

For discussion
on 12 July 2024

Legislative Council Panel on Manpower

Subcommittee on Issues Relating to Human Resources Training and Planning

Findings of the Survey on the Training Needs of the Local Workforce

Purpose

This paper aims to brief Members on the major findings of the "Survey on the Training Needs of the Local Workforce", conducted by an independent research organisation commissioned by the Employees Retraining Board (ERB).

Survey Background and Design

2. In order to understand the current and future skills training needs in various industries, the ERB commissioned an independent research organisation to conduct a "Survey on Training Needs of the Local Workforce" (the Survey) from November 2023 to March 2024. The Survey consisted of two parts, including (1) Quantitative survey: 1,261 members of the general public were interviewed on the basis of questionnaires; and (2) Qualitative survey: stakeholders' opinions were collected through six focus-group discussions and 56 one-to-one in-depth interviews. Stakeholders in the focus groups included representatives from trade unions, ERB Industry Consultative Networks and ERB training bodies. Stakeholders in the interviews included representatives from employers, chambers of commerce, professional bodies, social welfare organisations, training / educational institutions (non-ERB training bodies) and human resources companies.

Key Survey Findings and Recommendations

(i) Difficulties on Human Resources Faced by Various Industries

3. Various industries in Hong Kong are generally facing the problem of insufficient human resources. Different stakeholders mentioned the following difficulties / impacts affecting various strata in the workforce: (1) Long-term

shortage of manpower for work at the basic level; (2) Lack of articulation pathways in skills training; (3) Training courses / appraisal system not matched with the actual situation; and (4) The professional knowhow of technical trades reached a bottleneck.

(ii) Changes in Skills Needs in Various Industries and Emerging Skills

4. In recent years, commonalities were found in the skills development of various industries in Hong Kong: (1) Expanded scope of work for employees; (2) Increased online services / activities; (3) Increased use of technology and transformation in work nature; (4) Enhanced professionalism, technology and knowledge; and (5) Increasing importance of soft skills.

5. Most stakeholders mentioned that the emerging vocational skills were related to artificial intelligence. Stakeholders believed that future skills training must keep pace with the development of technology. No matter whether being engaged in basic-level or non-skilled jobs, employees need to learn new technologies in order to remain competitive. It is also necessary to include skills on software development / programming, artificial intelligence, big data analysis and other higher-end skills in accordance with market demand for continued education for trainees in need to facilitate the successful transformation of both the companies and the employees.

(iii) Difficulties Faced by Employed Persons and their Intention to Pursue Further Training

6. About 35% of the employed respondents encountered difficulties at work, which include heavy workload, staff relations, etc. Over 45% of the employed respondents planned to pursue further training to improve their skills, among whom more respondents would like to study industry-related professional qualifications or skills courses, as well as computer technology skills courses. In addition, nearly 60% and over 45% of the respondents would like to enrol in courses offered by local tertiary institutions and the ERB respectively.

(iv) Difficulties Faced by Job Seekers and their Intention to Pursue Further Training

7. More than half of the job-seeking respondents encountered difficulties in finding jobs, for reasons such as insufficient academic qualifications, lack of relevant professional qualifications / insufficient skills, etc. About 65% of job-seeking respondents planned to pursue further training to improve their skills, among whom more respondents would like to study industry-related professional qualifications or skills courses, as well as computer technology skills courses. In

addition, over 80% and about one-third of the respondents would like to enrol in courses offered by the ERB and local tertiary institutions respectively.

(v) Potential Workforce's Intention to Seek Job and Pursue Further Training

8. Homemakers aged 30-49 were inclined to enter into employment, but most of them are only looking for part-time jobs. Persons who have recently retired were less inclined to work, while young people who are neither in employment nor in education were the least motivated. When respondents were asked how to enhance their desire to enter into employment, about half of them replied that they had no intention to work at all. Only a few respondents mentioned about “good salary and benefits”, “flexible working hours”, etc. On the other hand, homemakers who were willing to seek work and persons who were recently retired have a higher propensity to pursue further training while young people who are neither in employment nor in education have little motivation to pursue further training.

(vi) Opinions on Future Development Direction of the ERB

9. The majority of respondents from the general public agreed that the service targets of the ERB should include university graduates, and ERB should offer more courses at higher qualification levels. Only a few respondents commented that university graduates have sufficient academic qualifications and do not need to use the services of ERB. On the other hand, some stakeholders suggested giving priorities to those with lower level of academic qualifications if ERB would expand its service targets to include university graduates

10. Stakeholders also suggested ERB strengthening its connection and cooperation with employers, trade unions, chambers of commerce and training bodies, as well as its support to small and medium-sized enterprises in the provision of skills training for employees. In addition, ERB might also strengthen its role as a job referral / matching platform as well as an intermediary between employers and employees. Furthermore, in view of the overall improvement of academic qualifications of all and the technology advancement, ERB should offer more skills-based courses at higher qualification levels, and also introduce courses on new technology.

11. There are also opinions that ERB should consider increasing the number of courses to provide more course choices to different target groups and strengthening publicity. On the other hand, ERB should streamline its administrative procedures in course approval and consider adjusting the appointment criteria of its training bodies.

12. Major findings of the quantitative survey are summarised in the **Annex**.

Advice Sought

13. The ERB would take into account the results of the Survey and the latest market trends when planning future skills training courses. Members are invited to take note of the paper and offer views on the training needs and services of the local workforce.

Employees Retraining Board
July 2024

Survey on the Training Needs of the Local Workforce [Major Findings of the Quantitative Survey]

(1) Why employed persons did not plan to pursue further training

- About one-third (33.4%) of the employed respondents who did not plan to pursue further training said that they were “too busy at work”, followed by “have sufficient academic qualifications / skills” (23.4%), “old age” (18.9%) and “need to take care of family” (16.3%).
- Among those employed respondents mentioning “need to take care of family”, 38.8% of them said that they would pursue further training if care services for the elderly or children could be provided during their training.

(2) Why employed persons did not plan to enrol in ERB courses

- Among those employed respondents who did not plan to enrol in ERB courses, 37.2% of them said that they were “unclear about courses offered by the ERB”, followed by “ERB courses were too elementary / qualification level is too low” (15.4%) and “ERB does not offer the courses they want to study” (13.0%).

(3) Why job seekers did not want to pursue further training

- Among those job seekers who did not want to pursue further training, 34.8% of them said that they “have sufficient academic qualifications / skills”, followed by “financial constraints / tuition fees too expensive” (18.8%) and “need to take care of family” (16.9%).

(4) Ways to motivate potential workforce's to enter into employment

- **Homemakers:** More than half (52.5%) of the respondents said they had no intention to work at all. Other respondents mentioned about “good salary and benefits” (13.5%), “childcare services provided” (13.4%) and “flexible working hours” (12.5%).
- **Persons who were recently retired:** 60.9% of the respondents said they had no intention to work at all. Other respondents mentioned about “good salary and benefits” (11.6%), “easy and stress-free work” (5.7%) and “organisation helps to find a job / provides employment follow-up services” (5.7%).

- **Young people who are neither in employment nor in education:** 36.1% of the respondents said they had no intention to work at all. Besides, some respondents mentioned about “good salary and benefits” (27.6%), “work from home” (27.4%) and “flexible working hours” (15.4%).

(5) Do you agree to include university graduates as ERB’s service targets

- Nearly three-quarters (72.5%) of the respondents agreed that the service targets of the ERB should include university graduates.
- Among those who disagreed, three-quarters (75.1%) of them commented that “university graduates have sufficient academic qualifications”. Other reasons for disagreement included “reducing other people’s opportunities to enrol in ERB courses” (19.7%) , “leave resources to people other than university graduates” (17.0%) and “university graduates can enrol in courses offered by other institutions” (16.6%).

(6) Do you agree that ERB should offer more courses at higher qualification levels

- 86.5% of the respondents agreed that ERB should offer more courses at higher qualification levels.

(7) Whether knowing ERB and attending ERB courses

- 84.9% of the respondents had heard of the ERB. Besides, 13.0% of the respondents had attended ERB courses.
- Among those respondents who were not interested in taking ERB courses, 17.6% of them replied that “free courses / provide sufficient allowances” would raise their intention to enrol, followed by “increase the number of courses” (8.9%) and “increase publicity at different levels” (8.3%).