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Global Skills Snapshot: The Hong Kong Perspective

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning! It is a real privilege to be given this opportunity to speak at the WorldSkills Conference and to share with you the Hong Kong experience.

About Vocational Training Council

In Hong Kong, Vocational Training Council (VTC) has the mission of providing quality VPET for nurturing globally competitive individuals to support the development of Hong Kong and the region. VTC is a statutory body with a budget of over HK\$ 4 billion (or around US\$ 500M). Every year, we offer vocational education and training from craft to technician all the way up to degree level to a quarter of a million young people and in-service workers, of whom 50,000 are full-time students. I shall deal with what are some of the priority issues for Hong Kong VTC to address.

Misconception of VPET

First and foremost, we need to change the mindset of parents and educationists including secondary school principals and teachers. There is a common misconception that VPET is ‘blue-collar’ education and a route for less-talented students and with limited career prospects. The perception is obviously far from the truth. To change this misconception, we have rebranded

TVET to VPET i.e. Vocational and Professional Education and Training. We wish to hammer home the word “Professional”. We need to remind people we are grooming the next generation of professionals who are professional not only in trade skills but also in soft skills. They are critical thinkers, problem solvers and design thinkers. The VTC has devoted significant efforts to promote VPET on the community and raise recognition of VPET through a range of publicity campaigns, school outreach activities, forums and seminars targeting local and international educators, as well as mega skills competitions and events.

Hong Kong Education System

Second, I wish to address the issue of articulation and permeability in vocational education and training. Currently, Hong Kong education system is similar to some extent to Swiss and German models, which offers two routes for students – one is the traditional academic route (see slides in grey colour), and the other one is vocational education route (in blue colour).

Articulation and Permeability

Hong Kong’s VPET provides a vertical progression route for students. Yet, it is not a single-track road but a route that extends in different directions and opportunities. Even if students choose the vocational route, they can still articulate up to the higher education ladder. Switzerland is well-known for its dual-track system which is highly effective and permeable. What Hong Kong lacks is a “Vocational Baccalaureate” like that in the Swiss system. We have plans to soon launch a 3-year Vocational Baccalaureate (VB) programme for students at senior secondary level enabling students to articulate straight to university of applied sciences equivalent type of higher education institutions or traditional academic universities. Only by doing this could we achieve comprehensiveness in articulation and permeability.

VTC Earn & Learn Scheme

Third, let’s look at Hong Kong’s dual track vocational education. Making reference to the international best practices of Swiss and German dual track models, we introduced the VTC Earn & Learn Scheme in 2014 for secondary school leavers (targeted at 16 to 17 year olds) with support from the Government and industry. The scheme provides participants with an

opportunity to "earn and learn" and to pursue a well-defined progression pathway for higher qualifications. By integrating structured classroom learning with on-the-job training, young people can put learning into real practice and content with real work world. With the positive feedback, the scheme has already been extended to cover 10 industries and trades. We are planning to further develop the dual-track model to Degree level, ultimately achieving the goal of dual-track learning for all.

Use of New Technology in Teaching and Learning

Fourth, let me share with you the use of new technology in making learning more fun. At VTC we continue to build new facilities to enhance teaching and learning outcomes. Last year, we established STEM Education Centers in different campuses to create simulated learning contexts and facilitate students' co-creation in projects, integrating modern technology with innovative ideas. With technological advances, the work world today and tomorrow will increasingly demand cross-disciplinary, collaborative and complex problem skills to deliver creative solutions. To meet evolving talent needs, we are driving new inter-disciplinary initiatives in forms of new programmes and collaborative projects.

Inter-disciplinary initiatives

Fifth, there are quite a number of interdisciplinary initiatives taking place at VTC. For instance, our students participated in World Solar Challenge 2017 with SOPHIE VI held in Australia last week. SOPHIE is future eco-friendly solar-powered car co-developed by a group of our IVE Engineering students and teachers.

Over the years, the engineering students kept refining and upgrading the functions, effectiveness, efficiency of SOPHIE, and now in its sixth generation with an enhanced design created by our HKDI graduate. Bringing together cross-disciplinary perspectives and expertise in engineering and design, SOPHIE VI is much lighter than its previous edition and conserves more electricity. Through the innovation process, students also learn to be self-discipline, determine to grasp new skills, to be tolerant, respectful of teamwork, which I believe are important attributes for success in the dynamic and competitive world. With their strong will, the team performed their best and successfully made a six-day ride of 3,000 km from Darwin to Adelaide across

Australia. I have just received news that they have won as the third runner up in this international solar car competition

International Exposure

The last point I wish to make is related as to “why we have sent students competing in some 20 trades” and “why we have sent two students to take part in the first WSI Youth Forum” held here at Abu Dhabi. We do this to maximize young people’s international exposure and prepare them for the globalized world. We emphasize the nurturing of inter-cultural networking skills. We provide our students with plenty of opportunities to study abroad and participate in exchange programmes. Through our global partner network, every year some 8,000 VTC students take part in various international programmes such as study tours, exchange programmes, overseas industry attachments and many more.

Skills and Talents are Key

Without doubt, a successful VPET system can facilitate growth and prosperity. To be successful long term, we must continue to develop and adapt to external circumstances. Moving forward, we will continue to enhance our capability and forge close relationships with the Government, industries and partners around the world. Through the concerted efforts of all VPET players, I am sure the vocational education sector will grow steadily and continuously and nurture even more competent professionals for the sustainability and betterment of our society and nation.

Thank you.