

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(2) 889/99-00  
(These minutes have been seen  
by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/MP/1

**LegCo Panel on Manpower**

**Minutes of Special Meeting**  
**held on Thursday, 4 November 1999 at 2:30 pm**  
**in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

**Members present** : Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon LEE Kai-ming, SBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon Kenneth TING Woo-shou, JP  
Hon David CHU Yu-lin  
Hon HO Sai-chu, SBS, JP  
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan  
Hon Michael HO Mun-ka  
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan  
Hon CHAN Kwok-keung  
Hon CHAN Yuen-han  
Hon CHAN Wing-chan  
Hon CHAN Kam-lam  
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung  
Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung  
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo  
Hon SZETO Wah

**Members absent** : Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, JP  
Dr Hon LUI Ming-wah, JP  
Hon Ronald ARCULLI, JP  
Dr Hon LEONG Che-hung, JP  
Hon SIN Chung-kai

**Public Officers :** Mr Philip K F CHOK, JP  
**attending** Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower

Mr Ivan LEE  
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education  
and Manpower

Prof LEE Ngok, JP  
Executive Director  
Vocational Training Council

Dr L H LEES  
Deputy Executive Director (Academic)  
Vocational Training Council

Dr Frederick K W MAK  
Deputy Executive Director (Training & Development)  
Vocational Training Council

Mr N C MOU  
Senior Industrial Training Officer (Apprenticeship)  
Vocational Training Council

**Attendance by :** Academics who conducted the consultancy study  
**invitation** on the Apprenticeship Scheme

Dr CHENG Chi-ho

Dr LI Shing-fu

Vocational Training Council Instructors and Workshop Instructors  
Association

Mr CHEUNG Fook-kwong  
Chairman

Mr IP Wing-kin  
Vice-Chairman

Mr CHU Wai-kan  
Deputy Secretary

Vocational Training Council Industrial Training Officer Grade

Association

Mr CHENG Kay-kin  
Chairman

Technical Colleges and Institutes Staff Association

Mr LI Kwok-lee  
Chairman

Mr WONG Chun-fai  
Vice-Chairman

Association of Inspectors of Apprentices

Mr KO Fai  
Chairman

Mr WAN Cheong-chiu  
Secretary

Mr CHAN Siu-lun  
Spokesman

Staff Association of Technical Education and Industrial Training  
Department

Mr TAM Wai-keung  
Deputy Chairman

Mr CHAN Yim-chau  
Deputy Chairman

**Clerk in attendance** : Mrs Sharon TONG  
Chief Assistant Secretary (2)1

**Staff in attendance** : Mr Raymond LAM  
Senior Assistant Secretary (2)5

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**I. Review of Apprenticeship Scheme and related issues**

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2) 179/99-00(01), CB(2) 226/99-00(01), CB(2) 235/99-00(01), CB(2) 266/99-00(01), (02), (03), (04) and (05))

Meeting with deputations

*Academics who conducted the consultancy study on the Apprenticeship Scheme*

At the invitation of the Chairman, Dr CHENG Chi-ho briefed members on the consultancy study (the study) on the Apprenticeship Scheme as follows -

- (a) the study sought to review the Apprenticeship Scheme (the Scheme) of the Vocational Training Council (VTC), having regard to the recent economic restructuring of Hong Kong, manpower requirements of different industries, the education system in Hong Kong, and the needs of the youth. In the study, similar systems in other places were examined and recommendations were made on the future operation of the Scheme. The review on the work of Inspector of Apprentices (I of A) was only part of the study;
- (b) according to the study, the duties of an I of As included monitoring the execution of apprenticeship contracts, mediating disputes between employers and apprentices, counselling and promotion of the Scheme;
- (c) each I of A had to attend to an average of 120 to 150 apprentices. In some trades, an I of A had to attend to over 200 apprentices. Despite this heavy workload, I of As considered that they could adequately cope with the workload;
- (d) apprentices generally considered that most I of As were effectively discharging their duties. However, some of them considered that I of As were not immediately available on urgent occasions and when counselling was needed; and
- (e) the study recommended that :
  - (i) more training in counselling should be provided to I of As. Their knowledge in new technology and statutory requirements should also be strengthened; and
  - (ii) I of As should maintain closer contacts with apprentices so that problems could be identified and addressed early.

2. On the decrease in the number of applications for the Scheme, Dr CHENG Chi-ho said that it was due to the community's perception of the social status of apprentices, the decline of old designated trades, the lack of new designated trades, and the lack of

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an academic link between apprenticeship training and further education. Mr SZETO Wah said that a renaming of the term "apprentice" might help to change the community's perception.

3. In response to Miss CHAN Yuen-han, Dr CHENG Chi-ho said that most of the apprentices, teachers and students surveyed were of the view that there was a need for the Scheme. The study indicated that the Scheme should continue to exist. However, the study also revealed that the operational aspects of the Scheme would need to be improved. Dr LI Shing-fu added that although the role of I of As had been reviewed in the study, consideration had not been given to the redeployment of I of As.

4. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan asked whether the new operations proposed in the study would result in a change in the number of training places. Dr CHENG Chi-ho responded that the effect on the number of training places had not been assessed in the study.

5. Mr CHAN Kwok-keung asked about the findings on the adequacy of I of A manpower. Dr CHENG Chi-ho said that the manpower of I of As was tight, as an I of A had to attend to about 120 to 150 apprentices. Some apprentices considered that I of As made infrequent visits and were not readily available to deal with urgent issues. Redeployment of I of As to perform other duties would aggravate the situation.

6. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan asked whether it was appropriate for VTC to respond to economic restructuring by reducing the number of training places in the Basic Craft Course (BCC) despite a strong demand for the training of Secondary 3 school leavers. Dr LI Shing-fu said that the study revealed that apprentices had a high turnover rate of 58% over a three-year period. A reduction in the number of training places would result in an even smaller number of apprentices completing training.

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7. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide members with the report of the study conducted by Dr CHENG Chi-ho and Dr LI Shing-fu.

*Vocational Training Council Instructors and Workshop Instructors Association (VTCIWIA)*

8. Mr CHEUNG Fook-kwong presented the submission as detailed in LC Paper No. CB(2) 266/99-00(04).

9. Mr CHEUNG Fook-kwong said that the number of training places of some VTC courses had been reduced by one-third just because of a few percent decrease in the placement rate of graduates.

10. As regards VTCIWIA's suggestion of providing training in more than one trade in the BCC, which was formerly known as Craft Foundation Course (CFC), Mr HO Sai-chu considered that the suggestion might hinder the specialization of apprentices. Mr IP Wing-kin explained that the suggestion did not apply to on-the-job training. The proposal sought to widen the scope of pre-employment training to facilitate a

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student's choice of the trade in which he would like to undergo training. He added that some students might revert to mainstream education after completing pre-employment training courses. Mr CHEUNG Fook-kwong added that students were expected to become more matured and suitable for on-the-job training after completing a two-year training course than a one-year training course.

11. On the high turnover rate of BCC trainees, Mr CHEUNG Fook-kwong said that it was partly due to the fact that some of the training centres, such as the centre in Pokfulam, prohibited trainees from leaving the centre during lunch time.

12. In response to Miss Cyd HO, Mr CHEUNG Fook-kwong said that graduates of the former CFC could take further preparatory courses and thereafter undergo technician apprenticeship training and further their education. However, such an academic link had been abolished with the recent revamp of course structure.

*Vocational Training Council Industrial Training Officer Grade Association*

13. Mr CHENG Kay-kin presented the submission as detailed in LC Paper No. CB(2) 266/99-00(03).

14. On the course duration of BCC, Mr CHENG Kay-kin said that both the labour unions of VTC and representatives of employers took the view that the course duration should be lengthened to two years. The training provided under the one-year course was far from adequate. Lengthening the duration of the course would enable students to be equipped with more than one kind of basic skills. This was especially important as it was envisaged that there would be a high demand for skilled workers in the electrical and mechanical trade in the next two years.

*Technical Colleges and Institutes Staff Association*

15. Mr WONG Chun-fai presented the submission as detailed in LC Paper No. CB(2) 266/99-00(02).

16. Mr LI Kwok-lee said that in the past two years, VTC had been trying to raise the status of the Institute of Vocational Education (IVE). The integration of diploma and higher diploma courses was an example. He considered that even with the relocation of industries to the Mainland, apprentices could still be trained to assist these relocated industries.

*Association of Inspectors of Apprentices (AIA)*

17. Mr CHAN Siu-lun presented the views of AIA as follows -

- (a) the Administration and VTC had not responded to economic restructuring in the past and introduced new designated trades in the Scheme. This had resulted in a decreasing demand for the Scheme;

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- (b) with the effort of I of As and the recognition of employers, the number of voluntarily registered apprenticeship contracts had increased from about 20% to more than 30% of the total number of apprenticeship contracts;
- (c) I of As had maintained a comprehensive network of contact with employers to identify vacancies and promote the development of the Scheme;
- (d) in order to increase the community's recognition of apprentices, I of As had been organizing an annual award scheme for outstanding apprentices for many years;
- (e) I of As had continuously promoted the Scheme through organizing exhibitions in major housing estates; and
- (f) AIA was in support of reform proposals that would bring about an improvement of the Scheme, such as strengthening publicity, strengthening communication with employers, and introducing new designated trades in the Scheme. It believed that the economy of Hong Kong would improve if the Administration and VTC played an active role in apprenticeship training.

18. In response to Mr SZETO Wah, Mr CHAN Siu-lun said that VTC was the only institution responsible for the training of apprentices.

19. Mr SZETO Wah asked about the reasons for the decrease in enrolment for the Scheme. He said that the relocation of industrial undertakings to the Mainland was not a new problem. This should not be a major reason for the decrease in enrolment. A tightening of entry requirements would also lead to a drop in the enrolment. A high drop-out rate in the course of training might be due to problems in the course contents. He considered that VTC should identify the genuine reasons for the decrease in enrolment and formulate solutions rather than reducing the number of I of As.

20. Mr CHAN Siu-lun said that the decline of old designated trades and the lack of new designated trades were the major reasons for the decrease in enrolment. Without legislative amendments to enable the introduction of new designated trades, many employers had not registered apprenticeship contracts of new trades. However, as a result of active promotion of voluntary registration by I of As, the number of voluntarily registered apprenticeship contracts had increased from about 20% to more than 30% of the total number of apprenticeship contracts.

21. Mr CHAN Siu-lun said that although there was a strong demand for training places in the construction industry, enrolment had dropped after the tightening of entry requirements. He added that as a result of the reduction of training places in BCC, some apprenticeship contracts had been cancelled by employers.

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22. On the high turnover rate of apprentices, Mr CHAN Siu-lun said that it was mainly found in the initial stage when apprentices were still adapting to the environment. Apprentices usually became more stable after this initial stage.

*Staff Association of Technical Education and Industrial Training Department*

23. Mr TAM Wai-keung presented the submission as detailed in LC Paper No. CB(2) 266/99-00(01).

24. Mr CHAN Yim-chau said that in the past two years, VTC had concentrated its work on the development of information technology education and in emulation into a tertiary institution. Much financial resource had been used for the establishment of IVE and the employment of a senior staff member. Being neglected by VTC, the Scheme gradually became outdated.

Meeting with the Administration

*Recommendations of the consultancy study and the future of the Scheme*

25. Mr HO Sai-chu and Mr Kenneth TING considered that the Scheme should continue to exist.

26. Miss CHAN Yuen-han opined that the paper entitled "Review of Apprenticeship Scheme - Redeployment of Inspectors of Apprentices in the Vocational Training Council" had given a wrong impression that VTC's decision to deploy some I of As to perform other teaching duties was based on the recommendations in the consultancy study. She expressed concern that VTC would downsize its Inspectorate of Apprentices (the Inspectorate) even though the study, the deputations and many employers considered that there was a need for apprentice training. She said that instead of tightening the entry requirements and redeploying some I of As to carry out other duties, VTC should consider ways to improve the Scheme.

27. Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (DSEM) responded that the Administration recognized the value of the Apprenticeship Scheme. The issue under consideration was not whether the scheme should be continued but whether as a result of the reduction in the number of new apprentices and participating employers over the past ten years of the scheme, the Inspectorate was overstaffed and its size should be reduced. VTC considered that this was necessary to better utilize resources and to meet the changing demand of the economy. He assured members that the redeployed resources would be used on the training of the youth. The new Certificate in Vocational Studies (CVS) Course, for example, was designed for students who had completed Secondary 3 education. Executive Director of VTC (ED/VTC) added that the placement rate of apprentices was relatively low. Out of about 3 000 apprentices who completed training, only around 1 000 had been placed in relevant employment. He said that apprentice training was not the only training available for Secondary 3 school leavers. Pre-employment training courses in hotel and catering, and the CVS

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Course to be offered by IVE were designed for students who had completed Secondary 3 education. Additional training places in building services would also be provided with the support of the industry. A new Foundation Diploma Course providing 2 000 training places would be offered for students who had obtained three passes in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE).

28. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan expressed concern that VTC had chosen to redeploy I of As rather than adopting the recommendations of the study. ED/VTC said that the study was a long term one. Even with the redeployment of I of As, recommendations in the study might still be adopted in the future.

29. Mr Andrew CHENG expressed concern about the information in the submission of VTCIWIWA that while there were 7 998 applicants in 1999-2000 for the BCC, only about 1 800 training places would be offered. ED/VTC responded that besides BCC and other courses offered by VTC for Secondary 3 school leavers, training places were also provided by the Construction Industry Training Authority and the Clothing Industry Training Authority.

30. In response to Mr Kenneth TING's question on whether there had been an increased number of applications for the Scheme, DED/VTC said that the number of applications for the Scheme in 1998-99 was higher than that of 1997-98. This was a usual phenomenon in times of economic downturn. ED/VTC reiterated that the placement rate of apprentices was relatively low and only about 1 000 out of 3 000 apprentices graduated.

*Role of VTC in the education system of Hong Kong*

31. Miss CHAN Yuen-han expressed concern about whether VTC intended to emulate into a tertiary institution. ED/VTC assured members that although VTC had integrated some diploma and higher diploma courses, it had no intention to emulate into a tertiary institution.

*Consultation with labour unions*

32. As regards consultation with the labour unions and staff concerned, ED/VTC said that consultation had been made on the deployment of I of As. Following the decision of VTC on the issue in July 1999, the management of VTC had held meetings on 12 July and 14 August 1999, and informal lunch meetings on 24 July and 7 October with AIA. It had also consulted individual I of As on 26 August 1999. As regards I of As who were civil servants, consultation had to be made through the relevant Government department.

*Adequacy of I of As after redeployment*

33. Mr CHAN Kwok-keung expressed concern that with the proposed redeployment of I of As, there would be insufficient I of As to cope with the future operation of the Apprenticeship Unit.

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*Training of redeployed I of As*

34. Mr CHAN Wing-chan, Mr YEUNG Yiu-chung and Mr CHAN Kwok-keung expressed concern about whether sufficient training would be provided to I of As to be redeployed for teaching duties in IVE. ED/VTC said that full-day training would be provided to these I of As. The wages, benefits and career prospects would remain unchanged. DED/VTC added that sufficient training, including on-the-job training as well as training in presentation skills and computer operation, would be provided to redeployed I of As. The training would last for about six months.

*Introduction of new designated trades into the Scheme*

35. Mr Michael HO asked whether new designated trades had been introduced into the Scheme in the past. DSEM responded said that the Administration had been monitoring the situation closely. Legislative amendments for the addition of two new designated trades would be introduced in the near future. Mr Kenneth TING considered that new designated trades should be introduced into the Scheme as far as possible.

*Academic link between the Scheme and higher education*

36. Miss Cyd HO asked whether graduates of CVS would be waived from the requirement of having three passes in HKCEE before they would be allowed to advance to higher technical education. ED/VTC said that a certain level of attainment in CVS would be equivalent to three passes in HKCEE. Students with a better performance would have a better chance of receiving higher education. DED/VTC added that the entry requirement of the CVS Course was only Secondary 3. The Foundation Diploma Course also accepted students with less than five passes in HKCEE. VTC was following the global trend of increasing emphasis on generic skills rather than developing specialized skills at an early stage. Graduates of CVS Course could further their education by taking other courses.

*Recurrent expenditure of VTC*

37. Miss CHAN Yuen-han asked about the use of the recurrent annual expenditure of VTC. ED/VTC responded that around 70% of the recurrent expenditure was used on the provision of diploma and higher diploma courses. The remaining 30% was used on other training courses including craft courses for Secondary 3 school leavers.

*Implementation of the proposed redeployment*

38. Miss CHAN Yuen-han said that VTC should not implement the proposed redeployment before thorough consultation with its staff was completed. She considered that the training of apprentices should continue.

39. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan expressed concern that VTC had not consulted the labour

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unions of VTC until after the decision had been made by the Council on the issue. He considered that VTC should carry out a comprehensive review of the Scheme and decide on the way forward before considering the redeployment of I of As. He considered that VTC should first consult the labour unions of VTC before making a decision on the redeployment of I of As. Mr SZETO Wah added that VTC should reconsider its redeployment plan having regard to the views expressed. He considered that besides the Scheme, a full review should be made on the training of Secondary 3 school leavers.

*Way forward*

40. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan suggested that the Panel should write to VTC conveying members' views and concerns on the review of the Scheme and the redeployment of I of As. The suggestion was agreed by members.

*(Post-meeting note : The letter from the Chairman to VTC and the latter's reply were circulated vide LC Paper Nos. CB(2) 514/99-00 and CB(2) 737/99-00.)*

41. Miss CHAN Yuen-han said that if VTC failed to take any action on the issue, the Panel might consider holding an inquiry on the matter.

Adm 42. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide a written reply on issues to which response had not yet been given.

43. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:50 pm.

Legislative Council Secretariat

17 January 2000