

Legislative Council Panel on Manpower

Policy Initiatives on Manpower Development and Training in the 2006-07 Policy Agenda

This note elaborates on the initiatives on manpower development and training in the 2006-07 Policy Agenda, and outlines other related policy initiatives to be undertaken by the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) in the coming year.

2006-07 POLICY AGENDA

Enlightened People with a Rich Culture

On-going Initiative

Implementing a qualifications framework by phases through the formation of industry training advisory committees to develop competency-based qualifications for individual industries, and developing a quality assurance mechanism to underpin the qualifications framework.

The Qualifications Framework

2. The Chief Executive announced in the 2004 Policy Address the establishment of a Qualifications Framework (QF) to provide a platform for life-long learning and to enable learners to progress along a clear articulation pathway. The QF is a seven-level hierarchy against which academic, vocational and continuing education qualifications can be benchmarked. All qualifications to be recognized under the QF will have to be quality assured. The implementation of the QF will not only benefit the individual employees but also enhance the competitiveness of our industries and the Hong Kong economy. The main facets of QF implementation are set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

Industry-led development

3. To ensure that the education and training programmes provided for an industry meet its specific manpower needs, EMB has been assisting

industries to set up Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs) to, among other things, develop Specifications for Competency Standards (SCSs) for individual industries. So far, ITACs have been formed for 12 industries, namely, Printing & Publishing, Watch & Clock, Chinese Catering, Hairdressing, Property Management, Electrical & Mechanical Services, Jewellery, Information & Communications Technology, Automotive, Beauty, Logistics, and Banking. We shall continue to reach out to employers, employees, professional bodies and other stakeholders in other industries to promote the formation of ITACs.

4. The first three ITACs (i.e. ITACs for the Printing & Publishing, Watch & Clock, and Hairdressing) have completed drafting of the SCSs. The SCSs will become the basis for curriculum design of training courses for the industries concerned. We expect that the first batch of SCS-based training programmes will be introduced towards the end of 2006. This is an important milestone for the development of the QF.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

5. We are also formulating an RPL mechanism for the purpose of recognizing the skills, knowledge and experience of in-service and experienced workers. The prime objective of RPL is to facilitate employees' continuing learning and skills upgrading so that they need not start from the basics when attending training and that repeated training on similar subjects/skills can be minimized.

Quality Assurance

6. To maintain the credibility of the QF, we need to put in place a rigorous accreditation mechanism to ensure the quality of the training providers, the education and training programmes offered and the qualifications awarded under the QF brand. To this end, we have introduced the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Bill (the AAVQB) into the Legislative Council (LegCo) in July 2005. A Bills Committee has been set up to scrutinize the Bill.

7. Under the AAVQB, we shall specify the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (HKCAA) as the Accreditation Authority and the Qualifications Register (QR) Authority. The HKCAA will be entrusted with the responsibility for assuring the quality of the programmes and qualifications recognized under the QF. Also as the QR Authority, the HKCAA is required

to administer the QR, a web-based database on qualifications, learning programmes and providers that are recognised under the QF. The QR will provide a centralized source of information for reference by the general public including learners, employers, providers, as well as the local and international communities. Enactment of the Bill will provide the QR with a statutory status. We expect that the QR will significantly enhance the transparency of the education and training sector given the free public access to its information and the fact that any programmes to be uploaded onto the QR will have to undergo the relevant accreditation processes.

8. We have consulted the trade associations, labour unions, training providers and individual learners on the prototype developed for the QR. The parties consider that the QR will provide an important source of information on quality-assured training courses and facilitate the pursuit of lifelong learning. We have taken into account comments received and are refining the design of the QR prototype. We shall launch the QR upon enactment of the AAVQB.

Other Related Policy Initiatives

Continuing Education Fund

9. We launched the Continuing Education Fund (CEF) in June 2002 to better prepare our workforce for the knowledge-based economy and to enhance Hong Kong's overall competitiveness. We have seen a marked increase in the number of CEF applicants in the past four years, from 63 000 in December 2003 to over 297 000 in September 2006. The number of approved courses has also increased from 2 000 at the end of 2003 to over 5 200 by September 2006. Taking into account the findings of an independent consultancy study commissioned by EMB, we are considering how best the operation and coverage of the CEF can be refined. We will brief the Members on our recommendations shortly.

Skills Upgrading Scheme

10. We launched a \$400 million Skills Upgrading Scheme (SUS) in September 2001 to provide focused skills training for in-service workers with lower education attainment, so as to enhance their skills and competitiveness in the labour market. The SUS currently covers 23 industries and has, since its inception, offered over 8 100 classes benefiting about 166 000 workers. As at end of September 2006, about \$305 million has been committed.

11. The SUS has gained extensive support from both employers and employees. A survey commissioned by EMB and completed in August 2006 indicated that 97% and 90% of the trainees considered that the SUS could enhance their vocational skills and self-confidence respectively. The Scheme is also very effective from the employers' perspective: 74% of them agreed that the SUS had helped improve their employees' overall performance.

Employees Retraining Scheme

12. The Employees Retraining Board (ERB) will provide over 100 000 training places in 2006 to help the unemployed and displaced workers to cope with changes in the economic environment and enhance their employability. The ERB will continue to develop new courses by tapping into markets with employment potential, such as massage and foot reflexology, hotel housekeeping and cleaning, etc. In response to market needs, the ERB will also offer separate training modules on post-natal care, child care and elderly care, in addition to the training for local domestic helpers. By "multi-skilling" the retrainees, their employment prospect should be improved.

Project Yi Jin

13. Project Yi Jin (PYJ) was launched in October 2000 for secondary school leavers and adult learners. A student who has successfully completed the programme will be awarded a certificate, which is comparable to five passes in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) for continuing education and employment purposes. Since the introduction of the PYJ in the 2000/01 academic year, over 32 000 students have benefited from the programme.

14. The PYJ has fulfilled its purpose of providing an alternative educational pathway and expanding the continuing education opportunities for the low achievers in the HKCEE. The programme has been popular and welcomed by students and parents, as reflected in the steady increase in annual enrolment (about 7 000 have enrolled for the 2006/07 academic year as compared to 5 000 for the last academic year). To tie in with the implementation of the new senior secondary (NSS) curriculum in September 2009, we will commence a review of the positioning and curriculum of PYJ shortly.

Yi Jin/Secondary Schools Collaboration Project

15. To provide an additional progression pathway for Secondary 5 students who do not wish to sit for the HKCEE, we introduced, as a pilot

scheme, the Yi Jin/Secondary Schools Collaboration Project (YJ/SSCP). The pilot YJ/SSCP adopts the same curriculum as the PYJ. Each secondary school pairs up with one of the FCE member institutions and work in partnership. The HKCAA has confirmed that the exit standard of the students is comparable to that of the PYJ offered to Secondary 5 school leavers.

16. An evaluation of the pilot scheme was conducted in 2005, which indicated that the YJ/SSCP pilot scheme is effective in enhancing students' self-esteem, motivation to learn, and aspirations for further studies. The students have also improved their language and communication skills. In the 2006/07 school year, 14 secondary schools with 22 classes have participated in the scheme.

17. The NSS curriculum and the way it is taught and assessed will have addressed the full range of student abilities and interests and incorporated some of the major elements of YJ/SSCP. Feedback and experiences gained from YJ/SSCP will provide input to the development of the NSS curriculum.

Training for Non-engaged Youth

18. Recognizing the increasing development and training needs of non-engaged youth, EMB set up a Task Force on Continuing Development and Employment-related Training for Youth (Task Force) in March 2004 and earmarked \$50 million for piloting suitable training programmes for non-engaged youth, providing train-the-trainer programmes for youth workers and commissioning research studies.

19. The Task Force has identified a number of areas in which there may be opportunities to further develop pilot projects and services for the non-engaged youth. These include –

- (a) programmes that aim to motivate non-engaged youth to seek self-improvement and work;
- (b) modern apprenticeship schemes;
- (c) sports-related training;
- (d) training for creative and cultural industries; and
- (e) training and employment programmes in the Mainland China.

20. Of the 23 pilot projects approved by the Task Force to date, 18 have already commenced, involving a total expenditure of \$30 million and offering over 4 200 training places.

Training for youth with disadvantaged background

21. As a concerted effort to address the problem of inter-generational poverty, we will continue to strengthen our vocational training services for the youth with disadvantaged background. These include the provision of additional training places through the Vocational Training Council for youth in certain relatively deprived districts (e.g. Yuen Long and Tin Shui Wai) and those of ethnic minority origin.

Collaboration with the Community

22. Human capital is the most valuable asset of Hong Kong and the key to the development of a knowledge-based economy. The Government has always accorded a high priority to education and manpower development. While we spare no efforts in pursuing education and manpower development initiatives, we need to count on the entire community to contribute to the development of our human capital for Hong Kong.

Education and Manpower Bureau
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