

**Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to the
Provision of Boarding Places,
Senior Secondary Education and Employment Opportunities for
Children with Special Educational Needs**

**Measures to Promote Employment Opportunities
for Students with Special Educational Needs**

Purpose

This paper outlines the measures currently adopted by the Administration to promote employment opportunities for students with special educational needs.

Background

2. The Administration has strived to put in place a series of measures to help students with special educational needs secure productive and gainful employment after graduation, with a view to achieving their self-reliance and full integration into the community.

3. In the admission, teaching and examination processes, appropriate support is provided and arrangements made to cater for students with special educational needs, so that they can have equal opportunities to acquire qualifications and knowledge necessary for

securing suitable employment after graduation. We also provide comprehensive vocational training, rehabilitation service and employment service, coupled with a series of measures to improve the employment prospects of people with disabilities. The objective is to enhance their employability and help them find jobs and secure employment. These services and measures are outlined as follows.

(I) Vocational Training and Rehabilitation Service

4. At present, the Vocational Training Council and the Social Welfare Department (SWD) provide comprehensive vocational training and rehabilitation service for the disabled with different abilities. The aim is to teach them the work skills, social and communication skills necessary for open employment in future.

Skills Centres

5. The Vocational Training Centre, with subventions from the Government, operates three skills centres for people with disabilities aged 15 and above who are assessed as having the ability to work in the open market. The skills centres offer a wide range of programmes for people with disabilities at the operative level and pre-craft level in technical, commercial and service-related streams covering different occupations and trades. The objective is to enhance their employability and prepare them for eventual open employment. In the 2005/06 academic year, the three skills centres offer a total of 660 full-time training places for people with disabilities.

6. The training programmes of the skills centres are reviewed

regularly to ensure that the training courses offered and planned match with the local occupational skills required and meet the needs of the employment market.

7. According to the last round of employment survey conducted in January 2006 for students graduated from the skills centres in July 2005, the employment rate for those actively seeking employment was 77%.

Integrated Vocational Training Centres (IVTC)

8. Currently, there are two IVTCs operated by NGOs with government subvention which provide a series of tailor-made training programmes for people with disabilities, including vocational training and retraining service etc. As at December 2006, the two IVTCs provided a total of 453 training places.

Sheltered Workshops (SW)

9. For those who are temporarily unable to take up open employment due to their disabilities, the SW of the SWD provides them with a specially designed training environment, in which they can learn to adjust to normal work requirements, develop social skills and relationships, and prepare for potential advancement to supported/open employment. As at December 2006, there were 36 SWs providing 5 258 places.

Supported Employment (SE)

10. The SE of the SWD provides support to people with disabilities in employment. With services encompassing job finding and matching,

job coaching, follow-through support and employment-related skills training, it serves as an avenue for upward mobility of people with disabilities in the SWs and a necessary step towards integration for those people with disabilities who otherwise cannot take up open employment. As at December 2006, there were 29 NGOs providing 1 655 places.

Integrated Vocational Rehabilitation Services Centres (IVRSC)

11. The SWD has started to implement the new service delivery model of the IVRSC since April 2004 through re-engineering the SW and SE services. The IVRSC provides people with disabilities with a series of integrated and seamless vocational rehabilitation services in a specially designed training environment. The services provided by the IVRSC include centre-based training, non-centre-based training, employment-related training, retraining and other support services. As at December 2006, there were 19 IVRSCs providing a total of 3 146 training places.

(II) Labour Department's Employment Service

12. The Selective Placement Division (SPD) of the Labour Department (LD) provides a personalised employment service to help place people with disabilities in open employment. The SPD also helps students aged 15 or above with special educational needs seek employment after graduation.

13. A placement officer is assigned to look after each disabled job-seeker registered with the SPD. Apart from providing employment counselling and arranging job matching and referral, the placement

officer will prepare disabled job-seekers for job interviews beforehand and, where necessary, accompany them to attend such interviews. When a job-seeker has been placed, the placement officer will provide follow-up service.

14. In 2006, the SPD provided placement service to 3 695 people with disabilities and helped 2 493 of them find employment, representing a placement rate of 67.5%. In the first month of 2007, the SPD helped place 234 people with disabilities in employment.

15. To encourage and help disabled job-seekers to be more proactive and independent in their job search, the Self Help Integrated Placement Service (SHIPS) under the LD provides group counselling sessions to the participants to improve their job-searching skills and interviewing techniques. Computer facilities (including Internet browsing), telephones and fax machines as well as access to up-to-date careers information are made available to them in the employment offices of the SPD. Whilst continuing to enjoy the placement service rendered by the SPD, they are also encouraged by the LD to search and apply for suitable jobs on their own initiative.

16. The LD's "Interactive Selective Placement Service" web-site enables disabled persons to register for the SPD's placement service or renew their previous registrations, so that they can gain access to the placement service, browse the vacancies available and perform preliminary job-matching. The web-site also enables employers to place vacancy orders with the SPD, identify suitable disabled job-seekers to fill their vacancies, or request the SPD to refer candidates to them for interview.

17. The SPD also regularly organises public education and publicity programmes to promote public acceptance of people with disabilities and to enhance their employment opportunities. These programmes include special promotional campaigns to canvas vacancies from targeted trades, award-presentation ceremonies to commend enlightened employers and model disabled employees, TV/radio programmes, newspaper/bus advertisement, seminars and exhibitions.

(III) Measures to Enhance Employment Opportunities

18. The Administration has also vigorously implemented a series of measures to create more employment and job opportunities for people with disabilities. These measures are outlined as follows.

On the Job Training Programme for Young People with Disabilities (Sunnyway)

19. Taking account of the demand for intensive vocational and employment services of young people with disabilities, especially graduates with special educational needs, the SWD piloted the Sunnyway with effect from October 2005 on a 3-year basis, benefiting young people aged between 15 and 24 with disabilities or early signs of mental illness. The programme will enhance the employment opportunities of young people with disabilities through a proactive training, market-driven and placement-tied approach, and encourage employers to offer them job opportunities. Services of the programme include individual counselling and training, job matching, job attachment, job trial and not less than 6 months' post-placement service.

20. During the job attachment period, an allowance of \$1,250 per month will be paid for a maximum of three months to the trainees who have achieved not less than 80% attendance each month. Employers providing job trials to the disabled participants are given a financial incentive at a rate equal to half of the monthly salary paid to the disabled participants or \$3,000, whichever is the lower, for a maximum of three months. As at December 2006, there were 16 NGOs offering 311 Sunnyway places.

21. To open up more training opportunities for trainees of the Sunnyway, a job attachment programme was launched among government departments/bureaux in February 2006. The programme has met with encouraging response. At present, a total of 24 government departments/bureaux have participated in the programme to offer job attachment opportunities to trainees of the Sunnyway.

“Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities through Small Enterprise Project” (3E’s Project)

22. In his speech on the 2001-02 Budget, the Financial Secretary announced a one-off provision of \$50 million for NGOs to create employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The 3E’s Project, funded by the provision, is run by the SWD. Through the payment of grants as seed money to NGOs, the 3E’s Project supports the creation of small enterprises/businesses to ensure that people with disabilities can enjoy genuine employment in a carefully planned and sympathetic working environment. The number of employees with disabilities should not be less than 50% of the total number of employees in each enterprise and a proper employer-employee relationship is required.

23. As at December 2006, a total sum of \$20.3 million had been granted under the 3E's Project to support 20 NGOs to set up 40 businesses of various natures including cleaning, catering, car beauty, mobile massage, retail shops, vegetable supply and processing, household service, travel agency etc. These businesses created 500 employment opportunities of which 360 were tailor-made for people with disabilities.

Marketing Consultancy Office (Rehabilitation) (MCO(R))

24. The MCO(R) was set up by the SWD and its objective is to enhance employment and training opportunities for people with disabilities through innovative, effective and efficient business development and marketing approaches. Services of the MCO(R) include assisting NGOs in setting up social enterprises and small businesses under the 3E's Project, promoting the products produced and services provided by people with disabilities, strengthening NGOs' cooperation with the public and private sectors, coordinating NGOs to secure job orders, providing business consultation for NGOs and organising marketing events for promoting the working abilities of people with disabilities and the brand name of "SEPD" (Support the Employment of People with Disabilities), which is a registered trademark for the products produced and services provided by people with disabilities.

25. In 2005-06, the MCO(R) secured job orders and tender contracts amounting to \$15.4 million for various vocational rehabilitation services units. The MCO(R) also successfully negotiated and attained free advertising, poster, newspaper and magazine spaces which had a total

market value of \$1.7 million, and attended more than 10 TV and 40 newspaper interviews. In addition, 60 marketing programmes were organised in the year.

“Work Orientation and Placement Scheme”

26. Launched by the SPD under the LD in April 2005, this scheme aims at encouraging employers to offer job vacancies for people with disabilities through a three-month trial placement. On joining the scheme, disabled job-seekers will undergo a short pre-employment training programme to improve their job-searching skills, interviewing techniques, communication and interpersonal skills etc. For each disabled employee engaged under the scheme, participating employers will receive a financial incentive equivalent to half of the employee’s wages, subject to a maximum of \$ 3,000 per month, for up to three months. Employers are also encouraged to appoint a staff member to be the “mentor” to help the disabled workers settle in their jobs smoothly. Mentors will receive a one-off cash award of \$500.

Government’s Policy on Employment of People with Disabilities

27. As the largest employer in Hong Kong, the Government fully recognises the importance of taking a lead in employing people with disabilities in order to help them integrate into the community.

28. The Government seeks to place people with disabilities in appropriate jobs whenever possible and welcomes applications from them for both civil service and non-civil service vacancies. Disabled

candidates are given an appropriate degree of preference for appointment if they are found suitable for employment. Disabled applicants who meet the basic entry requirements for a post will not be subject to any further shortlisting criteria and will be automatically invited to attend the selection interview. They will then compete for the post on the same grounds as other applicants. Once they are considered suitable by the selection board to carry out the duties of a particular post, they would normally be recommended for appointment even though they may not be able, due to their disabilities, to perform the duties of every post in the same rank.

29. We also provide on-the-job assistance to officers with disabilities to facilitate them in carrying out their duties. Such assistance may take the form of modifications of work areas and facilities (e.g. modifying the office door to facilitate smooth passage of wheelchairs); appropriate changes to job design or work schedules (e.g. placing mentally handicapped staff in less demanding jobs and not assigning outdoor duties to physically handicapped staff); provision of necessary equipment etc. In April 1996, a central fund, with a commitment of \$4.4 million, was established for the purchase of technical aids for disabled government employees to facilitate their performance of duties. So far, a total of about \$3.7 million has been disbursed from the fund for the purchase of technical aids such as computer with Braille display, scanner, hearing aids etc. for 84 disabled employees.

30. We have been devoting tremendous efforts to promoting the Government's policy on employment of the disabled in the civil service as well as cultivating peer acceptance of the disabled staff. This is done through publications issued to departments which introduce the said

policy and provide practical tips on how to work with disabled staff, and insertion of relevant contents into the various training courses for human resources managers and new recruits to the civil service.

31. As at 31 March 2006, there were 3 256 disabled civil servants, representing around 2.1% of the strength of the civil service. As at the same date, 265 disabled persons were employed by the Government on non-civil service terms.

Formulation of Recruitment Policy and Employment Indicator for People with Disabilities

32. To further promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities and on the recommendation of the RAC Sub-committee on Employment, the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (HWFB) mobilised all relevant government bureaux in May 2003 to encourage over 360 Government Subvented Organisations and Statutory Bodies (GSOs and SBs) to formulate a recruitment policy and an employment indicator for people with disabilities.

33. In early 2004, the HWFB conducted a tracking survey to follow up the above effort. Findings of the survey revealed that 85 GSOs and SBs had formulated policies on recruitment of people with disabilities, and 21 amongst them had also set up employment indicators for people with disabilities. The employment indicators set by these GSOs and SBs ranged from 0.1% to 33%.

34. According to the findings of another tracking survey conducted

by the HWFB in early 2007, there is a substantial increase in the number of the GSOs and SBs adopting the above measures. 101 of them had formulated policies on recruitment of people with disabilities and 33 amongst them had also set up employment indicators for people with disabilities. The employment indicators set by these GSOs and SBs ranged from 1% to 60%.

Conclusion

35. The Administration is sparing no effort in helping people with disabilities, including graduates with special educational needs, to find jobs in the open employment market, and providing them with vocational training and rehabilitation service where appropriate. We will continue to explore viable measures to further enhance the employment opportunities of people with disabilities.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Civil Service Bureau

Social Welfare Department

Labour Department

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