

PROGRESS REPORT on the Education Reform (4)

December 2006



*Learning for Life
Learning through Life*

Education Commission
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of
The People's Republic of China

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Foreword

In this changing world of the 21st Century, our younger generation needs to be equipped with a broad based knowledge, high adaptability, independent thinking and the ability for life-long learning. The Education Commission, in its *Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong* released in 2000, aptly made "Learning for Life, Learning through Life" the aim of education for the 21st Century. For over six years, we have been putting in place progressively a diversified and sustainable system of education which provides more choices and opportunities, lays emphasis on quality and encourages life-long learning. Today we are happy to say that we have launched all the proposals laid down in the 2000 blueprint of the Education Reform.

The Education Reform is a mammoth and complex task. Reform proposals spanned across areas which are interrelated. Adjustments in one area may have significant impact on other areas. Changes will inevitably give rise to anxiety, difficulties and challenges. In implementing the reform initiatives, our educators have worked diligently with devotion and commitment. Expected improvements are now gradually taking place in teaching and learning in schools. Our efforts are bearing fruits. The Education and Manpower Bureau and the education sector seem to have sailed through the most difficult period in the establishment of rapport and partnership.

We will continue to uphold our motto, which is "all for the students, for all students and for the good of all students". We will also do our best to maintain a harmonious and trustful relationship with the education sector, working together with our partners to create a better future for our system of education. Here I would also like to give special thanks to our educators for their dedication and hard work in grooming our younger generation. I would also like to thank Members of the Education Commission who, under the leadership of Dr Rosanna Wong, have been providing us with valuable advice on different domains of education. We are grateful to Dr Wong and Members of the Education Commission for all they have done to improve the quality of education in Hong Kong.



Arthur K C LI

Secretary for Education and Manpower

In 2000, the Education Commission recommended reforming the education system, with the objective of constructing a system conducive to life-long learning and all-round development. These reforms can be seen in the context of keeping pace with the progress of a knowledge-based economy in Hong Kong in the 21st Century. With the concerted efforts of all parties concerned, all items of the Education Reform have gradually been implemented. The Education Reform has reached a new milestone, and is being consolidated.

The Education Reform was always going to be a challenging task. As with other places around the world, Hong Kong also had to face some testing times, as different sectors with differing foci and differing visions contributed their opinions. Along with a declining student population, and the changing social climate and family structure, it was inevitable that discussions would ensue, further exacerbating the difficulties. However, we are very pleased to have a group of dedicated and professional educators who have been working for the Education Reform, always keeping the best interests of students as their prime concern.

Looking back on what have been achieved over the past six years, we are reassured that the Education Reform is progressing in the right direction. We have no doubt that there are many more challenges to face, but we are confident of moving forward. We believe that this is possible with the education sector, parents, members of the public and the Government all working in partnership towards the provision of quality education to all young people in Hong Kong.

The Education Commission will continue to monitor the implementation of the Education Reform by coordinating various initiatives and maintaining open communication with different sectors in the community. As we go forward, I would like to pay special tribute to all the frontline educators whose hard work, commitment and dedication to their calling has been the backbone of education in Hong Kong.



Rosanna WONG Yick-ming
Chairman
Education Commission

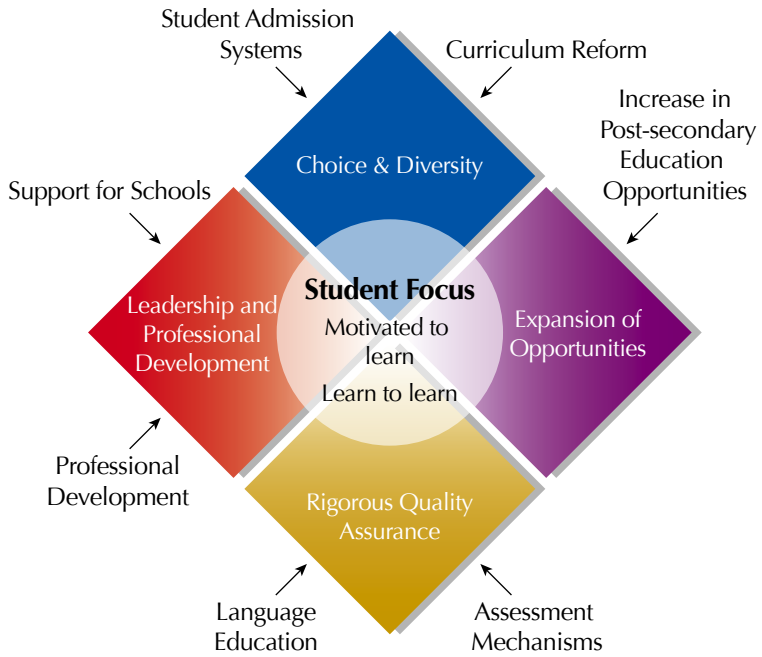
Chapter 1: Background

The 21st Century sees us facing substantial changes in the economic structure within a globalized world. To meet the challenges posed by these unprecedented changes, education systems and measures must progress in tandem to sustain the development of Hong Kong. It was in this context that the Education Commission (EC), after extensive consultation, submitted to the Government the *Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong* in September 2000. The proposals were accepted by the Chief Executive in his Policy Address in October 2000, which kicked off the reform of the education system in Hong Kong.

The Education Reform, which is student-focused, aims "to enable every person to attain all-round development in the domains of ethics, intellect, physique, social skills and aesthetics according to his/her own attributes so that he/she is capable of life-long learning, critical and exploratory thinking, innovating and adapting to change; filled with self-confidence and a team spirit; willing to put forward continuing effort for the prosperity, progress, freedom and democracy of their society, and contribute to the future well-being of the nation and the world at large". Concerted efforts and coordination of the community are required to put in place various Education Reform initiatives in a comprehensive and coherent manner.

Major Initiatives of the Education Reform

The Education Reform initiatives are wide-ranging and intertwining. There are, broadly speaking, seven major initiatives in the blueprint of the Education Reform - curriculum reform, assessment mechanisms, language education, support for schools, professional development, student admission systems and increase in post-secondary education opportunities. They can be summed up in the diagram below:



Chapter 2 : Progress of the Education Reform

Summary

Since October 2000, the Government has progressively implemented various reform measures according to the timetable as promulgated in the Education Reform. In the *Progress Report on the Education Reform* issued in January 2002, June 2003 and December 2004, the EC has reported to the public the progress of reform in the first four years. The implementation of the relevant measures at each stage of education in the past two years is summarized in the following table.

Stage of education	Reform Measures	Progress made in the past two years
Early Childhood Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To harmonize the monitoring structure and subsidy mode of kindergartens and child care centres.• Quality assurance in kindergartens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Various measures on the harmonization of pre-primary services have taken effect from the 2005/06 school year.• Seminars and workshops have been organized to enhance the self-evaluation skills of pre-primary practitioners. Focus inspections have prompted kindergartens to further develop their self-evaluation mechanism.

Stage of education	Reform Measures	Progress made in the past two years
Early Childhood Education		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pilot exercise on quality review of self-evaluation results of institutions was launched in March 2004, with the participation of kindergartens and child care centres. The pilot exercise was completed in July 2005. The results will be used as reference in formulating new measures in future.
School Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Through-train" mode. • To administer the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) under the Basic Competency Assessments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To date, 25 groups of public sector schools have adopted the "through-train" mode. • The TSA has been introduced to the Primary (P) 3, P6 and Secondary (S) 3 levels for the first time in 2004, 2005 and 2006 respectively.

Stage of education	Reform Measures	Progress made in the past two years
School Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) mechanism and the medium of instruction (MOI) arrangements for secondary schools. • To reform the academic structure for senior secondary education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EC has completed the review and their recommendations were accepted by the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) in December 2005. The revised SSPA mechanism is implemented with effect from the 2005/07 allocation cycle (i.e. applicable to students proceeding to S1 in September 2007 and thereafter) and the revised MOI arrangements for secondary schools will be implemented with effect from September 2010. • The EMB has announced in its report entitled <i>The New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education – Action Plan for Investing in the Future of Hong Kong</i>, published in May 2005, that the new academic structure for senior secondary education will be implemented in 2009. The four-year undergraduate programme will also be implemented in 2012.

Stage of education	Reform Measures	Progress made in the past two years
School Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To extend School-based Assessment (SBA) to subjects of the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) and Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SBA has been implemented in HKCEE Chinese History and History in 2006. SBA will be implemented in HKCEE Chinese Language and English Language and HKALE Computer Studies in 2007.
Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To broaden the admission criteria. To increase the opportunity for post-secondary education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The eight tertiary institutions funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC) are continuing their efforts in broadening their admission criteria gradually. The eight UGC-funded institutions announced on 5 July 2006 the general entrance requirements and programme specific requirements for admission to undergraduate programmes starting from the 2012/13 school year under the new senior secondary (NSS) and higher education academic structure. Assistance has been provided to students and education institutions to promote the development of self-financed post-secondary sector.

Stage of education	Reform Measures	Progress made in the past two years
Higher Education		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-secondary education opportunities are available to 66% of the relevant age cohort in the 2005/06 school year.
Continuing Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To implement the Qualifications Framework (QF) and its associated quality assurance mechanism¹ progressively to promote the development of continuing education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs) have been established for 12 industries. Their responsibilities include formulating the Specifications of Competency Standards which can be used as a basis for the development of relevant training programmes. • The <i>Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Bill</i>, which provides for the establishment of a credible quality assurance mechanism under the QF, was introduced into Legislative Council (LegCo) in July 2005. The Bill is being scrutinized by a Bills Committee formed by LegCo.

¹ The QF is a hierarchy of qualifications, of which the standards are clearly set out to order and support the qualifications. It provides clear information on the progression pathways. Qualifications must be quality assured in order to be registered under the QF. The Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation is tasked with the responsibility of assuring the quality of qualifications, other than those granted by the self-accrediting universities and their continuing education arms.

Section 1 : Curriculum Reform

Target

To enhance the knowledge and abilities of students and to help them develop positive values and attitudes, so as to establish a solid foundation for life-long learning and whole-person development.

Seven Learning Goals

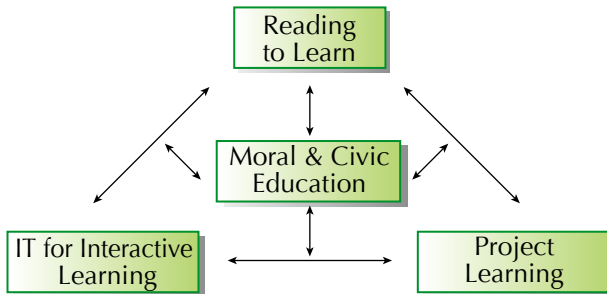
Following the aims of education and the school curriculum, the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) has set out the seven learning goals that students should achieve.



Short-term Targets of Curriculum Reform (2001-2006)

To achieve the above seven learning goals, schools should:

- Use the four key tasks to promote learning to learn;



- Infuse the priority generic skills (i.e. communication skills, critical thinking skills and creativity, etc.) into the learning and teaching of existing subjects/ Key Learning Areas (KLAs) so as to develop students' independent learning capabilities in the acquisition and construction of knowledge; and
- Formulate the whole-school curriculum plan (e.g. schools' five-year plan) by adopting the KLA curriculum framework and building on the existing strengths of schools.

(1) Four Key Tasks

Progress

- Schools have been recommended to use the four key tasks, namely Moral and Civic Education (MCE), Reading to Learn, Project Learning and Information Technology for Interactive Learning as entry points or means to achieve the learning goals and targets as set out in the KLA/subject curricula. The Quality Evaluation Centre, City University of Hong Kong was commissioned by the EMB to conduct a survey on "The Reform of the School Curriculum and the Implementation of Key Learning Area Curricula"² (KLA Survey) in October 2005, and as revealed from the result, over 90% of school heads indicated that they had used the four key tasks as the entry points for implementing the curriculum reform since the 2001/02 school year, with reading to learn having the highest percentage (over 99%). Most school heads perceived the use of the four key tasks helpful in enhancing student learning.

Tasks Ahead

- The implementation of the four key tasks can help students develop independent learning capabilities, which in turn will bring about a more holistic impact on effective learning. In sustaining the strengths with the use of the four key tasks in basic education, the EMB will continue to organize professional development seminars and workshops for teachers under the theme of the four key tasks in order to support schools in preparing for the reform of senior secondary education.

2 A total of 219 primary schools and 138 secondary schools took part in the survey.

(2) Curriculum Guides for Schools and Other Teaching Resources

Progress

- The *Guide to Pre-primary Education* has been revised and uploaded onto the EMB website. Printed copies have been sent to pre-primary institutions for teachers' reference.
- The *Provisional Final Draft of the Curriculum and Assessment (C&A) Guides* for all NSS subjects have been developed and uploaded onto the EMB website.
- A range of learning, teaching and assessment resources that support the school curriculum and curriculum reform, including the web-based resource platform for Liberal Studies, have been developed.

Tasks Ahead

- Development of the learning and teaching resources related to the NSS curriculum will be implemented in full scale.
- The final version of *C&A Guides* will be uploaded onto the EMB website in January 2007. Printed copies will be issued to schools shortly after.
- The EMB and Hong Kong Education City (HKEdCity) will develop more resources on the internet for easy access by teachers and schools. Moreover, more resources on learning and teaching as well as assessment at the basic education level will be developed to support the curricula of KLAs as well as cross-curricula development.

(3) Primary School Master/Mistress (Curriculum Development) (PSM(CD))

Progress

- Since September 2002, 610 posts of curriculum leaders in primary schools

(i.e. PSM(CD) or Assistant PSM(CD)) have been created. The post-holders are responsible for supporting primary school heads to lead curriculum development in schools.

- In addition, the curriculum leadership grant was provided to 58 primary schools with one to five classes to help them develop strategic plan/measures and implement curriculum reform.

Tasks Ahead

- With effect from the 2007/08 school year, the present five-year time limited primary school curriculum leader posts will turn to permanent posts and the curriculum leadership grant will also become a recurrent grant.

(4) Teachers' Professional Development and Training

Progress

- More emphasis on preparing schools for the NSS curriculum (including managing the changes involved), meeting the learning needs of students and stressing the paradigm shift from a teacher-centred to a student-centred pedagogy have been put on the professional development programmes for school heads and teachers. In addition, a series of programmes on changes in assessment practice and culture for improving learning and teaching has been provided.
- A network of schools with substantial school-based experience in gifted education has been formed under the Thematic Network in gifted education to further strengthen professional development of teachers in this area and to promote the development of gifted education.

Tasks Ahead

- Professional development for principals and teachers on the NSS curriculum will be provided.

- Priority will be given to enhancing the professional development programmes for school heads and teachers on themes covering the curriculum reform, the planning and implementation of whole-school curriculum, strategies to cater for learner diversity and the use of diversified modes of assessment for improving student learning. To address the needs of teachers, the programmes on MCE will also be enhanced. Moreover, there will be training on the infusion of critical thinking and creativity in KLAs and in gifted education.

(5) Provision of School-based Support

Progress

- At school level, teachers have been developed and nurtured as change agents in KLAs. A teacher network has also been formed.
- Various modes of collaboration and support have been provided to schools, e.g. regular and intensive school-based collaborative lesson preparation and action research, flexible advisory service, school-based seminars and workshops, etc. Collaboration with teachers has changed significantly in breadth as well as depth. In addition, there have been more frequent sharing sessions organized or coordinated for the whole school or at KLA/subject level.

Tasks Ahead

- School-based support services will continue to be provided for nurturing a culture for learning, collaboration and improvement in the school community. Effective practices will be explored to enhance the development of school-based curriculum.

(6) Promotion of Moral and Civic Education

Progress

- To support schools in the promotion of MCE, continued efforts have been made by the EMB in the provision of professional training and resource

support. In the 2005/06 school year, 64 training programmes, seminars and workshops were organized and attended by 2 188 MCE teachers. A series of MCE websites was developed with themes on national education, Basic Law education, flag raising, healthy life style, environmental education, moral education, life education, sex education, service learning, civic education, anti-soccer gambling, etc. to support schools in addressing current personal and social issues.

- New initiatives launched for strengthening moral and life education include letters to young people on how to lead a meaningful life by the former Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower, a project to publicize moral education through true stories of ordinary people, moral education resource books highlighting important core values and personal qualities as well as a celebrities talk series for the promotion of life education.
- In addition to the continuing organization of national education courses in Beijing for senior secondary students, talk series and study tours to Beijing for better understanding of contemporary China, Military Summer Camp for Hong Kong Youth, Dialogue Session on "Shenzhou VI" and summer camp interflow activities for secondary school students from Beijing, Hong Kong and Macao were also organized. Subsidies were also provided for programmes of the National Education Centre for strengthening national education.

Tasks Ahead

- To sustain the momentum in promoting MCE, at least one school leader in each school will receive intensive professional training related to MCE. On top of regular updating and development of new MCE websites in response to controversial social issues, resource support also includes the development of learning and teaching materials related to national education, moral education and life education, etc.
- On-going national education programmes will include the national education courses, National Day celebrations, talk series and study tours to Beijing for understanding of contemporary China, Military Summer Camp for Hong Kong Youth and Understanding our Motherland Programme.

- New initiatives will include the organization of a Symposium on National Education and Basic Law Education in 2007 and educational activities related to the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, promoting national education through the activities organized by Dr Sun Yat-sen Museum and the revamping of the curriculum for national education courses held in Beijing.
- To support the development of MCE as a component of other learning experiences under the NSS curriculum, relevant learning and teaching materials, talks, workshops, school-based support and focus group meetings will be provided and organized for schools.

Impact of the Curriculum Reforms

The KLA Survey in October 2005 was to ascertain, from the perspective of frontline practitioners, the progress of the curriculum reform and the implementation of KLA curricula in schools. The findings of the survey revealed that the curriculum reform has borne fruit:

- Over 75% of schools had already formulated or continued to adopt a five-year short-term strategy for whole-school curriculum development, implemented the school-based curriculum to better suit students' needs and formulated a whole-school homework and assessment policy.
- Schools had made substantial improvement in providing a broad and balanced curriculum for students and enhancing their whole-person development through the five essential learning experiences (Moral and Civil Education, Intellectual Development, Community Service, Physical and Aesthetic Development & Career-related Experience) and nearly all school heads perceived them as effective.
- Over 70% of primary and secondary school heads reported better/slightly better change in schools in the aspects of "school as a learning community" and "deployment of school resources".
- Over 70% of primary and secondary school heads perceived better/slightly better personal change in leadership competence, professional development,

collaboration with teachers and understanding of the curriculum development since the implementation of the curriculum reform.

- Over 70% of primary school heads and over 50% of secondary school heads reported student improvement in 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 since the implementation of the curriculum reform in the 2001/02 school year.

Section 2 : Assessment Mechanism

(1) Basic Competency Assessments

Target

The Basic Competency Assessments comprise the Student Assessment (SA) and the TSA. The SA is an online assessment programme to help teachers better understand the learning needs and problems of students in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics so that timely assistance can be provided to enhance their learning effectiveness. The TSA provides the school management with useful information on students' standards at the end of each key learning stage (P3, P6 and S3) in the three subjects mentioned above. Thus, the TSA facilitates feedback on learning and teaching, curriculum enrichment and improvement of teaching. The Government will provide support to schools in need of assistance.

Progress

- The online SA system has been made available to primary and secondary schools since June 2003 and January 2005 respectively. As at December 2006, more than 60% of primary schools and 80% of secondary schools have used the online system to assist learning and teaching. It has received international recognition and was awarded a silver medal for innovative excellence at the prestigious Geneva-based competition – le Salon International Des Inventions 2005.
- The TSA began at the P3 level in 2004. In 2006, all students at P3, P6 and S3 took part in the TSA. A total of some 220 000 students from 708 primary schools and 452 secondary schools took part in the TSA in 2006.
- An important milestone in the implementation of the BCA has been reached as quality information on the basic competencies of students at the end of key learning stages has been made available through the TSA.
- It is encouraging to note that there is continued improvement across the years in the percentage of students achieving basic competency at P3 and P6 in all the three subjects.

Tasks Ahead

- The development of the online item bank is on-going. The number of items in the item bank will be increased to facilitate learning and teaching in schools.
- Workshops will be organized for teachers to enhance their understanding of assessment for learning and to equip them with the skills to use TSA data to enhance learning and teaching.
- The provision of online SA and support services will be further disseminated to different stakeholders, including teachers and parents. Moreover, efforts will be made to enable them to have a better understanding of the objectives of the TSA.
- With a view to coming up with improvement measures, a review of the administrative arrangements will be conducted based on the experience of administering the TSA in the past three years.

(2) Public Examination Reforms

Target

To enhance the validity and reliability of the public examination system with a view to improving its interface with the curriculum reform and providing a more comprehensive assessment of students' performance.

Progress

- The HKEAA has continued to conduct seminars to enhance communication with teachers and to share with them the rationale underlying the setting of questions and what is expected of candidates. In addition, the HKEAA has continued to set appropriate questions for HKCEE and HKALE to put more emphasis on the assessment of candidates' ability to apply what they have learned to solve problems. A flexible approach in awarding marks has also been adopted to encourage independent and critical thinking.
- The HKEAA has reviewed the subjects in the HKCEE based on curriculum changes and needs. Two new subjects, namely Science & Technology and Integrated Humanities, and the merged subject of Computer & Information

Technology (from Computer Studies and Information Technology) were introduced in the 2005 HKCEE. Based on the CDC's proposal, the HKEAA has approved abolishing five HKCEE subjects and three HKALE subjects in 2007.

- The HKCEE Chinese Language and English Language examinations have been revised. Reading, writing, listening, speaking skills and integrated language skills will be assessed in the new examinations to be introduced in 2007. Standards-referenced reporting will also be adopted for these two subjects.
- The HKEAA has continued to extend SBA to more subjects for the HKCEE and HKALE. SBA has been introduced in HKCEE Science & Technology, Integrated Humanities, Computer & Information Technology, Visual Arts and HKALE Chinese Literature for the 2005 examinations; and in HKCEE Chinese History and History in 2006. SBA has been implemented in a total of 13 HKALE subjects and 13 HKCEE subjects in the 2005/06 school year.

Tasks Ahead

- SBA will continue to be extended to HKCEE Chinese Language and English Language as well as HKALE Computer Studies in 2007. The phasing in of SBA for the two HKCEE language subjects will occur over the three years 2007-2009. For 2007, about one third of schools have opted to submit SBA results for Chinese Language and English Language, and to have these results reported as part of the overall assessment of the subjects on the certificates of candidates.
- The HKEAA will continue with assessment development and research activities to further improve public examinations, e.g. by way of comparability studies between the results of different examinations.
- The HKEAA will work out plans for the implementation of onscreen marking in Chinese Language and English Language in the 2007 HKCEE.
- The HKEAA will continue setting appropriate questions in HKCEE and HKALE to assess students' ability to apply what they have learned to solve problems.
- The HKEAA will finalize the assessment framework of various subjects for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE) to be adopted in 2012.

- The HKEAA will finalize direct recognition of the current HKCEE and HKALE for admission purposes by North American universities (already secured for all key British and Australasian universities) and continue to work with relevant overseas bodies on securing advance recognition of the new HKDSE.

Section 3 : Language Education

Target

The language policy of the Government is to enable students and the working population to be biliterate (in written Chinese and English) and trilingual (in Cantonese, Putonghua and English).

(1) Building up a Professional Language Teaching Force

Progress and Tasks Ahead

- As recommended by the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) in 2003, the academic qualifications required for new language teachers³ have been enforced since the 2004/05 school year. To provide incentives for more serving language teachers to pursue further studies in the relevant language subject(s) that they teach, SCOLAR has allocated an additional \$300 million from the Language Fund into the Professional Development Incentive Grant Scheme for Language Teachers in April 2005. Since the commencement of the Scheme, over 8 000 applications for grants have already been received, involving funding of about \$200 million.
- In the 2006/07 school year, SCOLAR has launched a scheme to support English teachers in primary schools to attend overseas immersion study programmes in English-speaking countries for professional development in the teaching of English as a foreign language and an eye-opening experience on the new and different teaching methods and pedagogy. A total of 150 primary teachers from over 100 primary schools have participated in the scheme in the 2006/07 school year. In view of the encouraging response of teachers in the scheme, we would aim to continue the initiative in and beyond the 2007/08 school year, including consideration to extend it to English teachers in secondary schools as well.

3 Starting from the 2004/05 school year, new language teachers are required to be holders of a Bachelor of Education degree majoring in the relevant language subject or both a first degree and a Postgraduate Diploma or Certificate in Education majoring in that language subject. Those who do not possess the specified qualifications are required to acquire them within three to five years after their entry into the profession.

- To enhance the Putonghua proficiency of Chinese Language teachers, SCOLAR has been supporting serving Chinese Language teachers to attend four-week Putonghua immersion courses in the Mainland during the summer holidays. Up to the end of 2006, the initiative has already provided subsidies to about 1 100 teachers, involving study grants of over \$7.1 million.
- In the 2005/06 school year, SCOLAR launched a pilot scheme to provide training and support to kindergarten teachers responsible for conducting English lessons/activities. The pilot scheme has been a success – teachers taken part agreed that it has helped improve the quality of their English lessons/activities, as well as increase students' interests in the English language. In view of the positive results yielded, SCOLAR has allocated \$37 million from the Language Fund to extend the efforts by setting up a dedicated team for providing training and support in English education to around 150 to 200 kindergartens starting from the 2007/08 school year.

(2) Creating a More Motivating Language Learning Environment

Progress and Tasks Ahead

- Since the Task Force on Language Support was established in the 2003/04 school year, it has been expanding its support services. To meet with the demand of schools in support services in language education, the Task Force has been growing gradually. As at September 2006, it comprised 100 professional staff including officers openly recruited, teachers seconded from schools and Chinese language experts from the Mainland. The number of primary and secondary schools receiving intensive support in both Chinese and English languages has increased from just over 150 in 2004 to almost 350 in the 2006/07 school year. In the 2005/06 school year, the Task Force conducted over 200 professional development activities. According to schools' self-evaluation and an external review conducted by the Chinese University of Hong Kong, teachers considered the support services very effective in enhancing their knowledge about the language KLAs and the language-related curricula initiatives. They also thought that the support

services had a significant positive impact on the development of learning and teaching strategies, curriculum, the culture of reflection and collaboration and curriculum leadership.

- The importance of core teachers as change agents is being realized in the expanding use of networks to share experiences and learning materials. In particular, networks for Chinese debating and writing, English language arts and the teaching of Chinese language to non-Chinese speaking children are having encouraging results. To disseminate good practices to as many teachers as possible, the Task Force has delivered annual sharing events for both English and Chinese languages, produced four compendiums of exemplars of good practice, three CD-ROMs containing lesson plans, teaching materials and strategies, four newsletters containing strategies for teaching, as well as several smaller scale publications. These materials are also available on the website of the Task Force.
- To ensure the sustainability of the support measures, the Task Force has placed increased emphasis on curriculum leadership in 2006. This strategy aims to ensure that the reform measures are incorporated into the holistic planning of the school curriculum. In addition, the Task Force will continue to provide support in areas such as assessment for learning, the design of NSS curriculum for language subjects and the promotion of Putonghua. It will extend its scope of work to help individual schools improve their teachers' knowledge and skills required for implementing the curriculum reform. The Task Force will also further facilitate the teaching of Putonghua in schools, by assisting schools in the design of school-based Putonghua curriculum and creation of a diverse Putonghua-rich environment with a view to encouraging the use of Putonghua and enhancing competency.
- All public sector primary and secondary schools have participated in the Native-speaking English Teachers (NETs) Scheme. NETs are responsible for organizing and conducting activities in English and cultivating a reading culture among students. Moreover, they assist in the professional development of teachers in the schools. Separately, in the light of practical needs of some schools, schools have been provided with greater flexibility in terms of recruitment and deployment of teachers to further promote English language teaching.

- Through the use of the Language Fund, SCOLAR has been organizing or sponsoring a variety of co-curricular and community-wide language activities such as the English Festival, Putonghua Festival and the annual Hong Kong News Awards. The Committee also partnered with the mass media, say, to produce television programmes on language education, in order to better support language learning in schools and enrich the language learning environment outside schools. SCOLAR will continue its efforts to raise the motivation of students and public in language education through various co-curricular and community-wide language activities.
- SCOLAR will complete a research on conditions necessary for schools to make a successful switch to using Putonghua to teach the Chinese Language subject in 2007 and to implement measures to support schools interested in making such a switch.
- SCOLAR organized a debating competition for junior secondary students in the 2005/06 school year for the first time to raise their motivation for language learning, better train their skills of language usage (in particular in listening and speaking), sharpen their logical thinking capability and organization skills, as well as help them build up their self-confidence and a sense of team work. The competition allowed participation of students of S1 to S3 in large-scale debating activities. Workshops have also been provided for teachers for enhancing their skills in making use of debating activities in language education. Over 100 secondary schools applied to participate in it. In the 2006/07 school year, SCOLAR will continue to provide training and support to more schools interested in strengthening their language education through debating activities as well as to organize achievements sharing activities (e.g. debating camp, inter-school competition, etc.)

(3) Promotion of Reading

Progress and Tasks Ahead

- To promote reading to learn, which is one of the four key tasks in curriculum reform, the EMB has been supporting schools to align the promotion of reading with the strategic planning of schools' development. Focused school-based

support on reading to learn in curriculum planning and language teaching has been provided to schools in need. A promotion website, known as "Book Works", has been launched for all primary schools in Hong Kong. Talks on promotion of book reading in family had been organized.

- A two-year pilot project called Primary Literacy Programme – Reading for Key Stage 1 (PLP-R, KS1) was launched by the EMB in 104 primary schools on voluntary basis from the 2004/05 school year. The aim of the project was to foster the English language proficiency of students through a suitable literacy programme with a focus on reading, harnessing the experience and expertise of NETs in primary schools. The programme also supported parents in encouraging students to read at home. Building on the success of the pilot project, the EMB has extended the programme to another 67 primary schools on voluntary basis in the 2006/07 school year.
- Separately, SCOLAR has continued to support the Reading Ambassador and Reading Contract project organized by the HKEdCity since 2004. As at June 2006, 2 500 Reading Ambassadors have been trained to read and share with students of over 150 secondary and primary schools. About 1 500 of these Ambassadors are parents and 900 of them are students from tertiary institutions and secondary schools. The rest include some teachers-to-be and community leaders. The number of participating students in the Reading Contract project, under which they commit to reading at least ten books during summer holidays, has increased drastically from 43 000 in 2004 to over 300 000 in 2005.

(4) Medium of Instruction

Progress and Tasks Ahead

- The EC has completed the review on the MOI arrangements for secondary schools and its recommendations were accepted by the EMB in December 2005.
- The Government has injected \$900 million into the Language Fund to implement an English Enhancement Scheme in schools using Chinese as the MOI and a Support Scheme in schools using English as the MOI with a view to assisting them in raising students' English proficiency.

- Moreover, starting from the 2006/07 school year, schools using Chinese as the MOI may conduct extended learning activities in English at the junior secondary levels to provide students with the opportunities to use English as a learning tool.
- A study on extended learning activities conducted in English will be carried out to explore how these activities can be conducted effectively.

(5) Language Standards of Students

- Data collected in recent years indicate that the language proficiencies of Hong Kong students are gradually improving. Test results across key stages of education indicate the following –
 - In the TSA implemented in P3 and P6 respectively since 2004 and 2005, the percentages of students achieving basic competency in Chinese Language and English Language have been increasing continuously. As regards Chinese Language, the percentage of P3 students achieving basic competency has increased from 82.7% in 2004 to 85.2% in 2006; whereas that of P6 students has increased from 75.8% in 2005 to 76.5% in 2006. As regards English Language, the percentage of P3 students achieving basic competency has increased from 75.9% in 2004 to 79.4% in 2006; whereas that of P6 students has increased from 70.5% in 2005 to 71.3% in 2006;
 - The average score in Chinese Language of the Pre-S1 Attainment Test (i.e. attainment test for P6 students as they enter S1) has risen each year from 53.7 in 2001 to 60.3 in 2005. The average score in English Language has risen from 50.6 to 56.6 during the same period;
 - The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2003 shows that 15 year-old Hong Kong students are among the best learners in the world. In reading results for the mother tongue, only four countries and regions were statistically ahead of Hong Kong and that we were among a second group of 14 countries and regions where statistical difference is not significant; and

- Among all university graduates who have taken part in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) on a voluntary basis, their average score has been assessed at above Level 6 (Competent Users) and on the rise in the past few years. Meanwhile, according to an employer survey conducted by the Hong Kong Policy Research Institute on SCOLAR's commission, the expectation of the English competency of local graduates by a majority of employers in Hong Kong was below Level 6 or between Levels 6 and 7 at IELTS. It shows that most of the local graduates are on average meeting employers' expectation in their English proficiency.

Section 4 : Support for Schools

Target

Different sectors of the community are willing to provide support to schools and teachers in the implementation of the Education Reform. Apart from providing direct support to schools in terms of professional support and resources, the Government is also promoting collaboration between schools and other sectors of the community so as to provide our students with richer and more fulfilling learning experiences.

(1) On-site Support to Schools in Curriculum Development

Progress

- In the 2005/06 school year, different modes of on-site support to facilitate school-based curriculum development were provided to about 300 primary schools. Approximately, 6 000 school-based professional meetings and activities were conducted between the external supporters and teachers whereby curriculum-related issues were discussed and intervention strategies developed and tried out in the classrooms. A curriculum leaders learning community has also been developed with 124 participating schools. In a survey conducted in the 2005/06 school year, about 84% of the 925 primary teacher respondents rated the support services provided by the EMB as "satisfactory" or "very satisfactory".
- In the 2005/06 school year, school-based curriculum development support services were provided to 112 secondary schools. About 600 school-based professional meetings and activities were conducted, the main focus of which was on the four KLAs, namely Mathematics Education, Science Education, Technology Education and Personal, Social and Humanities Education. In addition, a wider range of services catering for the different needs of secondary schools and a number of teacher networks are under development. Feedback from teachers on the support services were in general favourable.

Tasks Ahead

- In addition to the development of practical and contextual pedagogical strategies to enhance the learning of students at the classroom level, special focus will be given to the interface between the primary and secondary education as well as the vertical progression and horizontal coherence of the school-based curriculum based on the integral conceptions of teacher development and curriculum development at the school level.
- The school-based curriculum development support programmes will be expanded to cover more secondary schools with special focus on the preparation of students for the NSS curriculum and devising effective strategies for teachers to cater for the diversity in student learning. Different strategies are being formulated to meet the school-based curriculum development challenges and enhance teacher capacity through their collaboration with external support officers and with peers in the school/teacher networks.

(2) Capacity Enhancement Grant (CEG)

Progress

- In the 2005/06 school year, the Government committed to providing schools with long-term support by making CEG a recurrent provision. Moreover, an additional one-off provision of \$1.65 billion for a period of three years has been provided for schools with a view to enhancing the capacity of teachers to cope with the implementation of SBA and TSA at the initial stage and further relieving teachers' workload.

Tasks Ahead

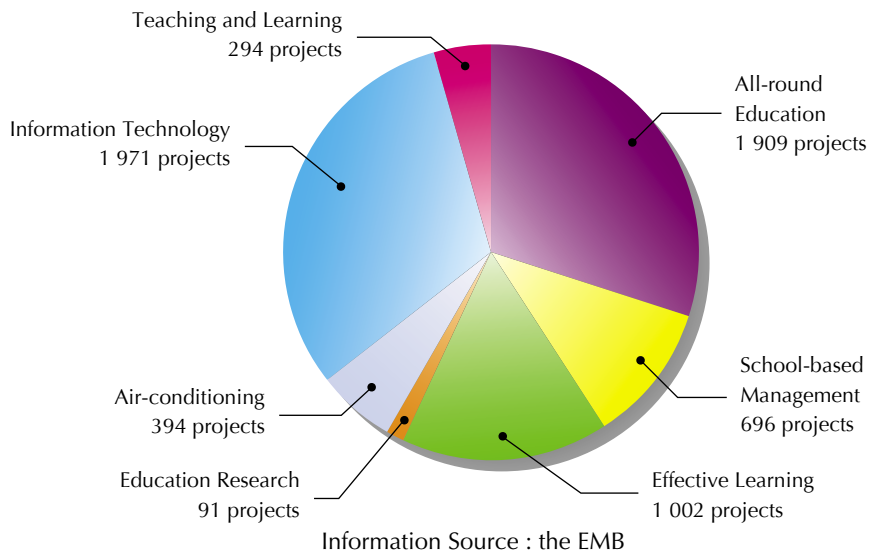
- The EMB will continue to monitor the effective use of CEG.

(3) Quality Education Fund (QEF)

Progress

- The QEF has completed nine rounds of grant allocation. A total of 6 357 projects have been approved with funds amounting to \$3.35 billion. Over 1 800 schools have benefited from the projects.
- The "priority themes" approach is adopted up to the ninth call for application to give a sharper focus to the QEF in support of the Education Reform. Under this approach, applications that carry a designated theme would receive priority consideration. Themes which have been designated so far include learning and teaching effectiveness, school-based management, research on assessment for learning, addressing diverse learning needs of students and civic and moral education, etc. Please refer to Table (3.1) below for details.

Nature of the Projects Approved by the QEF in the Past Nine Rounds



Information Source : the EMB
Table (3.1)

- To relieve teachers' workload and their stress in meeting the application deadline, the QEF has adopted a year-round mode of application with effect from September 2006. The funding scope has also been expanded.

- The QEF has provided funding support for the Chief Executive's Award for Teaching Excellence (ATE) which was first launched in November 2003. The aim of the Award is two-fold: to recognize accomplished teachers who demonstrate exemplary teaching practices to enhance their professional image and social status, thereby gaining society's recognition of the teaching profession; and to foster a culture of excellence and collaboration in the teaching profession. The first two ATEs, held in 2003/04 and 2005/06 respectively, covered primary, secondary and special school teachers teaching subjects under the Chinese Language Education KLA, the English Language Education KLA, the Mathematics Education KLA and the Science Education KLA as well as kindergarten teachers involved in language development. So far, 86 teachers have been selected for the Award and 123 for the Certificate of Merit.

Tasks Ahead

- The QEF will continue to provide special matching grants for schools to enhance their IT infrastructure.
- The QEF will continue to promote systematically the good practices and products of successful projects on different themes to the education sector for experience sharing and reference. Thematic networks will be formed and research and development of project outcomes will be commissioned to enhance the promotion and sustainable development of good practices derived from worthwhile projects.
- The QEF will continue to sponsor the ATE. The ATE (2006-2007) is open to teachers of the Arts Education KLA and the Personal, Social and Humanities Education KLA.

(4) School-based Professional Support (SBPS) Programmes

Progress

- The EMB has scaled-up the modes and scope of school-based professional support in facilitating schools to enhance the learning and teaching at KLA levels. The Pre-primary Education Support Section was set up in September 2006 to extend the on-site support services to the pre-primary sector. The nature of the support service is tailored to the identified needs of individual schools. Site-based professional support for principals and teachers is provided according to the different needs of the schools in order to assist them in implementing the different initiatives in the Education Reform.
- The SBPS Programmes are built on projects which have been field-tested with good results and recommended by co-workers. The following 5 programmes are included under the SBPS Programmes:
 - **Principal Support Network**

Experienced principals are seconded on a part-time basis to form a principal network providing collegial support to other principals. Based on identified school needs, individual principals within this network can form smaller networks on selected themes to conduct professional sharing activities.
 - **School Support Partners (SSP) Scheme (Seconded Teacher Scheme)**

Excellent serving teachers are seconded on both full-time and part-time basis in support of learning and teaching at schools. The teacher secondees are attached to a number of schools as teacher mentors. Training and induction programmes are provided to ensure that the SSP can provide high quality support.
 - **Professional Development Schools (PDS)**

A number of effective schools with breakthrough practices in KLAs and whole school pedagogical issues are designated as PDS. The PDS build a network to foster structured interactions amongst the participating schools and to provide support for these schools.

▪ **University-School Support Programmes**

School support services are commissioned to tertiary institutes with proven track records in delivering high quality school-based support to address schools' identified needs and to empower frontline educators in capacity building, for taking forward a number of education initiatives.

▪ **Collegial Participation in External School Review (ESR)**

Serving principals and experienced teachers are encouraged to engage in the ESR of another school to enhance participants' understanding of the school self-improvement processes and techniques and bring additional expertise to the ESR team.

- In the 2005/06 school year, the EMB has produced three publications and two CD-ROMs to share with schools the experience in participating in the SBPS Programmes.
- In the 2006/07 school year, there are 424 schools participating in the SBPS Programmes.

Tasks Ahead

- The above SBPS Programmes will continue and be refined where appropriate. It is expected that more schools will benefit from these on-site support services in the coming years.
- Upon the establishment of the Pre-primary Education Support Section, school-based professional support will be provided to kindergartens and kindergarten-cum-child care centres to help schools address the developmental and educational needs of children.

(5) Parent Education and Home-School Co-operation

Progress

- The Committee on Home-School Co-operation (CHSC) has been promoting parent education in kindergartens and primary and secondary schools through home-school co-operation interface. As at the end of the 2005/06 school

year, about 1 400 schools have set up their parent-teacher associations (PTAs). Federations of PTAs (FPTAs) have also been formed in 16 districts. The PTAs and FPTAs have organized parent education programmes and home school co-operation activities at both the school level and district level.

- To strengthen communication with parents, to help parents understand the latest educational policies and to provide useful information on learning and teaching, the EMB has committed itself to organizing various parents' talks, to delivering *e-Bulletin for Parents* and to issuing *Parents' Newsletter* half-yearly. The parents' talks have wide-ranging topics, including Primary One Admission (POA), SSPA, Liberal Studies under the NSS academic structure, etc. The talks were well received by parents. A total of 22 sessions of parents' talks including the annual CHSC symposium, eight Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM) Forum with parents on regional basis and 13 talks on different topics were organized in the 2005/06 school year. For the 2006/07 school year, 11 sessions of parents' talks including four SEM Forum with S1 parents on regional basis have been organized as at November 2006. From September 2005 onwards, *e-Bulletin for Parents* covering hot topics in education, useful information and the latest education policies has been issued to parents via email.

Tasks Ahead

- Building on its existing strength, the CHSC will strive to initiate genuine partnership between parents and schools by encouraging more involvement of parents and teachers as well as promoting the sharing of good practices on home-school co-operation and parent education among schools.
- The EMB will continue to organize various parents' talks and to publish *e-Bulletin for Parents* and *Parents' Newsletter* in the coming year with a view to providing parents with relevant information on education policies and enhancing their roles as stakeholders of education.
- The EMB has established communication channels with parents through radio programmes as well as organizing talks for parents at the school, district and territory levels. The EMB will continue to collaborate with FPTAs to enhance communication between the Government and parents.

(6) Support by Other Sectors

Progress

- The EMB has promoted the following activities with different Government departments and other sectors:

Organization	Support Activities
Social Services Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To provide support for newly arrived children by running induction programmes for them.• To implement the Understanding Adolescent Project in primary schools, through which a series of group, adventure-based and parent-child activities will be organized for the students identified with greater needs for guidance. The objective is to enhance students' resilience.• To assist needy students to join the activities of Uniformed Groups and the Hong Kong Award for Young People, funding is provided by the EMB to assist student members in purchasing uniforms and participating in camping/outing activities and/or joining leadership training courses.

Organization	Support Activities
Disciplinary Forces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In order to further enhance the concepts and effectiveness of the Smart Teen Challenge Project, the EMB has collaborated with the Hong Kong Police Force, Fire Services Department, Customs and Excise Department, Correctional Services Department, Immigration Department and Civil Aid Service to organize the Enhanced Smart Teen Project (the name of the Project was revised in April 2006). Through a series of discipline training and physical activities, the Project aims to develop students' self-discipline, confidence, resilience and collaboration skills.
Business Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Business-School Partnership Programme (Programme) launched by the EMB aims at helping S4 to S7 students understand their own abilities and potential with a view to planning for their future careers through cooperation between schools and the business sector. At present, there are over 130 industrial and commercial organizations participating in the Programme. Through participating in various activities like education forum, workshop, workplace visit, work attachment, etc., students will not only understand business operation and employers' requirements, but will also learn the appropriate work attitude and positive life values and ultimately achieve the goal of whole-person development.

Tasks Ahead

- The EMB will continue to encourage different Government departments and other sectors of the community to build up partnerships with schools so as to provide students with diversified and enlightening learning experiences.

Section 5 : Professional Development

Target

Frontline education practitioners are the key players in implementing the Education Reform. In support of the Education Reform, the Government strives to enhance the quality and professionalism of the teaching force through providing sufficient training and support as well as formulating appropriate professional standards. As school principals play a vital role in realizing the vision of providing quality education, the Government also places emphasis on enhancing the professional preparation and continuing professional development of principals, so that they can lead teachers and students in meeting the changes and challenges of the new millennium as well as in promoting collegial exchange and support.

(1) Teachers' Professional Development

Progress

- Following the issue of the document on *The Teacher Competencies Framework and the Continuing Professional Development of Teachers* in November 2003, and the setting up of a Steering Committee on Teachers' Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in March 2004, the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications (ACTEQ) conducted a comprehensive study in 2005 and issued *The Interim Report on Teachers' Continuing Professional Development* in April 2006. In the report, the ACTEQ reported a more thriving CPD culture where teachers and schools have been actively participating in all kinds of CPD activities and such activities are largely contributing to the betterment of student learning in schools. The ACTEQ also put forward interim recommendations to further enhance teachers' professional development.
- The ACTEQ has continued with its review of teacher preparation and conducted a study on the changing needs in schools. The Task Force on Initial Teacher Education has been set up to further look into the issue and to propose initial recommendations to the ACTEQ. The Task Force has conducted a series

of meetings to gather views and build consensus with various stakeholders, including teacher education institutions, principals and teachers.

- A Steering Committee on Internship was set up in November 2005 following the recommendations from an ACTEQ's joint Task Force on Internship. With the aid of a Tool Kit, a pilot school-based Induction Support Programme for Beginning Teachers was drawn up for field-testing by a total of six schools in the 2005/06 school year (Phase 1). Based on the research findings of the programme, the Steering Committee has refined the implementation strategies and the Tool Kit which will be tried out in 19 primary and secondary schools in the 2006/07 school year (Phase 2). In support of the internship proposal, the EMB has collaborated with teacher education institutions to train more than 1 100 mentor teachers for about 400 primary and 300 secondary schools to lend induction support to beginning teachers.
- Different institutes of early childhood teacher education have been providing a variety of training courses, including Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Bachelor of Early Childhood Education programmes, to enable qualified kindergarten teachers to further their studies and raise their professional competency.
- To encourage serving teachers to further upgrade their academic qualifications, the EMB has procured additional training places for each of the 2005, 2006 and 2007 intakes of a three-year part-time in-service Certificate in Early Childhood Education course through open tendering.

Tasks Ahead

- The Steering Committee on Teachers' Continuing Professional Development will continue to focus on disseminating good practices and providing support to principals, teachers and the school management in developing their school-based CPD policy. The Steering Committee will lay emphasis on the quality of CPD activities through promoting the teacher competencies framework for the enhancement of teachers' professionalism and students' learning effectiveness. The ACTEQ and the Steering Committee will keep track of the development of the three-year try-out period (from the 2003/04 to the 2005/06 school year or

from the 2004/05 to the 2006/07 school year) of the teachers' CPD framework so as to provide further recommendations in taking forward teachers' CPD.

- With reference to the views gathered from different stakeholders on ways to improve initial teacher education, the ACTEQ and the Task Force on Initial Teacher Education will continue to collaborate with teacher education institutions to enhance the professional quality of new teachers.
- Based on the review of Phase 1 of the pilot Induction Support Programme for Beginning Teachers in the 2005/06 school year, the Second Edition of the Tool Kit comprising some refined professional reference to facilitate beginning teachers' reflective learning was published in September 2006. It will be tried out in Phase 2 in the 2006/07 school year. A consultant will be hired to conduct a research study on Phase 2 of the pilot programme involving 19 primary and secondary schools. Based on the review of the use of the Second Edition of the Tool Kit, the implementation process of the programme and other identifiable success factors, the Induction Support Programme for Beginning Teachers will be further refined and will be promoted to a greater number of schools.
- The institutes of early childhood teacher education will continue to provide teacher training courses, including Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Bachelor of Early Childhood Education.
- The EMB has proposed to provide training subsidies to all teachers of local kindergartens for professional upgrading and expects that within five years all kindergarten teachers will have obtained a Diploma in Early Childhood Education.

(2) Principals' Professional Development

Progress

- The Certification for Principalship has been implemented.
- The EMB has continued to provide professional development programmes and support to newly appointed principals as well as serving principals, such as thematic seminars and workshops by renowned Mainland and overseas experts, networking and provision of analysis for school principals on their

needs for professional development in order to facilitate them in planning and carrying out CPD activities.

- The EMB has continued to provide the principalship training courses for serving/aspiring kindergarten principals and child care supervisors.

Tasks Ahead

- The EMB will continue to review the CPD framework and professional development programmes for principals in line with the latest development in education.
- The EMB will continue to provide professional development programmes and support to newly appointed principals as well as serving principals to enhance their leadership skills, particularly in the areas of instructional leadership and teaching/learning effectiveness.
- The EMB has proposed to provide training subsidies to all principals of local kindergartens for professional upgrading and encourage them to pursue further studies and obtain a degree by 2011/12.

Section 6 : Admission Mechanism

(1) Reform of the Primary One Admission System

Target

To avoid using children's abilities as the admission criteria and to enhance fair opportunities for parents in choosing schools.

Progress

- The various reform measures of the POA system have been implemented smoothly.
- P1 places for the 2006/07 school year have been allocated to applicants through the Discretionary Places Admission stage and the Central Allocation stage in accordance with the POA mechanism recommended by the EC. Taking into account the discretionary places and the number of children allocated to schools of their first three choices, the overall satisfaction rate was nearly 90%.
- The number of POA school nets has been adjusted from 47 for the 2004/05 school year to 37 for the 2006/07 school year.

Tasks Ahead

- To continue to review the POA school nets where appropriate.

(2) Reform of the Secondary School Places Allocation System

Target

To reduce the labeling effects of the allocation bands on schools and pupils and to promote the adoption of more diversified criteria for admitting S1 students.

Progress

- The interim SSPA mechanism was implemented in the 2004/06 allocation cycle for the last year. A record high satisfaction level was attained, with 81% students being allocated to their first three choices.
- The EC has completed the review of the SSPA mechanism and MOI arrangements for secondary schools. The review report was submitted in December 2005, and the recommendations were accepted by the EMB.
- Under the revised SSPA mechanism, the discretionary places quota and school choices will be increased. These will enhance parents' choice of schools, and at the same time promote diversified development of schools and students. The revision of the scaling mechanism will also help avoid increasing the pressure of public examinations on students.
- After seeking the views of the school sector and stakeholders, the EMB announced the implementation details of the revised SSPA mechanism in March and June 2006.

Tasks Ahead

- The revised SSPA mechanism will be implemented with effect from the 2005/07 allocation cycle. The mechanism will apply to students proceeding to S1 in September 2007 and thereafter.

(3) "Through-train" Mode

Target

To strengthen collaboration between primary and secondary schools with the same education philosophy so as to provide students with a coherent learning experience.

Progress

- Experience-sharing sessions for "through-train" schools have been conducted to consolidate and disseminate experiences.
- The number of public sector schools adopting the "through-train" mode has increased from 16 groups in the 2004/05 school year to 25 groups in the 2006/07 school year.
- Following the recommendations made by the EC, a school circular was issued in March 2006 to inform schools that the deadline for feeder and nominated schools complying with the "through-train" principles to decide whether or not to form "through-trains" has been deferred from 31 May 2006 to 31 May 2012.

Tasks Ahead

- To continue to facilitate the implementation of the "through-train" mode and provide professional support to "through-train" schools through the Regional Education Offices and the Curriculum Development Institute of the EMB.
- To continue to work together with those feeder and nominated schools which do not comply with the "through-train" principles to formulate appropriate development plans before the deadline in 2012.

(4) University Admission

Target

Local higher education institutions (HEIs) are encouraged to review their admission criteria and procedures so as to give due consideration to students' all-round performance and select the most suitable candidates for the relevant programmes.

Progress

- Since the 2005/06 school year, the eight HEIs funded by the UGC have already implemented their students' self-recommendation scheme under the Joint University Programmes Admissions System to take into account non-academic achievements of applicants.
- HEIs have exercised greater flexibility in admitting students of varied backgrounds and study levels. Sub-degree graduates of self-financing community colleges and other post-secondary institutions have been admitted into senior years of undergraduate study.
- The eight UGC-funded HEIs announced on 5 July 2006 the general entry requirements and programme specific requirements for admission to undergraduate programmes starting from the 2012/13 school year under the NSS and higher education academic structure.

Tasks Ahead

- The UGC will continue to encourage local HEIs to broaden their admission criteria and be more flexible in allowing entry at different levels. HEIs are also encouraged to strengthen their communication with the secondary school sector in this aspect.

Section 7 : Increase in Education Opportunities

(1) Increase in Senior Secondary Education Opportunities

Target

To provide all S3 students studying in publicly-funded schools, who have the ability and wish to continue with their studies, with subsidized S4 or training places.

Progress

- The S3 students concerned have been provided with sufficient S4 or training places.
- In the 2006/07 school year, there are a total of 12 senior secondary schools (SSS) with diversified curricula to meet the different capabilities and learning needs of students.

Tasks Ahead

- To enable students to complete the six-year of secondary education under the NSS academic structure in the same school under normal circumstances.
- To continue supporting SSS in offering diversified curricula to give parents and students more choices.

(2) Increase in Post-secondary Education Opportunities

Target

To support the progressive increase in post-secondary education opportunities so that 60% of senior secondary school leavers will have access to post-secondary education by the 2010/11 school year.

Progress

- The overall post-secondary participation rate for the 17-20 age cohort has increased to 66% in the 2005/06 school year.
- Interest-free start-up loans have been approved to support non-profit-making education providers in providing accredited self-financed post-secondary programmes.
- Five pieces of land were allocated to non-profit-making post-secondary education providers for the construction of purpose-built premises through competitive land grant exercises in 2003 and 2004.
- Grants have been approved for post-secondary education providers to conduct institutional reviews and programme validations.
- The Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary students has been significantly enhanced with effect from the 2006/07 school year.
- 20 institutions offered over 25 000 accredited full-time self-financed post-secondary places for senior secondary school leavers in the 2005/06 school year.
- To increase the articulation opportunities for sub-degree graduates, the UGC-funded institutions have decided to provide a total of 1 680 publicly-funded senior year undergraduate places for the 2005/06 to 2007/08 triennium.
- The register containing detailed information on accredited full-time self-financed post-secondary programmes has been updated.
- The *Career Guidance Handbook* on further education opportunities for senior secondary school graduates has been published in collaboration with the Hong Kong Association of Careers Masters & Guidance Masters.
- The Annual Information Expo for Secondary School Leavers was organized in July 2006 to provide one-stop service on further education and employment opportunities.

- Publicity events have been organized to promote recognition of the sub-degree qualifications.
- The EMB has initiated a review of the post-secondary education sector. Report of Phase 1 of the review was released for public consultation in March 2006.

Tasks Ahead

- The UGC plans to create on top of the approved provision of a total of 1 680 senior year undergraduate places for the 2005/06 to 2007/08 triennium, some 2 000 additional senior year undergraduate places at UGC-funded institutions starting from the 2006/07 school year to provide more articulation opportunities for sub-degree graduates. Of these 2 000 new places, 254 Year 2 undergraduate places are provided in the 2006/07 school year.
- The EMB will embark on Phase 2 of the review of the post-secondary education sector to look at, among others, the support measures for institutions and the quality assurance measures.
- The provision of financial assistance to needy students will continue.
- Senior school leavers will continue to be provided with useful information on further education opportunities.
- The EMB will continue to step up publicity to enhance the understanding of the public on sub-degree qualifications and the prospects for employment or further studies so as to promote recognition of these qualifications.

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.

