

**For information on
21 March 2006**

LegCo Panel on Manpower

Training and Employment Programmes for Youths Offered by the Labour Department

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the progress of the Youth Pre-employment Training Programme and the Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme offered by the Labour Department (“LD”) and the findings of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University's consultancy studies on the two programmes.

YOUTH PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRAINING PROGRAMME (YPTP)

2. The YPTP was launched in September 1999 to provide school leavers aged 15 to 19 with a wide range of employment-related training so that they are better equipped for employment. Each year, we provide 12 000 training places and we have never turned down any eligible applicants so far. Over the past six years, the YPTP has provided training to more than 66 000 young persons. According to survey findings, discounting those who pursued further studies on completion of the YPTP, about 70% found jobs.

Four Modules of Training Courses

3. The YPTP offers four modular training courses as follows:

Module A : Leadership, discipline and team building

This module, which comprises training of about 80 hours, includes training on confidence, leadership, team building and organisational skills.

Module B : Job search and interpersonal skills

This is a compulsory training module. During the 48-hour training period, trainees will learn communication and interpersonal skills, job search and interview skills as well as self-understanding and self-development skills.

Module C : Elementary/intermediate computer application

This part of the training ranges from 48 to 80 hours. The commonly used softwares are taught at the elementary level, while advanced courses on software application and programming will be offered at the intermediate level. Around 180 module C training courses were provided under the first phase of YPTP 2005/06.

Module D : Job-specific skills

A wide variety of job-specific skill training courses are provided under module D training, with a training duration ranging from 100 to 180 hours. At present, more than 300 courses in 18 categories of module D training are provided.

After completing the modular training, trainees can undergo a one-month workplace attachment training at government departments, social service institutions, as well as public and private organisations. Career counselling and support services will be rendered to trainees throughout the programme and after job placement. The whole training under YPTP lasts about six to nine months.

The 2005-06 Programme

4. The first phase of YPTP 2005-06 commenced in September 2005. Altogether 7 521 youths had enrolled and more than 4 700 attended training. The second phase of the programme year commenced in February this year and the programme is still open for applications.

5. To meet changing market needs, new types of Job-specific Skills training have been introduced in Phase II of YPTP 2005/06. Other than training in mainstream trades, new job skill training courses on design and sports are also available.

Workplace Attachment

6. After attending the modular training courses, trainees may participate in workplace attachment training for one month. During the attachment period, trainees will be paid a training allowance of \$2,000 (increased from \$1,000 to \$2,000 since the 2005/06 Programme). In the 2004/05 programme year, 1 824 trainees took part in such attachment. The most popular vacancies were General Office Clerk, Teaching Assistant, Programme Assistant, Sales and Cook. As for trainees of the 2005/06 Programme, the workplace attachment commenced in December 2005.

Improvement Measures

7. Starting from Phase I of 2005/06, trainees may take more training courses from a mix of options to further enhance their employability. The allowance for workplace attachment has also been increased from \$1,000 to \$2,000. The two new initiatives have proved to be popular among trainees. Over one-third of trainees taking job skill courses enrolled in more than one course in a module. The percentage of trainees opting to join workplace attachment also increased from 14% for 2004/05 to 17%.

Special Tailor-made Training Courses

8. To meet the skill requirements of individual employers, we have developed special tailor-made training courses for them. After completing the training provided free of charge under YPTP, the trainees will be employed in training vacancies by these employers under the YWETS. During September 2005 to February 2006, five tailor-made training courses had been conducted for employers in the catering, retail, fashion sales and tourism industries. A thematic job fair on such special tailor-made training was held on 11 March 2006. This new mode of training is popular amongst larger establishments and enables trainees to find jobs and attain sustainable career development.

THE YOUTH WORK EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING SCHEME (YWETS)

9. The YWETS was launched in July 2002 to enhance the employability of young people aged 15-24 with educational attainment below degree level by providing them with real work experience in on-the-job training of 6-12 months. For the 2005/06 programme year, more than 9 000 youths have enrolled with the Scheme so far.

10. Under YWETS, trainees are placed in training vacancies and provided with on-the-job training under the guidance of mentors appointed by employers. Additional support such as counselling service is available from case managers who are registered social workers. Trainees are encouraged, during the period of training, to attend suitable vocational courses and are entitled to reimburse the related training course and examination fees from YWETS, subject to a maximum of \$4,000.

11. Participating employers receive a monthly training subsidy of \$2,000 for each trainee engaged during the employment and training period up to one year, as well as full-package support services.

Placements

12. The original target of the YWETS is to place 20 000 young people into employment by July 2006. This was achieved in early April 2005, 16 months ahead of schedule. As at the end of February 2006, a cumulative total of 26 728 trainees have been placed in training vacancies. They were mainly engaged in clerical (23%), sales (14%), and information technology (11%) posts. In addition, another 14 558 have found employment in the open employment market with the advice and assistance of their case managers.

Training Vacancies and Tailor-made Projects

13. As at end of February 2006, we have received a cumulative total of over 62 000 vacancies from about 11 000 employers. Of these, 13% are from the wholesale and retail trade, 10% from catering trade and 9% from education services.

14. The YWETS offers a variety of tailor-made employment projects to cater for trainees' needs and interest. Over 30 projects offering about 2 000 vacancies have been organized, covering industries such as wholesale and retail, aviation, tourism, information technology, film and entertainment, education, social services and catering, etc. We will continue to develop special tailor-made projects for industries and individual establishments.

One-stop Service under the YPTP and the YWETS

15. Together with the YPTP, we provide a one-stop service in offering training and employment opportunities to young people. Through a “revolving door” mechanism introduced for the 2005/06 programme year, trainees may now move between the two schemes at different stages during the programme year on the recommendation of their case managers in order to make the best use of the training available under both schemes. To facilitate the effective operation of the revolving door, a trainee may now receive case management service from the same Non-Governmental Organisation/case manager when he moves between programmes.

EVALUATION OF THE TWO PROGRAMMES

16. To assess the effectiveness of the two youth programmes, the LD has commissioned the Centre for Social Policy Studies of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (“HKPU”) to conduct studies on the YPTP and YWETS.

YPTP

17. For the YPTP, the review of the 2003-04 Programme concluded that it had positive functions and was of value to society. Trainees, training bodies, host organizations and employers considered the YPTP highly effective in enhancing the employability of young people.

18. Of the four modules provided under YPTP, module D (Job-specific Skills Training) was most well received among trainees. Almost 90% of the trainees interviewed had enrolled for this module. Besides, the review also concluded that host organisations and trainees had highly praised the workplace attachment training under the Programme as it successfully helped trainees gain work experience and deepen their understanding of the world of work.

19. In response to the review, we have already implemented two improvement measures as described in paragraph 7 above.

YWETS

20. For the YWETS, the LD has commissioned the HKPU to undertake a comprehensive review of the Scheme and conduct an 18-month longitudinal study (“Panel Study on YWETS trainees”) on more than 800 trainees to trace the changes in their employability and the long-term effects of the Scheme on them.

(i) The Panel Study on YWETS trainees

The study revealed that after joining the Scheme for one year, the trainees had made significant improvement in various aspects, such as preparation for work and employability. Over 70% of trainees were found to have secured employment whereas around 10% of them pursued further study. Only 16.5% of trainees were still seeking jobs. The methodology and details of the findings are at Appendix.

(ii) The “Comprehensive Review”

The study affirms the effectiveness of YWETS and recommends the Government to continue implementing the Scheme. The study group points out that YWETS is a good mix of “Active Labour Market Policies” in line with the standards promulgated by the International Labour Organisation. It also affirms that YWETS has effectively assisted disadvantaged youths in seeking jobs, especially on enhancing trainees’ human capital, self-efficacy and strengthening their resources of the social network. Besides, YWETS has effectively assisted youths with relative lower education level and working experience in equipping themselves for enhancing employability.

More specifically, the study makes the following recommendations to the government and social partners participating in the scheme:

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

- (a) To be more flexible in co-coordinating their service units in different districts so as to alleviate the regional difference in demand and supply of services.
- (b) To better utilize their local network with the employers and strengthen communication in order to explore more employment training opportunities for young people.
- (c) To have regular review on the morale and retention of staff. More training and information on career counselling should be provided to case managers.

Employers

- (a) To strengthen communication with the LD and NGOs with a view to developing a training programme with consideration on trainees' abilities to meet the requirements of the commercial sector and labour market.
- (b) To make better use of support services provided by YWETS.
- (c) To encourage trainees to make better use of the off-the-job vocational training allowance for enhancing their employability.

Labour Department

- (a) The LD has discharged its functions properly in administering YWETS. LD should keep on promoting YWETS to employers and strengthen the bridge-role between employers and NGOs.
- (b) To step up efforts to promote the 'tailor-made' projects which benefit both trainees and employers. This kind of projects could accommodate diversified interests of trainees, cater for the needs of economic development as well as provide further sustainable developing opportunities to the youngsters.
- (c) To collaborate with relevant departments and organizations to formulate policy to support the development of professionalism in career counselling.

THE WAY FORWARD

21. The LD will continue to offer the programmes for youths in 2006. We have sufficient places for youths who are interested in joining either of the programmes. In the light of operating experience and changes in the labour market, we will introduce new training courses and adopt necessary measures to further improve the programmes. We will also take into account the recommendations made in the studies conducted by the HKPU in running them.

Labour Department
March 2006

Panel Study on YWETS Trainees Methodologies and Findings

The “Panel Study on YWETS Trainees” is to trace the first-term YWETS trainees for a period of 18 months for the changes in their employability. It included two waves of interview. The first wave of interview was kicked off in mid-November 2002 and 1 009 trainees were successfully interviewed. The second wave of interview was conducted in December 2003 and 857 trainees were interviewed. The Panel Study concluded that the following aspects of trainees are apparently improved after they joined YWETS for one year:

(1) Better prepared for work

The case management service provided by YWETS through case managers, who are registered social workers, with personalized career counselling and support service has effectively improved the job-seeking skills and mind-set of trainees.

(2) Enhanced employability

It is found that over 70% of trainees were able to secure employment after one year whereas around 10% of them continued further study. Only 16.5% of trainees were still seeking jobs. Beside, most trainees shared the views that they received great support from mentors. Over 90% of them indicated that their mentors could assist them in tackling problems at work. Over 60% of trainees who had completed their on-the-job training were offered further employment by employers. This affirms the effectiveness of YWETS in improving the employability and competitiveness of trainees.

(3) More motivated in continuing study

The study findings revealed that before joining the YWETS, only a few of the respondents had attended vocation-related training courses. After joining the YWETS, nearly half of the trainees said that they applied for off-the-job vocational training courses. This reflects that the Scheme has increased their motivation on studying.

(4) Enhanced psychological qualities of individuals

The study showed that trainees had better self-evaluation, particularly on self-esteem, after they joined YWETS. If trainees have better self-evaluation, they have a clearer picture on their career interests that will reduce their obstacles in job searching.

(5) Strengthened resources of social network

It is noted that there were great improvements on the support they gained from their family members when trainees came across problems. In the mean time, through support services provided under YWETS, trainees had expanded their social network and obtained more diversified information about the employment market. That would put them in a more advantageous position in seeking jobs with higher pay.

(6) Improved individuals and families financial condition

Before joining YWETS, near 40% of the trainees were financially dependant on their parents or other aids. After joining YWETS for one year, over 70% of trainees had secured employment and the salary they earned became their major source of income. The situation not only enabled trainees to become financially independent but also increased their total household income.