

**Higher Education Plans and Policies of Selected Asia-Pacific Countries**

*Australia*

- The Australian government is committed to “making Australia one of the most educated and highly skilled workforces in the world in order to secure national long-term economic prosperity” [E36]. Its 2009 budget announced the investment of an additional A\$5.4 billion (HK\$38.2 billion) to support higher education and research over the next four years. The government is aiming to ensure that by 2020, 20% of first-degree students are from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and by 2025, 40% of Australians aged between 25 and 34 hold degrees. The announced investment will significantly lift the proportion of Australia’s national wealth devoted to higher education, from 0.78% of GDP in 2007 to 0.86% in 2012 [E37].
- In the budget released in May 2010, the government further announced a Skills for Sustainable Growth strategy, with a budget of A\$661 million (or HK\$4,678.1 million) [E38]. This strategy focuses on the development of skills in the Australian workforce, and on ensuring that the nation’s education and training systems are flexible and responsive to economic needs. It will deliver guaranteed training places to people under 25 for their first qualifications, or to raise their qualifications.

*New Zealand*

- The New Zealand government aims to build “a world-leading education system that equips all New Zealanders with the knowledge, skills, and values to be successful citizens in the 21<sup>st</sup> century”. New Zealand’s Office of the Minister for Tertiary Education published “The Tertiary Education Strategy 2010-15” in December 2009 [E39]. The Strategy describes the government’s strategic direction, and guides the investment decisions of the Tertiary Education Commission [E40] to maximise the contribution of tertiary education to New Zealand.
- The government’s vision for tertiary education is to provide relevant and efficient tertiary education that meets the needs of students, the labour market and the economy. In a tight fiscal environment, the New Zealand government is unable to provide significant funding increases to meet the growing demand for tertiary education, and will need to move funding away from low-quality qualifications (such as those with poor educational or labour market outcomes) to fund growth in high-quality qualifications that

benefit New Zealanders and contribute to economic growth. Specifically, the government will create incentives for more young people to achieve qualifications at the degree level. The New Zealand government's 2010 Budget [E17] announced a new initiative to meet, through savings, increased demand for tertiary education by maintaining the 2010 baseline provision as well as providing an additional 765 and 455 equivalent full-time students respectively at universities and institutes of technology and polytechnics in 2011.

- Apart from this strategy, the said Budget announced that increased funding of NZ\$2 million (or HK\$11.3 million) per annum would be provided for four years (2010/11 – 2013/14) to expand the promotion of the country's education sector overseas to aid the recruitment of international students [E17].

### *Singapore*

- Singapore is committed to continuing its efforts in “restructuring into an innovation and knowledge-based economy” through investment in R&D and nurturing, attracting and retaining local and international talents. Through education, it intends to “invest in people and create opportunities for all to move up” [E41]. A university education is expected to “prepare students not only for today's world but also for a world where there will be jobs that have yet to be invented and challenges not yet foreseen” [E42].
- According to the Singaporean government, education spending will continue to rise over the next five years, particularly in higher education. The government will raise the university cohort participation rate from the current 25% to 30% by 2015, and that of polytechnics from 42% to 45%. The Committee on the Expansion of the University Sector submitted a report entitled *Greater Choice, More Room to Excel* in 2008 [E43] that recommended the enhancement of existing publicly funded universities, and the establishment of a new publicly funded university. As a result, the educational profile of Singapore's resident workforce will improve significantly over time, with 50% projected to possess at least a diploma by 2020, including 35% holding degrees. Through implementing the recommendations of the report, Singapore's university sector is expected to be “well-positioned to meet the needs of the economy, offer high-quality higher education to students, and further enhance its international reputation”.
- The Singaporean government announced a series of measures to further enhance R&D efforts in its 2010 budget. The government will top up the

National Research Fund with another S\$1.5 billion (or HK\$8.4 billion) to support the intensification of R&D [E44], bringing the overall R&D spending to 3.5% of GDP by 2015 [E45]. It is expected that private sector R&D spending will grow from 2% of GDP currently to 2.5% over the next five years.

### *South Korea*

- The South Korean government aims to enhance the international competitiveness of its universities and cultivate talents qualified for industry and local society [E46]. According to the Major Policies to Enhance the Competitive Strength of Korean Higher Education [E47] published by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in February 2009, the government recognises that low investment in higher education would deteriorate the educational environment and weaken the education/research capacity of higher education institutions, lowering their level of international competitiveness. The government planned to allocate KRW5.24 trillion (or HK\$35.4 billion) for higher education funding in 2009, up 14.2% compared with the 2008 budget of KRW4.59 trillion (or HK\$31 billion). In its 2010 Fiscal Policy (October 2010), the government announced the policy direction to increase investments in basic science and original technology to foster innovative results and raise talented individuals in the field of science and technology [E48].
- Through two major initiatives, the BrainKorea 21 Project [E49] and the World Class University Project 2008-2012 [E50], the government aims to:
  - i) have ten research-oriented, globally competitive universities established or further developed by 2012;
  - ii) ensure that South Korea is one of world's top ten countries in terms of papers listed in the Science Citation Index and in knowledge transfer; and
  - iii) transform all South Korean universities into globally competitive research-oriented institutions, through supporting new growth-generating fields that have the potential to spearhead national development, and through recruiting and retaining international scholars.

### *Japan*

- The Japanese government aspires to develop Japan into “an education-based

nation”, and published a “Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education” in July 2008 [E51]. Foreseeing that international competition will further intensify, the Japanese government considers it essential to nurture, through education, citizens who have great prescience, creativity and excellent leadership skills.

- The Plan sets out the direction to form world-class research centres and promote the internationalisation of universities, which would contribute to the improvement of Japan’s competitive strengths.
- In July 2008, the Japanese government launched its Global 30 Project to establish core universities for internationalisation with a view to receiving 300,000 international students by 2020. Certain universities will be provided with financial assistance of ¥200 to 400 million (or HK\$16.6 to HK\$33.3 million) per annum for five years with a view to creating an attractive educational and research environment for international students. In 2009, 13 universities were selected. As part of the project, the government is also seeking to establish overseas offices in Tunisia, Egypt, Germany, Russia, India, Uzbekistan and Vietnam to promote Japan’s higher education.

### *India*

- The Indian Prime Minister said in his address to the nation in 2007 [E52] that the government would “make India a nation of educated people, of skilled people, of creative people.” He also mentioned that the university system would be the “focus of the reform and development agenda.”
- The government considers a very substantial increase in the gross enrolment ratio necessary for India to become a knowledge society. It plans to raise this level to 21% by 2017 as mentioned in the Eleventh National Five-year Plan (2007-12) [E53]. The government has also identified the quality of educational provision as a major challenge facing the higher education sector, and considers it imperative that an increasing number of Indian higher education institutions should be of world-class standard with internationally recognised quality.
- The Eleventh National Five-Year Plan also states that efforts will be made to establish 50 centres for training and research in frontier areas that will be funded on a competitive basis according to specific proposals.