

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee (RAC)
held at 3:00 p.m. on 25 June 2003
in Room 2005, 20/F., Murray Building, Hong Kong**

Present

Dr Raymond WU Wai-yung	(Chairman)
Mr Robin GILL	Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Vice-chairman)
Dr Margaret CHUNG	
Ms Christine FANG	
Mrs Doris HO	
Ms Priscilla HO	
Dr IP Yan-ming	
Mrs Julie LEE	
Dr Simon LEUNG	
Prof LEUNG Ping-chung	
Mrs Olivia LEUNG	
Mrs Jackie MA	
Professor Arthur MAK	
Dr TSE Tsun-him	
Mr WANG Kai-fung	
Ms WONG Kwai-wan	
Miss Ophelia CHAN	Assistant Director (Rehabilitation and Medical Social Services) (Social Welfare Department)
Miss Tina CHAN	Senior Specialist (Audiological Services) (Education and Manpower Bureau)
Dr Amy CHIU	Principal Medical and Health Officer (Department of Health)
Dr Daisy DAI	Senior Executive Manager (Hospital Authority)
Mr Stephen PANG	Commissioner for Rehabilitation
Mr Tommy LAI	Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Secretary)

In attendance

Mr Cliff KONG	Head & Principal Consultant (Hong Kong Productivity Council)
Ms Christine CHOY	Senior Consultant (Hong Kong Productivity Council)
Mr FU Siu-pun	Vocational Training Council
Mr CHAN Kwok-kuen	Principal, Lutheran School of the Deaf
Mr S N CHAN	Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
Mr Derek LEUNG	Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Absent with Apologies

Miss Iris CHAN
Mr CHONG Chan-yau
Mr YEUNG Ka-sing
Hon Howard YOUNG How-wah

Agenda Item I – Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2002 were confirmed.

Agenda Item II – Matters Arising

2. Nil.

Agenda Item III – Re-engineering Plan for the Skills Centres Operated by the Vocational Training Council [RAC 1/2003]

3. Members were briefed on the background against which the proposed re-engineering plan had been developed. Representatives of the Hong Kong Productivity Council (HKPC) then gave a power-point presentation on the major findings of a consultancy study undertaken by the HKPC to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the services provided by the skills centres run by the

Vocational Training Council (VTC) and to map out a plan for future development of the services. A copy of the power-point presentation was distributed to Members.

4. Representatives of HKPC said that apart from the survey and interviews, the consultant team had adopted objective cost benchmarking in evaluating the services provided by the skills centres. The Administration informed Members of the cost of training places in VTC skills centres vis-à-vis that of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) run centres and explained that a set of objective performance measures and outcome indicators for the services provided by skills centres had been recommended by the consultant for evaluation on the effectiveness of the services.

5. A **member** said that in addition to comparing the services provided by skills centres run by the VTC and NGOs, it would be useful to compare existing services in Hong Kong with similar services provided overseas. His view was shared by the Chairman. Representatives of HKPC said that the consulting team was unable to identify suitable overseas comparisons.

6. A **member** expressed concern over the proposed shortening of the training programme for special school graduates in skills centres run by the VTC from three to two years. Representatives of HKPC said that the proposal was based on the successful existing practice of skills centres operated by NGOs. Furthermore, the proposal had received support from stakeholders at focus group discussions organized during the consultancy study.

7. A **member** asked whether the objective of this exercise was simply to achieve savings. The Administration explained that the purpose of the exercise was evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the existing mode of delivery of services by VTC skills centres, in the light of the known trend in decline in the number of target service recipients. Bearing in mind the prevailing stringent financial situation, it was necessary to ensure that public monies were well spent. For prudent management of resources, adjustments would need to be made if demand for a particular service dropped. He stressed that both HWFB, as the responsible policy bureau and VTC, as the service provider upheld the basic principle that no graduate of special schools would be deprived of the opportunity to receiving training in skills centres because of the change and, that existing trainees in skills centres would not be affected by the proposed closure of one of the three skills centres. The aim of this exercise was to

evaluate the effectiveness of the training services offered in VTC skills centres, in meeting the policy objective of helping PWDs in finding employment in the open job market.

8. A **member** asked whether the VTC Technical Aid and Resource Centre (TARC) would be disbanded. The Administration responded that not all of the consultant's recommendations were accepted. However, in VTC's proposed re-engineering plan, the TARC would be right sized.

9. In response to a Member's question about the introduction of a more flexible mode of funding approach for VTC skills centres, the Administration responded that a lump-sum grant subvention approach was recommended by the consultant. However, as the existing structure of VTC skills centres was considered over-sized, the subvention to be given for running the service would have been set at too high level if the present establishment and structure were used to calculate the amount of grant. As such, it would be more appropriate to introduce the lump-sum grant subvention mode after the proposed re-engineering changes had been put in place. Meanwhile, HWFB would review the budget with VTC on a six-monthly basis and if necessary, make adjustments to ensure the effective deployment of resources.

10. The Administration remarked that the re-engineering exercise should focus on the quality of services provided by VTC skills centres in addition, to evaluating their cost-effectiveness. Whilst expressing no disagreement over the proposal to close down one skills centre run by the VTC, she did not support to choosing Pokfulam Skills Centre (PSC) as the centre to be closed. She felt that trainees living on Hong Kong Island should be given the choice to receive vocational training at a venue on Hong Kong Island. She also felt that as the boarding service served the purpose of providing independent living training to trainees, it should be retained.

11. The Administration remarked that the existing boarding service provided in the skills centres in Tuen Mun (run by VTC) and Tai Po (run by a NGO) could meet the needs of all potential users in the territory. Given the fact that boarders would not have to travel to the skill centres for training on a daily basis, it would not pose much inconvenience to those living on Hong Kong Island if they were to receive boarding service at either of the two centres. He also drew Members' attention to the latest data on new intakes in the academic year 2003/04, which showed that the PSC with a capacity of 100 had

so far received only 18 enrolment applications. This clearly reflected the fact that the PSC was grossly under-utilized. To address users' concern about transport arrangements, HWFB would work with the VTC to provide transport to the trainees living on Hong Kong Island to attend courses at the Kwun Tong Skills Centre.

12. A **member** said that in the context of the re-engineering plan, it was important to have an overall assessment of the projected service demand for training in skills centres. As the proposed re-engineering plan included, amongst other things, improvement in the efficiency of the Vocational Assessment Service (VAS) run by the VTC, it was worthwhile to consider the effectiveness of VAS and to find out whether there was any duplication with the services run by the Selective Placement Services of the Labour Department. The Administration responded that the prime objective of skills centres was to prepare PWDs for employment in the open market. Projections on demand for training services in skills centres was based on the information provided by the Education and Manpower Bureau having taken into account, the preference indicated by special school students after graduation. As regard the VAS, given the changes in the types of jobs available in the open market today, the VAS operation (which was based on a model adopted some 15-20 years ago) was considered to be outdated and not cost-effective. There was scope for a complete overhaul of the operation and structure of VAS.

13. A **member** informed Members that at the meeting of the VTC Committee on Vocational Training for PWDs held in mid June 2003, the proposed re-engineering plan for skills centres was endorsed. Representatives of employers' associations and NGOs present at the meeting were in general supportive of the proposed changes outlined in the plan. The proposed phasing out of the boarding service in skills centres was also debated at the meeting. Possible disruption caused by the proposed closure of the PSC was raised. A suggestion to run skills training courses for PWDs in other existing venues of VTC on Hong Kong Island was also raised. The Administration remarked that both VTC and HWFB would continue to keep a dialogue with the stakeholders with a view to explaining to them, the details of the changes and various options which would help ease their concerns, would be explored.

14. A **member** said that she appreciated the need for the Government to ensure the effective delivery of vocational training services for PWDs and proper use of public funds. However, as the proposed re-engineering plan

concerned about the benefit and well-being of PWDs, she felt that for the smooth implementation of the changes, it was imperative to foster closer relations with users' groups prior to their implementation. She supported the proposed re-engineering plan in principle but adequate assistance should be given to those affected by the proposed changes. Special transport arrangements for trainees living on Hong Kong Island and off-site training courses in existing VTC venues on Hong Kong side, were worthy of further consideration. The proposed re-engineering exercise had to fulfill the policy objective of enhancing the employment opportunities for PWDs. She recommended that the RAC should try and reach a consensus on this subject at this meeting. Sharing her view, a **member** said that the proposed changes should not be unduly delayed but attention should be given to minimizing the inconvenience and disruption to service users, including to parents of trainees.

15. Members were also informed by the Administration that upon the transfer of subvention control from Health, Welfare and Food Bureau to SWD, two NGOs Skills Centres, namely Caritas Lok Mo Skills Centres and Hong Chi Pinehill Advanced Centre had been converted to Integrated Vocational Training Centres (IVTCs) with effect from 1 April 2003. IVTCs aimed to provide people with disabilities with a series of seamless one-stop vocational training and rehabilitation services including skills training and retraining, supported employment, job attachment etc.

16. In summary, Members agreed that the proposed re-engineering plan was worthy of support in principle. The Administration undertook to convey the comments/suggestions of Member's suggestions to VTC for consideration in working out the implementation details. Users' groups would also be further consulted and Members would be provided with a copy of the Consultancy Study Report.

Agenda Item IV – Pilot Scheme to Enhance the Development of People with Disabilities in Arts and Culture [RAC 2/2003]

17. **The Chairman** said that the pilot scheme had already been discussed on several occasions in previous RAC meetings. He thanked Members for their support given to the pilot scheme, in particular to Mrs HO who had provided useful advice from the perspective of the sponsor, i.e. the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust (HKJCCT). A number of Members also

expressed their gratitude to Mrs HO for her efforts made in progressing the pilot scheme.

18. A **member** urged Members to join the proposed Sub-committee on Arts and Culture (SCAC) which would oversee the implementation of the pilot scheme. She was encouraged by the enthusiasm shown by participants at the workshops given by members of the China Disabled Peoples' Performing Art Troup (CDPPAT).

19. The Administration responded that the successful collaboration with CDPPAT in the latter's performances in Hong Kong and the subsequent workshops for trainers, was conducive to future co-operation in the implementation of the pilot scheme.

20. Replying to a Member's question about the representation of user groups on the SCAC, the Administration said that a user group representative would be invited to join the SCAC.

21. A **member** said that many local disabled artists had shown their potential in district performances in Hong Kong. Under the pilot scheme, more opportunities should be given to them to perform and improve. She suggested that representatives of relevant agencies in arts and culture for disabled persons be invited to sit on the SCAC. A **member** gave her support to inviting agencies with proven a track record to join the SCAC. The Administration responded that given the SCAC would be responsible for vetting and approving proposals submitted by agencies under the pilot scheme, the presence of agencies' representatives in the SCAC might lead to a conflict of interest. It would therefore not be prudent to include them in the SCAC. Members, in general, shared his view.

22. **The Chairman** said that the fundamental objective of the pilot scheme was to enrich the lives of PWDs in arts and culture, on an equal opportunity basis. The targets were to promote basic training for PWDs in arts and culture and to broaden their exposure and experience by launching exhibitions and performances. In time, disabled artists with potential to develop further to the elite level, could be identified. A **member** agreed with the Chairman and said that the pilot scheme would enable PWDs to enjoy arts and culture activities, thereby enriching their lives.

23. A **member** was impressed by the performance of the CDPPAT. Local disabled artists and performing groups should be given appropriate and professional training under the scheme to develop their potential. The Administration responded that these groups would be given opportunities to perform on a regular basis.

24. **Members** endorsed the proposed way forward as set out in the paper.

Agenda Item V – Enhanced Support Service for Hearing Impaired Integrators [RAC 3/2003]

25. A **member** expressed concern regarding the integration of hearing impaired students in mainstream schools. For those who had complete loss of hearing ability, it would be difficult for them to learn in mainstream schools. A **member** replied that pre-schoolers with special educational needs would be assessed prior to their Primary One admission. The results of this assessment would be used as reference for their subsequent referral to mainstream or special schools. The Education and Manpower Bureau would provide support to those students in need.

Agenda Item VI – Any Other Business

26. A **member** expressed serious concern about the imposition of additional administration fees on candidates with disabilities taking public examinations organized by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA). A number of Members also indicated their objection to the HKEAA's move which was contrary to the principle of equal opportunity for PWDs, and suggested the RAC take action against it.

27. The Administration agreed to approach the HKEAA to reflect the views of Members over the issue and report the outcome of his discussion with HKEAA to Members.

(Post meeting note: The Administration discussed the matter with the General Secretary of HKEAA on 26 June 2003. Subsequently, HKEAA issued a letter to C for R on 16 July 2003 confirming dropping the proposed fee charges).

Date of Next Meeting

28. The next RAC meeting would be held in November/December 2003. The Secretary would inform Members of details nearer the time.

Rehabilitation Division
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
Government Secretariat

July 2003