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Cosmopolitan Education

Overview

Government outlay on education exceeds HK\$50 billion (US\$6.5 billion) a year – the biggest item of Government expenditure – accounting for about a quarter of the recurrent annual budget. There is an acute awareness of the need to equip students with the knowledge and skills to compete in a competitive and globalised world, and reforms are introduced whenever needed to ensure Hong Kong is in step with global dynamics. “Lifelong learning” is one of the city’s fundamental benchmarks.

Education Reforms and Initiatives

Recent reforms have brought sweeping changes to the education system. Starting from the 2008/09 school year, free education was increased from nine to 12 years to include senior secondary education provided by public-sector secondary schools. Beginning the same school year, full subvention will also cover full-time courses offered by the Vocational Training Council for Secondary 3 school leavers. Over 95 per cent of Hong Kong’s youngsters already pursue senior secondary education or vocational education of an equivalent level, and this is expected to grow under the new system.

The school year 2009/10 will witness further initiatives. Small class teaching in public sector primary schools is to be introduced in phases, starting with Primary One classes. Additionally, the New Senior Secondary curriculum begins, leading to the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination, which will see its first graduates in 2012. These curriculum and assessment reforms aim to promote students’ whole-person development and lifelong learning.

To further encourage lifelong learning, the Government has established a seven-tier Qualifications Framework, underpinned by a sound quality assurance mechanism, to regulate and benchmark qualifications and learning programmes.

Improvements for Overseas and Mainland Students

New measures have been introduced to attract more non-local students to study in Hong Kong, including an increase in admission quotas, relaxed employment restrictions and the provision of government scholarships.

Non-local students taking full-time and locally accredited programmes at degree level and above will be allowed to take up study-related internships, part-time on campus jobs and full-time off-campus summer jobs. These students will also be allowed to stay for 12 months upon graduation to seek employment in Hong Kong.

Attractions for Overseas and Mainland Students

- Learning in a cosmopolitan, liberal and English-speaking environment.
- Attaining high-ranking, internationally recognise qualifications.
- International perspectives and employment opportunities.
- Geographical and cultural proximity eases adjustment and learning conditions for Mainland students.
- Learning on the door-step of the world’s fastest-growing country for overseas students.

Cradle of Young Talent

Hong Kong students have scored some notable successes in recent years. The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2007 recently announced that Hong Kong Primary four (P4) students rose to the world’s top and Secondary two (S2) students ranked fourth in mathematics. In science, P4 students ranked third and S2 students ranked ninth. The city’s 9-10-year-old students are the second-most literate in the world, according to the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study 2006, which assessed 215 000 fourth-grade primary students from 45 education systems. Additionally, the Programme for International Student Assessment 2006 found that Hong Kong’s 15-year-olds rank second in scientific literacy, third in reading literacy and third in mathematical literacy.



About 400 000 students in 57 countries / regions were randomly assessed.

In recent years, the International Astronomical Union has named a number of minor planets and asteroids after Hong Kong students following their prize-winning feats in the annual Intel International Science and Engineering Fair. Further academic success was achieved when a team of four students from Hong Kong Baptist University won the CFA Global Investment Research Challenge Championship 2008, beating competition from 80 universities worldwide.

In light of such achievements, the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education was set up in 2008 to provide information, advice and support for gifted students, parents and teachers.

International Schools

A vibrant international school sector is an important component of Hong Kong's status as Asia's world city. It helps to attract talented people, executives and their families from around the world and, at the same time, nurtures the next generation of home-grown talent.

Hong Kong has more international schools than any other Asian city, with 74 kindergartens, 46 primary and 24 secondary. These schools offer a familiar learning environment for students from all corners of the globe, and over 10 curricula, including British, American, Australian, Japanese, Singaporean, French, German, Korean, Canadian and the International Baccalaureate.

The Government intends to reinforce Hong Kong's status as a regional and international education hub. In order to

achieve this, vacant school premises and greenfield sites have been chosen for the development of new international schools and the expansion of existing ones. The Government is also seeking to enhance the provision of boarding facilities at these planned international schools.

World-class Universities

Hong Kong has 12 degree-awarding higher education institutions, including nine universities, a teacher education institution, a performing arts academy, and a post-secondary college.

In 2008, three Hong Kong universities were ranked among the "world's top 50 universities" by Times Higher Education World University Rankings. They are the University of Hong Kong (HKU), the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), which were placed 26th, 39th and 42nd respectively.

Hong Kong universities host Asia's best executive business management programmes and research projects – the EMBA offered by HKUST and CUHK ranked 1st and 15th respectively according to a survey by the Financial Times in 2007; MBAs offered by HKUST, HKU and CUHK ranked 11th, 58th and 73rd respectively in the Top 100 MBAs 2007 (Economist Intelligence Unit).

Currently, the standard duration of Hong Kong's undergraduate degrees is three years, but this is set to increase to four years starting in 2012, offering students a broader, deeper university experience.

In the 2007/08 academic year, there were nearly 8 000 non-local students receiving higher education in Hong Kong

Centres of Excellence

Hong Kong's institutions excel in different areas of international research and academic activity.

- Hong Kong Polytechnic University's Institute of Textiles and Clothing won the Gold Medal in the 32nd International Exhibition of Inventions, New Techniques and Products 2004.
- Led by CUHK, four tertiary institutions - CUHK, HKU, HKUST and Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) - have pooled their expertise to establish a research and teaching centre that excels in state-of-the-art plant and fungal biotechnology.
- HKU is a world leader in the study of liver diseases. The HKU liver transplant team conducted the first "adult-to-adult right lobe live donor liver transplantation" in the world.
- Hong Kong is a pioneer in computer navigation surgery for bone cancer patients. CUHK orthopaedic surgeons received an award at the International Society of Limb Salvage meeting in Germany in September 2007 for their groundbreaking work.
- CUHK achieved a breakthrough on non-invasive prenatal diagnosis to revolutionise the way of checking fetus health.
- HKU is globally the second highest cited institution for research on avian influenza, and is one of the nine World Health Organization H5N1 reference laboratories.

For more information, please visit www.edb.gov.hk