

LCQ12: Labour supply for Hong Kong hotel industry

Following is a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mrs Rita Lau, to a question by the Hon Paul Tse in the Legislative Council today (April 28):

Question:

Some members of the hotel industry have recently relayed to me that they find it difficult to recruit hotel services workers who meet the required standards of qualifications, work experience and service attitudes, and that the locally trained staff often cannot provide services which are as hospitable and attentive as those provided by overseas staff from countries such as Thailand, the Philippines and Nepal, etc. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the number of applications for importing workers received from employers in the hotel industry in each of the past three years and, among such applications, the number of those which were approved;

(b) whether it can streamline the application procedure for importing workers, so as to shorten the application processing time and facilitate employers in the hotel industry who need to employ overseas workers to complete the application procedure more easily; and

(c) of the total number of hotel services workers who were trained under the government training programmes and Government-subsidised training programmes in each of the past three years, and the resources involved; whether it has consulted the hotel industry on its level of satisfaction with the performance of the locally trained hotel services workers at present, so as to review such training programmes?

Reply:

President,

The Government and the tourism and hotel industries share the common objective of constantly providing quality service, thereby reinforcing Hong Kong's tourism brand and competitiveness. My reply to the various parts of the question is as follows.

(a) The Government adopts an open and liberal policy on admission of talents to meet the local manpower needs from all sectors and enhance Hong Kong's competitiveness in the international market.

High-skilled workers or professionals who wish to enter Hong Kong for employment in the hotel industry can apply to the Immigration Department (ImmD) for employment visas or permits under the General Employment Policy (GEP) or the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals (ASMTP). The numbers of applications for the hotel industry in the past three years are set out at the annex.

On the other hand, employers who are genuinely unable to recruit suitable local workers can be allowed to apply for importing workers at the technician level or below under the Supplementary Labour Scheme (SLS). In the past three years, the Labour Department (LD) did not receive any application from the hotel industry for importation of workers under the SLS.

(b) The application procedures of the GEP and the ASMTP are simple and convenient. Generally speaking, the ImmD will complete the processing of an application within four weeks upon receipt of necessary documents submitted by the applicant. In May 2008, the ImmD further simplified the procedures. If the employer had a non-local staff approved of an employment or training visa/ entry permit in the past 18 months before submission of the application, there is no further need to submit documents of company background, e.g. the Business Registration Certificate. In addition, the employees concerned can also apply to bring their dependants (i.e. spouse and unmarried dependant children under the age of 18) to Hong Kong on the same application form.

To ensure priority of local workers in employment, the SLS is monitored by the Labour Advisory Board (LAB) and operates on two cardinal principles: (i) employers must accord priority to local workers when seeking to fill job vacancies available in the job market; and (ii) employers who are genuinely unable to recruit suitable local workers can be allowed to apply for importing workers at the technician level or below. Each SLS application has to undergo a four-week open recruitment exercise in Hong Kong. The LD will thereafter submit recruitment results and all relevant information to the LAB for consideration before approving or rejecting an application.

(c) At present, a number of local educational and training institutions such as the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU), the Chinese University of Hong Kong

(CUHK), the Vocational Training Council (VTC) and the Employees Retraining Board (ERB), as well as various training and employment programmes including the Skills Upgrading Scheme (SUS), the Youth Pre-employment Training Programme and the Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme (YPTP • YWETS), and the Employment Programme for the Middle-aged (EPM) offer publicly-funded hotel training courses, or subsidise eligible employers in the hotel industry to provide on-the-job training. Participants of certain courses even have the opportunities to undertake internship in local and overseas hotels.

The numbers of hotel workers trained by the Manpower Development Scheme of the ERB, the SUS, the YPTP • YWETS and the EPM over the past three years as well as the resources involved are set out below.

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
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Number of hotel workers trained	3,947	4,417	3,715
Resources involved	\$19.23 million	\$22.84 million	\$24.02 million

The approved intakes of University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded programmes on hotel and tourism management in the past three years are listed as follows.

Level of study	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
-----	academic year	academic year	academic year
	-----	-----	-----
Sub-degree	155	155	155
Undergraduate (including first-year and senior year intakes)	217	217	217

(Note: Recurrent subventions through the UGC are provided mainly in the form of block grants. Institutions enjoy autonomy in the allocation of funds available and are

free to determine the amount of resources to be used for different levels of studies and disciplines. As such, the amount of resources involved in the programmes on hotel and tourism management is not available.)

The numbers of new intakes of VTC's hotel/ tourism-related courses as well as the Government subvention involved in the past three years are set out below.

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
	academic	academic	academic
	year	year	year
	-----	-----	-----
Number of new intakes	2,225	2,128	2,242
Government subvention involved	\$91 million	\$96 million	\$105 million

The Government and the training institutions concerned have been maintaining close liaison with the hotel industry. Their representatives have participated in the advisory committees on hotel training courses of the CUHK, the PolyU and the VTC etc to offer advices on curriculum development and training effectiveness. Representatives of the hotel industry also took part in the student admission interviews of the two aforementioned universities.

The courses provided by the ERB are market-driven. The ERB consults the industry in developing its courses and conducts reviews from time to time. To facilitate future course development, the ERB will carry out in 2010-11 a survey on the graduates of its courses for the hotel industry, covering employers' level of satisfaction with their performance and their needs in skills upgrading.

The Industry Working Group of the Hotel Industry under the SUS evaluates the effectiveness of the relevant SUS courses from time to time to ensure that the training needs of the industry are met.

Furthermore, the LD conducts surveys regularly on the YPTP • YWETS and the EPM amongst participating employers to collect their feedback on the training content and the employment programmes and follows up on the areas of improvement.

The Government will continue to promote exchanges and co-operation between the hotel industry and the training institutions to ensure that the training can meet the needs and facilitate the overall development of the hotel industry.

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