with special needs (<i>ED</i>)</p>	<p>To complete consideration of recommendations by July 1999</p>