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Panel on Public Service

Meeting on 19 December 2016

Updated background brief on training and development for civil servants

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the provision of training and development opportunities for civil servants by the Civil Service Bureau ("CSB"), and summarizes the major views and concerns expressed by members when the subject was discussed at meetings of the Panel on Public Service ("the Panel").

Background

2. The Government provides civil servants with learning opportunities that would equip them with the skills, knowledge and mindset necessary for providing quality service to the public. Whilst individual bureaux/departments ("B/Ds") provide vocational training to meet job-specific needs, the Civil Service Training and Development Institute ("CSTDI") under CSB focuses on training programmes that fulfill the common training needs of civil servants, such as leadership and management, language and communication, national affairs and the Basic Law. CSTDI also formulates policies on training and performance management, provides consultancy services to B/Ds on human resource management and promotes a culture of continuous learning in the civil service.

3. Brief descriptions of the various training programmes and activities organized by CSTDI are set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(4) 356/15-16 (03)) for the Panel meeting on 21 December 2015. For the financial year 2016-2017, the approved financial provision for CSB for its work on civil service training and development is \$144.1 million.

Deliberations of the Panel

4. The major views and concerns expressed by Panel members since 2010-2011 session and the Administration's responses are summarized below.

National studies and Basic Law training

5. Concerns were raised by some members that civil servants attending the national studies courses conducted in the Mainland and the Basic Law training organized by CSTDI might be exposed to one-sided views only and brainwashed into a "One country, One system" mindset.

6. The Administration advised that many B/Ds had direct work contacts with the Mainland. There was a genuine operational need for civil servants to understand the systems and other aspects of the Mainland. In attending the national studies programmes conducted in the Mainland, civil servants would meet with different organizations and people so that they could understand the political, social and economic developments in the Mainland from different angles. Open discussions were held in which programme participants could freely express their ideas. The Administration also highlighted that political neutrality was one of the core values of the civil service. All civil servants were well aware of their responsibility, as set out in the Civil Service Code, to implement the policies and decisions of the Government of the day in a professional and impartial manner.

7. Some members urged CSB to enhance the content and delivery of Basic Law training for civil servants, such as placing more emphasis on the theory and principles of "One Country, Two Systems" and inviting Basic Law experts from the Mainland as guest lecturers so that civil servants could have a better understanding of the Mainland and the one country in the context of "One country, two systems".

8. The Administration responded that CSB had been devoting resources to deepen civil servants' understanding and knowledge of the Basic Law. CSTDI would invite Basic Law experts from the Mainland to provide Basic Law training for civil servants where practicable.

Leadership and management development

9. Members noted that CSTDI organized regular short seminars delivered by prominent speakers and experts on topical subjects for senior civil servants. Some members questioned the effectiveness of these seminars in enhancing the capability of senior civil servants in discharging their duties.

10. The Administration advised that seminars on topical subjects organized by CSTDI aimed at providing senior civil servants with background information of such subjects. If a B/D considered it necessary to equip its staff with the necessary skills and knowledge for, say, the formulation of a certain policy area, the B/D would organize its own in-depth training programmes for such purpose.

11. On the suggestion of providing training to senior civil servants to enhance their skills in communicating with Legislative Council ("LegCo") Members, the Administration responded that one of the major functions of CSTDI was to provide training to enhance the skills of civil servants in communicating with different stakeholders such as LegCo Members, District Council members, the public and media. To enhance the skills of senior civil servants in communicating with LegCo Members, CSTDI had in the past invited a former President of LegCo and LegCo Members to share their valuable insights and experience on the subject.

Overseas training for civil servants

12. Noting that the Administration would arrange civil servants to attend training programmes at overseas universities, some members enquired whether the Administration would sponsor civil servants to attend overseas courses of at least one year duration with recognized degree qualification or courses at renowned overseas business schools.

13. The Administration advised that a few civil servants were sponsored to acquire a master degree in overseas institutions each year. In considering whether to offer one-year overseas training to civil servants, factors such as financial implications, work relevance, and work commitment of the staff concerned would need to be considered.

14. On the question of whether civil servants who were granted full-pay study leave of one year or more by the Government to attend training courses were required to sign an undertaking to serve in the civil service for at least three years after the study, the Administration advised that if the civil servants failed to complete the post-training service as agreed in the undertaking, they would be required to repay the Government the training cost.

Continuous training

15. Members noted that the Administration offered financial sponsorship, i.e. the Training Sponsorship Scheme, to encourage civil servants to pursue learning through external courses. Under the Scheme, civil servants remunerated on or below Master Pay Scale Point 16 or equivalent, including Model Scale 1 staff, might apply for reimbursement of course fees for self-

arranged studies. About \$2 million had been earmarked for 600 applications in 2015-2016. In this connection, some members asked whether consideration could be given to raising the financial sponsorship for the Scheme and whether action(s) would be taken by CSB to encourage more frontline civil servants to participate in the Scheme.

16. The Administration responded that the Training Sponsorship Scheme aimed at encouraging frontline civil servants to pursue continuous learning outside office hours. The sponsorship ceiling was \$6,000 per applicant per year. The number of courses i.e. three courses per applicant per year was sufficient to meet the needs of frontline staff to undertake work-related external courses for continuous learning. CSTD I would closely monitor the utilization trend and consider injecting additional funding based on actual requirements. Apart from sponsoring frontline civil servants to pursue continuous learning outside office hours, B/Ds had all along been providing vocational training to meet job-specific needs of their frontline staff.

Training for non-civil service contract staff

17. Some members asked about the provision of training for non-civil service contract ("NCSC") staff. The Administration advised that relevant training programmes, including orientation programmes and job-related training, were provided to NCSC staff to better equip them to discharge their duties. Local training activities held in Hong Kong were generally open to NCSC staff. However, leadership and management training would generally be provided only to civil servants, who would have a life-long career in the civil service and who might be required to shoulder heavier responsibilities upon promotion in due course.

Training programmes on the Belt and Road Initiative

18. As Hong Kong could make the most of its advantages under the Belt and Road Initiative, question was raised as to whether CSB would provide training to equip civil servants with knowledge and understanding on the initiative.

19. The Administration advised at the Panel meeting of 21 December 2015 that it would be one of the focuses of training in the year to equip civil servants with knowledge and understanding on the Belt and Road Initiative, in particular, to those civil servants whose main duties were to promote Hong Kong and to liaise with other regions outside Hong Kong in different areas of work related to the Belt and Road Initiative.

Training on communications

20. In view of increasing public confrontation against the Government, question was also raised as to whether CSTDI would organize courses to equip civil servants with the necessary skills to manage conflicts, including abusive language, and to cope with stress arising from these conflicts.

21. The Administration advised that CSTDI had organized courses for enhancing the quality of customer service, handling public complaints, managing conflicts, coping with stress and maintaining emotional well-being, and efforts in this regard would be stepped up.

Evaluation of training programmes

22. On the mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of various training programmes, the Administration advised that feedback from both course providers and participants would be collected systematically for course evaluation with a view to further improving the training programmes. The Administration would seriously consider the views collected and fine tune the programme contents to meet the training needs of civil servants at different levels.

Latest position

23. The Administration will update the Panel on the training and development for civil servants at the Panel meeting on 19 December 2016.

Relevant papers

24. A list of relevant papers is in the **Appendix**.

List of relevant papers

Meeting	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Public Service	17 January 2011	<u>Administration's paper</u> <u>Minutes</u>
	21 November 2011	<u>Adminstration's paper</u> <u>Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat</u> <u>Minutes</u> <u>Administration's follow-up response to issues raised at the Panel meeting</u>
	19 December 2011	<u>Administration's paper</u> <u>Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat</u> <u>Minutes</u>
	18 February 2013	<u>Administration's paper</u> <u>Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat</u> <u>Minutes</u> <u>Administration's follow-up response to issues raised at the Panel meeting</u>

Meeting	Date of meeting	Paper
	17 February 2014	<u>Administration's paper</u> <u>Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat</u> <u>Minutes</u>
	16 February 2015	<u>Administration's paper</u> <u>Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat</u> <u>Minutes</u> <u>Administration's follow-up response to issues raised at the Panel meeting</u>
	21 December 2015	<u>Administration's paper</u> <u>Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat</u> <u>Minutes</u>

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