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Panel on Public Service

Meeting on 21 May 2018

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)306/16-17(05)) for the Panel meeting on 19 December 2016. For the financial year 2018-2019, the estimated financial provision for CSB for its work on civil service training and development is \$165.8 million.

Establishing a new civil service college

4. In October 2017, the Chief Executive announced in her Policy Address that the Administration will establish a new civil service college to further enhance training for civil servants in the areas of leadership development, interaction and communication with the public, innovation, use of technology, etc. CSB has commenced project planning and site search for the college.

Deliberations of the Panel

5. The major views and concerns expressed by Panel members since 2012-2013 session and the Administration's responses are summarized below.

National studies and Basic Law training

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. Some members questioned the effectiveness of arranging officers at Master Pay Scale ("MPS") Point 34 or above, in particular those civil servants at the professional ranks, to attend the Mainland programmes on national studies. They held the view that these programmes should only be arranged for those civil servants who had close working relationship with the Mainland authorities.

9. The Administration explained that some training programmes, such as seminars on cross-boundary law enforcement, were organized by individual B/Ds in collaboration with the Mainland authorities. For the Mainland

programmes on national studies and thematic visits organized by CSTDI, although officers at MPS Point 34 or above were eligible to apply, only about 700 senior and middle ranking civil servants were selected each year to attend.

10. Regarding the suggestion of strengthening trainings to enhance civil servants' knowledge on principles behind the drafting and interpretation of the Basic Law, the Administration advised at the Panel meeting of 19 December 2016 that CSB had been devoting resources in training civil servants to enhance civil servants' understanding of the Basic Law and the "one country, two systems" principle, and Basic Law formed an integral and important part of training for civil servants in the coming years. In addition, individual B/Ds could design tailor-made courses to meet their specific needs. As an illustration, the Department of Justice was planning to provide training for their counsels on the differences between the common law system in Hong Kong and the civil law system in the Mainland.

Training on communications

11. In view of increased number of public confrontations with frontline civil servants, 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. 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.

Overseas training

12. Noting that CSB had arranged civil servants to attend different training courses in the Mainland, the United States and Canada, some members asked whether the Administration would arrange civil servants to attend training courses in neighbourhood countries in order to widen their exposure.

13. The Administration advised at the Panel meeting on 19 December 2016 that CSB had sponsored 61 civil servants to attend executive development courses at overseas renowned institutions and arranged attachments of three civil servants to overseas organizations in 2016. Individual B/Ds would also arrange attachments to international organizations that had direct working relationship with them. As the Mainland, the United States and European countries were the major trading partners of Hong Kong, the bulk of training courses for civil servants were concentrated in these places. A staff exchange programme with Singapore was also in place, though not being pursued actively.

Continuous training

14. Members noted that the Administration offered a Training Sponsorship Scheme to encourage civil servants to pursue learning through external courses. Under the Scheme, civil servants remunerated on or below MPS 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 550 applications in 2016-2017. In this connection, some members asked whether consideration could be given to raising the financial sponsorship for the Scheme and about action(s) taken by CSB to encourage more frontline civil servants to participate in the Scheme.

15. 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

16. 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 on the use of social media and "Big Data"

17. Some members urged the Administration to step up training on the use of social media and "Big Data" as the use of "Big Data" was not common among B/Ds.

18. The Administration responded at the Panel meeting of 19 December 2016 that training on the use of social media and "Big Data" could equip civil servants with greater skills and confidence in public engagement. The Hong

Kong Police Force had made a head start with the number of followers and hit rate being key performance indicators, whereas some B/Ds, including the Hong Kong Observatory, were also contemplating to do the same.

Evaluation of training programmes

19. 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.

Establishing a new civil service college

20. In response to members' enquiries about the project progress of the new civil service college, the Administration advised at the Panel meeting of 19 March 2018 that the project was still in the planning stage and the Administration was still searching for a suitable site and gathering more information about the civil service training systems of some overseas jurisdictions.

Latest position

21. At the Panel meeting on 12 October 2017, Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT proposed to discuss the provision of training for civil servants to promote the use of innovation and technology in their work.

22. The Administration will update the Panel on the training and development for civil servants at the Panel meeting on 21 May 2018.

Relevant papers

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

List of relevant papers

Meeting	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Public Service	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>
	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>

Meeting	Date of meeting	Paper
	19 December 2016	Administration's paper Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat <u>Minutes</u>

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Legislative Council Secretariat
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