

**Subcommittee on Employees Retraining Ordinance
(Amendment of Schedule 3) Notice 2008**

**Estimated Expenditure of the Employees Retraining Board
for the 2008-09 Financial Year**

Purpose

At the meeting of the Subcommittee held on 6 November 2008, Members requested the Administration to provide more information on the estimated expenditure of the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) for the 2008-09 financial year. This paper provides the relevant information for Members' reference.

ERB's Estimated Expenditure for 2008-09

2. In accordance with the decision of the Chief Executive-in-Council, the eligibility criteria of the Employees Retraining Scheme (ERS) were relaxed with effect from 1 December 2007 to cover all eligible persons aged 15 or above with education level at sub-degree or below. In tandem with the expansion of its service targets, the ERB remains committed also to serving the low-skilled unemployed people, displaced workers and the disadvantaged in the society, including ethnic minorities, new arrivals, the disabled, occupational accident rehabilitants, and rehabilitated offenders. The ERB endeavours to provide multi-faceted, placement-tied courses as well as generic skills courses to assist its trainees in acquiring vocational skills and recognised qualifications. It will also incorporate an element of "sustainability" into its training programmes with a view to enhancing trainees' employability and competitiveness.

3. The overall expenditure of the ERB for 2008-09 is estimated to increase from about \$393 million in 2007-08 to about \$877 million. About 66% of the overall expenditure (about \$582 million) will be used for provision of training and retraining courses, 13% (about \$113 million) for disbursement of retraining allowance, and the remaining 21% (about \$182 million) for supporting the development of new training and employment support schemes or enhancement of existing schemes, payment of administrative charges to the Immigration Department for collection of the Employees Retraining Levy, general administrative and operating costs of the ERB's Executive Office, as

well as installation and maintenance of information technology system and facilities, etc.

Training Courses

Enhancement of Training Portfolio

4. The number of training places will be increased by 40%, from 87 000 in 2007-08 to 122 750 in 2008-09. About 95 000 training places are for existing courses tailored to meet the training needs of the original service targets (i.e. those who are aged 30 or above with junior secondary education or below). Courses include those on Security and Property Management, Household Services, Personal Care Services, Healthcare Massage Services, Customer Services, Environmental Hygiene and Cleaning Services and the majority of them are pitched at Level 1 of the Qualifications Framework (QF).

5. The ERB started to launch new courses gradually in September 2008 to meet the needs of the market and employers. A total of 120 new courses have been developed to meet the diverse career aspirations of the much expanded target groups including the unemployed who are younger or with a higher education level. Training courses are pitched at QF Level 1 to 4 and cover a wide spectrum of industries including Tourism, Exhibition, Hotel, Retail, Logistics, Information Technology, Design, Merchandising, Healthcare, Leisure and Sports, Beauty Care, and Catering etc. To tie in with Hong Kong's development as an international financial, trading, logistics, tourism and information centre, the ERB also provides courses designed to prepare trainees for professional examinations, such as Insurance Agents, Accounting Technicians, Tourist Guides, etc. There are also training courses with professional assessment incorporated and recognised for professional certification purpose such as Healthcare Assistant. The ERB is committed to helping those who are interested in entering specific professional through training and recognition mechanism.

6. To meet the special needs of non-engaged youths aged 15-20, the ERB launches a total of 40 courses pitched at QF Level 1 under the Youth Training Programme. Apart from vocational and generic skills training, these courses also place much emphasis on whole person development and provide additional counseling and

support services. It is hoped that the courses will help improve the young people's personal attributes and capabilities through a variety of strategies, including nurturing their positive attitudes towards life, self confidence, self discipline, and pursuit of excellence. Career planning and personalised employment support will be provided to set the right paths for the young people. Training bodies will also assist the trainees to articulate to further studies or employment according to their aspirations upon course completion.

7. The ERB has developed various new courses to meet the training and employment needs of the disadvantaged groups including the new arrivals, the disabled, people recovered from industrial accidents, ethnic minorities, and rehabilitated ex-offenders. In particular, a new course entitled "Employment Set Sail" is designed to help the new arrivals and ethnic minorities to better understand their communities and the local workplace culture to facilitate their joining the workforce.

8. The ERB endeavours to assist the ethnic minorities, and to this end 10 full-time placement-tied and 7 part time generic skills courses (conducted in English) have been developed in the current year. Five of the full-time placement-tied courses are catering for the needs of the younger groups including Fitness Instructor Training, Programme Worker Training, Community Interpreter Training, and HKIAAT Account Clerk Training, as well as the Diploma course in Translation and Interpretation which is designed for people with higher education. Training bodies providing these courses may apply for extra resources for interpretation services to be provided to trainees to facilitate their understanding about the training content.

Enhancement of Training Content

9. Given the rapid development of our technology nowadays, individuals would need to pursue self learning as well as life-long learning, and be able to acquire knowledge in breadth as well as depth. The ERB aims to help its trainees sustain their employability in the labour market and attain upward mobility through acquiring generic vocational skills training, including personal attributes and foundations skills (i.e. languages, numeracy, information technology (IT) applications). This is achieved through revamping and enhancing part-time non-placement-tied courses on personal attributes and foundation skills, including English communication, Chinese communication, Putonghua, numeracy, and IT applications. The ERB

will launch 20 new courses pitched at QF Level 1 to Level 4, covering the above five areas this year.

10. The ERB will take into account the learning progress of its trainees when developing placement-tied courses. Apart from extending the training hours for practice in class so that trainees would receive guided practical training, there will also be extra learning time for more complex concepts and for the development of soft skills for the betterment of personal attributes. All these aim to better equip trainees for employment after graduation and to enhance sustained employment.

11. To assist trainees in finding the directions for their lives, strengthening their abilities in dealing with adversities, and nurturing a positive attitude towards life, cross-industry training for enhancement of personal attributes is incorporated into all full-time placement-tied courses. The key elements of the module include personal financial management, career planning, work culture, team spirit, adversity management, etc.

12. Given the enhancement of the training content, the total training hours will increase by almost 95% when comparing with that of 2007-08. The average training time for existing full-time courses will increase from 98 hours in 2007-08 to 132 in 2008-09. For new courses introduced in 2008-09 (excluding Youth Training Programme), the average training time is 197 hours. The duration of Youth Training Programme is 300 hours.

Retraining Allowance

13. With the increase of training places in full-time courses in 2008-09, the budget for retraining allowance will rise accordingly. While 41 000 trainees have received retraining allowance in 2007-08, it is estimated that the number of trainees receiving retraining allowance will increase to about 74 000 in 2008-09, representing a rise of around 80%.

Other Training Schemes and Related Items

14. The ERB operates two Training Resource Centres which provide free self-learning facilities to enable its graduates and potential

trainees to pursue continuous training and self-learning. Through provision of self-learning and interactive learning support services, job seeking and market information, recruitment seminars, skills enhancement workshops, the Training Resource Centres serve to enhance trainees' employability.

15. In 2008-09, as a pilot scheme, the ERB has converted one of the Training Resource Centres into a Training cum Employment Resource Centre (TERC) to offer apt and multi-faceted training and employment support services to people in need of training and employment services. The TERC serves as an information hub for the ERB's training courses and services where the public can enquire and enroll in ERB's courses. They may also attend briefings that are held regularly on different industries and courses, in order to understand the course features and development of relevant industries to facilitate their choices of training courses. The multi-media self-learning and reading corner in the Centre offers different reference materials and self-learning softwares to encourage self-learning and upgrading of the trainees.

16. The TERC offers personalised service by professional social workers to persons who have been identified as having training and employment needs after assessment. The assessment is conducted through a systematic assessment tool specially designed for local people in order to understand and analyse job seekers' personal background and service needs. Through professional intervention and career guidance, the Centre will help the job seekers understand their career aspirations, set the career goal, and plan for their future career and study directions. The TERC also provides continuous assessment for the job seekers as well as career counseling.

17. To achieve the goal of "helping people to help themselves", the TERC has set up support groups in the Centre for members of similar backgrounds so that they can exchange market information and promote communication and learning. Successful job seekers are invited to serve as volunteers to share their experience to enhance support and encouragement among the job seekers. The Centre also provides dedicated support service and platform for information exchange for new arrivals and ethnic minorities. A "Vacancy Search Terminal" of the Labour Department, job vacancy information cards, and full office equipment are also available in the Centre. Job seekers can utilise these resources to prepare their resumes and contact employers. The Centre also provides free

recruitment and referral services for employers in the district.

18. The ERB coordinates the Integrated Scheme for Local Domestic Helpers which involves 13 designated Regional Service Centres operated by 13 training bodies. The scheme offers referral services for graduates of courses on local domestic helpers, post-natal care and child-care workers, etc. The ERB plans to rebrand the Integrated Scheme for Local Domestic Helpers into a “One-stop Integrated Household Services” in 2008-09 to expand and provide one-stop referral service for different household services. Apart from household cleaning, cooking, post-natal care and child care, the rebranded scheme will also include services such as referral of elderly home care, support for attending medical appointments, stand-in service for foreign domestic helpers who are on leave, care for plants/pets etc. to meet the diverse demands of household services.

19. The ERB has launched the Healthcare Massage Integrated Service (HMIS) to provide graduates of the Healthcare Massage training course with a one-stop referral service. This includes the referral service of provision of massage service in estates’ clubhouses, business organisations, “3R Zone” Work Experience Centre and the pilot home-based massage service with a view to enhancing the employment prospects of graduates. To achieve better synergy and to enhance the cost-effectiveness of the services, four regional Service Centres will be set up in 2008-09 to provide referral of massage services not just for estates’ clubhouses, business organisations, but also domestic households under the brand of “Healthcare Massage Integrated Scheme”.

20. The ERB operates a Practical Skills Training and Assessment Centre (PSTAC) to co-ordinate and administer different practical skills assessments so as to ensure the skills level of its graduates, enhance public and employers’ confidence and promote employment opportunities for graduates. In 2008-09, the ERB will strengthen the quality assurance mechanism for its training courses to ensure that they would be able to satisfy the accreditation of the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications, and hence be recognised under the QF and listed on the Qualifications Register launched by the Government in May 2008. Besides, following the relocation of the PSTAC, the ERB has upgraded its assessment facilities and equipment as well as streamlined the assessment procedures, thereby shortening the waiting time for assessment and facilitating the trainees’ performance during assessment

in a better environment.

21. The ERB also endeavours to gauge the views of relevant industries and training institutions in reviewing and revamping its existing courses as well as in developing new courses. An incentive scheme providing “Course Development Subsidy” and “Training Facilities Subsidy” is set up to encourage training bodies to develop new courses with market potential for the original service targets. Regular surveys are conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of ERB’s training courses and services. In 2008-09, Technical Advisory Teams for different industries are set up to support the work of course development and quality assurance. The subsidies offered under the incentive scheme for course development are further enhanced to encourage the development of new courses that meet the needs of the disabled, people recovered from industrial accidents and the ethnic minorities. The ERB will also strengthen its market research by conducting tracking surveys on graduates of specific courses, as well as surveys on training needs of the new service targets and target groups with special needs.

22. Having entered its 15th anniversary which marks an important milestone in the development and in line with the expansion of its service targets, the ERB has devoted much efforts in 2007-08 to promote its training courses and services to the public. In 2008-09, the ERB will further enhance its publicity efforts both at district level and across the territory in order to reach out to and benefit more people in need. For wider reception and recognition of its courses and graduates, the ERB is undertaking a rebranding exercise to better reflect its new positioning.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
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