

Construction Industry Council

Construction Industry Training Board

The 4th Meeting of the Construction Industry Training Board was held on Monday, 29 November 2010 at 2:30 pm in Conference Room, CICTA Management Training and Trade Testing Centre, Level 7, No. 95 Yue Kwong Road, Aberdeen, Hong Kong.

Present : Ir Billy W H Wong Chairman
Mr Enoch Lam
Mr S H Tso
Dr Lo Kin-ki
Ir Poon Lok-to, Otto
Mr Donald Choi
Mr Lai Yuk-fai, Stephen
Mr Jimmy Tse
Ir Helen Kwan

In attendance : Ir Jimmy Chan Chief Assistant Secretary (Works) 6, DEVB
Mr Charles Wong Director (Training), CIC
Mr Chu Yin-lin Senior Manager (CT), CIC
Mrs Sophie Leung Secretary, CITB
Mrs Olivia Yiu Trainees Recruitment & Placement Manager, CICTA
Mrs Shirley Lam Assistant Secretary, CITB

Attend part of the meeting : Dr Chung Ting-Yiu, Robert HKU Public Opinion Programme
Ms Pang Ka-lai, Karie HKU Public Opinion Programme
Mr Lee Wai-kin, Frank HKU Public Opinion Programme
Ms Lee Wing-yi, Winnie HKU Public Opinion Programme

Apologies : Ir Thomas Ho
Mr Chow Luen-kiu
Mr Cheung Tak-hing
Mr Lok Kwei-sang, Tandy

Progress Report

Action

4.1 Shuffling of agenda items

The CITB agreed to shuffle the agenda items so that HKU Public Opinion Programme's briefing would be received first.

(Dr Chung and his team were invited to join the meeting at this juncture.)

4.2 Report on findings relating to opinions of target trainees of full-time courses on CICTA and its courses

4.2.1 Dr Chung presented the opinion survey as set out in Paper CIC/CTB/P/034/10 conducted by HKU Public Opinion Programme (referred to as 'HKU POP') in relation to target trainees of the CICTA and relevant parties. The survey mainly consisted of a quantitative section and a qualitative section. The former section was conducted via telephone interviews with respondents comprising job seekers/ those who were planning for a career move/ incumbent blue-collar local workers aged between 15 and 45 with secondary school education; current S.3 to S.7 students; and parents who had at least one child attending secondary school. The latter was conducted through focus group meetings with CICTA trainees/ graduates, parents of South Asian origin and new immigrants from the mainland in addition to the respondents covered by the telephone interviews. Key findings were shown below:

- i) Overall impression of the construction industry – Most respondents' impression about the construction industry was found to be superficial and it was opined that the construction industry was for the working class only. Approximately over 40% of the respondents would immediately think of 'building construction/ bridge and road construction' whereas 'construction workers' would make around 30% of the respondents thinking of 'construction site/

Action

working at construction site'. Apparently, respondents' impression about construction workers was dominated by negative conceptions. Although construction industry practitioners could give a 'professional image', most people opined that construction workers' social status was relatively lower compared with that of workers from other labour-intensive industries.

- ii) Considerations before joining construction industry – An overwhelming majority of the respondents admitted that they had never thought of joining the construction industry due to their major worries about 'the hardship, 'unsafe working condition' and 'lack of interest'. Meanwhile, around 40% of the parents indicated they did not support their children in joining the construction industry for similar reasons. In addition, subjects of the survey would mainly consider factors like 'pay/ fringe benefits', 'interest' and 'prospect/ promotion opportunity' in choosing their occupations.
- iii) Knowledge of CICTA – More than half of the respondents indicated that they had an idea of what CICTA was. However, only a minority of them knew that its full-time courses were 'free of charge and with allowances'. More than half of the secondary school students opined the courses were attractive after they were told of this information. However, less than one third of the job seekers/ blue-collar workers and parents opined they were attractive. As for the reason for which a respondent would consider for enrolment in a CICTA course, the overwhelming opinion was industry-wide recognition. Regarding

Action

the reasons for not enrolling for the course, more than 20% of the job seekers/ blue collar workers indicated that they were totally not interested in joining the industry while around 30% of the parents did not want their children to join the industry. In addition, around 30% of the respondents thought that recruitment for the construction industry should target the youths.

At the focus group meetings, CICTA graduates' comments on the CICTA were rather positive whereas the ethnic minorities expected the CICTA to provide teaching materials in different languages or to engage corresponding language speakers as instructors.

4.2.2 Dr Chung continued to present a number of key recommendations in relation to the findings, namely:

- i) Making use of National Geographic channel's programme productions on major infrastructure projects in the world for education and promotion purposes.
- ii) Reporting the successful stories of key figures in the construction industry by tracking coverage in collaboration with TV stations.
- iii) Instilling common knowledge of construction engineering in various learning stages of formal education to arouse students' interest in construction science and technology.

4.2.3 Concerning the findings and recommendations of the opinion survey, a Member asked whether short term and pertinent strategies existed in addition to the medium and long term promotional recommendation. Another Member asked about the performance indicators for

Action

evaluation of the key recommendations. In addition, a Member pointed out a phenomenon in which some workers preferred taking up other manual jobs to joining the construction industry. Dr Chung and his team gave illustration by quoting the data and observations of the survey report. Later, a Member mentioned the effect of psychological factors, e.g. senses of achievement and satisfaction, on enhancing the attractiveness of the industry. However, a Member opined that gross exaggeration and mis-representation in promotion were not recommended. Finally, the CITB thanked Dr Chung for his presentation.

(Dr Chung and his team left the meeting at this juncture.)

4.2.4 The Chairman in view of the findings had the following comments:

- i) The promotional strategies and directions had to be contemporary and pertinent. Concern was expressed on the promotional messages of the '5-8-1' Scheme in which target trainees might be misled to believe that their salaries after graduation would be between \$8,000 and \$10,000 whereas the actual income earned had already significantly exceeded such amounts nowadays.
- ii) One of the major target trainee sources of the CICTA was ethnic minorities. According to the survey, it showed that they encountered language barrier to joining the construction industry. Accordingly, the offering of practical Cantonese training courses for construction purposes in CICTA premises coupled with on-site promotion set up deserved further exploration.
- iii) As for the career path, commencement of preliminary preparation for introduction of a 'master craftsmanship' qualification was

Action

necessary.

- iv) As for the preparation of success stories of key figures, it has to be highlighted that every building did have its unique story and participation of the whole construction team was required. Therefore, team collaboration had to be stressed to bring out the participation and contribution of dedicated workers in the process of planning and construction in the documentaries.

4.2.5 A Member strongly agreed to the recommendation on making use of National Geographic channel's programmes on construction of major buildings in the world for promotion purposes. He also pointed out that all construction-related materials, e.g. information on safety, technology and employment opportunities, would be made available in the resource centre to be set up in CICTA premises for the distribution of industry messages for promotional purposes. Meanwhile, a Member suggested making use of social networks widely used by youths for promotion because the degree of penetration could be very deep, which was worthwhile for exploration. In addition, a Member opined that since the government had previously produced some documentaries on a lot of major infrastructure projects, interviews with parties involved in the projects could be considered and records thereof should be kept in the archive of the resource centre to be set up.

4.2.6 A Member advised that the CITB might, whilst formulating its promotional programmes in response to workers' reluctance to join the industry due to instability of the work cycle, consider encouraging workers to acquire skills of other trades. Accordingly, they would become multi-skilled craftsmen and job opportunities would increase. The work cycle and income would then become stable. The Chairman opined that such initiative could be introduced shortly, like offering top-up courses or course/trade test fee concessions as an incentive. The Chairman also advised that a recommendation should be made to the

Action

Construction Industry Council (CIC) to adopt ‘multi-skills’ as an industry-wide strategy and to state clearly that it would work on facilitating workers to become ‘multi-skilled’.

4.2.7 A Member, who represented the Development Bureau, expressed that the Bureau supported the recommendation on ‘multi-skills’ as well. Although some of the industry practitioners might have different interpretations on the matter, the Development Bureau did wish to encourage more youths to join the industry and to strive to become multi-skilled. Meanwhile, the government would also consider revising the terms of construction contracts so as to tie in with the initiative. It might encourage a change of condition of employment from daily-paid to monthly-paid for certain trades so as to improve job security.

4.2.8 Concerning the above discussions, the Chairman summarized below:

- i) The management was requested to follow up on the measures for promoting ‘multi-skills’;
- ii) The recommendation on ‘multi-skills’ would be submitted to the CIC for consideration and adoption as an industry-wide strategy;
- iii) The offering of practical Cantonese course for construction purposes for ethnic minorities should be followed up, provided that suitable CICTA premises and relevant conditions were available.

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4.2.9 Finally, Members agreed to accept the findings of the opinion survey. As for the recommendations of the report, they would be further deliberated at the next meeting. If necessary, Members might make a request to the CIC Secretariat to obtain a complete version of the opinion survey report for reference.

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Action

4.3 **Confirmation of the progress report of the 3rd meeting held in 2010**

Members took note of Paper CIC/CTB/R/003/10 and confirmed the progress report of the 3rd meeting held on 20 September 2010.

4.4 **Matters arising from the last meeting**

4.4.1 Agenda item 3.3.2 – Competition bill

Concerning the query on the possible violation of the competition bill for granting training allowances or subvention of course costs, Director (Training) expressed that legal advice would be sought if necessary.

4.4.2 Agenda item 3.3.3 – Drop-out rates of basic craft course trainees and wastage rates of graduates

The item would be discussed under a separate item below.

4.4.3 Agenda item 3.4 – Training period of Enhanced Construction Manpower Training Scheme, statistical analysis of trainees and development of a ‘metal works’ course

Some Members expressed that the training period of certain training courses might be too long. Director (Training) reported that the issue would be discussed at the scheduled Course Advisory Panel meetings and the outcomes of the review would be reported later.

D(T)

In addition, statistical analysis of trainees for the new training year and the recommendation on development of a short course on metal works would be discussed under a corresponding item below.

Action

- 4.4.4 Agenda item 3.5—A proposal on running ‘Skills Enhancement Course for Plumbers’

The item would be discussed under a separate item below.

- 4.4.5 Agenda item 3.9— Review of tender procedures

Members noted that the management was following up on the tender procedures, especially the measures in handling special circumstances that might arise after tender invitation.

D(T)

- 4.5 **Proposal on running a full-time short course on metal works under the Enhanced Construction Manpower Training Scheme**

Members took note of Paper CIC/CTB/P/031/10 and noted the proposed course contents.

A Member suggested adding a colloquial term, ‘tin knockers’, to the course title to better reflect the genuine job nature of workers in the said trade. As for the course venue, a Member opined that accessibility and appeal for trainees should be the top priority.

After discussion, Members agreed to offer two classes of the Course for Metal Works (commonly known as ‘Tin Knockers’) at a total capacity of 30 in six months’ time from April 2011 (i.e. phase II of the Scheme). The training period would last for 75 days. The daily allowance for a trainee would be \$200. Members also requested the management to collect trainees’ views on course venue to make the course more appealing to trainees. Meanwhile, data collected would facilitate long-term planning as well.

SM(CT)

- 4.6 **Proposal on running an ‘Advanced Course for Senior Construction Workers’**

Members took note of Paper CIC/CTB/P/032/10 and noted

Action

the proposed contents and target trainees of the above course.

A Member raised that the course title might mislead people into believing that the proposed course was for enhancing the skills of trainees. Therefore, he suggested stating clearly the course objective whether general management personnel or foremen for specific trades would be trained up. In addition, the entry requirement for the course would be possession of trade tested qualification. Actually, many of the frontline management positions on the market were taken up by levelers, who did not hold trade tested qualification. Therefore, the proposed entry requirement of trade tested qualification might preclude them from undergoing formal training. In fact, sophisticated skills were not necessary for management personnel. As such, the management was requested to think of a more appropriate entry requirement. As for the proposal on running six classes in Kowloon Bay Training Centre, Members opined that classes could be run in other centres for the convenience of interested parties. A Member, who represented the Development Bureau, suggested that clarification on manpower demand in this field should be sought beforehand with the Hong Kong Construction Association.

The Chairman requested the management to revise the course proposal according to the views above and to submit a paper for CITB's consideration later.

SM(CT)

4.7 Overview report on graduate placement service and retention rates of graduates

Members took note of Paper CIC/CTB/P/033/10 and noted the placement service offered by the Trainees Recruitment and Placement Department of the CICTA.

Members noted that for retention rates of graduates, those of supervisor courses had ranged from 87.7% to 96.4% over the past three years while those of basic craft courses in the last two years had been close to 70%, which was higher than that (around 50%) recorded in 2007. As for the reasons

Action

of trainees to stay in the industry, ‘satisfactory pay’, ‘an opportunity to put into practice the skills learned’ and ‘bright outlook of the industry’ were the key factors. Most of the graduates were still working in their respective trades. Comparing the pay levels of trainees during the survey period and those in the previous two years when they had graduated, there were growth of 1% to 10% and 11% to 20% for basic craft trainees and supervisor course trainees respectively. Concerning trainees who had left the industry, most of them had accumulated less than three months’ experience in the industry. The main reasons for quitting were ‘hard physical work’ and ‘dangerous job nature/ poor environment’ etc.

Members opined that the above data were partially related to the opinion survey conducted by HKU POP earlier and suggested passing the data to Dr Chung’s team for analysis and comparison. In addition, a Member opined that those data were valuable for reference and they could be taken as measurement of the effectiveness of placement initiatives. Meanwhile, Members noted that the management would conduct a similar survey amongst graduates of full-time adult short courses later.

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4.8 **Proposal on using 2011 advertising budget as funding for advertising initiatives for various courses and trade tests**

Members took note of Paper CIC/CTB/P/035/10 and noted that the CIC had endorsed a budget of \$4 million as advertising costs for 2011 for all courses and trade tests. Since the development of new recruitment strategies based on the HKUPOP report would take some time, the management hoped that Members would first earmark \$1.7 million for placing advertisements in newspapers for courses to be introduced in the coming year. A Member indicated that the advertising recommendations in the survey report of HKUPOP had been resolved to be deliberated at the next meeting and the paper only covered a budget proposal of \$1.7 million for placing advertisements in newspapers without any elaboration on a definite action plan. After further discussion, Members agreed that the management could prepare a proposal with a definite and

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Action

practical plan, which should be supported by scientific data, in relation to the advertising budget on promotional materials to be published in the coming three months for CITB's approval by circulation of papers or at special meetings where urgent needs arose.

4.9 Particulars of Enrolled Trainees of CICTA Full-time Courses in 2010 and Drop-out Rates of Trainees over the Past Three Years

Members took note of Paper CIC/CTB/P/036/10 and noted the particulars of enrolled trainees for 2010 below:

| Particulars--- items with significance (percentage) | Basic Craft Courses | Construction Supervisor/ Technician Training Programmes | Full-time Adult Short Courses |
|--|-------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Age | 18-19 (39.4%) | 20-24 (40.2%) | 46-55 (26.8%) |
| Gender | Male (99.5%) Female (0.5%) | Male (89.7%) Female(10.3%) | Male (97.9%) Female (2.1%) |
| Academic qualification | S.5 (66.7%) | S.5 (60.9%) | S.5 (40.4%) |
| Place of residence | NT North (30.5%) | NT North (22.4%) | NT North (24.2%) |
| Education background | Local (97.7%) | Local (97.1%) | Local (78.8%) |

Members also noted that the average drop-out rates of two-year basic craft course trainees had ranged from 39% to 46% in the last three training years whereas those of one-year course trainees had varied between 23% and 28%. It was shown that the drop-out rates of two-year basic craft course trainees were apparently higher than those of one-year course trainees. Meanwhile, the drop-out rates of supervisor training programme trainees during the same period were 24%.

Members suggested that the correlation between course venue and place of residence of trainees should be studied

Action

- in the light of the particulars of the enrolled trainees. For example, some specific courses could be provided in different training centres on a trial basis. Response would be assessed and analyzed with a view to facilitating the enrolment of interested parties. In view of the fact that the drop-out rates of two-year basic craft course trainees were more than twice the figures for one-year courses, Members suggested to review the course training period to cope with the needs of the industry and society.
- SM(CT)**
- SM(CT)**
- 4.10 **Proposal on revising contents of ‘Supervision of Tree Works Course’**
- Members took note of Paper CIC/CTB/P/037/10 and noted the proposed revision of course contents and contact hours. However, Members advised the management to discuss with the Tree Management Office under the Development Bureau so as to devise a course with higher relevance in contents and to set an appropriate number of contact hours.
- SM(ST)**
- 4.11 **To consider an application made by a joint venture for training locomotive drivers under the Collaborative Training Scheme**
- Members took note of Paper CIC/CTB/P/038/10. Members also noted the details of the application submitted by the said joint venture and the approval granted by the Labour Department to the training course.
- A Member expressed that the CICTA would send representatives to inspect classes during trainees’ training period under the Collaborative Training Scheme in order to ensure course quality. However, the current issue was that the said joint venture had already conducted training for 27 employees prior to CITB’s approval, i.e. the batch was not trained under the supervision of the CICTA. If this would become a precedent, other companies might follow suit and apply for allowances for training courses yet to be approved.
- After discussion, the CITB agreed to approve the
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Action

application submitted by the said joint venture. However, allowances would only be available to training conducted subsequent to application approval and under the supervision of CICTA, i.e. only the 13 trainees yet to undergo training would be subsidized whereas the 27 people who had completed training before approval would not be eligible under the Cooperative Training Scheme.

A Member who represented the Development Bureau enquired about the identity of workers to be trained under the Collaborative Training Scheme and reiterated that workers who would be trained had to be local workers. Regarding the only criterion for eligibility under the current Scheme was employment with a partner company whereby foreign nationals who were Hong Kong identity card holders or employment visa holders would also be covered by the Scheme, a Member who represented the Labour Department pointed out that a foreign national who had entered HK for employment as an imported worker should have been equipped with the specific trade skills stated in the approved Supplementary Labour Scheme and should therefore take up jobs relevant to the specific trade in HK. Accordingly, he/she was basically not allowed to undergo any training for jobs in other trades. The Chairman required the management to follow up on the eligibility of trainees so as to ensure compliance of the Scheme with legal requirements and procedures.

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4.12 Proposal to set up an Intermediate Trade Testing Workshop for tilers and plasterers at Tong Fuk Correctional Institution

Members took note of Paper CIC/CTB/P/039/10 and noted that the Correctional Services Department had written to the CICTA in September 2010 to express its wish to have an Intermediate Trade Testing Workshop for tilers and plasterers set up at its Tong Fuk Correctional Institution.

After discussion, Members agreed to accept the above said request. In order to encourage more inmates to become

SM(ST)

Action

qualified workers by taking trade tests for subsequent entry into the industry, Members also agreed to return the paid test fee of \$150 to those who could pass the intermediate trade tests. However, the concession proposal should be submitted to the Committee on Administration and Finance and the CIC for approval before implementation. Meanwhile, Members advised the management to follow up on the provision of more appropriate training courses to the party concerned.

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4.13 Subsidy scheme for fees of selected trade tests and skills enhancement courses

Members took note of Paper CIC/CTB/P/040/10 and noted the criteria for eligibility for fee subsidy in relation to trade tests, specified training courses and skills enhancement courses below:

| | Trade test | Specified training course | Skills enhancement course |
|----------|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| Criteria | -No. of qualified workers account for less than 60% of the manpower in the industry -more than 50 additional craftsmen are required in the trade -manpower shortage is conceived in the trade | -Enrolment rate is below 30% -the number of registered skilled worker (provisional) exceeds 50 | -trade test passing rate is below 60% |

After consideration, Members agreed to designate 22 trades, 17 trades and 18 trades respectively for trade tests, specified training courses and skills enhancement courses for inclusion in the fee subsidy scheme for workers under

SM(ST)

Action

the ‘Investing In Construction Manpower’ Project based on the above criteria. Members also suggested that the management should follow up on a proposal to provide financial incentives to workers who had been trade tested in one trade to take a trade test or a specified course in another trade so as to encourage industry practitioners to achieve ‘multi-skills’.

SM(ST)

4.14 Proposal on running ‘Skills Enhancement Course on Plumbing for Semi-skilled Workers’

Members took note of Paper CIC/CTB/P/041/10.

After discussion, Members agreed to offer the above course under the ‘Investing In Construction Manpower’ Project. The course objective was to enhance the skill level of workers who had taken an intermediate trade test for plumbers but failed. The course would be composed of three independent modules. A certificate would be awarded upon completion of each module. The class size would be 12. A worker who completed the course would be granted a fixed allowance under the project at a maximum of \$1,000 or an amount equivalent to the fee of the individual module. Meanwhile, Members brought up the policy direction of ‘multi-skills’ once again and advised the management to follow up on measures to motivate workers to enhance craftsmanship through training or acquiring skills in other trades.

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4.15 Any other business

Periodic report on Enhanced Construction Manpower Training Scheme

A Member who represented the Development Bureau raised that the management was requested to submit periodic reports on the progress of the scheme, which should include recruitment, enrolment and placement arrangements upon completion of training, as well as the proposals on boosting enrolment since the above scheme had been launched for several months.

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Action

4.16 Date of next meeting

To be advised.

All to note

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:52 pm.

**CITB Secretariat
December 2010**