

LCQ19: Qualifications Framework

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Chun-ying and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (December 11):

Question:

The Qualifications Framework (QF), launched in 2008 by the Education Bureau (EDB), defines clear and objective standards applicable to the qualifications in the academic, vocational and professional as well as continuing education sectors. To dovetail with the implementation of QF, EDB has set up 22 Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs) which are tasked with drawing up the Specification of Competency Standards (SCSs) for the relevant sectors. SCSs set out the skills, knowledge and outcome standards required of employees in different functional areas in order to assist in the formulation of training programmes to enable employees to obtain recognition under QF. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it is learnt that ITAC of the retail banking industry has received the assistance of The Hong Kong Institute of Bankers in drawing up its SCSs, whether the Government knows if ITACs of other industries have also received the assistance from the professional bodies and related organisations of the relevant sectors in drawing up their respective SCSs; if it knows, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) given that EDB signed in June this year a Letter of Intent on Qualifications Framework Co-operation between Hong Kong and Guangdong with the Department of Education of the Guangdong Province to strengthen the collaboration on QF between the two places, and that Hong Kong and Guangdong will set up a working group to develop a mechanism for co-operation, communication and coordination, of the details of the relevant work and the progress made so far; and

(3) given that EDB has completed the referencing/comparability projects of Hong Kong's QF with the QFs of a number of regions (such as Europe, Scotland, Ireland and New Zealand), whether the Government has drawn up a work plan and timetable for the co-operation in QF between Hong Kong and the Mainland?

Reply:

President,

Our reply to the Hon Chan's question is as follows:

(1) We have set up 22 Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs), which provide a platform for stakeholders to implement the Qualifications Framework (QF) and to exchange views on the training needs and manpower developments of industries. The ITACs comprise representatives from employers, employees,

trade associations, professional bodies, and trade unions of the industries to ensure that different stakeholders can participate in the implementation of the QF.

When the ITACs draw up the Specification of Competency Standards (SCS), their members who represent different sectors of the industries will participate in the work. During the process, the ITACs will also consult different stakeholders of the industries (including relevant professional bodies) to ensure that the SCS so drawn up meet the needs of the industries. For example, the Arboriculture and Horticulture (A&H) ITAC just published the SCS for the industry this month, and the ITAC members representing the trade associations, professional bodies, and trade unions, etc. participated in the drawing up of the SCS. Moreover, that ITAC consulted the industry on the draft SCS in July and August this year, and invited representatives from the trade associations, professional bodies, trade unions, and training providers, etc. to attend the consultation session and listened to their views.

(2) and (3) The intention to develop the nation's QF was announced in the National 13th Five-Year Plan in 2016. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government is committed to playing an active role during the setting up of the nation's QF.

Over the years, the Education Bureau (EDB) and the QF Secretariat have shared our experience of developing and implementing the QF with various organisations and parties on the Mainland. We have also been in close liaison with the Mainland authorities to facilitate qualifications recognition in different industries. In 2011, the QF Secretariat signed a letter of intent with the Guangdong Occupational Skill Testing Authority (OSTA) and set up a working group to explore the development of common vocational competency standards and mutual recognition of vocational qualifications.

At present, the Vocational Training Council (VTC) and the OSTA conduct examinations on the occupational skills of the electrical maintenance industry, and actively promote the development of "One Examination, Multiple Certification" arrangement for the beauty and hairdressing industries. Under the arrangement, candidates need to pass one common examination for them to have their qualifications recognised by Hong Kong, the Mainland, and international professional organisations. Moreover, for the Chinese catering industry, the Chinese Culinary Institute under the VTC and the OSTA jointly administer the assessment under the "One Trade Test, Two Certificates" arrangement. Under this arrangement, candidates who pass written tests of both the VTC and the National Occupational Qualification, together with a common practical assessment, may have their qualifications recognised in Hong Kong and the Mainland.

The planning and development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area provide more opportunities for the HKSAR Government to explore with the Guangdong Province the feasible approaches and options in the recognition of qualifications. As stated in the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area promulgated by the Central

Government in February 2019, the higher education institutions of Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao are encouraged to explore the mutual recognition of academic credits of specified courses. In May 2019, the HKSAR Government and the Guangdong Provincial Government signed the 2019 Work Plan of the Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation to follow up on, among others, the initiative of encouraging the higher education institutions of Guangdong and Hong Kong to explore the mutual recognition of academic credits of specified courses. In June this year, the EDB also signed the Letter of Intent on Qualifications Framework Co-operation between Guangdong and Hong Kong with the Department of Education of the Guangdong Province. The letter of intent covers the co-operation in the QF between Guangdong and Hong Kong, the exploration of mutual recognition of credits in different categories of education and training in the Greater Bay Area, and the promotion of talent exchange in the Greater Bay Area. The EDB, the QF Secretariat, and the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications will continue to co-operate with the relevant authorities in the Guangdong Province to foster collaboration between the two places on the QF and to facilitate qualifications recognition in more industries.