

LCQ4: Attracting skilled talents

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Ngan Man-yu and a reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (June 14):

Question:

There are views pointing out that as holding a university degree is the minimum threshold for various talent admission schemes in Hong Kong at present, students who come to Hong Kong for study generally will not choose to enrol in vocational education programmes at non-degree level, and such a situation is not conducive to attracting skilled talents to Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of non-local students enrolling in vocational education programmes offered by various higher education institutions in each of the past three years, with a breakdown by the type of skills involved in the programmes; the measures put in place by the authorities to encourage non-local students to enrol in vocational education programmes in Hong Kong;

(2) whether it will allow non-local students who have completed associate degree programmes in vocational education in institutions offering vocational education in Hong Kong (including the Vocational Training Council, corporate academies and schools of professional and continuing education of various institutions) to apply to work in Hong Kong without securing an employment, regardless of whether they have completed the relevant programmes on local campuses or branch campuses on the Mainland; and

(3) of the measures in place to ensure the work quality and professional qualifications of non-local students who have completed the aforesaid vocational education programmes when they join the local labour market, including whether it will promote the joint exploration and deepening of the training system for skilled talents by institutions offering vocational education locally and in the Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area?

Reply:

President,

The core mission of education is cultivating values and nurturing people, nurturing talents who are able and virtuous for society. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government has been adopting the policy of supporting the parallel development of the traditional academic and Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET) pathways, and promoting VPET at different levels through the strategy of fostering industry-institution collaboration and diversified development under a multi-pronged approach, with a view to providing diversified learning and

employment opportunities for young people to develop and flourish. On grooming talents for Hong Kong's development, the Chief Executive set out a clear direction in his 2022 Policy Address, and relevant bureaux have been listening to the views of the relevant sectors and put forward solutions having regard to the situation of different industries. Looking ahead, each bureau will commence a new round of manpower projection to help the Government formulate appropriate strategies to address the overall manpower needs.

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

(1) VPET covers programmes up to degree level, among which many are specialised programmes on vocational skills or professional knowledge. Different post-secondary programmes may include VPET and generic learning elements, and hence the Education Bureau (EDB) does not keep complete information on the number of students pursuing VPET programmes. Nevertheless, the Vocational Training Council (VTC), as the largest VPET provider in Hong Kong, is committed to offering quality VPET programmes for both local and non-local students. According to the information provided by the VTC, the numbers of non-local students of post-secondary programmes (i.e. degree and Higher Diploma (HD) programmes) from the 2020/21 to 2022/23 academic years are 79, 65 and 86 respectively.

As regards HD programmes, which is a sub-degree qualification that has stronger applied and VPET elements, according to the information provided by different institutions to the EDB, the numbers of non-local students of full-time locally-accredited HD programmes from the 2020/21 to 2022/23 academic years are 362, 310 and 381 respectively. The breakdown by institutions is set out at Annex for reference. The EDB will continue to support and encourage institutions to recruit non-local students and attract talents for Hong Kong in accordance with the established mechanism in the future, and will review the relevant policies as appropriate to address the needs for the development of our talents and society.

(2) The Government has all along been listening to the different views from different sectors on how Hong Kong should address the manpower needs with an open mind, and has conducted in-depth analyses, so as to pursue the policy direction put forward by the Chief Executive in his 2022 Policy Address. We will continue to proactively discuss and study the matter with the relevant policy bureaux and departments and conduct planning in a holistic manner, thereby addressing society's needs appropriately.

(3) To assure the quality of different VPET programmes, the HKSAR Government has put in place a mechanism as a safeguard, and defined through the Generic Level Descriptors (GLD) clear and objective standards and levels in four domains, i.e. Knowledge and Intellectual Skills; Processes; Autonomy and Accountability; and Communication, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Numeracy. As the statutory accreditation authority and Qualifications Register authority, the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) assures that QF-recognised programmes meet the outcome standards of the corresponding QF Level. The

learning outcomes of VPET programmes recognised under the QF can all meet the corresponding objective standards in the GLD. Taking HD programmes as an example, their graduates should meet the standards of QF Level 4, which are:

- in terms of Knowledge and Intellectual Skills, demonstrate and work with a broad knowledge base with some specialised knowledge and skills; and to evaluate information;
- in terms of Processes, perform skilled tasks; conduct routine data collection and analysis; as well as plan, select or present information, methods or resources;
- in terms of Autonomy and Accountability, undertake self-directed and some supervisory activities, as well as work contributing to group performance; and
- in terms of Communication, ICT and Numeracy, organise and synthesise information to convey complex ideas, as well as using ICT and data to measure progress.

We also specify, among other requirements, the learning outcomes, curriculum, and exit qualifications of HD programmes through the Common Descriptors for Associate Degree and Higher Diploma Programmes (Common Descriptors), as well as the requirement to undergo accreditation to ensure the quality of HD programmes. This year, we concluded the Review of Sub-degree Education and updated the Common Descriptors which will come into effect in the 2024/25 academic year, unequivocally spelling out the requirements regarding HD education.

On the other hand, the VTC has been maintaining close communication and co-operation with the Government and the industries to understand the latest situation of Hong Kong's manpower market and job market, enabling it to develop and enhance its VPET programmes and ensuring its programmes can keep pace with the times and address the actual needs of society and the industries. With the support of the governments of the two places, the VTC and the Shenzhen Polytechnic signed a collaborative framework agreement in 2020 to pursue further collaboration in areas including offering joint programmes, providing workplace attachment and training and exchange opportunities, and research and development. In 2021, they signed an agreement on further collaboration to further pursue organising joint programmes and workplace attachment and training, so as to jointly cultivate talents. There are eight programmes jointly organised by the two parties that have successfully passed the accreditation of the HKCAAVQ and are recognised under the QF. The VTC will continue to expand its Mainland network

proactively in the future.

Thank you, President.