

**Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET)
International Conference
17 June 2017**

Closing remarks

Mrs Carrie YAU, GBS, JP, Executive Director of VTC

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and gentlemen, Good afternoon. It is a great pleasure for me to say a few words at the end of the Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET) International Conference.

This International Conference on VPET is one of the largest scale conference held in Hong Kong. I thank you all for your participation. On behalf of the organisers – the Education Bureau and Vocational Training Council, I would like to extend our most sincere gratitude to the joint efforts of all the participating leaders, experts, guests, representatives and students!

As the conference ends, I believe we all have agreed that VPET provides a foundation for growth, and a major driver for economic and social development. During these two days, we had in-depth discussions and dialogues on key issues related to VPET. Leaders and experts from higher education institutions and industries from around the world had shared the latest updates on development in VPET in their respective countries, best practices and importance of STEM education.

VPET holds the key to our future. Today, skills development for employability, or VPET, is high on the agenda of policymakers in education. Countries around the world are stepping up efforts and have made major strides on VPET development.

As his keynote speech, Prof Andreas SCHLEICHER has emphasised the importance of skills development :

“Skills change lives, and have an INCREASING impact on labour market outcomes and social participation”. He also reminds us that “skills contribute to economic prosperity and social cohesion”

In the G20 summit 2016, held in Hangzhou, China, leaders agreed on an initiative to Promote Quality Apprenticeships, **in recognition of the importance of skills for the workforce**. In the World Economic Forum on Latin America held earlier this year, governments and country leaders have expressed that “**skills have become the global currency of 21st century economies**”, and a number of developing countries have launched apprenticeships and dual education programmes. Although apprenticeship and skills training is not new in UK and Australia, both countries are now extending training opportunities with higher level apprenticeships, to address their nations’ manpower needs. All of these show the strong commitment of each government in VPET.

Let us now turn to the local scene and look at what the situation is like in Hong Kong? In 2014, the Hong Kong Government set out a policy on promoting and strengthening Vocational Training and Education. Since then we have rebranded VET or TVET to VPET, reminding the community that skills training is the pathway to grooming professionals. In strengthening VPET, the Government provides a subsidy to VTC for the Earn and Learn Scheme, enabling our students to be trained at the workplace. The Government also ear-marked a site in Hong Kong for VTC to build a new campus with state-of-the-art facilities for skill-based and authentic training.

The Earn and Learn scheme, which now benefits more than 4,000 students at Diploma and High Diploma levels, is planned for Degree programmes which will adopt the dual track approach. With all the development on vocational education and training worldwide and in this region, it is timely for this conference to be held in Hong Kong for exchanging ideas and information on VPET.

In the Worldskills Competition, we learnt from Finland and other partners that these competitions are used for developing and benchmarking VPET, for creating new teaching models, and to raise the awareness of the importance of professional excellence. Therefore, it is highly relevant for the Worldskills Hong Kong competition to be held concurrently with this VPET international conference.

In the coming Worldskills competition to be held in Abu Dhabi in October, government leaders and policy makers will gather in the Ministers TVET Summit, and create a global call to prioritise skills education and training,

highlighting the need for enhanced skill strategies that are responsive to the changing manpower requirements. We look forward to see many of you in Abu Dhabi.

As educators or education providers, we wish to see in our younger generation an all-round development covering both hard skills and soft skills. A lot of speakers have spoken about the importance of soft skills. We also wish to see in them the ability to integrate modern technology and ideas; creativity, critical thinking and a global outlook. To this end, we also actively promote STEM education. One highlight of the WorldSkills Hong Kong Competition has been the International STEM Students' Forum. The International STEM Students' Forum held today is an excellent opportunity for students from VTC and many other countries to share their ideas.

As the point made by today's keynote speaker Professor Shyamal MAJUMDAR on the importance of partnership and collaboration among VPET institutions. He emphasized

“.....the peer to peer learning and networking for exchanging and sharing of information and practices, and reckons that Networking and Partnership are the new Strategic Resources in the Sustainable Development Goals era”

Some speakers have pointed out that many jobs today will most likely disappear in the next five or 10 years. That means the skills we use now in the workplace may not necessarily be the skills we'll need in the future. Lord Kumar BHATTACHARYYA came all the way to forewarn us

“The task is not to find the perfect solution to the current skills crisis. It is to anticipate and adapt to the next skills crisis better than anyone else.”

So what kind of skillsets will be needed in the future workforce and how can we prepare our younger generations for future skills requirements? Does Hong Kong need a dedicated organisation to look into what professional skills we need? Should we set up an overarching body to look at future skills policy? This question is worth policy makers and education institutions to consider.

There has been so much happening in the last 2 days and one can just go on and on, but I will quickly wrap up in the interests of time. I sincerely thank all of

you here today, speakers and students from over 30 countries, and my colleagues working behind the scenes. Together we have made this event a rewarding one for all.

Above all, I want to thank all of you our guests from afar, for giving VTC the privilege and honour to use this event as a platform for our students to perform and excel. As you can see, we deployed a lot of students here e.g. the MCs, student ambassadors and helpers. Indeed, the stage is for our students to build up their confidence and improve their communication skills. Thanks to you, our guests for giving an opportunity for our students to extend hospitality to people of different nationalities and work with teammates to keep the event lively and vibrant at all times, to chat with you and have a hands-on experience in making your stay pleasant and worth your while.

Do enjoy the rest of your stay in Hong Kong, let's keep in touch. I look forward to meeting you again.
