

For discussion on
16 January 2006

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON PUBLIC SERVICE

Enhanced Training for Civil Servants

Purpose

This paper presents an updated overview of the measures taken to enhance the training and development programmes for civil servants.

Overall scene

2. The Government is committed to providing civil servants with training programmes that would equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary for providing quality service to the public. In 2004/05, the Government spent about HK\$823 million¹ on training and development. The training output amounted to 584,000 trainees through classroom training and another 105,000 trainees through web-based courses.

3. At present, vocational training (i.e. training designed to meet the job-specific needs of staff of certain grade or department) is provided by bureaux/departments. As regards generic training (i.e. training for enhancing the general personal effectiveness of staff, such as courses on languages, use of IT, and general management), the Civil Service Bureau (“CSB”) and bureaux/departments complement each other in the provision of such training. CSB will focus more on common needs across departments while departments will provide training meeting the specific needs of their staff. About one-third of the generic training currently offered to civil servants is provided by CSB mainly through the Civil Service Training and Development Institute (“CSTDI”) and the General Grades Office.

4. In 2004/05, CSB spent about HK\$103 million on training for all civil servants, benefiting about 48,000 trainees. On the other hand, departments spent about HK\$720 million on training for their own staff, benefiting about 536,000 trainees. In terms of web-based courses, over 41,000 trainees benefited from the courses offered by CSTDI on such general subjects as management, languages, national studies and IT. About 64,000 trainees

¹ This includes salaries for training staff, rentals for accommodation, training costs and related expenses.

benefited from web-based vocational programmes offered by departments to suit their specific needs.

Enhanced training and development programmes rolled out by CSB

5. The Civil Service Bureau has made conscious efforts in recent years to expand the training and development opportunities for all levels of civil servants.

6. In April 2004, CSTDI was subsumed under CSB in the interest of delayering and to achieve better efficiency. To ensure that the resources we spend on training and development are utilized in the most cost-effective manner, CSTDI places focus on four main areas of work: senior executive training and development, national studies programme, providing consultancy services to departments on human resource management, and promoting a culture of continuous learning in the civil service.

7. In December 2005, we have presented to Members vide LC paper No. CB(1)507/05-06(04) an overview of the national studies programmes and related training activities provided to civil servants, including the various enhancement programmes that we have introduced in the past few years. The following paragraphs give a summary of the training and development activities that CSB is engaged in, other than the national studies programmes already covered in the above-referenced paper.

Development and learning opportunities for senior executives

8. We are committed to providing directorate and senior non-directorate staff with adequate support in acquiring leadership skills, in seeking new ideas, and in learning the best management practices for meeting the challenges ahead. We offer different programmes for staff at different levels. Enhancements to these programmes are made from time to time to match the changing needs of the officers and the latest requirements of the external environment.

9. A 3-week programme called *Leadership In Action* is offered to senior professionals with potential for advancement. The programme is conducted by local and overseas experts. A one-week *Leadership Enhancement and Development* (“LEAD”) programme led by a team of faculty from the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University is offered to directorate officers. The LEAD programme adopts the rigorous case study approach which enables the study of real issues confronting public officials. To facilitate cross fertilization, senior staff from overseas governments, public and private organizations are invited to join both programmes.

10. In 2005, we have further strengthened our programmes by offering a series of 1 day or 1½-days advanced management workshops led by distinguished scholars and world class experts for directorate officers on specific topics such as competitive strategy, negotiation, presentation with impact, and communication tactics and strategies.

11. We have also enriched our seminar series to include topics which address the latest public and management challenges, such as seminars on crisis management in 2004, and constitutional development in 2005. Senior public officers and distinguished scholars, including professors from Tsinghua University, Cambridge University and Harvard University were invited to conduct these seminars. Over 2,000 senior officers attended these seminars in 2005.

12. Apart from local courses and seminars, we offer a variety of attachment programmes for senior officers to gain wider exposure. These include attachment to policy bureaux to participate in policy work, attachment to private sector organizations in Hong Kong or overseas government/organizations, and exchange programmes with Mainland cities.

13. Funding support and advice are given to bureaux and departments to groom officers for advancement. Selected officers are sponsored to attend executive development programmes at renowned overseas institutes. The duration of these programmes lasts from a few weeks to a full academic year.

14. The on-line resource centre designed for senior officers (namely, the “Leaders’ Corner”) has been revamped and consolidated as a resource corner for our senior staff to extract useful tools and information for their work and continuous development. Summary reports, insights and personal observations contributed by the participants in overseas and Mainland programmes are now available on-line for cross department learning and sharing.

Development and learning opportunities for staff at other levels

15. In the past few years, particular attention has been given to meeting the needs of staff most affected by changes in the civil service and/or the external environment. Diversified training and learning opportunities have been made available to support them in facing up to these changes and to enable them to provide better services to the community.

16. Whilst providing expert advice to bureaux and departments in HRM matters, CSB rolls out training and development programmes in close support of reform initiatives launched by either the centre or bureaux/ departments. For some years, we have also been actively encouraging civil servants at all levels to pursue continuous learning to build up their resilience and capabilities at times of change. An account of our endeavours in the above respect is given below.

(i) *The Three-Year Training and Development Programme*

17. We earmarked \$50 million in 2001/02 to launch the Three-Year Training and Development Initiative, providing staff in the Voluntary Retirement grades (like the clerical and secretarial grades) with a diverse range of training activities to help job transition, build new mindset, develop IT or other new skills, etc. Savings achieved in the first three years were utilized to roll forward the programme beyond March 2004. Over 186,000 training places would have been provided by the end of 2005/06. It is estimated that another 5,000 training places would be provided in 2006/07.

(ii) *Enhanced E-learning resources*

18. Since launching our service-wide e-learning portal in 2000, we have over the years expanded, on a sustained basis, the e-learning opportunities open to civil servants. Taking advantage of the convenience of the internet which allows learning at any time and according to one's own pace, we have made available an increasing number of on-line courses. We now offer, through the enhanced Cyber Learning Centre ("CLC") Plus website, close to 250 items of web courses and job aids. The web courses, covering a wide range of subjects, have in 2005/06 attracted some 30,000 participants so far, about 50% of whom are staff remunerated below Point 34 of the Master Pay Scale. We plan to add at least another 20 items during 2006/07, particularly in the areas of Putonghua, English language and IT. We expect the number of web course participants to increase by 18% from 34,000 in 2005/06 to 40,000 in 2006/07.

19. At the same time, CSTDI has been assisting bureaux and departments in the development of e-learning resources and the enhancement of e-learning platforms so as to encourage more staff to take up learning on-line. By the end of 2005/06, about 10 bureaux/departments will have their e-learning resources hosted on the CLC Plus website.

(iii) *Encouraging continuous learning through financial sponsorship*

20. In 2001/02, we launched the Training Incentive Scheme to support officers to attend employment-related training programmes. This Scheme ran for 3 years ending 2003/04. It benefited over 7,000 staff, mainly middle managers and junior staff.

21. In 2005, we have launched two training sponsorship schemes to provide financial assistance to civil servants who wish to pursue learning to enhance their knowledge, personal effectiveness and qualifications.

22. The first scheme is open to junior to middle managers for pursuing recognized management courses outside office hours. We reimburse 75% of the course fee up to a ceiling of HK\$22,500 per year. Under the second scheme, front-line staff attending work-related courses or courses that raise their qualification to Form-5 level could claim for course fee reimbursement. For work-related courses, the maximum amount of reimbursement is \$2,000. For courses leading to Form 5 qualification, we reimburse up to 75% of the course fee or a ceiling of \$6,000.

23. These two schemes will continue to be offered in 2006/07. To encourage more civil servants to take advantage of them, we will expand the coverage of the scheme by increasing the number of recognized courses. Other enhancement measures are being considered.

(iv) *Special programmes for general grades staff*

24. In 2005, the General Grades Office (“GGO”) of CSB has organized a special mindset training programme – “Change for Better Future” for all clerical and secretarial staff in the civil service. The programme aims at helping these staff to embrace changes and face the challenges with confidence. Over 20,000 (or 94% of all) clerical and secretarial staff have attended the seminar so far. The rest will attend the seminar in early 2006. In 2006/07, GGO will focus on job skills and personal effectiveness training for clerical and secretarial staff to enhance their capability to take on new job assignments with competence and confidence.

(v) *Classroom training*

25. The training opportunities outlined in paragraphs 17 to 24 above are made available on top of the classroom training programmes run by CSTDI for civil servants. CSTSI offers classroom training on a broad range of subjects including management, communication, national studies, English language, Chinese language and Putonghua.

26. In 2005/06, the total output in classroom training provided by CSB (including GGO and CSTDI) is expected to reach 24,000 trainees, excluding the training referred to in paragraph 24 above on mindset change offered by GGO in 2005. In 2006/07, we will enhance our classroom training by focusing on specific training needs e.g. contract management, performance management and customer service. The trainee number in 2006/07 is expected to rise to 29,500.

Supporting and facilitating departments in human resource development

27. At the organizational level, CSTDI is making sustained efforts to help departments in developing HRD strategies and spearheading HRD initiatives. CSTDI provides consultancy services to departments on formulating training policies, carrying out training needs analysis, developing and implementing departmental T&D plans to support departmental corporate goals, as well as designing and organizing tailor-made programmes and classes for their staff. In 2001, CSB launched a scheme to promote the formulation of Training and Development (“T&D”) Plan and requested departments to draw up T&D plans for their staff with a view to upgrading our human capital and linking training with the business needs of the departments. Since then, we witness the institutionalization of the T&D functions by many departments. In 2005, some 50 departments have prepared annual departmental T&D plans for their staff. Based on these plans, we provide support to departments through the provision of training classes, consultancy services and funding support. We also disseminate best practices in T&D matters for experience sharing amongst departments. In addition, CSTDI provides advice and support on development of web courses, self-learning, and ways to promote knowledge sharing.

28. We partner with departments in promoting and implementing HRM best practices. To facilitate experience sharing amongst departments and with external organizations, seminars and workshops on relevant HRM topics are organized regularly. CSTDI also offers an extensive array of consultancy services in managing and enhancing staff performance, drawing up and updating competency profile, enhancing leadership and service qualities, developing and implementing change strategies, and selecting suitable consultants to provide specialized HRM services.

29. The number of HRM consultancy projects conducted by CSTDI for departments in 2005/06 is anticipated to reach 130, relative to 53 and 81 such projects in 2003/04 and 2004/05 respectively. The number of consultancy projects is expected to grow to about 150 in 2006/07.

Way forward

30. In the coming years, the Civil Service Bureau will continue to strengthen and diversify the range of training opportunities open to civil servants through more systematic planning, encourage wider use of e-learning, and provide more financial assistance for self study after office hours. We will continue to monitor the service-wide trends in training and development and provide targeted support in line with new demands and changes in the environment.

Civil Service Bureau
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