

Notes from Asia Pacific, March 2012

Singapore

Last week the Singapore government announced a reshuffle of Permanent Secretary appointments. Mrs Tan Ching Yee, who has headed up Ministry of Education (MOE) for five years, leaves for the Ministry of Health. In her place there now appear to be two posts: Perm Sec (Education Policy) and Perm Sec (Education Development) .

The Ed Policy post is to go to Ms Chan Lai Fung. Ms Chan moves to MOE from the Ministry of Finance. She is an economics graduate and a former Colombo Plan scholarship holder. The Ed Development post goes to Ms Yeoh Chee Yan, a graduate in philosophy and psychology from the University of London, who is

A level results

The press and TV coverage of the results largely concentrated on individuals who had overcome obstacles to do well, including one who had taken a slow track to do A levels at the age of 22 (after doing badly in PSLE) and was now going to university, and 9 students who got 9 Distinctions. The results were described as "overall the same as last year", with no detailed statistics published. Of the 14,262 students who sat the exams in 2011, 90.8 per cent of students had passes in three or more H2 subjects and passed the General Paper or Knowledge and Inquiry.

International schools

Anglo-Chinese School (ACS), Hwa Chong International and St Joseph's Institution (SJI) International are private schools allowed since 2004 to recruit Singaporean as well as overseas students. They have to follow the bilingual programme but otherwise are free to select the curricula and qualifications that they use and to set their fee levels - which are normally much higher than the Singaporean alternatives (public or private). At ACS and Hwa Chong 50% of the students are Singaporean; at SJI the proportion is even higher - 60%. The Singaporean or permanent resident families do not seem to be put off by the high fees. The institutions are all expanding to cater for the higher demand.

In all three, 4th year students do iGCSEs and subsequently the IB Diploma. The schools attribute the high demand from Singaporeans to the schools' brand names, their alternative curricula, and their class sizes of no more than 30.

The Arts

Government support for community engagement in the arts has been a theme over the past couple of weeks. Announcements have included a new partnership between Lasalle College of the Arts and Goldsmith's (London). This adds to the existing partnership between the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and the Royal College of Music (London). A new strategy for promoting participation in the arts covers high-level performance as well as opportunities for community engagement at all ages, including at school. The announcement last month of an extension of the required number of hours of PE at primary and secondary level was also part of this strategy.