

Chapter 3 : Concluding Remarks

To keep up with the changing social environment and meet the social needs of the 21st Century, our system of education, including its mode, content and teaching methods, has to progress in tandem. The Education Reform proposed by the EC in 2000 aims to create more room for schools, teachers and students, so as to provide students with comprehensive and balanced learning opportunities, lay the foundation for life-long learning and achieve all-round development. To this end, we have launched an extensive reform over the past six years in areas from early childhood to school, to higher, and to continuing education.

The spirit of the Education Reform is "student-centred". Any reform measures must be targeted at students. With this in mind, we have initiated curriculum reform and introduced measures to enhance the language proficiency of students. We have also provided schools with various types of support, promoted the professional development of principals and teachers, improved school admission and assessment mechanisms and increased education opportunities for students. Now that the measures proposed in the blueprint of the Education Reform in 2000 have been implemented progressively, the major task ahead is to gear up for launching the New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education in 2009 and 2012 respectively.

With the launch of the Education Reform, we are glad to see the encouraging results brought about by the changes. According to the KLA Survey on the implementation of the curriculum reform, almost all the principals surveyed agree that the five essential learning experiences (Moral and Civic Education, Intellectual Development, Community Service, Physical and Aesthetic Development and Career-related Experience) help promote the all-round development of students effectively. The majority of schools also confirm that the four key tasks (Moral and Civic Education, Reading to Learn, Project Learning and Information Technology for Interactive Learning) help facilitate students' learning. Over 70% of primary and secondary school heads reported improvement in their leadership competence, professional development, collaboration with teachers and understanding of the curriculum development since the implementation of the reform. Over 70% of primary school heads and over 50% of secondary

school heads reported improvement in students' communication, critical thinking skills, creativity, self-learning, learning motivation and interest, sense of national identity, respect for others, sense of responsibility and overall learning performance.

We are also glad to see that Hong Kong students have won numerous awards in international competitions. Outstanding achievements, however, are not limited to a small number of students. The PISA by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development in 2003 showed that among 15-year-olds in 41 countries and regions around the world, Hong Kong students ranked first in mathematics, second in problem-solving skills and third in scientific literacy.

The New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education, which is based on the reform of the basic education level that started in 2000, will be implemented. By enhancing flexibility in the education system, we hope to provide students with more room and opportunities for learning. The NSS education allows students to continue their studies up to a level equivalent to the present S6 so as to enable them to meet the requirements of a new knowledge-based economy in Hong Kong. The new curriculum proposed for the senior secondary level also offers greater diversity, more choices and smoother multiple pathways for advancement, which can suit different inclinations, interests and learning needs of students. As the number of public examinations will be reduced, there will also be increased time for more effective learning. Four-year undergraduate programme at university will make room for the all-round development of university students.

To increase learning opportunities, Project Yi Jin and various post-secondary programmes have provided students with more channels to pursue further studies. The overall percentage of the relevant age cohort receiving post-secondary education has increased from about 33% in the 2000/01 school year to 66% in the 2005/06 school year.

Experience over the past six years tells us that education reform is in no way an easy task. However, according to the data collected and on-site observation, positive and encouraging changes are taking place in such areas as student learning and performance, professional development of teachers, teaching

effectiveness and school culture. Hence, we believe that our Education Reform is progressing in the right direction and should be continued.

There are still many challenges ahead. Our secondary schools, while preparing for the implementation of the NSS in 2009, have to deal with the problem of a declining student population. This problem, which currently affects student intake in primary schools, will eventually have impact on the secondary school sector and inevitably cause anxiety and worries to school heads and teachers. In addition, the changing social climate and family structure will make educating our younger generation more and more complicated. We must show our care and concern for the frontline educators who are facing difficulties during the process. We must provide them with adequate support and acknowledge their efforts. As a major advisory body, the EC will continue to monitor the progress of the Education Reform and coordinate the various other reform initiatives and measures. We will join hands with stakeholders in realizing the goal of the Education Reform.