

立法會
Legislative Council

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Panel on Manpower

**Minutes of policy briefing cum meeting
held on Tuesday, 17 October 2017, at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex**

Members present : Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP (Chairman)
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, GBS, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-kin, SBS, JP
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming, SBS, JP
Hon YIU Si-wing, BBS
Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, BBS, JP
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong, SBS, JP
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, JP
Hon Andrew WAN Siu-kin
Hon CHU Hoi-dick
Hon Jimmy NG Wing-ka, JP
Hon HO Kai-ming
Hon SHIU Ka-fai
Hon SHIU Ka-chun
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
Hon CHAN Chun-ying
Hon LUK Chung-hung
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH
Hon Jeremy TAM Man-ho

- Member attending** : Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
- Members absent** : Hon CHAN Hak-kan, BBS, JP
Hon CHAN Kin-por, GBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP
Hon Kenneth LAU Ip-keung, BBS, MH, JP
- Public Officers attending** : Item III
- Dr LAW Chi-kwong, GBS, JP
Secretary for Labour and Welfare
- Ms CHANG King-yiu, JP
Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare
- Mr Caspar TSUI Ying-wai
Under Secretary for Labour & Welfare
- Mr Carlson CHAN Ka-shun, JP
Commissioner for Labour
- Miss Mabel LI Po-yi, JP
Deputy Commissioner for Labour
(Labour Administration)
- Mr Jeff LEUNG Wing-yan, JP
Deputy Commissioner for Labour
(Occupational Safety and Health)
- Item IV
- Mr Kevin YEUNG Yun-hung, JP
Secretary for Education
- Mr Brian LO Sai-hung, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education (1)
- Ms Elaine MAK Tse-ling
Principal Assistant Secretary
(Further Education)
Education Bureau

Clerk in attendance : Miss Betty MA
Chief Council Secretary (2) 1

Staff in attendance : Ms Rita LAI
Senior Council Secretary (2) 1

Ms Gloria TSANG
Council Secretary (2) 1

Ms Kiwi NG
Legislative Assistant (2) 1

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I. Information paper issued since the last meeting

Members noted that no information paper had been issued since the last meeting.

II. Date of next meeting and items for discussion
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)25/17-18(01) and (02))

Regular meeting in November 2017

2. Members agreed that the following items proposed by the Administration be discussed at the next regular meeting at 4:30 pm on 21 November 2017:

- (a) A proposal to create a Chief Labour Officer post to assist in the various duties in relation to the abolition of the Mandatory Provident Fund offsetting arrangement; and
- (b) Review of the Continuing Education Fund and proposed funding injection.

III. Briefing by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare on the Chief Executive's 2017 Policy Address
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)25/17-18(03), The Chief Executive's 2017 Policy Address and The Chief Executive's 2017 Policy Agenda)

3. At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for Labour and Welfare ("SLW") briefed members on the major new and on-going

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initiatives pertaining to the labour and manpower portfolio undertaken by the Labour and Welfare Bureau ("LWB") and Labour Department ("LD"), as set out in the Chief Executive ("CE")'s 2017 Policy Address and Policy Agenda.

(Post-meeting note: The speaking note of SLW tabled at the meeting was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)78/17-18 on 18 October 2017.)

Improving employment benefits

Statutory paternity leave and maternity leave

4. Dr Elizabeth QUAT said that the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong ("DAB") was in support of the Administration's proposal to increase the number of statutory paternity leave ("PL") days from the current three days to five days, as well as the proposal to embark on a study on extending the statutory 10-week maternity leave ("ML").

5. The Chairman, Ms Alice MAK, Mr HO Kai-ming and Mr LUK Chung-hung strongly called on the Administration to consider increasing the duration of statutory PL days further to seven days, which was of critical importance to promote family-friendly employment practices ("FFEPs"). These members were of the view that the additional cost arising from increasing two days of PL would be affordable by the employers. The Chairman added that the labour sector would be receptive to the proposal of increasing the number of statutory PL from three to five days, on the understanding that the Administration would in tandem advise on the timetable for further increasing the number of statutory PL to seven days. The Chairman also highlighted the provision of more favourable statutory PL and related benefits in various countries/places.

6. SLW said that the Administration fully acknowledged the benefits of statutory PL brought to families of the employees concerned. Commissioner for Labour ("C for L") advised that the Administration had completed the review of the implementation of statutory PL which had come into operation since February 2015, and initially proposed to increase the duration of statutory PL from three days to five days. LD would report the outcome of the review to the Labour Advisory Board ("LAB") and the Panel and consult their respective views by the end of

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2017. SLW and C for L stressed that the Administration reviewed employees' rights and benefits from time to time and would propose gradual improvement to employment benefits, taking into account the interests of both the labour and business sectors.

7. Mr YIU Si-wing expressed concern about difficulties of the micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in manpower deployment if ML was to be extended to beyond 10 weeks. He enquired about the Administration's stance over the suggestion of extending the 10-week ML and whether consultation with the stakeholders would be conducted.

8. Ms Alice MAK said that the Women Affairs Committee of the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions had all along advocated for the extension of the statutory 10-week ML to 14 weeks with full pay. To take forward the proposal, the Administration should consider providing subsidy to employers to meet the additional cost, which would amount to about \$1,000 million and represented only a small percentage of the government recurrent expenses. She further asked about the timetable for the Administration's study on ways to improve the statutory ML.

9. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung expressed grave concern that the Administration's study on ways to improve statutory ML would eventually be fruitless as in the case of the study on standard working hours ("SWH") conducted by the last term Government. Mr LEUNG held the view that the duration of ML should be at least extended to 14 weeks as recommended by the International Labour Organization ("ILO"). Drawing reference to overseas practice in financing the cost of ML, Mr LEUNG considered that the Government should shoulder the cost of additional four-week ML.

10. SLW said that the Administration noted various concerns over extending the duration of statutory ML. It would embark on a study to look into possible ways to improve statutory ML, taking into account the interests of working women and the affordability of enterprises, and would deliberate the subject thoroughly at LAB. Noting that the cost of ML was funded by contributory social insurance schemes in many overseas places, the Administration would also consider whether to provide government subsidy as practised in some places such as Singapore. SLW further said that it was estimated that it would take about three years to prepare the enabling legislation if the extended duration of ML was to be partially funded by the Government.

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Unleashing labour force and addressing labour shortage

Provision of child care services

11. Dr Elizabeth QUAT was of the view that provision of adequate subsidized child care services, in particular after school care services for primary school students, was crucial to releasing female homemakers to join the labour market and alleviating the problem of labour shortage.

12. Sharing a similar view, Ms Alice MAK called on the Administration to strengthen its efforts in promoting employers to adopt FFEPS with a view to helping employees to meet their family commitments, thereby enabling the potential female workforce in the community to take up employment.

13. Mr HO Kai-ming expressed concern about the limited provision of subsidized child care services, in particular full-day standalone Child Care Centres places. Mr HO called on LWB to collaborate with the Education Bureau ("EDB") to explore the feasibility of providing more after school care services for young children so as to release female homemakers, including those in possession of higher educational attainment, to join the labour market.

14. SLW explained that EDB had in the past collaborated with community organizations to launch school-based care services for students after school. However, having regard to the complexities involved and the reduction in the number of participating schools, the provision of child care services had become community-based. SLW further advised that a Consultancy Study on the Long-term Development of Child Care Services was being conducted. The study findings would facilitate the planning work of improving the provision of child care services. In addition, the Social Welfare Department rolled out in October 2017 a three-year Pilot Scheme on Relaxing the Household Income Limit of the Fee-waiving Subsidy Scheme under the After School Care Programme for Low-income Families and Increasing Fee-waiving Subsidy Places. The number of full fee-waiving after school care places would be increased by 2 000.

Manpower shortage for elderly care services

15. In the light of the ageing population and the severe manpower shortage for elderly care services, Dr Elizabeth QUAT expressed support for the Administration's proposal to examine the possibility of importing

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care workers in the subsidized units of elderly and rehabilitation services. Dr QUAT called on the Administration to make reference to the neighbouring countries/places, such as Japan, to formulate specific measures for provision of elderly care services, such as tailor-made training courses for care workers and use of technology in elderly care. Dr QUAT enquired about the Administration's plan in this regard.

16. Drawing reference to the statistics on real wage index in various sectors as compiled by the Census and Statistics Department, Ms Alice MAK said that manpower shortage in the elderly care sector was mainly due to its unfavourable working terms and conditions. To address the problem, the Administration should consider ways to improve the employment benefits of care workers.

17. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed great reservations about the Administration's proposal to import care workers to address the manpower needs for the elderly and rehabilitation services. Dr CHEUNG was also concerned about the malpractices of a number of employment agencies ("EAs"), including overcharging of commission and involvement in "bonded labour" during the placement of foreign domestic helpers ("FDHs") and when arranging local workers and workers from the Mainland to work in the residential care homes for the elderly.

18. SLW responded that similar to other developed countries, it would be unavoidable to consider labour importation to meet the increasing demand for elderly care services and rehabilitation services in the light of the ageing population and continuing decline in birth rate. On the premise that local workers' priority for employment would be safeguarded and initiatives, including improving the remuneration packages and working conditions and environment, would be taken to attract local workers to the elderly care sector, the Administration would explore with the stakeholders the possibility of increasing labour importation on an appropriate and limited scale.

19. The Chairman noted from the terms of reference of the Manpower Development Committee ("MDC") under LWB that it would advise the Government on manpower needs of Hong Kong and policies for developing human resources to meet these needs. He sought information on the number of meetings held by MDC in the past years and its on-going study on manpower requirements as well as recommendations on specific measures to be taken to address the manpower requirements in various trades and industries.

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20. SLW said that the Government would consider aligning the courses offered by the Vocational Training Council ("VTC") with the findings of the "Report on Manpower Projection" compiled by LWB, so that the training and re-training efforts could be more focused on addressing the manpower demand and supply of different sectors. Separately, the Commission for the Planning of Human Resources to be chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration would be set up to formulate and coordinate policies on human resources in a holistic manner. The information requested by the Chairman would be provided after the meeting.

Strengthening support for elderly employment

21. Responding to the Chairman's enquiry about the employment support for elderly job seekers, SLW said that provision of support for elderly employment would help unleash local labour force and affirmed that it was one of the key tasks of LD.

Safeguarding occupational safety and health

22. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan expressed grave concern about the occurrence of a number of serious and fatal industrial accidents in the year. She enquired about the specific measures to be taken by the Administration to safeguard the occupational safety and health ("OSH") in the construction industry.

23. Dr KWOK Ka-ki and Mr HO Kai-ming considered that the penalties for contravention of the OSH legislation were too low to achieve the deterrent effect. Mr HO welcomed the Administration's plan of bringing in higher penalties under the OSH legislation and enquired about the work progress for amending the relevant legislation. Expressing concern about the considerable number of fatalities and injuries in connection with the construction of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge works projects and a recent accident involving hand-dug tunnelling in confined space, Dr KWOK asked about the Administration's work in safeguarding occupational safety of construction workers and preventing recurrence of similar accidents.

24. SLW and C for L advised that having regard to the occurrence of a number of serious and fatal industrial accidents in the year, LD considered that the current penalties for breaching the OSH legislation

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were still too low to reflect the seriousness of the offences and the consequences of the accidents. They did not have sufficient deterrent effect to propel the improvement of OSH performance. LD in consultation with the Department of Justice was conducting a review on the penalty level for non-compliance with the OSH legislation. The Administration had commenced the relevant preparatory work with reference to the penalty levels under similar legislation in other jurisdictions and aimed to come up with a preliminary direction for amending the legislation within 2017. SLW further advised that LD was highly concerned about OSH of tunnelling works, in particular those involving the use of hand-dug method. LD was working with the industry to devise a new set of guidelines on hand-dug tunnelling works which would set out clearly that only under exceptional conditions would hand-dug tunnelling works be allowed and would also specifically require the relevant duty holders to implement more stringent OSH measures. LD aimed to issue the guidelines by end 2017. Moreover, LD would encourage construction workers to lodge complaints concerning unsafe working conditions. This would enable LD to conduct inspections in a more targeted manner. As a first step, LD would soon launch a publicity poster in Chinese, English and six ethnic minority ("EM") languages (namely, Indonesian, Hindi, Nepali, Tagalog, Thai and Urdu) setting out LD's complaint hotline.

25. Mr HO Kai-ming expressed further concern about the rehabilitation services for injured employees, which could facilitate their recovery and return to work as early as possible. Mr HO enquired about the Administration's policy in this regard.

26. C for L said that rehabilitation services for injured employees were amongst the issues being dealt with by a Task Force on Improving Work Injury Protection for Employees in High-risk Industries set up in February 2016 under the coordination of LD. A series of improvement measures had been implemented by the Task Force such as enhanced arrangements for medical clearance and work injury assessment, and provision of training on occupational medicine and work injury assessment for medical staff of the Hospital Authority. Apart from receiving a range of integrated services under the public healthcare system, injured employees were provided with an additional channel to receive free rehabilitation services in the private sector under the Voluntary Rehabilitation Programme launched by the insurance industry to facilitate their speedy recovery and early return to work.

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Abolishing the "offsetting" arrangement under the Mandatory Provident Fund system

27. Mr YIU Si-wing noted that the Government was willing to enhance its financial commitment to providing financial subsidy for employers to alleviate the impact of abolishing the "offsetting" arrangement under the Mandatory Provident Fund ("MPF") system on their businesses. He enquired how the Administration would address the employers' concern about their inability to meet their potential severance payment ("SP") or long service payment ("LSP") obligations as they came due.

28. Mr LUK Chung-hung sought information on the details of the legislative proposal for abolishing the "offsetting" arrangement. Mr LUK held the view that the existing entitlement of two-thirds of employees' last month's wages in respect of the amount of SP/LSP payable for the employment period should be maintained.

29. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung was concerned about whether and how the Administration would consult the stakeholders prior to finalizing the legislative proposal for the abolition of the "offsetting" arrangement.

30. SLW said that the Government was now considering the option of developing a mechanism to assist employers, in particular those from the micro, small and medium-sized establishments, to save up a dedicated reserve in advance to meet their potential SP or LSP obligations in future. The Administration hoped to come up with an enhanced proposal in the coming months to abolish the "offsetting" arrangement that would take account of the interests of both the business and labour sectors so as to preserve the function of MPF as a key pillar of retirement protection.

Employment of foreign domestic helpers

31. Dr Elizabeth QUAT said that while it was imperative to safeguard employees' rights and benefits of FDHs, it was equally important for the Administration to address the job-hopping problem of FDHs so as to protect the rights of FDH employers. Expressing a similar concern, Mr Michael TIEN proposed the introduction of a probation period for newly-recruited FDHs and that payment of intermediary fees to EAs be settled by instalments and be subject to FDHs' satisfactory completion of the probation period.

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32. SLW said that the Administration was committed to striking a balance between protecting the employees' rights and entitlements of FDHs and the interest of FDH employers in the formulation of policies relating to employment of FDHs. C for L added that according to the existing immigration requirements, FDHs who had prematurely terminated their contracts had to return to their places of origin before submitting fresh employment visa applications. The Immigration Department ("ImmD") had been processing FDHs' employment visa applications with great care. It had strengthened measures to closely scrutinize applications suspected of job-hopping. In assessing the applications, ImmD would examine the frequency and reasons of premature termination of contracts. As a matter of fact, ImmD had refused a number of employment visa applications from FDHs whose employment contracts were prematurely terminated.

Alignment of statutory holidays with general holidays

33. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan said that DAB had been striving for the alignment of the number of statutory holidays ("SHs") with general holidays ("GHs"). Dr CHIANG considered it essential to align the leave entitlements of all employees in a bid to promote a family-friendly culture in employment.

34. Ms Alice MAK considered that all employees should enjoy same leave entitlements and called on the Administration to expedite the alignment of the number of SHs with GHs.

35. In response, SLW said that the Administration was fully aware of the labour sector's concerns over the subject, while it had to deal with other more prioritized tasks. It was also noteworthy that some employers had been providing their employees with holiday benefits which were more favourable than the statutory requirements.

Continuing Education Fund

36. Noting the Administration's proposal of injecting an additional \$1.5 billion into the Continuing Education Fund ("CEF"), Dr CHIANG Lai-wan asked whether the Administration would consider raising the subsidy ceiling per eligible applicant from \$10,000 to, say \$20,000, and expanding the scope of CEF courses.

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37. SLW said that the suggestions had been covered by the review of CEF being conducted. The Administration would revert to the Panel on the review findings in the November meeting.

Working hours policy

38. Dr KWOK Ka-ki and Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed grave concern that Hong Kong almost topped all countries/places in terms of total weekly working hours and that the subject of SWH was not covered in the CE's 2017 Policy Address. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung and Mr LUK Chung-hung shared similar concerns. Mr LUK asked whether the Administration regarded the long working hours situation in various trades and industries in Hong Kong and overtime work without compensation were issues that had to be attended to. Referring to a recent serious bus accident involving a number of fatalities and injuries, Dr KWOK Ka-ki considered that the occurrence of the accident was largely due to the long working hours of the bus driver concerned. Dr KWOK enquired how the current-term Government would follow up on the subject of SWH, in particular whether consideration would be given to legislating for SWH.

39. SLW said that the current-term Government did not have any plan to legislate for SWH. Acknowledging the problems associated with the long working hours situation in various trades and industries in Hong Kong, the Administration would follow up on the proposals of the last-term Government. LD would commence the formulation of sector-specific working hours guidelines for certain industries to provide guidance on suggested working hours arrangements, overtime compensation methods and good working hours management measures, etc., for reference and adoption by employers and employees.

40. Dr KWOK Ka-ki and Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed regrets about the Administration's reluctance to legislate for SWH, which in their view, was crucial to maintaining employees' work-life balance. Dr CHEUNG cast doubt about the effectiveness of the sector-specific working hours guidelines to be formulated.

Review of the Work Incentive Transport Subsidy Scheme

41. Mr Michael TIEN considered that the Administration should review the modes of subsidy under the Work Incentive Transport Subsidy ("WITS") Scheme. Notably, the Administration should make reference

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to the use of personalized Octopus under the Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities and provide low-income earners with concessionary fare for work-related trips so as to encourage them to work across districts.

42. SLW advised that upon the implementation of the enhancements to the Low-income Working Family Allowance Scheme (which would be renamed as the Working Family Allowance ("WFA") Scheme), the WFA Scheme would basically cover the household-based applicants for WITS and the household-based WITS would thus be abolished when implementing the enhancements. The way forward for the individual-based WITS would be considered in the light of the implementation of the WFA Scheme and the proposed Public Transport Fare Subsidy Scheme as announced in the CE's 2017 Policy Address.

Collective bargaining

43. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung expressed disappointment that the subject of collective bargaining was not covered in the CE's 2017 Policy Address. Given that employees' rights and benefits had not been adequately protected over the years because of lack of right to collective bargaining, the Administration should consider commencing the discussion on the way forward of the right to collective bargaining.

IV. Briefing by the Secretary for Education on the Chief Executive's 2017 Policy Address

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)25/17-18(04), The Chief Executive's 2017 Policy Address and The Chief Executive's 2017 Policy Agenda)

44. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Secretary for Education ("SED") briefed members on the major development of the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework ("HKQF") in 2017, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper.

(Post-meeting note: The speaking note of SED tabled at the meeting was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)78/17-18 on 18 October 2017.)

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Development of Hong Kong Qualifications Framework

45. Citing that specific skills and knowledge were required in different functional areas of the production process in the fashion industry, Mr Michael TIEN said that provision of innovative, integrated and quality assured training programmes for recognition under HKQF would enable young practitioners to make career progression and move upward in the industry. To this end, Mr TIEN was of the view that EDB, Commerce and Economic Development Bureau and Innovation and Technology Bureau should work collaboratively to ensure the quality and standards of HKQF-recognized programmes for different trades and industries, and thereby enhancing the professionalism and competitiveness of the industries. Mr TIEN enquired which government bureau would spearhead to take forward the relevant work and how it would be proceeded with.

46. SED advised that the Industry Training Advisory Committee ("ITAC") for the fashion industry was one of the 21 ITACs set up for 22 industries/sector. As a platform for stakeholders to put HKQF into implementation and to exchange views on the training needs and manpower development for the industry, the Fashion ITAC was drawing up the Specification of Competency Standards ("SCSs") for the industry and would also consider implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning ("RPL") mechanism in the industry for recognition of the relevant experience and competence acquired by practitioners at the workplace. It would correspondingly enable training institutions and course operators to design training courses to meet the needs of the industry. SED further advised that various government bureaux/departments would work collaboratively on the promotion and development of different trades and industries.

47. Mr Michael TIEN said that in addition to conventional schooling, vocational education should also be provided for young people based on their interest and aspirations. SED responded that there were different programmes organized by VTC, for instance, the Pilot Training and Support Scheme, which integrated structured vocational education and on-the-job training with clear career progression pathways for specific industries. SED stressed that industry participation in the implementation of HKQF was imperative. The Administration would work closely with the industry stakeholders for the development of HKQF to meet the training needs and manpower development of individual industries.

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48. Mr YIU Si-wing said that to his knowledge, a new ITAC for the travel industry was expected to be established in the fourth quarter of 2017. Expressing appreciation of the support provided by the Qualifications Framework Secretariat ("QFS"), Mr YIU asked about the lead time for implementation of QF in the travel industry after the setting up of the relevant ITAC. As the travel industry comprised inbound and outbound tourism as well as local tourism, Mr YIU said that different levels of qualifications, such as different categories of tourist guides, should be introduced for the industry practitioners according to their skills. He sought information on the support from QFS in this regard.

49. SED advised that upon establishment of an ITAC for the travel industry by end of 2017, its primary task was to draw up SCSs in respect of key functional areas of the industry. Given that the implementation of HKQF and setting up of ITAC for individual industries were industry-led, the actual implementation of HKQF in the travel industry would hinge on the consensus to be reached among the industry stakeholders in respect of the skills, knowledge and outcome standards required of employees in different functional areas of the respective sectors. While QFS could provide information on the implementation of HKQF in other industries for reference, the drawing up of the specific SCSs for the travel industry relied on industry stakeholders who had first-hand experience in the industry.

50. Mr YIU Si-wing said that apart from the industry practitioners, certain experts in areas of ecology, culture and heritage conservation had been assisting in the development of local tourism. He asked whether the Administration would consider engaging these experts in drawing up SCSs for the travel industry.

51. Deputy Secretary for Education stressed that the implementation of HKQF in individual industries was industry-led. QFS was committed to working closely with various ITACs and assisting the industries in drawing up SCSs and developing the RPL mechanism in a flexible manner, having regard to the different operation and circumstances of individual industries.

52. Mr Frankie YICK said that in the light of his experience in assisting in the setting up of QF for marine operations, the implementation of QF for the industry had helped address the recruitment difficulties for ferry services. He appealed to other trades and industries to be proactive in implementing HKQF.

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53. The Chairman pointed out that some EM job seekers encountered difficulties in finding elementary employment because of lacking proficiency in Cantonese. He enquired whether HKQF qualifications could be extended to cover the general language proficiency or skills of individual job seekers.

54. SED said that the implementation of HKQF in various trades and industries was to make available comprehensive learning pathways for the industry practitioners and to facilitate sustainable development. While the QF-recognized qualifications would give due recognition to the skills and experience acquired by practitioners at the workplace of relevant industries, it would be for individual employers to decide whether job seekers holding relevant QF-recognized qualifications were considered suitable for the jobs.

55. The Chairman expressed the view that the Administration should formulate policy facilitating and encouraging employees to pursue further education and training for the purpose of obtaining higher levels of qualifications under HKQF. Notably, the Administration should consider introducing in-service paid study leave to employees to attend QF-recognized courses.

Proposed injection to Qualifications Framework Fund

56. Members noted the Administration's plan to submit the funding proposal to the Finance Committee ("FC") for injecting \$1.2 billion into the QF Fund so as to continue implementing the relevant initiatives.

57. The Chairman and Mr YIU Si-wing were in support of the Administration's plan to inject \$1.2 billion into the QF Fund so as to continue promoting lifelong learning and supporting the manpower need of Hong Kong. Mr YIU asked whether the Administration would make use of the additional injection to provide financial incentive for the industry practitioners to obtain formal recognition of their skills and knowledge under the RPL mechanism. Mr Michael TIEN enquired how the QF Fund could facilitate the career development of industry practitioners.

58. Mr Frankie YICK expressed support for the Administration's proposal to inject \$1.2 billion into the QF Fund which would facilitate implementation of HKQF in various trades and industries.

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59. SED explained that having regard to the estimated funding shortfall in the coming few years and the Government's commitment to support the sustainable development and implementation of HKQF, the Administration proposed to inject \$1.2 billion into the QF Fund. The QF Fund aimed to support schemes and initiatives for the sustainable development and implementation of HKQF. At present, industry practitioners who had successfully completed RPL assessments could apply for reimbursement of 75% of the assessment fees, while the remaining 25% of RPL assessment fees would be reimbursed upon completion of a QF-recognized programme.

60. In concluding the discussion, the Chairman said that members had raised no objection in principle to the proposed injection to the QF Fund and its submission to FC for consideration.

61. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:20 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
20 November 2017