

**Views on the Accreditation of Academic and  
Vocational Qualifications Bill 2005**

**By**

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## **Views on the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Bill 2005**

We welcome the introduction of a bill that aims at maintaining the overall competitiveness of Hong Kong's manpower in the global economy. We also believe that a well-defined Qualification Framework (QF) is vital to the long term development of the continuing education program and its success.

When studying the Legislative Council Brief Accreditation Of Academic And Vocational Qualifications Bill 2005 (File Ref.: EMB (MPE)CR 1/3231/04), we have some views on the implications of QF set out by the Bill:

### Fees and Charges

Accreditation Authority – HKCAA will be self-financed and is empowered to charge fees for conducting the accreditation tests. We hope and believe that HKCAA, as a not-for-profit-oriented statutory body, will impose a mechanism to ensure that the profit from charges and fees for conducting accreditation tests are subject to a capped maximum. The charges and fees paid by the operators of learning programs and assessment agency would be transferred to end customers and learners.

### Business Opportunities and Risks

We welcome the Bill also because it helps create business and job opportunities for the society at large. More learning institutes may be established and more job vacancies created as a result. The nature of long term commitment enhances the sustainability of such business and job opportunities.

It is our belief that a responsible bill will need to enable HKCAA to devise the mechanism for academic and vocational accreditation to underpin the Qualification Framework by introducing accreditation tests which include any assessment or other activity to determine whether an operator of learning programs is competent to achieve the objectives as claimed by it or whether a learning program meets the standard as claimed by its operator, while at the same time addresses the issues faced by the general public learners.

The issue that concerns the public learners most is the tuition fees that they will be paying when participating in such learning programs. The mechanism devised by this bill should include tuition fees as a factor of accreditation. It is a rule of thumb that no interference in the commercial world is preferred, but it is only valid when institutes are exercising their enterprise responsibility to the society instead of

exploiting the workforce with lower education level.

#### Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism

We are glad to see the establishment of a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism and believe that people with good skills and experiences but low education level will have equal stance to attain their respective qualifications. Of course, it is the duty of HKCAA to accredit appropriate assessment agencies that assess the skills, knowledge or experience acquired by the individuals for the purposes of the QF.

#### Facilities that help the public learners

Qualification Framework no longer only focuses on academic accreditation at degree or above levels or sub-degree qualifications. It is now proposed to cover the accreditation for a much wider education and training market, as well as a wider class of working people.

The accreditation of sub-degree, degree, or above education concerns only the higher educational institutions. Students pay their tuition fees as usual and are not aware of what the Bill has done to them. On the contrary, the Bill will gradually arouse public concern and social impact as the accreditation of vocational qualifications will be affecting the benefits of a large class of workforce. Unlike students who are mostly financially supported by family and are entitled to government loan, the working class has encountered financial burdens, and the introduction of the Bill means that they have to pay for the qualifications if they are to remain competitive in the job market. For many people in the working class, making ends meet may have difficulties already. We hope the government will consider establishing grant and loan program for the people in need alongside the introduction of this Bill.

#### Qualifications Register (QR) established as a web-enabled public face of the QF

We appreciate such an arrangement and believe that web-based interface is the most effective communication channel between Government and the Public. The general public would love to have a centralized source of information on the recognized qualifications for their reference. We also think that vocational training institutes should provide basic IT application trainings to learners as part of the learning programmes.

### Publicity of the QF

The success of the implementation relies on the participation of the learning program providers to seek HKCAA's quality assurance for their courses under the QF as well as the participations of the general public. The government has already considered providing non-recurrent funding to subsidize the cost of accreditation borne by the providers of training courses on a matching basis. We think the general public should also be educated through promotion activities to learn about and become aware of the importance of such a government policy. The accreditation of vocational qualifications is not compulsory but its introduction does affect their future competitiveness in the job market.

Promotion activities require resources in terms of money and time. HKCAA has to devise a mechanism that effectively allocates some of its budget in this area.

### Supportive of the Bill

We, by all means, support the Bill because it originates from the ground that a global economy demands more competitive manpower and it is vital to the future development of Hong Kong in its transition into a knowledge-based economy.