

CE's speech in delivering "The Chief Executive's 2021 Policy Address" to LegCo (9)

VIII. Nurturing Talents and Youth Development

Quality Education

Vision for Education

137. Talent is the most important element in the future development of Hong Kong and education is the key to nurturing talents. During my term of office, I have been proactively realising my vision for education, i.e. nurturing our young people into quality citizens with a sense of national identity and social responsibility, an affection for Hong Kong as well as an international perspective. I have also delivered my electoral promise by providing additional resources for education. However, as a minority of our students have been deluded and radicalised to take part in illegal acts and even participate in organising extreme political activities, we must pay more attention to the sense of national identity, values and civic-mindedness of our next generation.

Strengthening Government's Role

138. A nation will prosper when its young people thrive. The role of a government in education for a nation or region is not merely a provider of resources, but also a policy maker, administrator and regulator. To enhance the quality of education, I have always heeded the advice of stakeholders in the education sector, and have asked the EDB to conduct in-depth reviews on eight areas of education to come up with recommendations on how our education system can be improved. I am glad to see that the EDB is working with school sponsoring bodies, schools and relevant institutions on the implementation of the recommendations. Meanwhile, the EDB must also safeguard the well-being of students by effectively monitoring and following up on any issues that involve school management and the conduct of teachers, with a view to restoring Hong Kong's educational order.

Early Childhood Education

139. The current-term Government has devoted substantial resources to early childhood education, with the aim of providing highly affordable and good quality kindergarten education to all children, irrespective of their family background. Currently, as many as 90% of the half-day kindergartens joining the kindergarten education scheme are free of charge. We will further enhance the professional development of teachers, reinforce the support to students with diverse needs, strengthen the Quality Assurance Framework, promote parent education, etc. with a view to improving the quality of education.

Family Education

140. For Chinese people, family always comes first. Our parents, irrespective of their education background, teach us to respect our elders, love our siblings, be kind to our neighbours and abide by the rules. These are the values parents would like their children to hold onto. I believe that the educational function of families is an integral part of a civilised society and parents' influence on their children is irreplaceable. The EDB will continue to support various initiatives for reinforcing home's school co-operation and promoting parent education.

Basic Education

141. Regarding basic education, to better cater for learning and growth of students, small class teaching has been implemented in the vast majority of the public sector primary schools, and improvement to teacher's class ratio as well as enhancement of non-teaching staff support have also been made to public sector primary and secondary schools, so that teachers can focus on teaching. The current term Government has shown its utmost sincerity and support for teachers by implementing in one go the all-graduate teaching force policy in public sector primary and secondary schools starting from the 2019/20 school year. I hope that the teaching force will perform its mission of nurturing talents, equip themselves to keep abreast of social developments and the demand for talents, and help students lay a solid foundation for learning through basic education in areas like language and reading proficiency, innovative thinking and developing an interest in science.

Diversified Progression Pathway

142. To provide students with a diversified and flexible progression pathway and enrich their learning opportunities, we have completed the review of the school curriculum and implemented measures for optimising the four senior secondary core subjects at Secondary Four from this school year onwards. Also, we will review the Diploma Yi Jin subsidy scheme to continue to provide an alternative pathway for Secondary Six school leavers as well as adult learners to obtain a formal qualification for the purposes of employment and further study. On vocational and professional education and training, we will continue to promote Applied Learning as a valued senior secondary elective subject by developing more diversified and up-to-date courses, as well as placing equal emphasis on practice and theory to cater for the diverse interests of students and facilitate their exploration of multiple pathways for further study and career pursuits.

Post-secondary Education

143. The current term Government has rolled out various initiatives to ensure that all students attaining "3322" in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination and aspiring to study further will now have access to subsidised undergraduate education. In fact, the post-secondary education of Hong Kong is where our strengths lie. Not only will it nurture local talents for us, but it will also contribute to building a pool of

talents for the GBA.

144. I visited eight UGC-funded universities around July and August this year to understand their latest developments. I am pleased to learn that the resources invested by the current-term Government in university research have been creating very positive impact and the outcomes are most encouraging. Take the results of the Research Assessment Exercise 2020 announced by the UGC earlier as an example. About 16,000 research items involving 41 disciplines in 13 areas were assessed by distinguished overseas and local scholars. Among them, 25% were judged to be world leading and a further 45% were judged to be internationally excellent. The Research Matching Grant Scheme, which covers a period of three years, is due to end in July next year under the original plan. I propose to extend the Scheme for another two years, so that the industrial and commercial sectors can continue to make good use of the Scheme to support the research work of the higher education sector.

Special Education

145. We are committed to catering for students with special education needs. The current-term Government has doubled the recurrent expenditure on integrated education to about \$3.6 billion per year, while the recurrent expenditure on special education has also increased from about \$2.5 billion to about \$3.5 billion per year. The allocation has not included the provision of the On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services for pre-school children under the LWB.

Non-Chinese Speaking Students

146. To encourage non-Chinese speaking parents to send their children to local kindergartens, starting from the 2017/18 school year, the EDB has been providing additional subsidy for kindergartens under the kindergarten education scheme admitting non-Chinese speaking students. What is more important, however, is to assess the effectiveness of this initiative and make adjustments as appropriate, in the hope that language will no longer be a barrier for non-Chinese speakers to integrate into the local community and enter the job market.

National Education and Values Education

147. The child is father to the man. This is particularly true for a person's character and sense of national identity. Education on these attributes must begin from an early age. Students should acquire through education and at an early age a correct understanding of the history and culture of our country, as well as the way of life of its people, including the constitutional order of the HKSAR. Many veteran educators and I have great expectations on the efforts of the HKSAR Government in making Chinese History an independent compulsory subject for the junior secondary level and revising the curriculum since the 2018/19 school year, as well as on the Citizenship and Social Development subject which has been introduced to replace the Liberal Studies subject starting from this school year. The EDB will assume a monitoring role in this respect.

148. Moral education is an important part of school education. To develop students' positive values and attitudes, the EDB has in recent years launched funding programmes under the Quality Education Fund (QEF) to support schools in promoting values education to help students cope with adversities with a positive attitude and develop positive thinking. To safeguard against the adverse effects of disinformation on the Internet, we will enhance the media and information literacy of teachers and students, and optimise the use of the QEF to support schools in promoting media and information literacy education, teaching students how to distinguish the authenticity of information and nurturing their critical thinking skills, thereby consolidating values education.

(To be continued.)