

LCQ1: Manpower development of and professional recognition for information technology industry

Following is a question by the Hon Charles Mok and a written reply by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Nicholas W Yang, in the Legislative Council today (May 15):

Question:

Some practitioners of the information technology (IT) industry (including the communications industry) have relayed that the ever-evolving technological development makes it necessary for them to pursue continuing education through multiple pathways in order to stay competitive. They hope that their professional status can enjoy a higher recognition and their advancement paths can be clearer. In 2015, the Task Force on Information and Communications Technology Professional Development and Recognition (the Task Force) established under the Digital 21 Strategy Advisory Committee published a report (the report), putting forward recommendations on the establishment of a unified framework for IT professional recognition (the unified framework). However, the Task Force opined that as members of the industry had not reached a consensus on the implementation details, it would be difficult to implement the unified framework right away. Regarding the manpower development of and the enhancement of practitioners' professional status in the IT industry, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) with regard to the five recommendations made by the Task Force in the report for facilitating various stakeholders in reaching a consensus on the establishment of the unified framework, of the work progress made by the Government in following up such recommendations;

(2) whether it will, in the light of the recommendations of the report, formulate afresh a long-term plan for the manpower development of the IT industry, with a view to enhancing the recognition for and professional status of the practitioners; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it will follow up the matters relating to the establishment of the unified framework, including:

(i) enhancing the proposed framework put forward by the Task Force by drawing reference from international practices and consulting afresh the practitioners in the industry in this regard; if so, of the work schedule (including the target time for completion of the relevant work);

(ii) exploring ways to introduce flexibility to the unified framework to dovetail with the changes in the market's demand for IT professional skills

and to encompass novel modes of continuing education so as to ensure that the framework can keep abreast of the time; and

(iii) consulting the business sector afresh on the unified framework, and launching mitigation measures to assist small and medium enterprises in coping with the issue of increase in operating costs that might arise from the unified framework?

Reply:

President,

A consolidated reply to the three-part-question is set out below.

The Task Force on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Professional Development and Recognition (Task Force) under the then Digital 21 Strategy Advisory Committee was set up by the Government in 2012 to conduct research on establishing a unified professional recognition framework for local ICT professionals (the Proposed Framework). In its report released in September 2015, the Task Force pointed out that as the industry and public had not reached a general consensus on the relevant issues of the Proposed Framework, including the credibility and transparency of the awarding body of the Proposed Framework, impact of the Proposed Framework on the operating costs of small and medium-sized enterprises, whether the introduction of the Proposed Framework would dampen innovation and creativity, and raise the entry barrier for pursuing a career in ICT, etc., it would be very difficult to implement the Proposed Framework. Nowadays, with the rapid development of ICT, the qualification requirements of ICT practitioners in the industry keep evolving with the emergence of new technologies. This adds to the difficulty in setting up a unified professional recognition framework. As such, the Government currently does not have any plan to further follow up on the establishment of a unified professional recognition framework nor to consult stakeholders again on this subject.

In the past few years, the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) together with relevant government departments and organisations have implemented numerous measures to nurture ICT talent in the industry with reference to recommendations of the report and the latest development of information technology (IT) and the Internet economy, details of which are elaborated below:

(a) setting up the "Student IT Corner" website to provide students and parents with IT-related information;

(b) setting up the "IT Career Role Models Platform" to provide students with information on IT positions and career prospects in different industries;

(c) organising the annual Hong Kong ICT Awards and establishing the award categories of Startup Award and Student Innovation Award to recognise local start-ups and outstanding ICT inventions and applications made by students;

(d) implementing the Enriched IT Programme in Secondary Schools to provide funding support for secondary schools to organise various types of IT activities to create more opportunities for students to learn about IT outside the school curriculum with an aim to fostering an IT learning atmosphere in schools and cultivating students' interest in IT;

(e) the OGCIO collaborates with the industry and professional bodies to organise conferences, thematic seminars and workshops to promote professional accreditation in information security and enhance IT practitioners' knowledge and skills in information security;

(f) the Cyberport organises the Digital Tech Internship Programme to subsidise and arrange local university students to take up internships in renowned overseas, Mainland and local enterprises or start-ups;

(g) the School of Professional and Continuing Education of The University of Hong Kong (HKU SPACE) launched in 2018 the first part-time Diploma in eSports Science programme at Level 3 under the Qualifications Framework. The Open University of Hong Kong and HKU SPACE will launch an e-sports-related Bachelor programme and a full-time Higher Diploma programme in September 2019 respectively;

(h) the Innovation and Technology Commission launched the Reindustrialisation and Technology Training Programme in August 2018 to subsidise local enterprises on a 2:1 matching basis for their staff to receive technology training covering different technology areas including IT; and

(i) planning to launch the IT Innovation Lab in Secondary Schools initiative to provide a maximum funding of \$1 million to each publicly-funded secondary school in Hong Kong in the three school years from 2019/20 to 2021/22 for procuring IT equipment and organising IT-related extra-curricular activities.