

Submission for public hearing in respect of  
establishment of ICT Professional Recognition scheme

Your Honorable Legislative Councilor,

This is Edmand Cheung, Managing Director of Jardine OneSolution (HK) Limited, where I manage the ICT business of Jardine Group in HK with more than 1,400 staff in HK and close to 3,000 staff in the region.

I am glad to be able to attend this hearing to express my view and to answer any questions that you may have.

ICT is now in our everyday life with more and more ICT applications become mission critical systems, failure of which will greatly affect our economy and citizens. At the same time, ability to recruit ICT professionals is getting more and more difficult partly due to lack of professional recognition in the industry which makes it difficult to attract talents to join the industry. This in turn also affects the quality and also speed of implementation for ICT projects in general.

It is with this background that I am supportive of the establishment of an ICT Professional Recognition Scheme in HK.

As a declaration of potential conflict of interest, I would like to declare that I am a member of the Task Force on ICT Professional Development and Recognition. But I am here not because I am a member of this task force but because I am running an ICT business that needs to provide quality services to my clients and for that, the current lack of a generally accepted ICT Professional Recognition scheme is impacting my business.

I understand there was a previous meeting of the Panel of ITB where the proposed scheme has been introduced to the Panel. Hence, I am not going to repeat these.

But I think it would be useful to explain to the Panel what I think this scheme will bring to my business and likely to the overall ICT professions and business in HK.

Firstly, would this scheme bring additional costs to the ICT services providers and employers? My feel is that if we do this right, the costs will and should be increased as we will have to pay higher salary to qualified staff. Is this a bad thing to the business – not necessarily for a few reasons:

1. Without this scheme, will the costs remain low? It will not as basic economic theory suggests that price will increase when supply is lowered. Supply is lower because not many of our children look at ICT education in the University as a good career for them and we don't have enough quality ICT graduates from the

Universities. This is not only a theory but is what we are currently experiencing in our recruitment as there are not enough ICT professionals in the market and their requested salaries are getting higher every quarter.

2. If we hire less experienced or qualified staff, cost per staff may be lower but total costs will not be as we need to factor in more time for training, coaching and also more time for implementation of every project. These are all costs to the business and to the clients. It is likely that these costs will add up to be more than paying higher salary for qualified staff.

Secondly, would the additional costs make ICT services providers and employers more difficult in running their business?

1. As the current scheme is aiming at professional level staff and not all staff, any additional costs will not be very high. And as and when we have more qualified professionals, services quality will improve and time required for implementation of every project will be shorten and this will lower the costs of the business. Hence, in the medium to long term, this will actually makes it easier to run the business.
2. Yes, there will still be ICT services providers that win deals with price and this will be difficult for us and for them as well. But this is happening today and this scheme will not make this worse.

Of course, apart from the impact to my business as one of the key ICT services providers in HK, I think it is also important to recognize the importance of this scheme to the development of the ICT professionals and industry in HK.

A unified recognition scheme will certainly promote professionalism and offer development opportunities for our ICT professionals. Decades ago, I was from the Accountancy profession and I am still a Qualified CPA under the HK Institute of Certified Public Accountants and serve in a committee of HKICPA. I have personal experience to see the benefits of professional recognition and very much want to see ICT profession, which is the career that I have chosen and work for in the last 20 years, could have the same level of recognition by the community and that ICT professions could have the same level of pride as the other professional bodies.

I would urge the Panel members to support this first move to develop the ICT industry in HK.

Thank you.

Edmand Cheung