

A Brief Description of the Hong Kong Education and Grading System

A. Structure of the Education Systems in Hong Kong

The education system in Hong Kong comprises of Primary, Secondary schools and University. Most children start school at the age of 3 to attend kindergarten. Kindergarten is not free and does not fall into the normal curricular regulation and funding of the education department.

There are three main types of schools in Hong Kong – local government schools, local private schools and international schools.

1. Nine Years of Compulsory Schooling – Primary School and Lower Secondary School

Since the late '70's, education in Hong Kong became compulsory up to the 9th grade (Form 3) and it is provided free by the government. The 9 years of compulsory and free education consists of 6 years in Primary school and 3 years in Secondary school. Children will be in primary school between 6 and 11 years old. Although students are assigned his/her school in a controlled random selection – taking into account the area they live and whether other family members have attended or are attending the school, many parents would take their children to their preferred school and take the school's entrance exams instead. Therefore, parents exercise a lot freedom of choice. The schooling during these nine years is free but the books are not.

Classes in Hong Kong are mainly instructive and heavy emphasis is placed on achieving good grades in exams. There is very little opportunity for students to think creatively and students have heavy homework assignments even during holidays.

2. The Senior Secondary School (Form 4 – Form 7)

Most students would continue their education up to Form 5 if they reach a certain standards when they have completed form 3. Few would start working or enter vocational training after Form 3 if they cannot continue in the mainstream education. During these two years, students concentrate their efforts in attaining good grades at the Form 5 public examinations, the results for which will determine whether they can continue to study form 6 and form 7 (the pre-college years)