



On 24 January 2008, the seminar “Our Ten Years under the DDO – Moving Forward, Changing Culture” was organized by the Equal Opportunities Commission to review the impact of the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO) since its implementation and to explore the way forward. Participants had raised a number of questions in different sessions of the Seminar. Due to time constraint, many questions were not able to be answered by individual speakers in the Seminar. Questions relating to employment are now recorded verbatim (with some translation) and replied as follows:

We would like to thank the Labour Department (LD) for addressing the following employment issues. (Note: In the following answers, the term “we” refers to “the LD”.)

1. I am from a firm which employs PWD. We find many of the PWD are extremely under confident. They are also reluctant to talk about their disability to let an employer know how an employer can make them successful. I think the education system could help to raise confidence and some of self worth. How can the education system help on this?
2. Which government department conduct the job type & ability assessment for the persons with disabilities? What mechanism is used? (English Translation)
3. Often PWD who are talented are doing jobs which are below



their capabilities. What can we do to overcome this issue?

In response to question 1, 2, and 3 :

The Vocational Training Council provides Vocational Assessment Service (VAS) since 1982. The VAS is the only centre that provides vocational assessment service for the disabled in Hong Kong.

Vocational Assessment Service:

I. Specific VAP (3-5 days) :

This is a simple and effective assessment designated for the following clientele:

- (a) Special school leavers.
- (b) Workers of sheltered workshop/supported employment, or trainees of day activity centre, and those waitlisted for such services.
- (c) Any disabled person, aged 15 or above and hopes to attend short courses on specific trades offered by Skills Centre.



II. Comprehensive VAP (3 weeks):

This vocational assessment programme is designed to provide a comprehensive evaluation of a disabled person's vocational potential over a wide range of trades. It follows the established international vocational assessment procedure, and a multi-disciplinary team approach is used, which involves different professionals such as physician, specialist (education services), social worker, placement officer, occupational therapist, work evaluators, etc.

The Selective Placement Division (SPD) of the Labour Department provides free employment service to job seekers with disabilities. Employment service offered by SPD

includes:

- (a) vocational counselling and assessment
- (b) job matching and referral
- (c) post-placement follow-up



Before job matching and referral, the placement officer

will conduct an in-depth interview with each jobseeker to provide them with vocational counselling and the latest labour market information. Besides, simple vocational assessment would be conducted to assess their working abilities. Where necessary, job seekers with disabilities would be referred to training bodies or institutes for vocational training.

Some employers may still have misconceptions about working ability of PWDs and their ability to adapt to new workplaces. To remove prejudice against the PWDs and increase their acceptance by the community, the SPD of the Labour Department regularly organizes public education and publicity activities, including special promotional campaigns to targeted trades to canvass vacancies, production of video on success employment cases of people with disabilities, radio programmes, leaflets, seminars and bus advertising.

The SPD also provides support services to employers to employ more PWDs through Work Orientation and Placement Scheme . Besides, employers would be encouraged to give recognition to capable PWDs by providing career development chances.



4. How many persons with disabilities are employed by the government? (English Translation)

As at 31 March 2007, there were 3,263 disabled civil servants, representing 2.1% of the strength of the civil service. As at the same date, 310 disabled persons were employed by the Government on non-civil service terms.

5. What's the concrete planning or ideas to help Employment Services for People with disabilities?

To encourage employers to provide more employment opportunities for people with disabilities, the Selective Placement Division of Labour Department (SPD) has launched the "Work Orientation and Placement Scheme" (WOPS) in April 2005.



Under the WOPS, a short-term pre-employment training programme is made available to disabled job-seekers for improving their job-searching skills, interviewing techniques, communication and interpersonal skills. For each disabled person engaged, a financial incentive, equal to half of the actual wages paid to the disabled employee and subject to a ceiling of \$3,000 per month, will be paid to participating employers for up to three months. The scheme has been well received by employers and people with disabilities.

The SPD also organizes various promotion activities to promote the public's understanding and acceptance of people with disabilities. These activities include special promotional campaigns to targeted trades to canvass vacancies, production of video on success employment cases of people with disabilities, radio programmes, leaflets, seminars and bus advertising.

6. Social enterprise is a good idea. But how can an employer offer their job to the disabled, i.e., where to find their disabled employees? At the same time where can the disabled person find out job opportunities with the social enterprises? Is there such an information such as yellow pages for the social enterprises that can benefit both?

The Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department provides free employment service for jobs seekers with disabilities and free recruitment service for employers, including those of social enterprise. Placement officers perform job matching according to the requirements of the job as well as the working abilities and career orientations of job seekers. Suitable candidates are selected to attend job interviews with employers.



The Hong Kong Council for Social Services has a website on social enterprise (<http://www.socialenterprise.org.hk>) which provides useful information on social enterprise, for example services and products provided by social enterprises and their addresses.

7. There was a rule in the hospital I worked that employees could go home when certain typhoon signal was hoisted. However, I was often among the last group of employees to leave, almost an hour later after the typhoon signal was hoisted. I am a wheelchair user. (English Translation)



Given the diverse nature and work requirements of different trades and posts (for example, certain medical service and public transport service have to be maintained in times of typhoons), the Labour Department advises employers to devise prior work arrangements for their employees, in accordance with the work requirements of the trade and posts. They should also consult their employees in advance in order to maintain good labour relations and avoid dispute.

The work arrangements should cover rules regarding reporting for duty, release from work, resumption of work, calculation of wages, etc. As regards arrangements for reporting for duty and release from work, to ensure safety of employees, employers should make realistic assessments of the requirements for essential staff and require only those absolutely essential staff to report for duty under adverse weather conditions. After the Pre-No. 8 Special Announcement is issued by the Hong Kong Observatory, employers should give due consideration to the needs of individual employees and release non-essential employees from work in stages according to the work requirements of the trade and posts as well as weather and traffic conditions.

To ensure orderly staggered release of employees, employers should work out the release arrangements in advance with their employees. To safeguard employee's safety, having regard to weather and traffic conditions, employers should allow employees who have mobility problems, who rely on ferry service to travel to and from their workplace or who may face greater hardship in commuting (for example, those living in remote areas) to leave first as far as it is practicable. As for other employees, employers should release them in stages, according to their travelling distance or time required to return home. This helps safeguard their safety and ease traffic congestion. In applying these arrangements, employers should be flexible and give due consideration to the particular needs of individual employees and other circumstances as well.

The Labour Department has prepared a guidebook on work arrangements in times of typhoons and rainstorms to provide practical guidelines and samples for reference of employers and employees. The guidebook can be obtained from the branch offices of the Labour Department's Labour Relations Division or downloaded from <http://www.labour.gov.hk/eng/public/wcp/Rainstorm.pdf>.



For further information, employers and employees may call the Labour Department's hotline at 2717 1771 (handled by "1823 Citizen's Easy Link").



8. Can you explain the job matching service? For example, what kinds of jobs are more suitable for persons with visual impairment? During the transitional period between leaving school and starting employment, are there any plans / strategies to avoid the persons with disabilities becoming "hidden youths"? What role can the social workers play in vocation training? (English Translation)

The Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department provides free employment service for job seekers with disabilities and free recruitment service for employers. Placement officers perform job matching according to the requirements of the job as well as the working abilities and career orientations of job-seekers. Suitable candidates are selected to attend job interviews with employers.

Both the government and non-government organizations offer a wide range of training courses to people with visual impairment. These courses include telephone operation, audio-typing, Braille stenography and massaging. With proper rehabilitation and vocational training, people with visual impairment are competent to perform in jobs like telephone operators, telesales, executive officers, clerks, office assistants and masseurs.

The policy objective of the Government in assisting persons with disabilities in attaining employment is to ensure that they have equal access to participation in productive and gainful employment in the open market. To achieve this, the Government strives to provide a wide range of employment and vocational rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities so as to equip them with job skills that meet market requirements and assist them in securing suitable employment commensurate with their abilities. These include market-oriented vocational training / retraining programmes through skill centres, integrated vocational training centres, employees retraining scheme, supported employment service and on-the-job training programme.

Role of social workers in vocational training of PWDs:

Under the training and retraining programmes for PWDs provided by VTC and ERB, there are social workers who serve as case managers to provide personalized career counseling and support services to trainees and to assist them in understanding their career orientations



so as to formulate career plans. In order to facilitate the personal development of young people, social workers are also available at some training centres like Skills Centres which provide individual or group counseling services to trainees on psychological, behavioural, emotional, adjustment, learning, family and interpersonal relationship problems. Moreover, programme on 'Independent Living and Social Skills Training Programme' was also designed for the trainees for better integration in society.

9. Can the quota system be implemented so that more persons with disabilities will be employed? (English Translation)
10. Will there be any legislation to implement and monitor the quota system? (English Translation)

In response to question 9 & 10:

The Government has reservation about establishing a quota system because:

- (a) The quota system is implemented in overseas countries in order to assist the employment of persons with disabilities but the overall result remains to be seen. (Due to its limited achievement, the quota system in the UK has been put to an end).
- (b) We should help persons with disabilities to obtain suitable employment that match their own abilities; this would facilitate their better integration in the workplace;
- (c) On the contrary, persons with disabilities would be stereotyped under a compulsory employment system and sometimes even being misconceived as a burden to the society.
- (d) Most of the private firms in Hong Kong are small and medium enterprises. The implementation of quota system may have an adverse effect on their business operation. If these firms are exempted from the implementation, it would be even more difficult for the quota system to achieve any positive result.

((a) - (d) English Translation)



11. Are there any interest groups monitoring the employment situation or support measures to persons with learning disabilities at current? Do the employers offer any accommodations to persons with learning disabilities? (English Translation)

Its objective is to assist people with disabilities in securing jobs in open employment that best suit their abilities, skills, qualifications and experience. The ultimate aim is to integrate them into the community and help them financially independent.

The work of the Selective Placement Division includes:

- providing job seekers with vocational guidance, assessment and the latest information on the labour market to help them find open employment jobs that best suit their abilities and the needs of the market.
- matching the requirements of job vacancies against the working abilities of job seekers and referring the most suitable job seekers to employers for job interviews.
- providing follow-up service to monitor the work progress of the employees and to ensure a harmonious relationship between the employers and the employees.
- organising public education and promotional activities to enhance the public understanding of the working abilities of people with disabilities and to cultivate a positive attitude towards them.

Employees with specific learning difficulties may request the employers for modification of work or special arrangements if necessary. The Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department will liaise closely with the employers and employees to strengthen their communication and to facilitate their study of the feasibility of making such arrangements.

