

**Baseline Survey on
Employers' Attitudes towards
Employment of People with Disabilities**

Report

Prepared by



Unleash Foundation Limited

Sponsored by

**Funding Program of Research Projects on
Equal Opportunities 2013/14**

Equal Opportunities Commission

May 2015

Research Team

The research team includes the following members:

CHAN Ho-ting, Mac (Mr.), Director of the Foundation

WONG Ming-wai, Flora (Ms.), Council member of the Foundation

Table of Contents

| | | |
|------|--|----|
| I. | Introduction | 1 |
| II. | Background | 2 |
| III. | Purposes | 3 |
| IV. | Methodology..... | 4 |
| V. | Results | 5 |
| | 1. Qualitative interviews – individual in-depth interviews | 5 |
| | 2. Quantitative study – questionnaire survey | 7 |
| VI. | Analyses | 14 |
| VII. | Recommendations | 17 |
| | Appendix A (Qualitative Study)..... | 19 |
| | Appendix B (Quantitative Study)..... | 20 |

I. Introduction

Unleash Foundation Limited (the “Foundation”) is a people-oriented charitable fund which is an approved charitable body within the definition of the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap.112). The Foundation was established in January 2012. It strives unremittingly for people from different strata, categories and age ranges such as: youth, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, etc. Through a wide variety of activities, for instance, public education, book publishing and charitable competitions and so forth, the Foundation encourages people to unleash their potential and to promote the humanistic spirit. The Foundation has a huge network covering different sectors, including social institutions and corporations in city in order to advocate civic education as well as sustainable development by means of handing out funding and fund-raising. Besides, the foundation also provides advice to help improving non-governmental organizations/ charities performance and cost effectiveness.

To realize our values and promote diversity, we have conducted a survey to find out how to create an environment of providing more job opportunities for people with disabilities¹ (PWD) and to formulate strategies to help their employment. We target to collect views from business owners, human resources (HR) practitioners or people who are performing HR function in a company (e.g. line managers, team leaders) in this survey.

In this report, there are seven sections in total, including the introduction, the background and purpose of conducting the survey, the research methods we have used, followed by presentation of results, analyses and recommendations. We have also enclosed herewith two questionnaires for ease of reference.

¹ The project has mainly focused on people with physical disabilities (e.g. wheelchair users) and people with sensory disabilities (e.g. those with visual impairment or hearing impairment).

II. Background

According to the Special Topics Report No. 62 – People with disabilities and chronic diseases, published by the Census and Statistics Department of the HKSAR Government in 2014, it was found that of the 558,000 persons aged 15 and over with disabilities, some 76,200 (13.6%) were employed persons. Their median age was 51, and about 52% of them earned less than HK\$10,000 per month.

In the past few years, the HKSAR Government and the Equal Opportunities Commission have been actively encouraging corporations in Hong Kong to be equal opportunities employers under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (Cap.487) to recruit people, irrespective of their disabilities. In fact, many corporations claim that they are equal opportunities employers and committed to eliminating disability discrimination in employment.

In this research project, we would like to find out the views of the HR personnel in recruiting PWD, and their attitudes, concerns and rationales on the issue. In light of collecting views of the employers and HR personnel on key influential obstacles, we would like to formulate strategies to help PWD for employment by providing advices and development training programmes tailored for individual needs.

This research project could be conducted yearly so that we can compare longitudinal survey results with the baseline data to reflect the effectiveness of campaigns against disability discrimination in employment, and the employment status of PWD after redressing those key influential obstacles.

III. Purposes

There are mainly three objectives for this research project. First and foremost, we would like to find out the current attitudes of corporations in recruiting PWD. Secondly, we would like to investigate, under what principal prerequisites/ characteristics/ conditions, the corporations are willing to employ PWD. And lastly, we would like to formulate strategies to help people with disabilities for employment.

IV. Methodology

The Foundation conducted this survey “Employers’ Attitudes towards Employment of People with Disabilities” during the period from August 2014 to January 2015. The survey included two parts - individual in-depth interviews and a questionnaire survey.

Qualitative study - individual in-depth interviews

The first part of this baseline survey is to conduct qualitative interviews. The aim of the interviews is to understand the current situation of PWD in the job market; to find out how to create an environment of providing more job opportunities for PWD; and to formulate strategies to help the employment of PWD.

Eight companies participated in the individual in-depth interviews. They were of different industries, including retailing, social service, property management, professional services, etc. We aimed to conduct the interviews in at least five different industries, in order to gain a wide perspective towards the employment problems faced by the PWD in the society. The size of the company also ranged from small-and-medium enterprises to big corporations.

Quantitative study - questionnaire survey

After the analysis of the qualitative interviews, we gained a better understanding of some underlying reasons for the unemployment of the PWD and the worries that some companies were considering when they employed PWD. With these results, we then conducted a quantitative questionnaire survey, to further analyze the importance of these concerns and to discover the most decisive factors influencing the employment of the PWD.

We collected a total of 209 completed questionnaires from respondents of different industries in Hong Kong.

V. Results

1. Qualitative study - individual in-depth interviews

Among the eight employers interviewed, all were open in different extent in employing PWD. When they were asked if they supported employment of PWD, their answers included:

‘We are open to employ PWD as long as they can fulfill the job requirement.’

‘We have conducted a project on hiring PWD. It was not easy to motivate the line managers to take action as it was not their core business. However, it is social responsibility of a corporate and we hope more companies in Hong Kong can support the initiative.’

‘Management has the initiative in mind but it takes time to study on the feasibility of undertaking, as exemplary inclusive employers could hardly be identified.’

‘It needs quite a lot of resources in terms of staff training, readjustment of facilities, etc. Surely, it takes time to develop.’

When the employers were asked about the practices adopted to facilitate the employment of PWD, most of the employers interviewed provided wheelchair access and flexible HR policy. However, most of the employers did not mention much on special arrangements during recruitment. One of the employers made a suggestion:

‘In the pilot project, we did not have much experience and we asked the candidates (with disabilities) to suggest their needs of accommodation during interview. We recommend that other companies may seek advice from related NGOs in advance so as to avoid embarrassment.’

When asked about the barriers of employing PWD, it seemed that location and rental cost were critical in Hong Kong situation.

'We have already conducted a feasibility report on hiring PWD. However, we have not yet launched the project due to the limitation of the office location. The costs of finding a new office and its renovation are too high.'

'There are access barriers in retail shops. Space is limited due to high rental costs in Hong Kong.'

Employers interviewed also revealed concerns about readiness of the candidates with disabilities during recruitment. Employers opined that candidates with disabilities were generally lack of confidence even if they were capable of performing the job duties. One of the employers made a suggestion for job-seeking PWD:

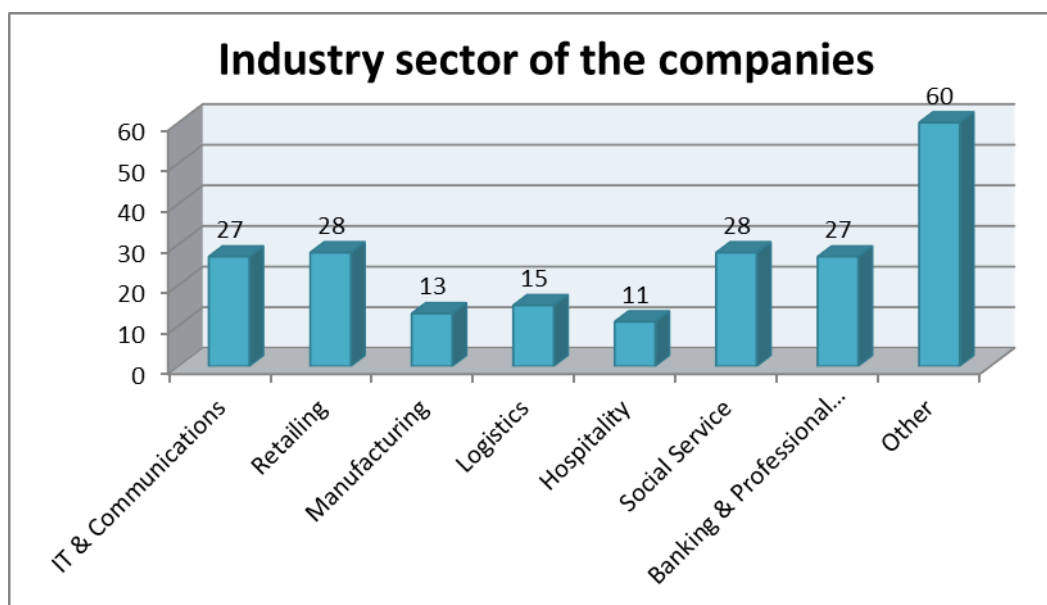
'From our opinions, it would be easier for PWD to start from positions that required a lower qualification to gain experiences and build mutual trust with employers. They are very good performers and even can get promotion opportunities, when they have built their confidence.'

2. Quantitative study - questionnaire survey

We invited respondents who worked in different industries to complete the questionnaire survey. They either filled in the printed questionnaire or completed the questionnaire online. A total of 209 completed questionnaires were collected.

(A) Industry sectors of the companies (N=209)

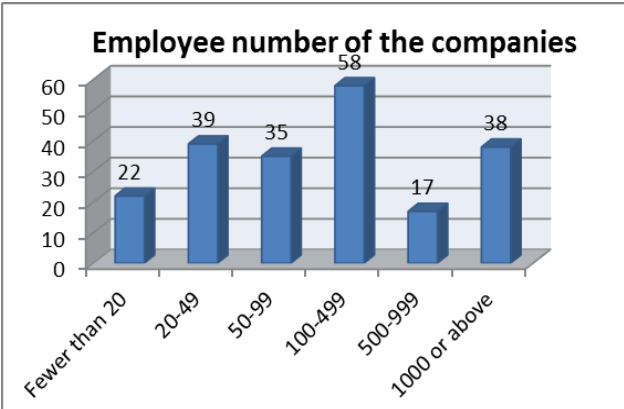
The respondents came from diversified sectors, namely IT & communications, retailing, social service and others. The distribution was shown in the following:



| Industry sector of your company | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| IT & Communications | 27 | 13% |
| Retailing | 28 | 13% |
| Manufacturing | 13 | 6% |
| Logistics | 15 | 7% |
| Hospitality | 11 | 5% |
| Social Service | 28 | 13% |
| Banking & Professional Services | 27 | 13% |
| Others | 60 | 29% |

The respondents came from companies of different industry sectors and relatively more respondents were working in the sectors of IT & communications, retailing, social service, and banking & professional services.

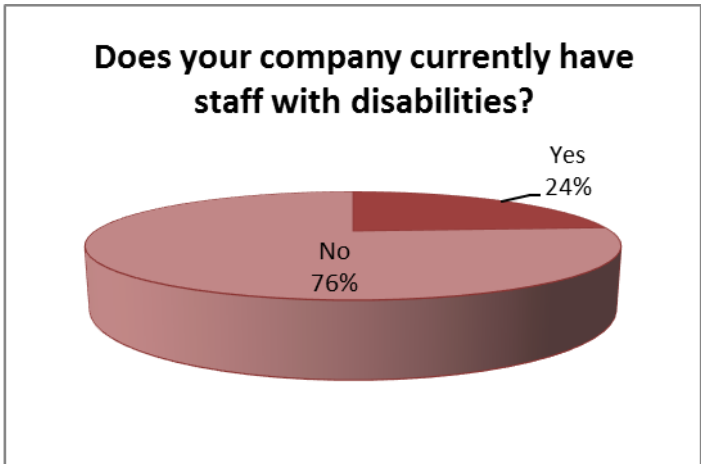
(B) Sizes of the Companies (N=209)



| No. of employees in your company | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Fewer than 20 | 22 | 11% |
| 20-49 | 39 | 19% |
| 50-99 | 35 | 17% |
| 100-499 | 58 | 28% |
| 500-999 | 17 | 8% |
| 1000 or above | 38 | 18% |

The above bar chart illustrated the scale of the companies. About 28% of the respondents worked in companies of 100-499 employees, whereas nearly one-fifth of the respondents worked in companies of 20-49 (19%), 50-99 (17%), and 1,000 or above employees (18%), respectively.

(c) Does your company currently have staff with disabilities? (N=209)



| Does your company currently have staff with disabilities? | Percentage |
|---|------------|
| Yes | 24% |
| No | 76% |

The above data showed that about one quarter of the respondents were working in companies that had employed staff with disabilities.

However, the proportions varied from one industry sector to another. The following table shows the variation in four selected industries, IT &

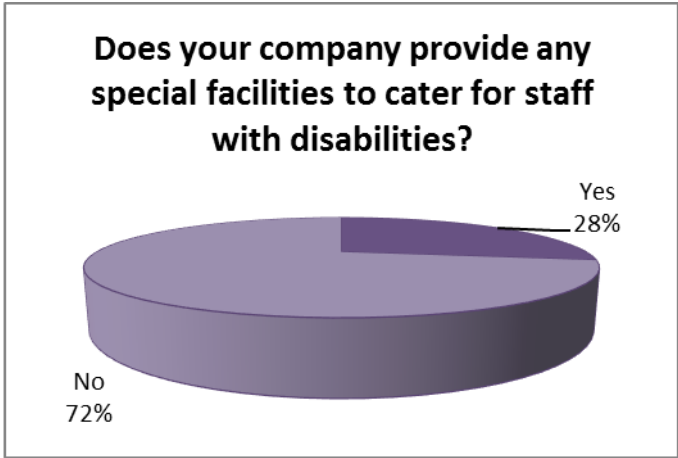
communications, retailing, social service, and banking & professional services. As revealed, the sector of social service appeared to employ a higher proportion of staff with disabilities (54%), while other sectors showed lower percentages of 6-8%.

| Industry sectors | Does your company currently have staff with disabilities? | |
|--|---|-----|
| | Yes | No |
| IT & Communication (n=27) | 8% | 92% |
| Retailing (n=28) | 6% | 94% |
| Social Services (n=28) | 54% | 46% |
| Banking & Professional Services (n=27) | 8% | 92% |

Furthermore, the differences in proportions of employing staff with disabilities between small firms (companies with less than 100 employees) and large corporations (companies with more than 99 employees) were obvious, as indicated in the following table. As expected, it revealed that large corporations would tend to employ staff with disabilities.

| Company scale | | Does your company currently have staff with disabilities? | |
|--------------------|---------------|---|-----|
| | | Yes | No |
| Small firms | Fewer than 20 | 5% | 95% |
| | 20-49 | 10% | 90% |
| | 50-99 | 9% | 91% |
| Large corporations | 100-499 | 19% | 81% |
| | 500-999 | 38% | 62% |
| | 1000 above | 58% | 42% |

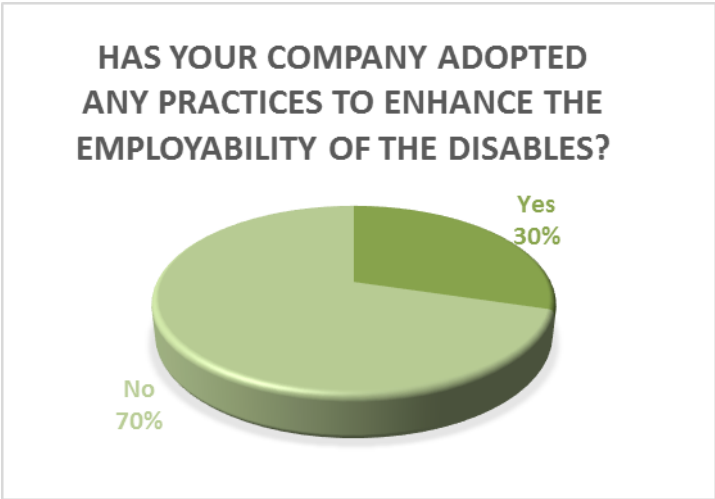
(D) Does your company provide any special facilities to cater for staff with disabilities (N=209)



| Does your company provide any special facilities to cater for staff with disabilities | Percentage |
|---|------------|
| Yes | 28% |
| No | 72% |

The results showed that most of the companies (72%) did not provide any special facilities to cater for staff with disabilities.

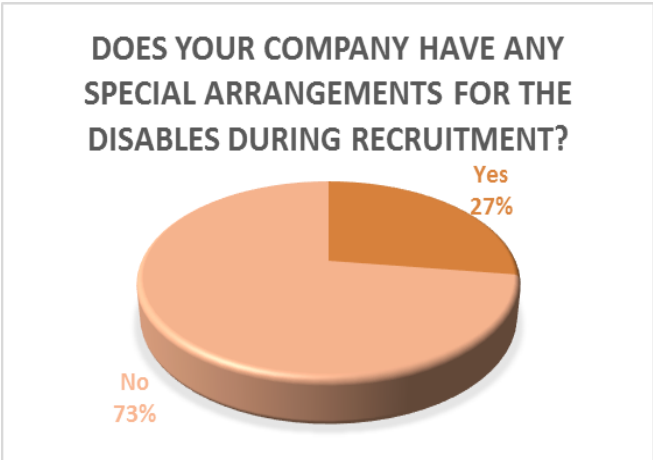
(E) Has your company adopted any practices to enhance the employability of the disables? (N=209)



| Has your company adopted any practices to enhance the employability of the disables? | Percentage |
|--|------------|
| Yes | 30% |
| No | 70% |

The data revealed that most of the companies (70%) had not adopted any practices to enhance the employability of the PWD.

(F) Does your company have any special arrangements for people with disabilities during recruitment? (N=209)



| Does your company have any special arrangements for the disables during recruitment? | Percentage |
|--|------------|
| Yes | 27% |
| No | 73% |

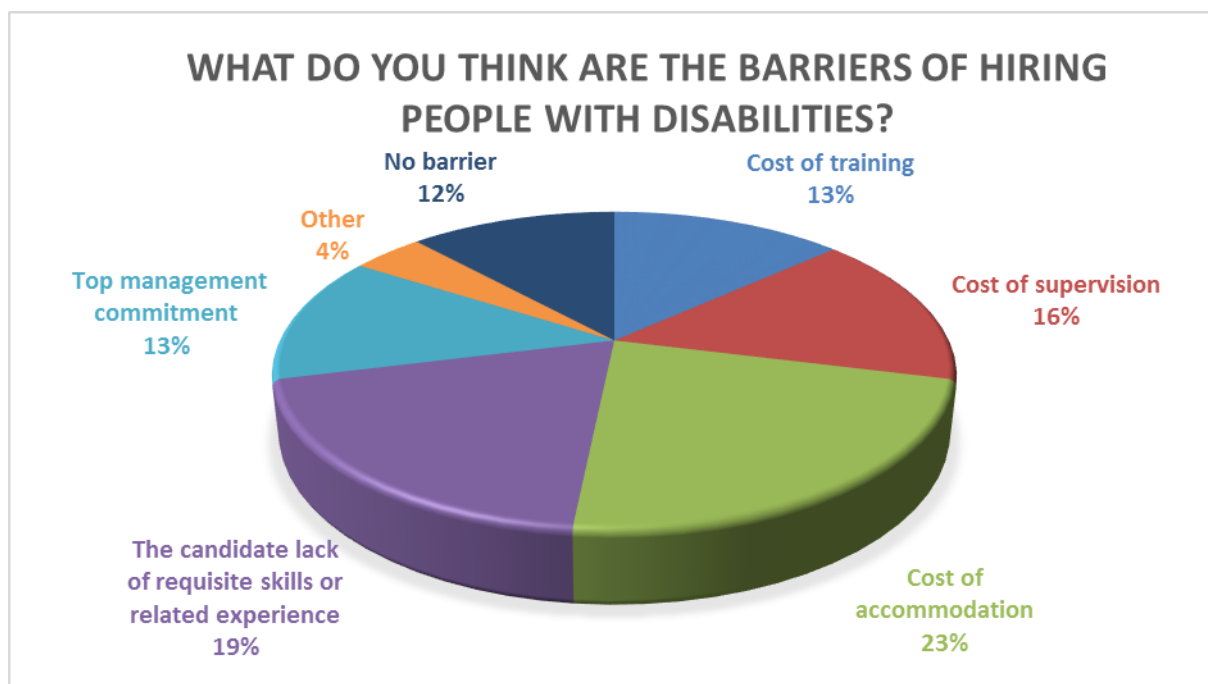
The data revealed that most of the companies (73%) did not provide any special arrangements for PWD during recruitment.

(G) Companies adopting arrangements for people with disabilities (N=209)

| Adopting arrangements for PWD in | Percentage |
|---|------------|
| Three areas (special facilities in employment, practices to enhance employability, special arrangements during recruitment) | 14% |
| Two areas (any two of the listed items) | 15% |
| One area (any one of the listed items) | 13% |
| None | 58% |

The findings showed that 42% of the companies had adopted at least one arrangement for the PWD in the 3 areas (i.e. special facilities in employment, practices to enhance employability and special arrangements during recruitment). It was disappointing to note that 58% of the companies did not adopt any arrangements for the PWD.

(H) The barriers of hiring people with disabilities (N=209)



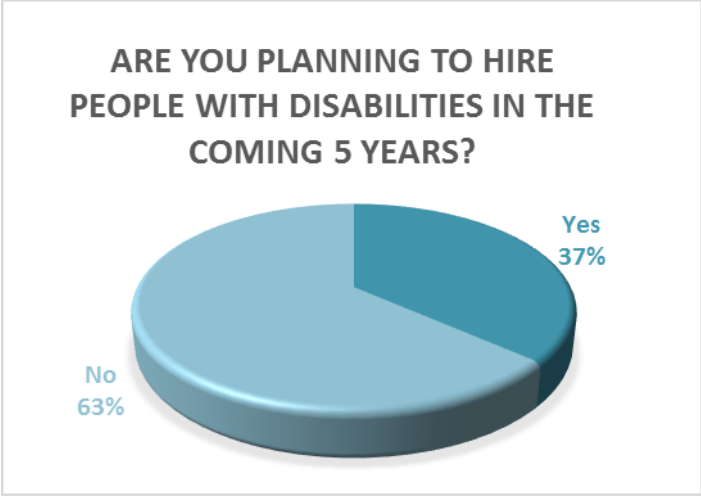
| What do you think are the barriers of hiring people with disabilities? (Can choose multiple options) | Percentage |
|--|------------|
| Cost of accommodation | 23% |
| Candidate lack of requisite skills or related experience | 19% |
| Cost of supervision | 16% |
| Cost of training | 13% |
| Top management commitment | 13% |
| No barriers | 12% |
| Other | 4% |

When the respondents were asked about what the company considered as barriers of hiring PWD, the results revealed that the majority of the companies (88%) viewed that there were some barriers of hiring PWD. The highest proportion was found in “Cost of accommodation” (23%), followed by “Candidate lack of requisite skills or related experience” (19%), “Cost of supervision” (16%), “Cost of training” (13%) and “Top management commitment” (13%). Only 12% of the respondents expressed that their companies had no such barriers.

Among these 12% of the companies saying that there were no barriers in

employing people with disabilities, 43% were currently employing PWD. Furthermore, about 16% of the companies which were not currently employing PWD would plan to hire people with disabilities. However, 35% of the companies were neither currently employing PWD nor planning to do so in the coming 5 years. This means that over one-third of the 12% companies saying no barriers in employing PWD are not actually hiring or planning to hire PWD.

(I) Will companies plan to hire people with disabilities in the coming 5 years? (N=209)



| Are you planning to hire people with disabilities in the coming 5 years? | Percentage |
|--|------------|
| Yes | 37% |
| No | 63% |

The above pie chart illustrated the proportion of companies which had the planning to hire PWD in the coming 5 years. The data revealed that about two-thirds of the companies (63%) were not planning to hire PWD in the coming five years.

Among the 37% of companies saying that they were planning to hire PWD in the coming 5 years, only 20% of were actually hiring staff with disability currently. After deduction, it meant that only 17% of the companies would plan to employ PWD in the coming 5 years.

VI. Analyses

Based on the afore-mentioned results, some patterns or trends were identified for consideration by key stakeholders. They include:

- 1. Hong Kong employers in general do not show keen initiatives on employing people with disabilities but the situation varies among different industry sectors.**

According to a survey² released in the United States in 2009, about 18-19% of companies in goods-producing/ service-producing industry and about 43% of companies in public administration had employed PWD, who were with physical or mental disabilities. When compared to findings of the present survey, especially those in the commercial sector, employers in Hong Kong do not show keen initiatives on hiring PWD. While 54% of the respondents in the social service sector revealed that employees with disabilities were hired in the companies, there was only 6-8% in the commercial sector. It was disappointing to note that around 58% of the companies interviewed did not adopt any arrangements for employing staff with disabilities. Also, a majority of the employers (63%) did not have any plans in employing PWD in the coming 5 years. Ironically, most of the companies saying no barriers in employing PWD were not actually hiring or planning to hire PWD. In general, it appears that employers in Hong Kong show a relatively low intention to employing PWD.

From the qualitative interviews, employers from the commercial sector were less active in creating opportunities for PWD when compared to those from the social service sector. One common misconception was noted in the employers who still embraced some stereotypes about PWD that they were incompetent in the working environment. In light of these biased views, there is still room for stakeholders to explore opportunities and formulate strategies catering for PWD so as to promote their participation in the workforce.

² Domzal, C., Houtenville, A., and Sharma, R. (2009). *Survey of Employer Perspectives on the Employment of People with Disabilities: Technical Report*. (Prepared under contract to the Office of Disability and Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor). http://www.dol.gov/odep/documents/survey_report_jan_09.doc

2. Employers have encountered barriers when they consider the employment of people with disabilities.

From the quantitative survey, up to 88% of the employers expressed that there were barriers in employing PWD. Most of the barriers (69%) came from additional costs in training, supervision and accommodation, lack of management commitment and so on. Only 19% of the employers indicated that the barriers came from the candidates being lack of requisite skills or related experience.

According to the qualitative interviews, employers were open in employing PWD. Some of the interviewed employers in the past 5 years started to study the feasibility of employing PWD. However, the actual employment of PWD was disappointingly low. Some of the difficulties they had encountered were:

- (a) Both recruitment staff and line managers did not have much understanding about PWD and related accommodation they needed to provide for PWD during the employment cycle.
- (b) Line managers supported the concept of equal opportunity for PWD but were not motivated to take action.
- (c) Accommodation might need to locate a new office and employers were concerned about the costs of relocation and renovation.
- (d) There were access barriers in retail shops which were of limited space due to high rental costs in Hong Kong.
- (e) It would be easier to employ people with other disabilities (e.g. intellectual disabilities) rather than those with physical disabilities because accommodation in facilities might not be required for them.
- (f) Staff turnover rate was not so high that opportunities for recruiting PWD appeared scarce.
- (g) Exemplary inclusive employers could not be identified.

The qualitative interviewees also revealed concerns about readiness of the candidates with disabilities during recruitment. Employers opined that candidates with disabilities were generally lack of confidence even if they were capable of performing the job duties. However, once they

were employed, they were outspoken about their needs and appeared competent in their works.

3. Additional costs in providing training, supervision and accommodation appear to be the biggest hurdle for employers to consider hiring PWD.

The results revealed that employers were worried about additional costs in providing training, supervision and accommodation if PWD were employed. Furthermore, employers in the qualitative interviews mentioned that transportation was an issue for the PWD who would probably be reluctant to take up new jobs which required them to travel a long distance from home to office.

In general, employers are positive in employing PWD. However, they are concerned about additional costs in providing accommodations to staff with disabilities. In this regard, seminars or training workshop should be provided for employers such that they understand the needs of PWD and are more willing to open up opportunities for PWD's employment.

VII. Recommendations

It is expected that people with disabilities would have benefited from targeted support measures in finding employment. In this regard, recommendations are hereby made for consideration by the key stakeholders.

1. Demonstrate commitment : actions speak louder than words

There is the call for companies not just to talk about their commitment to hiring PWD, but to demonstrate it by putting words into special arrangements during recruitment, including but not limited to: (i) making it easy for candidates to disclose their disability; and (ii) providing a hotline or single point of contact for candidates with disabilities to reach out to during the recruitment process. Companies that take the trouble to consider practices and special facilities of enhancing PWD's employability will be seen to be genuine in their interest in tapping into this pool of talent and serious about their commitment to being an inclusive employer.

2. Support measures for PWD to equip themselves

There is a need to provide students with disabilities with more exposure to the world of work and the skills required in the workplace, so that they are able to build their confidence and market themselves more effectively to future employers. Educational institutions and companies might work hand-in-hand and take initiatives of offering skills workshops, running mentoring programmes and providing internship opportunities. It will bring students with disabilities into the workplace so that they could unleash their potential in the bid of attaining self-reliance. Such opportunities will also break down the knowledge barrier amongst employees regarding how to communicate with PWD as well as their level of understanding about what PWD can contribute.

3. Enhance employment of PWD

The government has a key role to play in making funding available for initiatives of enhancing the employment of PWD and in setting benchmarks on accessibility of buildings and working with companies to ensure that universal design is being implemented. This approach

requires a shared commitment and determination and the pooling together of ideas and resources, connecting the various stakeholder groups and developing programmes to remove barriers to inclusion for talents with disabilities in the workplace.

4. Provide incentives for employment of PWD

The Government may provide to the employers different incentives for employment of PWD, say for example, wage subsidy, tax allowance, etc. These incentive measures are important in facilitating the transition of PWD into the labor market.

5. Raise public awareness of capable PWD in employment

Apart from the existing Code of Practice on Employment under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance issued by the EOC in 2011 as a useful guide for employers, promotion and educational programmes should also be formulated so as to raise public awareness of PWD who could work competently in the labor market if they are provided with opportunities. The focus of the general public should be placed on PWD's abilities rather than their disabilities. The EOC might partner with different non-governmental organizations to hold seminars/talks /training workshops for stakeholders in order to promote equal opportunities for PWD in employment.

Appendix A (Qualitative Study)

1. Have your company adopted any of the following practices to enhance the employability of people with disabilities? (Made existing facilities accessible, Restructured jobs/work hours, Reassignment, Modified equipment, Modified training material, Provide readers or interpreters, Flexible human resources policy, Changed supervisory methods, Transportation accommodation, Written job instruction, and Modified work environment)
2. In order to recruit people with disabilities, could they generally be exempted from the competitive appointment process?
3. What have your company done to facilitate the employment of people with disabilities?
4. Does your organization provide health or disability benefits for any of your employees?
5. What are the barriers to employment or advancement for people with disabilities?
6. What approach do you regard as the most effective or ineffective in reducing barriers for PWDs?
7. What are the difficulties in making changes to meet the need of employees with disabilities?
8. Which type of access have you provided to people with disabilities?
9. Is your company doing any sustainability reporting? If so, which type of reporting are you currently using?

Appendix B (Quantitative Study)

- 1) Are you a HR practitioner or a company owner? Yes, for _____ years No
- 2) Industry sector of your company IT & Communications Retailing Manufacturing Logistics Hospitality Social Service Banking & Professional Services Others: _____
- 3) Employee number of your company is Fewer than 20 20-49 50-99 100-499 500-999 1,000 or above
- 4) Does your company currently have staff with disabilities? If yes, how many?
 Yes, no. of staff with disabilities: _____ No
- 5) Does your company provide any special facilities to cater for staff with disabilities?
 Yes
 Communication access for hearing impaired Wheelchair access
 Communication access for visually impaired Others: _____
 No
- 6) Has your company adopted any practices to enhance the employability of the disables?
 Yes
 Accessible entrance/exit Transportation accommodation
 Provided readers or interpreters Restructured jobs/ working hours
 Modified equipment Others: _____
 No

7) Does your company have any special arrangements for the disabled during recruitment?

- Yes
- Make job information accessible for hearing-impaired Modify interview questions
- Make interview locations and restrooms accessible Others: _____
- No

8) What do you think are the barriers of hiring people with disabilities?

- Cost of training Cost of supervision Cost of accommodation
- The candidate lack of requisite skills or related experience Top management commitment
- Others: _____ No barrier

9) Are you planning to hire people with disabilities in the coming 5 years?

- Yes No