

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON PUBLIC SERVICE

Civil service training: an up-dated overview

Purpose

This paper presents an up-dated overview of the provision of training and development opportunities in the civil service.

Background

2. Training offered to civil servants could be broadly categorized into two types: vocational and generic training. Vocational training (designed to meet the work requirements and job-specific needs of a certain grade of staff) is provided primarily by departments. Examples of generic training (aimed at meeting certain common training needs related to the general personal effectiveness of staff) include training on management and languages. A sizeable volume of generic training is provided by the Civil Service Training and Development Institute (“CSTDI”).

3. To ensure that CSTDI is better placed to roll out training and development programmes in close support of HRM initiatives and reforms launched by the Civil Service Bureau (“CSB”), and in the interest of achieving better efficiency and economy through delayering, CSTDI has been subsumed under the Civil Service Bureau with effect from 1 April 2004. Following reorganization, the core business of CSTDI has been re-aligned to focus on the following four areas :

- ♦ senior executive training and development
- ♦ national studies programmes
- ♦ providing consultancy services to departments on human resource management initiatives
- ♦ promoting a culture of continuous learning in the civil service

Senior executive development

4. We are committed to providing our directorate staff with adequate support in acquiring the leadership skills and in learning the best management practices for meeting the challenges ahead. In this connection, we offer a robust range of training and development programmes to senior civil servants from different grades :

(i) *Local training programmes*

- ♦ Targetted at senior professionals with potential for advancement, the 3-week Leadership in Action (LIA) programme covers formulation and implementation of public policies, media skills, crisis management, leadership and change management. This programme is conducted by local and overseas experts.
- ♦ Targetted at directorate officers, the one-week Leadership Enhancement and Development (LEAD) programme is led by faculty members of the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University with the aim of enhancing their capacity in advocating public policy, managing crisis and change, and strategic management.
- ♦ Apart from the above programmes, CSTDI also organizes short seminars for senior civil servants, covering topics like public policy reform, national studies and the Basic Law, and stress management. We also organize seminars jointly with external organizations to learn from their experience and to facilitate cross-fertilization.

(ii) *Attachment programme*

To widen their exposure and perspective, we organize Bureau attachment programmes for officers from different departments and grades every year through which they could immerse in policy work direct. Similar openings for attaching officers to external organizations in both the public and private sectors are also made available. The attachment duration is normally six months.

(iii) *Overseas programmes*

CSTDI provides funding support and assist bureaux/departments in grooming directorate officers and officers with potential for advancement to the directorate level. Each year, we sponsor a number of these officers to attend renowned overseas management programmes. Most of these programmes last for 2-6 weeks. There are also degree courses that run up to one year.

(iv) *E-learning*

The Leaders' Corner at our Cyber Learning Centre Plus provides a convenient platform for senior civil servants to find new ideas, to acquire new knowledge in different areas, and to share the experience of other experts/CEOs.

5. **Appendix 1** gives the projected training figures for senior executive development in 2004-05.

National studies programmes

6. As the integration and economic ties between Hong Kong and South China (including the Greater Pearl River Delta Region) further intensify, there is a continuing need to keep civil servants abreast of latest developments in the Mainland. Apart from the current mainland programmes such as the Advanced National Studies Programme offered by the National School of Administration, National Studies Programmes offered by the Tsinghua University and Peking University, and Familiarization Visits, we have expanded our staff exchange programmes with Mainland cities/provinces. After reaching a pilot agreement on staff exchange with Shanghai in 2002, we have entered into similar agreements with Beijing and Hangzhou with the exchange activities rolled out in 2004. Officers who have participated in the exchange programme found the experience highly beneficial.

7. Apart from residential programmes on the Mainland, CSTDI also provides a good number of local programmes. These include programmes conducted by academics and experts from the Mainland, to help fortify civil servants' understanding of national developments and the Basic Law.

8. To facilitate timely access to authoritative studies of national affairs, CSTDI will continue to strengthen the 'China Update' website on the Cyber Learning Centre Plus by enriching its content and adding more interactive elements so that civil servants could keep themselves up-to-date on national affairs with ease.

9. The projected training figures for national studies in 2004-05 are at **Appendix 2**.

Consultancy services on human resource management

10. To encourage departments to think and plan ahead so that departmental corporate goals could be supported more effectively by training and development activities, CSTDI has, in the past few years, made sustained efforts to help departments in formulating and rolling forward T&D plans. By now, most departments have developed their own T&D plans. Apart from T&D plans, the consultancy services of CSTDI covers subjects including managing change, developing leaders, managing and enhancing performance, and enhancing service quality.

11. In delivering consultancy services on change management, CSTDI provides facilitators to departments in conducting strategic planning workshop/retreats to formulate business strategy and to strengthen communication with staff. At the same time, we also assist departments in proactively assessing the training and development needs of their staff, in support of (and sensitive to changes in) the departments' corporate and business goals.

12. In developing leaders, CSTDI assists departments in enhancing the leadership abilities of senior civil servants, in grooming promising officers in line with succession plan, in formulating a long term human resource development framework and in drawing up personal development plans for individual officers.

13. One of the major challenges facing the Government is how best to develop a workforce in the public sector that is highly adaptive to demands for change and capable of delivering improvements to service quality on a sustained basis.

14. CSTDI assists departments in introducing competency-based performance management to manage staff performance more effectively. On top of consultancy service on performance management, CSTDI provides advice and support on development of web-courses, self-learning, and ways to promote experience sharing. We also assist departments in selecting

suitable consultants to provide specialized HRM service. CSTDI organizes regular seminars/workshops on relevant topics to facilitate experience sharing and exposure to best practices in HRM.

15. In 2004-05, CSTDI has provided human resource management consultancy service to about 50 departments, covering some 235 grades and 30,000 officers. Most of the officers covered are at junior or middle ranks. The number of consultancy projects run up to about 90 in this financial year. To support the dissemination of best practices in human resource management, we have launched a web-site in September 2004 to allow easy access to reference materials on best HRM practices across departmental boundaries and to facilitate the sharing of experience.

Promoting continuous learning culture

16. To promote a culture of continuous learning in the civil service, CSTDI launched our e-learning portal (namely, the Cyber Learning Centre Plus) in 2000, providing a range of training resources on-line and allowing civil servants to learn at their own time and according to their own pace. Since then, CSTDI has made sustained efforts to strengthen the functions and content of this e-learning portal. By now, there are over 200 items of e-learning resources matching the learning needs of officers at different levels.

17. In 2004, the use of e-learning as a training delivery mode has experienced substantial growth. By the end of 2004, the number of registered users of our on-line portal has reached 45,000, up by 10,000 relative to 2003. About 35% of these users are front-line staff. The number of web-course registered participants and the number of hits have reached 23,000 and 450,000 respectively, representing an increase of 50% over 2003. According to a recent survey, over 90% of the respondents are satisfied with the quality and usefulness of the e-learning resources. At the same time, CSTDI has been assisting departments in enhancing their e-learning infrastructure so as to encourage more staff to pursue learning on-line. By now, more than ten departments have adopted their own e-learning platforms for vocational training.

18. In line with our efforts to promote e-learning, CSTDI has started in 2004-05 to offer blended training whereby trainees study basic concepts and relevant materials first through e-learning before attending classroom training. We see merits in encouraging wider use of such a mode of learning, in terms of cost-effectiveness and as a means to ease staff release problems.

New initiatives and training programmes

19. The new initiatives that we are rolling out recently as well as our work targets for 2005-06 include the following :

Senior executive training and development

- (i) To enhance directorate officers' diverse abilities in different areas, CSTDI recently starts to offer a series of 1-2 day advanced management workshop/seminars on specific topics. These workshops are led by world class experts and conducted through case studies and group work. The first such workshop has been held in December 2004. A Harvard professor who specializes in international commerce talked to our directorate officers on how best to formulate policies with a competitive edge. The workshop was highly rated by participants. We will invite distinguished scholars and experts including those from the Mainland to organize more such workshops this year, covering topics including leadership, change and innovation, strategy formulation and crisis management.

National studies programmes

- (ii) Commissioning the China Foreign Affairs University to organize a Foreign Affairs Programme to enhance civil servants' understanding of foreign affairs and protocol. The first such programme was held in December 2004.
- (iii) Commissioning the National School of Administration to organize a dedicated course for directorate officers in the Administrative Service to equip them with a good overall understanding of the systems on the Mainland, the latest socio-economic developments and national policies, so as to ensure that the merits of closer integration between Hong Kong and the Mainland are duly taken into account when they are formulating policies. Our working target is to deliver, within two years, extra places that would allow all directorate officers in the Administrative Service who had not attended a similar programme in the past to complete the course.

- (iv) We have signed an agreement with Guangdong in December 2004 to provide more exchange opportunities for civil servants. Planned to start in early 2005, the added exchanges are expected to help further strengthen inter-government co-operation.

Providing consultancy services to departments on human resource management initiatives

- (v) To address the pressure encountered by civil servants in adapting to changes, we will offer a series of seminars and activities on work-life balance (and a related package of learning resources) to assist staff in facing pressure positively and in harnessing it to enhance their effectiveness. Subjects to be covered in the seminars and activities include mental well-being and techniques for managing pressure.

Promoting a continuous learning culture in the civil service

- (vi) CSTDI will continue to renew and enhance the variety as well as quality of the learning materials available on our web-site, whilst at the same time offering assistance to departments in promoting wider use of e-learning. By 2006, the number of registered users of our portal is expected to reach 60,000 whilst the range of e-learning resources available on-line will increase to 250 items, from 200 items at present.

Sponsorship and other training schemes

20. For some years, the Government has been actively encouraging civil servants to pursue continuous learning to build up their resilience and capabilities at times of change. In 2001-02, we earmarked \$50 million to launch the Three-year Training and Development Initiative. That has yielded positive results. As part of our on-going efforts to promote a culture of continuous learning in the civil service, CSB will launch the following sponsorship schemes in 2005-06 to provide financial assistance to officers who wish to pursue learning that would enhance their knowledge, personal effectiveness and qualifications :

(i) ***External management training sponsorship scheme***

To enhance the management capacity of junior to middle managers, funds will be made available to support them in pursuing recognized management courses outside office hours. Staff may receive sponsorship for up to one year's study. We will reimburse 75% of the course fee, up a ceiling of \$22,500.

(ii) ***External training sponsorship scheme for front-line staff***

Funds will also be made available to support front-line staff in attending work-related courses or courses that can raise their qualification to Form-5 level. These courses would be taken outside office hours. For work-related courses, the maximum amount of reimbursement is \$2,000. For courses leading to Form 5 qualification, the maximum amount of reimbursement beyond \$2,000 will be 75% of the course fee up to a ceiling of \$6,000.

We have reserved \$10 million to finance the above two sponsorship schemes.

21. Members of the clerical and secretarial grades form an important pool of human resources within the civil service, involved as they are in providing different kinds of front-line service to the public and internal support to government departments. To enable members of these grades to provide a better service to the public and to cope with changes in work, the General Grades Office of the Civil Service Bureau has launched a new training programme commencing January 2005. The programme comprises a series of change management seminars and a number of job-related workshops and courses covering, for example, customer service, staff counselling skills, positive thinking and continuous learning. The estimated number of training places for the programme is 5,600. We will also endeavour to provide suitable training in professional knowhow and skills for members of the clerical grade before they are posted to take on new duties.

22. We plan to launch in 2005 a new special unpaid leave scheme. In the interest of encouraging staff who are taking such leave to pursue studies that will help enhance their personal effectiveness, qualification and efficiency in the discharge of their duties, we propose to offer them training assistance. They may apply for reimbursement of up to \$30,000 per year.

Concluding remarks

23. During the coming year, the Civil Service Bureau will continue to closely monitor the overall provision of training and development opportunities in the civil service. We shall work with departments closely and deploy resources flexibly, providing civil servants with training and development programmes that would equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary for delivering efficient and quality service to the public.

Civil Service Bureau
January 2005

**Senior Executive Training & Development Programmes
Estimated figures for 2004-05**

(1) Local Programmes

Programme	Number of Participants
Leadership in Action	65
LEAD	35
Advanced Management Programme/seminars	100
Directorate Seminars/Workshops	2,300
Total	2,500

(2) Attachments to bureaux or outside organizations: 12 officers

(3) Overseas Management Programmes

Number of officers: 18

**National Studies Programmes
Estimated training figures for 2004-05**

(1) Programmes on the Mainland

Programme	Number of Participants
Advanced National Studies Programme at the National School of Administration, Beijing	32
National Studies Course at the Tsinghua University	109
National Studies Course at the Peking University	52
Foreign Affairs Studies Programme at the China Foreign Affairs University, Beijing (introduced in December 2004)	20
Familiarization Visits to the Mainland	75
Total	288

(2) Local Programmes

National Studies and Basic Law Seminars/Courses	3,700
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(3) Staff Exchange Programme with the Mainland

In 2004-05, attachments to HKSARG were organized for a total of 16 Mainland civil servants. During the same period, ten officers from the HKSARG were attached to municipal governments on the Mainland.