

For information on
14 December 2009

Legislative Council Panel on Manpower
Measures Taken by the Labour Department
to Promote Youth Employment

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the measures taken by the Labour Department (LD) to promote youth employment.

Background

2. Enhancing the employability of young people and supporting their career development is a priority concern of the Government. We understand that some young people are facing acute difficulties in securing employment for a variety of reasons, including their relatively low academic achievement, limited work experience, absence of clear career goals, lack of work motivation and weak personal networks.
3. The unemployment rate of young people aged 15 to 24 is persistently higher than the overall unemployment rate. This phenomenon, however, is not peculiar to Hong Kong and is encountered by economies at various stages of economic development. According to the Global Employment Trends published by the International Labour Organisation in May 2009, prior to the onset of the financial tsunami, young people (aged 15 to 24) were 2.8 times as likely to be unemployed as adults at the global level. Over the past five years, the youth unemployment rate (for people aged 15 to 24) of Hong Kong was on average 2.1 times of the overall unemployment rate.
4. Young people may find it more difficult to hold down jobs at times of economic adversity. On one hand, they will face keener competition for the reduced opportunities in the employment market. On the other hand, they will stand a higher risk of redundancy owing to their lower employability.
5. LD adopts a multi-pronged strategy to promote youth employment. In close collaboration with stakeholders and other social partners, LD spares no effort to assist young people to develop their careers through providing a full range of recruitment and placement services in general and administering dedicated training and employment programmes for young people in particular.

User-friendly Employment Services

6. LD provides convenient employment services free-of-charge to all job seekers, including young people, through its 12 Job Centres, the Recruitment Centre for the Catering Industry (RCCI), Telephone Employment Service Centre, Interactive Employment Service website (iES) and vacancy search terminals installed at various convenient locations across the territory. Job seekers who need more intensive employment services or have special difficulties in finding jobs may join the Job Matching Programme or the Work Trial Scheme (WTS). To facilitate job seekers' access to job vacancy information, LD will, on a trial basis, provide non-government organisations (NGOs) with vacancy search terminals connected to the extensive job vacancy database of the Department. LD also plans to disseminate information on job vacancies and job fairs via Short Message Service to job seekers who have registered an interest in receiving such information.

7. Apart from the highly popular¹ iES, the work trial opportunities under WTS are also well received² by young people. The job openings and on-the-spot interview arrangements offered by RCCI have received the strong support³ of young job seekers. LD will establish a new Recruitment Centre for the Retail Industry (RCRI) in mid-2010. We are confident that the new RCRI will be able to offer on a year-round basis a significant number of retail vacancies that are suitable for young job seekers with different academic qualifications and skills levels.

Dedicated Training and Employment Support for Young People

Youth Pre-employment Training Programme and Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme

8. LD administers the Youth Pre-employment Training Programme (YPTP) and the Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme (YWETS) to provide a full range of pre-employment and on-the-job training to young people aged 15 to 24 with educational attainment at sub-degree or below level.

¹ iES recorded 1.19 billion page views in the past 12 months from December 2008 to November 2009.

² 37% of those placed into work trials under WTS from January to November 2009 were young job seekers aged 15 to 24.

³ More than half of the users of RCCI are young people aged 15 to 24.

9. YPTP provides a wide range of modular training on leadership, job-search and interpersonal skills, computer application and job-specific skills, while YWETS offers job placements with on-the-job training of six to 12 months' duration with a view to enhancing the employability of young people, facilitating their smooth transition to employment and achieving further skills development. The effectiveness of the two youth programmes has been repeatedly affirmed by feedbacks of stakeholders and evaluation results of independent consultancy studies. Over the years, YPTP has trained over 90 000 young people (other than those pursuing further studies, 70% of trainees were employed after completion of training) and YWETS assisted 62 200 in securing employment.

10. To meet the diversified needs and interests of trainees, tailor-made training-cum-employment projects (e.g. the "IT Seeds Project", "Airport Ambassadors Programme" and "Pilot Project for Tradesman Trainees", etc.) are organised under the youth programmes in collaboration with employers and training bodies. In the 2008/09 Programme, 19 tailor-made projects offering about 1 800 vacancies in a wide spectrum of industries and occupations were organised.

11. In addition, YWETS co-organised six job fairs with its training bodies in the 2008/09 Programme with a view to enhancing the employment opportunities of young people, particularly those living in remote districts.

12. To proactively assist young people in navigating their career journey, LD has further enhanced and integrated YPTP and YWETS into a "through-train" programme - YPTP YWETS - to provide seamless and comprehensive youth training and employment support. Starting from the 2009/10 Programme Year commencing in September 2009, the revamped Programme –

- (a) enrolls trainees on a year-round basis in place of two phases of recruitment per annum in the past, so as to meet the training and employment needs of young people in a more timely and flexible manner;
- (b) extends the provision of personalised career guidance and counselling services by 12 months for trainees who have secured employment so as to better assist them to settle in their jobs, overcome problems in the workplaces, and pursue further learning and skills upgrading opportunities; and

- (c) organises more tailor-made and value-adding training-cum-employment projects in collaboration with employers and training bodies.

13. Trainees enrolled in the revamped Programme are entitled to a full range of coordinated and customised training and employment support services, including pre-employment training, one-month workplace attachment training, on-the-job training of six to 12 months, reimbursement of off-the-job course and examination fees up to \$4,000 per trainee, as well as case management services rendered by registered social workers. Response of young people to the revamped Programme is encouraging. From its commencement on 14 August 2009 to the end of November 2009, some 10 000 applications were received, up 40% over the figure for the corresponding period last year.

14. In collaboration with stakeholders, including employers and training bodies, the revamped YPTP YWETS actively organises new training-cum-employment projects for young people with different backgrounds. Major projects in the pipeline include –

- (a) “Targeted Career Training Mission”, a special training project for youths at risk organised in collaboration with NGOs operating youth outreaching services. Youths at risk are provided with a package of tailor-made pre-employment training courses featuring ample flexibility in course durations, class sizes, and course schedules, as well as personalised career counselling and support services by social workers of NGOs.
- (b) Collaborative projects with the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF) for enhancing the employability of disadvantaged youths. Capitalising on synergy with new social partners and innovative approaches, these projects suitably and flexibly integrate pre-employment and on-the-job training under YPTP YWETS with the social capital developmental strategies advocated by CIIF, with a view to reaching out to non-engaged youths who are not readily accessible by the existing youth training and employment programmes.
- (c) “IT Seeds Project”, a training-cum-employment programme to train young people to provide teaching, administrative and technical support in schools. Free pre-employment training under YPTP YWETS is provided to trainees, followed by employment in the form of 12 months’ on-the-job training (OJT). During the OJT period, trainees are provided with one-day paid leave each week for attending a one-year job-related vocational training course.

- (d) “Technical Support Services Officer Training Project”, a training-cum-employment programme organised for youths with educational attainment at sub-degree level. Trainees receive pre-employment training and sit for professional examinations leading to entry qualifications. Apart from undergoing 12 months’ OJT on management of the information technology system and multi-media system of schools, trainees are given paid leave each week during the OJT period for attending a one-year job-related training course.
- (e) “VTC Graduate Trainee Scheme”, a special employment project run in collaboration with the Vocational Training Council for its graduates of diploma and higher diploma programmes. Employers offering training vacancies with six months’ OJT and appointing mentors with relevant work experience to guide the trainees throughout the OJT period are entitled to a monthly training subsidy of \$2,000 from the YPTP YWETS for each trainee engaged.
- (f) “Airport Ambassadors Project”, a special employment project under which young people are trained to provide customer services to passengers at the Hong Kong International Airport. Trainees undergo 12 months’ comprehensive OJT with job rotation to enhance their knowledge of customer services and airport operations, with a view to better preparing them for taking up relevant posts in the aviation and related industries.

Youth Employment Start

15. The Youth Employment Start (Y.E.S.) provides one-stop and personalised advisory and support services on employment and self-employment to young people aged 15 to 29 with different backgrounds and development needs.

16. The services of Y.E.S. are offered through its two centres respectively in Langham Place, Mongkok and Metroplaza, Kwai Chung. For the first eleven months of 2009, the two centres together provided services to 65 987 young people and registered 29 416 as members who are entitled to make use of the various services of Y.E.S. on a continuing basis.

17. To cater for the distinct needs of different groups of target users, Y.E.S. provides a wide range of services as follows:

- (a) **Career assessment** – Y.E.S. puts together a career assessment kit which helps gauge the personality, emotional intelligence, career interest, career maturity and entrepreneurship potential of young people.
- (b) **Career guidance** – Supported by comprehensive analysis of the results of career assessment, career consultants of Y.E.S. offer personalised guidance on available job and training opportunities and conduct mock interview sessions with young people to enhance their interviewing skills.
- (c) **Facilities for job search** – Computer and Internet services are provided to enable young people to conduct job search, build their resumes and prepare application letters. In addition, Y.E.S. arranges recruitment days and invites practitioners of different industries and professions to update young people on the latest labour market situation.
- (d) **Training and development programmes** – Y.E.S. draws up customised training programmes targeted at the different needs of young people. Y.E.S. invites renowned professionals and celebrities to deliver talks and share their experience in overcoming difficulties in employment. Besides life skills and employment sustainability training, Y.E.S. organises employment-focused skills training with strong input of employer organisations and professional associations.
- (e) **Self-employment support** – Y.E.S. regularly holds workshops and professional advisory sessions on self-employment and offers young entrepreneurs a full range of office facilities and services free of charge. They include well-equipped business workstations, meeting rooms and a design corner with professional design software/hardware.

Internship Programme for University Graduates

18. Amidst the financial tsunami, LD has launched the Internship Programme for University Graduates (GIP) as a special and time-limited initiative to encourage enterprises to offer internship and employment opportunities to recent university graduates, with a view to broadening their horizons and helping them gain experience so that they would be better equipped for the employment market when the economy revives.

19. GIP provides opportunities for interested graduates to work as interns and receive training of six to 12 months in local or Mainland enterprises. For local internships, graduates receive training in their capacity as employees, and are paid wages commensurate with the duties, responsibilities and training contents of the posts. Mainland internships are not premised on an employment relationship. An intern on the Mainland is entitled to receive a living allowance of HK\$3,000 and, depending on circumstances, an accommodation allowance of HK\$1,500 each month from the Government.

20. Applications from graduates to join GIP are accepted as from 1 August 2009. By the end of November 2009, some 1 200 graduates have secured employment in Hong Kong under GIP and 200 have firmed up internships on the Mainland.

Way Forward

21. Promoting youth employment is a long-term and mammoth task that calls for cross-sectoral collaboration of stakeholders on various fronts ranging from education, skills training, career counselling to employment support. With the gradual recovery of the local economy, the unemployment rate for the most vulnerable group of young people aged 15 to 19 dropped from 28.7% for the period May to July 2009 to 22.7% for the period August to October 2009. We will continue with our all-out efforts to enhance the employability of our young people and facilitate their smooth transition to employment through offering a full range of client-oriented employment services and dedicated youth training and employment support programmes.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
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