



# Hong Kong Sees STEM Education As Key To It's 'Smart City' Plan

STEM education (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) is key to the implementation of Smart City urban planning because technology enables the whole social engineering project. The natural demand for STEM education falls short of necessary and 'skilled' workers to create and maintain smart cities. □ TN Editor

The government released its official blueprint on Friday for a "smart Hong Kong" - a plan for an efficient and sustainable city embracing digital data, innovation and technology. But there are warning signs Hong Kong has some catching up to do if the blueprint is to be realised.

According to one smart city global index by Sweden-based EasyPark Group, Hong Kong currently ranks 68th in the world when analysing the city's smart credentials including transport, sustainability, and living standards. The index, published in May this year, analysed the credentials of 500 cities worldwide and placed Hong Kong immediately behind Tampere in Finland, Ljubljana in Slovenia, and Leeds in northern

England.

Successful smart cities require a tech-savvy workforce highly skilled in science and technology. They are what a government study on the Smart City Blueprint for Hong Kong calls “smart people”. The report outlines specific policy objectives, including the facilitation of “lifelong learning for individuals in the public and private sector, youth to elderly, about science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)”.

So as the aspiration of being a smart city is embraced by government, STEM has suddenly become a hot topic.

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“STEM is important as the driving force for our economy and for our society’s needs to be addressed,” says Professor Lam Hon-ming, a molecular biotechnologist at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Lam was speaking at a recent STEM event where Amgen - one the world’s largest independent biotech companies - was announcing a new partnership with the university. They will jointly deliver the Amgen Biotech Experience (ABE), a hands-on science laboratory training programme for Hong Kong secondary schools.

“The ultimate goal of the ABE is to get students interested in and excited about science discovery, and expose them to opportunities they may not have had otherwise,” says Penny Wan, vice-president and general manager of Amgen in Japan and Asia-Pacific.

The project, which will run from 2017 to 2020, aims to reach 2,000 pupils, 100 teachers and 100 laboratory technicians across 35 local secondary schools. Wan says it’s based on a simple principle.

“We train the teachers to train the students,” she says, adding that schoolchildren are most likely to be engaged by their teachers, so the priority is to give teachers the resources and training to inspire the pupils.

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