

Shine Skills Centre

The Audit Commission ("Audit") conducted a review of the operation of the Shine Skills Centre ("SSC") of the Vocational Training Council ("VTC") in the provision of vocational training to persons with disabilities ("PWDs") for open employment.

2. SSC is a member institution of VTC Group and a major institution that provides vocational training to PWDs aged 15 or above for open recruitment. SSC operates its three vocational training sites in Kwun Tong, Tuen Mun and Pokfulam. The programmes and services provided to PWDs by SSC include vocational assessment service, full-time training programmes, part-time training courses, provision of technical aids and rehabilitation and boarding services. For the 2014-2015 school year, SSC offered 660 full-time training places and 400 part-time training places.

3. The Committee noted the following findings from the Director of Audit's Report:

- the Shine Vocational Assessment Service ("SVAS") will conduct vocational assessments¹ for PWDs to assess their suitability for attending SSC's full-time training programmes. For PWDs who were assessed as unsuitable for vocational training, SVAS would recommend them to attend other programmes provided by other non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") (e.g. sheltered workshops and day activity centres). SVAS would not release the assessment results and recommendations to these PWDs before the completion of assessment reports for their alternative arrangements. In 2013-2014 school year, of the 15 specific vocational assessment reports examined by Audit, 11 were issued later than the target time of four weeks by five to 14 weeks;
- SSC had not set a target time for processing PWDs' admission applications for full-time training programmes. Of the 30 applications in 2013-2014 school year examined by Audit, nine (30%) of them took more than three months to process;
- SSC conducted annual assessment on the completion rates of full-time training programmes for each vocational training sites, but there was

¹ SVAS offers two types of vocational assessments, i.e. specific vocational assessment and comprehensive vocational assessment, to evaluate the PWD's vocational strengths and potential, and suitability for attending the programme.

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no record showing the dropping out reasons for 14 students in 2013-2014 school year;

- SSC reported on the VTC website and to the Legislative Council the employment rate of 94% for 2013-2014 graduated students without disclosing the calculation method. However, SSC included those in supported employment or working in sheltered workshops in calculating the percentage of graduated students in employment. In fact, only 137 (52.1%) of the 263 SSC students graduated in 2013-2014 school year were in open employment;
- SSC had a total of nine Student Counsellors to provide, inter alia, career guidance services to the students. However, SSC had not set benchmarks on the numbers of jobs secured and trial work placements arranged for students by the Student Counsellors and there were under-performance in the numbers of job secured and placements arranged for some Student Counsellors;
- SSC conducted employer satisfaction survey by sending out questionnaires to graduated students' employers to gauge their levels of satisfaction on SSC's full-time training programmes and the students they hired. However, the Student Counsellors would only send a questionnaire to those employers who, based on their experience, would be willing to respond to the questionnaire;
- SSC carried out annual employment surveys covering graduated students of the immediate past academic year, but it did not request graduated students to state whether their employment was under the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme² of the Labour Department, and it did not monitor the employment status of graduated students in the longer term. Moreover, in the period 2011-2012 to 2013-2014 school years, four training programmes, i.e. "Programme assistance practice", "Computer and network practice", "Catering and housekeeping practice" and "Office practice" rated by more than 50% of the graduated students as "fairly relevant" or "not relevant" to employment;

² Financial incentives are provided to employers who participated in the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme and hired PWDs. Employers are granted, up to a maximum of eight months, a monthly allowance for each hired PWD who has been assessed by the Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department as having employment difficulties.

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- there were neither assessment forms nor board reports in three (out of the 37) recruitment exercises conducted by SSC in the period from 2012-2013 to 2014-2015 school years for short-term contract staff. Job applications for two of these three exercises were also missing;
- all VTC's teaching staff and some other designated staff were encouraged to attain not less than 40 continuous professional development hours within two consecutive years under a non-mandatory Scheme since 2010-2011 school year. However, in the period 2012-2013 to 2013-2014 school years, 29 (46%) staff attained less than 40 continuous professional development hours, while four of these 29 staff did not attain any continuous professional development hours at all; and
- the second floor (391 square metres) and the seventh floor (411 square metres) of the Shine Skills Centre (Pokfulam) building had been vacant since June 2012 and July 2005 respectively. In September 2010, VTC proposed to release the two floors for use by the Social Welfare Department ("SWD"), and the Labour and Welfare Bureau ("LWB") agreed with the proposal in October 2010. In April 2015, VTC intended to withdraw the above proposal and sought LWB's support for remodelling the two floors for enhancing the training for SSC's students. In June 2015, LWB declined VTC's above proposal and the two floors would be used for setting up a day activity centre and a hostel for severely mentally handicapped persons.

4. The Committee did not hold any public hearing on this subject. It conducted a visit to the Shine Skills Centre (Pokfulam) on 19 January 2016 to better understand the training programmes conducted at SSC and the existing use of the two vacant floors at the Shine Skills Centre (Pokfulam) building. The Committee also asked for written responses regarding the effectiveness of the services provided by SSC to PWDs and details of improvement measures in response to Audit's recommendations. The replies from Secretary for Labour and Welfare and the Executive Director of VTC are in *Appendices 78 and 79* respectively.

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Photograph 1



Members of the Committee were briefed on the training programmes conducted at SSC and the use of the two vacant floors during the visit to the Shine Skills Center (Pokfulam).

5. The Committee notes that SWD has reserved the two vacant floors at the Shine Skills Centre (Pokfulam) building for the operation of a day-care centre and hostel for persons with severe intellectual disability. The Committee considers that the Administration should formulate a holistic rehabilitation policy to provide comprehensive training and lifelong support for PWDs to prepare them for open employment and better integration into the community. In implementing this policy, LWB, as the responsible bureau, should better coordinate public organizations, NGOs and SWD in the provision of different services for PWDs. In this regard, the Administration should consider allocating more resources, including additional floor spaces, to VTC for enhancing and expanding SSC's training programmes.

6. The Committee wishes to be kept informed of the progress made in implementing the various recommendations made by Audit.