

**LegCo Panel on Manpower
(For Meeting on 30 March 2000)**

**The 2000-01 Budget – Measures to Promote Employment, Training,
Retraining and Continuing Education**

Introduction

The Government is committed to enhancing the employability and competitiveness of our workforce by investing heavily on vocational training and retraining as well as encouraging continuing education. In 2000-01, the Government has earmarked an additional recurrent funding of \$300 million for the implementation of seven new initiatives which aim to help people upgrade their knowledge and skills. This paper informs Members of the objectives and details of these initiatives.

Continuing and Expanding the Youth Pre-employment Training Programme

2. To tackle the problem of youth unemployment, we launched a massive youth pre-employment training programme - the YPT Programme in September 1999 to provide over 10,000 school leavers aged between 15 – 19 with a wide range of employment-related training in four areas (including (1) leadership, self-discipline and team building training; (2) job search skills and interpersonal skills training, (3) computer application; and (4) job-specific skills training) as well as workplace attachment of one month's duration.

3. Since the YPT Programme was launched, there has been encouraging support for the Programme from various quarters of the community. Participating trainees and employers consider the training highly useful and suited to the needs of young school leavers. They advocate renewed efforts on the part of the government in enhancing the employment opportunities of young people and promoting the importance

of “life-long learning” and “continued personal development”.

4. The Administration proposes to continue and further expand this Programme in 2000-2001 to continue to benefit over 10,000 young school leavers. \$80 million of additional expenditure has been earmarked in the budget for its implementation. This amount represents an increase of \$30 million over the provision for the current Programme. We will carry out a comprehensive review of the current Programme in April and depending on its outcome, consider modifications to the existing modules of the Programme. The next YPT Programme is scheduled to commence around October 2000.

Additional On-the-Job training under the Youth Pre-employment Training Programme

5. To further enhance the employment opportunities of trainees of the YPT Programme, the Administration proposes to add a new component - “On-the-Job Training Scheme” – to the YPT Programme. Under this Scheme, the Government will provide incentives, which include a training subsidy of \$2,000 per trainee per month and a “train-the-trainer” package, for employers who are willing to provide on-the-job training to trainees of the YPT Programme for a period of three months, with a view to continued employment thereafter. This arrangement is on top of the one-month workplace attachment training being offered to all trainees under the YPT Programme. Trainees who have completed workplace attachment under the YPT Programme are eligible to join the Scheme. \$26 million additional funding has been earmarked in the 2000-2001 budget for implementing the Scheme.

6. We are in the process of consulting employers and relevant organisations on the specific arrangements regarding the new “On-the-Job Training Scheme”, with a view to launching the Scheme around May/June this year for trainees who have completed workplace attachment under the YPT Programme. About 4,000 trainees are expected to benefit from the Scheme in 2000-2001.

Additional Vocational Training Places for S.3 and S.5 school leavers

7. In Hong Kong's increasingly service-based economy, more emphasis is now placed by the employment market on core generic skills. In particular, language, IT and numeracy are important skills to enhance young people's employability. In response to these changes, the Vocational Training Council (VTC) has introduced in the 1999-2000 school year a Certificate in Vocational Studies (CVS) course and a Foundation Diploma (FD) course for S.3 and S.5 school leavers respectively, providing them with alternative means of receiving further education.

8. The design of the CVS and FD curricula aims to strike a balance between vocational training and general education. Apart from basic vocational skills like business and technological studies and practice, the two courses also cover core generic skills such as language, IT and numeracy. The aim is to enhance the trainees' employability. Trainees with good performance may also advance to other VTC courses.

9. To provide more opportunities for young school leavers to receive further education, we have earmarked a full-year recurrent provision of \$55 million for the VTC to provide, in the 2000-01 school year, 500 and 1 000 additional places for the CVS and FD courses respectively. If this proposal is accepted, the VTC will provide a total of 1 300 and 3 000 CVS and FD training places respectively in the 2000-01 school year.

Additional IT training places at the junior assistant level

10. With active input from the industry, we launched a pilot IT training programme – the IT Assistant Course – in February 2000. The aim is to meet the needs of companies in different sectors, including many small and medium enterprises, for trained IT manpower at the junior assistant level, and at the same time to equip trainees with the skills to take up jobs available in the market.

11. The course comprises 10 modules and lasts for 10 weeks. The modules cover basic IT skills, office software and database applications, Windows NT, basic web authoring and intermediate web authoring, introduction to e-commerce, media production for business, web internet support, IT for business and soft skills and job searching. It is expected that trainees who have completed the course will be able to take up jobs like web enhancement and support assistant, computer graphics design assistant, electronic data processing clerk and IT technical trainee.

12. The pilot course is run jointly by the VTC and the Employees Retraining Board. In view of the keen response (over 3 200 applicants), we have increased the training capacity of the pilot course from 170 places to 300 places. We propose to further increase the training capacity to meet the needs of job-seekers and the industry, and have earmarked \$18 million additional funding in 2000-01 to provide 1 000 IT Assistant Course training places. We expect that the first batch of additional classes will commence in June 2000. We are in parallel exploring the possibility of involving private sector training providers and web-based teaching to enable more people to benefit from the course.

Launching the “Project Springboard” to provide bridging programmes for secondary school leavers and adult learners

13. To provide an alternative route and expand the continuing education opportunities for secondary school users and adult learners so that they may gain a solid foundation for employment and further education, the Administration proposes to launch a new bridging programme - the “Project Springboard” - in October 2000.

14. The programme will be organised by the Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions, membership of which includes the University Grants Committee-funded Institutions (except HKUST), the Open University of Hong Kong, Caritas Adult and Higher Education Service and the Vocational Training Council.

15. The programme is a skill-based programme, with emphasis on biliteracy and trilingualism, information technology application as

well as certain practical subjects. There will be six core subjects, i.e. Chinese, English, Puotonghua, IT/Computer, Quantitative Skills and Communication Skills. In addition, some electives such as Tourism, Multimedia and IT Networking Support will be offered. About 5,500 places will be available in the first year for day and evening courses. This initial capacity can be adjusted in the light of demand. Students are required to finish 10 modules in order to complete the programme. Upon graduation or completion of the programme, they may pursue continuing education at the certificate or diploma level in the same institution or other institutions of the Federation.

16. The programme will be run on a self-financing basis. However, to help kick-start the programme, the Government has earmarked \$60 million in each of the coming three years to launch a pilot scheme under which we will reimburse students 30% of the tuition fee upon their successful completion of each module. In addition, students may apply for financial assistance under the Non-means-tested Loan Scheme to pay for the tuition fee. We are also considering recognising the qualification of this programme as equivalent to Secondary 5 level in the recruitment for certain Government posts. We will review the programme and the support measures before the end of the three-year period.

17. In connection with the “Project Springboard”, the Government and the Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institution are working on a clear articulation ladder, showing how one can progress from the bridging programme to attain higher education and professional qualifications by pursuing continuing education programme either with the same institution offering the bridging programme or other institutions. We expect to promulgate the details in mid 2000.

Extension of the scope of the Non-means Tested Loan Scheme

18. To ensure that aspiring individuals will not be deprived of continuing education opportunities for lack of financial means, the Administration proposes to extend the scope of the Non-means Tested Loan Scheme to include professional or continuing education courses provided locally by non-local universities and professional bodies, registered schools and recognized training institutions, starting from 2000-01 academic year. The criteria for recognised institutions are

being drawn up. The number of eligible applicants is estimated to increase from 200,000 to 700,000, while the total annual loan is estimated to be \$173 million.

Website on Continuing Education

19. To provide a convenient channel for people who aspire to pursue further education and to promote continuing education, we are now collecting the latest information on continuing education courses provided by different types of organisation in Hong Kong, and will set up by July 2000 a website on continuing education for access by the public.

20. The website will cover a wide variety of continuing education courses, including academic, professional, vocational and personal development courses pitched at different levels. Relevant information including organising bodies, place of submitting application, ways for seeking further information and making enquiries, commencement dates, course titles and nature, fees, as well as admission requirements will be available. It will be linked to the major educational and training institutions, providing a focal point or one-stop shop for continuing education information.

Way Forward

21. We will seek the Finance Committee's approval for funding these initiatives as appropriate. We will review the effectiveness of the above measures from time to time if they are approved and implemented.

Education and Manpower Bureau

March 2000