

## **Response to “Enhancing the Quality of our Home-grown Talent”, Public Engagement Exercise on Population Policy**

by Hong Kong Association of Careers Masters and Guidance Masters, 8 Jan 2014

Hong Kong Association of Careers Masters and Guidance Masters is a teacher professional body established since 1959, aiming to support career teachers and counseling teachers in secondary schools through professional development, and provision of career information to educators and the public with close collaboration with the government, tertiary education sector and labor sector, as well as formulation of career guidance curriculum with academics and experts in the field. Currently we have about 420 secondary school members, with attendants of various activities adding up to more than 5000 headcounts annually. Our mission is to promote career guidance and education to facilitate career development of the young generation, with which they could be equipped with the career management skills to make informed choices in further studies, training and occupations. We believe that the young people, irrespective of their social economic background and academic aptitude, need and are eligible to get support in their process of career development, so that they can have their potentials actualized through career aspirations for the betterment of themselves and the society as a whole.

In light of the above, we are concerned about how the population policy under consultation in the long run could genuinely enhance the quality of home-grown talent. This response document outlines our views and recommendations on different areas enmarked in the consultation paper.

Recommendations:

### **1. What is the TALENT to be nurtured?**

We echo that one of the missions of education is to nurture talents and get the young generation better prepare for their future – a world with enormous diversity and complexity. Our future Hong Kong generations will have to work in different locations and different cultures, instead of having their career locally-based. Nevertheless, the consultation paper fails to address that preparation of the young generation, even from the perspective of human capital enhancement, should be a through-train development since their young age. The role of primary and secondary education in this regard

shouldn't be left out. Despite the positive impacts of the first wave of Education Reform with implementation of the New Academic Structure, continue review and strategies input should be fostered to introduce *global competence* in curriculum (in a board sense) of schools and further education. **Global competence** refers to '*the capacity and disposition to understand and act on issues of global significance. Globally competent individuals are aware, curious, and interested in learning about the world and how it works. They can use the big ideas, tools, methods, and languages that are central to any discipline (mathematics, literature, history, science, and the arts) to engage the pressing issues of our time. They deploy and develop this expertise as they investigate such issues, recognizing multiple perspectives, communicating their views effectively, and taking action to improve conditions*'.<sup>1</sup> It is worth investigating how these ideals set forth the directions of sustaining education reform or development for earlier stages of education (KS1-KS3).

Besides, the consultation paper confirms that more opportunities are given to the young generations to meet their aspirations for post-secondary education, the role of public investment in supporting those with adequate caliber for UGC-funded places, the long-term planning regarding proportions of UGC-funded places and those from self-financed institutes, and most importantly, monitoring and quality assurance of the later with respect to types of programmes offered and quality of education experiences...are all core and complicated issues in the "talent-nurturing" debate. Further investigations and call for public involvement in planning are recommended.

## 2. What is Vocational Education and Why?

The consultation paper highlights vocational education as our hope to resolve the manpower mismatch problem, which is expected to heighten with further increase in percentage of the young cohorts receiving higher education. The value of vocation education for societal and individual well-being is also a hot issue in Taiwan, with the trajectory of higher education expansion and the following manpower mis-match and career frustration comparable to experiences in our context. We support, as stated in the paper, that government has a key leading role to play in curriculum setting, resource allocation, yet consensus of the industries and community is crucial. To revitalize vocational education, career education that begins at junior secondary levels has a

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<sup>1</sup> Educating for Global Competence: Preparing Our Youth to Engage the World , p.13

pivotal role. We have ample experiences to bring in mentors, alumni, business partners and entrepreneurs to give talks, job shadowing, and with career-related experiences and Applied Learning curriculum offered to senior secondary students local students are given more opportunities in career exploration. We must stress that, however, due to the deficiency in career guidance or education policy and structure, the provision of these opportunities is highly restrictive, disorganized, and fragmented (considering promotion and liaison of various school-business connections, the Labour Department and at least five sections under EDB are involved, with very limited coordination among the sections and implementation programs, resource overlapping is a problem). A fundamental paradigm shift out our perception towards vocational education requires substantial effort and investment to:

- (a) get parents, students, teachers and school leaders involved in education and experiences of vocational education;
- (b) formulate a clear policy of vocational education, including what is meant by vocational education at different levels of education/training experiences;
- (c) establish partnership with well-orchestrated and strategic education and promotion measures, with a good representation from government, industries, education and labour sector;
- (d) strengthen connections between career-related experiences/education programs currently available to secondary school students to vocational education and related opportunities; and
- (e) foster and demonstrate “**profession pride**” in various vocational tracks, that comprises of financial reward, social status, professional image, career prospect, quality of working environment, and professional recognition/articulation – all requires big investment from the industries to build and change culture WITHIN the vocational tracks, yet without these efforts the promotion of vocational education would be a designated failure.

### 3. What can the Manpower Projection tell us?

If we agree that a sizable portion of the human manpower would go global or have their work station not restricted to Hong Kong, our understanding and expectation towards “manpower projection” would be one that inform the public, including policy makers, educators in schools, course designers in tertiary education sector, providers of

vocational training about information at (1) HK-based; (2) regional, and (3) international levels. We are not prophets and thus admittedly predictions and estimations would have distortion from reality. Yet such a system, with sound accessibility, comprehensiveness, and connectedness built with educational and training services (career guidance or advisory services, QF, QR, programs provision by tertiary institutes...etc), may caste gradual changes in our understanding towards human resources and career aspirations of the young people.

#### 4. What can Career Guidance do to leverage changes?

The consultation paper states that “our education and training should better prepare our young people to transit from school to work” and “requires more career counseling in schools to help students make career choices that are right for them”. We couldn’t agree more in this regard!

Extensive review of education and manpower policies in various developed countries/cities demonstrates the need to put career guidance in the central focus to assist changes in mindset and provision of the necessary support/services.<sup>2</sup> Through various channels HKACMGM has advocated career guidance to be stepped up in secondary schools, at least, to support ALL young people in making informed choices among multiple pathways they can choose from. Career guidance refers to *services and activities intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Such services may be found in schools, universities and colleges, in training institutions, in public employment services, in the workplace, in the voluntary or community sector and in the private sector. The activities may take place on an individual or group basis, and may be face-to-face or at a distance (including help lines and web-based services). They include career information provision (in print, ICT-based and other forms), assessment and self-assessment tools, counseling interviews, career education programmes (to help individuals develop their self awareness, opportunity awareness, and career management skills), taster programmes (to sample options*

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, *Career Guidance: A Handbook for Policy Maker*. OECD: 2004; retrieved at <http://www.oecd.org/education/innovation-education/34060761.pdf>; *An Aspirational Nation: Creating a Culture Change in Careers Provision*, National Careers Council: 2013. Retrieved at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/205147/bis-13-919-national-careers-council-report-an-aspirational-nation-creating-a-culture-change-in-careers-provision.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/205147/bis-13-919-national-careers-council-report-an-aspirational-nation-creating-a-culture-change-in-careers-provision.pdf);

before choosing them), work search programmes, and transition services.<sup>3</sup>

Significances of career guidance, according to OECD, include:

- Move from an approach that emphasizes assistance with immediate occupational and educational decisions to a broader approach that also develops people's ability to manage their own careers: developing career planning and employability skills; and
- Find cost effective ways to expand citizens' access to career guidance throughout the lifespan.

What currently available is far from satisfactory and sufficient to meet the heightening expectations or needs. In various occasions we have demonstrated that career guidance in secondary schools is marginalized with fragmented supports from various parties involved. Thus we propose the followings for the future Hong Kong workforce, applicable but not restricted to secondary schools:

- (a) Setting up a Consultation Board or Council on Career Guidance that works directly with the related government sections on or provides the blueprint on:
- Conducting researches/support researches (for instance, review on current provision of career guidance to different cohorts of the population, including the SENs and NCS, and identification of respective needs to be met);
  - Conducting investigations on practices or models that schools may adopt with career personnel, for instance, whether career guidance counselors in school should be working full-time or with a sensible combination of teaching capacity;
  - Formulating policies and practices for career guidance and educators/service providers outside schools;
  - Advising on implementation strategies in various sectors, advices on qualifications, training and accountability of career guidance practitioners or service providers;
  - Supporting coordination and partnership of the business/professional/employer sectors to training institutes and schools.

The existing system has these elements either being deficient or uncoordinated in provision or implementation. The Board, or a similar organization, should be in place

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<sup>3</sup> *Career Guidance: A Handbook for Policy Maker*. OECD: 2004; retrieved at <http://www.oecd.org/education/innovation-education/34060761.pdf>

and work closely with the related government sections to bring in changes progressively.

(b) Improving Access of Career Information /Coaching to people in Transition using, but not limit to, electronic platform that allow coordination, synthesis and dissemination of career information, as well as providing a platform for self-regulated career assessments and connections with career. <sup>4</sup>

We are committed to getting involved in further discussion of the recommendations.

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<sup>4</sup> HKACMGM has set up an empirically-based **myCareermap career assessment platform** since 2009, with about 10000 senior form students attempted the assessments with follow-up guidance every year. The platform, due to limitation of resrouces, couldn't cater for continuing career exploration like the two exemplary platforms below. ([www.mycareemap.org/2013](http://www.mycareemap.org/2013)).

Examples of career development platform for ALL citizens supporting different stages of transition with provision of on-line or hot-line support can be found at <http://www.myfuture.edu.au/> and <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/Pages/Home.aspx>.