

Chapter 4 Key Objectives (I)

**Strengthen research
Fortify recognition**

**Expand networks
Promote employment**

- ◆ *Strengthen research, set up a human resources database*
- ◆ *Reinforce liaison and communication with employers and all stakeholders*
- ◆ *Promote skills assessment and professional certification to fortify recognition*

- 4.1 The ERB has been adopting the “market-driven” and “user-based” approaches in our operations. With our continuous efforts in improving the quality of our training courses, the placement rate of our graduates has been satisfactory and feedback from employers has been generally positive. Both the Board and our training bodies have been working hard to promote the ERS to enterprises and to persuade employers to take on mature staff with low qualifications. Over the years, we have built up an extensive network of employers. The reputable “Integrated Scheme for Local Domestic Helpers” initiated and developed by the ERB since 2002 is one of the success stories of the ERS.
- 4.2 With its new role, the Board expects to expand its services to include not only the unemployed at middle-age and with low education, but also the in-service workers with higher qualifications up to the sub-degree level. The primary training objective is still placement-oriented, but there will be new foci on skills upgrading and self-improvement. We aim to re-energise the local work-force and assist in elevating its overall quality so that we can ride on any economic structural changes.
- 4.3 To realize these goals, it is important to keep our training programmes abreast of the market needs and changes. The Executive Office would strengthen its market research and carry out forward looking analyses so that training could be developed aptly to match the needs of the market. To this end, closer ties and consultations with various stakeholders will be necessary for

collecting views and information for course design. The Executive Office also plans to work closely with the business sector, especially the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and social enterprises, to better identify their manpower and training needs in order to provide the required pre-employment training as well as in-service skills enhancement training.

- 4.4 Professionalization of skills marks the development and maturity of a knowledge-based economy, as well as the competitiveness of our work-force amid the global and regional competitions. Therefore, the ERB endeavours to promote standardized assessments and explore skill and professional certification schemes for improving the employability and professionalism of our trainees.

(I) Strengthen research, set up a human resources database

- 4.5 To promote the recognition of our courses and to support our expanded scope of work, the Executive Office will conduct regular researches and studies on the labour market and manpower supply in order to assist the Board to formulate a comprehensive training strategy. Through internet-based trainee enrolment, the Board records trainees' education attainment, training received and work experience. Over time, the aggregate data collected will provide useful information for analyzing our manpower mobility, as well as for refining and reviewing our training plans regularly.
- 4.6 To help trainees devise their individual learning plan and strengthen the support for life-long learning, we propose to set up an online learning platform. Besides reviewing their training records, trainees can also access the latest training and employment information via the platform. For continuous improvement, the Executive Office also plans to conduct longitudinal studies on trainees as one of the means to assess the effectiveness of our services.
- 4.7 Moreover, we shall conduct surveys on service targets of different age groups so that more diversified training can be developed to meet their specific training and employment needs. For example, we shall collaborate with relevant social services organizations to

identify the career aspirations, vocational skills required to be trained and availability of employment opportunities, etc. for the youth, middle-aged, and the elderly, etc.

- 4.8 The Government conducts manpower projections at the macro level on a regular basis. At the same time, the Vocational Training Council (VTC) also conducts manpower surveys with focus on the manpower demand and supply of individual industries. So far, these surveys cover 25 industries/sectors and provide input to the relevant training providers for the development and design of training courses to meet the needs of the respective industries.
- 4.9 In view of this, the Board will regularly collect and analyse manpower, employment and training information published by the Government, VTC, the Hong Kong Institute of Human Resource Management, and other local and overseas organizations in order to identify job types with employment opportunities in both Hong Kong and the Mainland for course development. When formulating our training strategies, the latest development in government policies (including those on labour, human resource development, social welfare, employment and alleviation of poverty, etc.) will be carefully observed to ensure alignment. The Exchange Forum on the ERB website will also be enhanced to effectively collect more diverse views.
- 4.10 Apart from research at the macro level, at the micro level, the Board recommends to launch in 2009-10 an Organisational Human Resources Health Check Scheme by commissioning professional organizations to conduct analysis on the manpower training needs for SMEs and social enterprises. In collaboration with the employers, we can provide the necessary training to upgrade the quality and productivity of their employees. With such joint efforts, we hope that the competitiveness of the enterprises and Hong Kong will be improved.

(II) Reinforce liaison and communication with employers and all stakeholders

- 4.11 Employers' participation and acceptance of our graduates are keys to the success of our training. It is thus pertinent and vital that we establish and maintain close partnership with employers of different sectors. The Board will fortify communication with employer and trade associations and professional bodies, and introduce to them our new role, functions and the latest development of our services. We shall also invite them to contribute their valuable opinions and help us disseminate relevant information to their members so that our services would be fully comprehended and utilized by employers. Through this, we shall have a better grasp of the latest information on manpower and training needs of the different trades. With the setting up of the Industry Consultative Networks (please refer to Chapter 6 for details), there will be more proactive involvement of stakeholders in the design of training courses, making our training better meeting the market needs.
- 4.12 In this information age, the ERB will actively promote its expanded services and latest development through multiple communication channels to employers, trade associations, government departments and professional bodies, etc. Moreover, different promotional campaigns will be launched to establish contacts with all relevant target groups.
- 4.13 Riding on the wave of globalisation, there is an upsurge of "Regional Economies" to combat the threat of other economic unions. To sustain its economic development amidst competition, Hong Kong should develop itself to become a 'Headquarters Economy'. In performing a core role in the regional economic union, the demand for Hong Kong's manpower will be increased. So we shall reinforce our communication with relevant government bureaux, departments and organisations, making it known to overseas corporations and Mainland enterprises that the ERB could assist in recruitment and training of staff (within our target groups) if they plan to set up offices or production centres in Hong Kong. This will promote the development of "Headquarters Economy" in Hong

Kong, and naturally lead to more job opportunities for our labour force.

(III) Promote skills assessment and professional certification to fortify recognition

- 4.14 To monitor the quality of training and promote standardization of training courses in order to increase their credibility such that employers have more confidence in the skill standards of our graduates, the ERB set up the Practical Skills Training and Assessment Centre (the “PSTAC”) in October 2002 to oversee and administer standardized skill assessments.
- 4.15 To boost the recognition of our healthcare massage courses and assist graduates to seek employment in the Mainland, the ERB, with the support from the HKSAR Government and the Department of Labour and Social Security of Guangdong Province, signed an agreement with the Occupational Skill Testing Authority of Guangdong Province in May 2007 to launch the National Occupational Qualification Skill Test and Certification for graduates of our Healthcare Massage courses on a pilot basis. With experience gained from this pilot scheme, assessment and certification will be expanded to other areas to meet the needs of the market and our trainees.
- 4.16 The National Occupational Qualification Skill Test and Certification represents an important reference for Mainland employers in recruitment and is important for Hong Kong workers seeking jobs in the Mainland. The skill standards and working experience required for each level are prescribed according to National standards and the assessments are conducted in recognized skill assessment centres. Those who pass the assessment will be awarded a National Occupational Qualification Certificate. These certificates are major vocational qualifications in the Mainland and are regarded as prerequisite for employment. Acquiring the National Occupational Qualification Certificate is necessary and would impart greater credibility for individuals wishing to work or start a business in the

Mainland. There are altogether 5 levels of certificates: Elementary, Intermediate, Advanced, Technician and Senior Technician.

- 4.17 **A through-train services encompassing training, assessment and certification** - In order to help the elementary workers to upgrade their skills and encourage them to attain qualifications, to boost their confidence and expand their employment horizons, and to increase their job prospects in the Mainland, we plan to offer through-train services encompassing training, assessment and certification for certain trade tests (e.g. health masseur, chef, room attendant, beautician, etc.) of the National Occupational Qualification Skill Test and Certification (Elementary and Intermediate Levels only). This will be helpful to those trainees who intend to work in the Mainland.
- 4.18 Subject to future demand, we shall expand our service to other trade tests of the National Occupational Qualification Skill Test and Certification, as well as tests of higher levels when we have accumulated adequate experience. Details of development will be subject to further discussion with the Occupational Skill Testing Authority of Guangdong Province. For tests of higher levels, individuals are expected to shoulder part of the costs which should be considered as personal investment in self-improvement.
- 4.19 In keeping with Hong Kong's position as an international financial, trade, logistics, travel and information centres, we shall strengthen cooperation with these industries and help those among our target groups who are interested in entering the trades to do so through our training schemes and passing of the professional certification examinations.
- 4.20 In view of the relatively high costs of these examinations and relevant training programmes, and the favourable returns obtained by trainees accordingly, it is suggested that part of the training costs should be borne by the trainees and/or their employers. The trainees and/or their employers should also be responsible for paying the examination fees.