

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON PUBLIC SERVICE

National studies programmes and related training activities for civil servants

Purpose

This paper gives an overview of the national studies programmes and related training activities currently offered to civil servants, including the Civil Service Exchange Programme with the Mainland.

National studies programmes and related training activities

2. In keeping with the development of closer ties between the Mainland and Hong Kong, the Civil Service Bureau has made conscious efforts in recent years to expand the training opportunities open to civil servants with a view to enhancing their understanding of the latest political, social and economic developments in the Mainland. An account of the new training courses and activities that have been added since 2000 to our portfolio of national studies programmes is given below.

(1) Tsinghua / Peking University Programme

3. We have been organizing the Tsinghua Programme since 1993 for officers at MPS 45 or above. In 2004, we commissioned the Peking University to organize a similar programme. Both programmes now last for 17 days, including a 3-day visit to cities outside Beijing. The programmes aim at providing participants with a comprehensive understanding of the political, social, economic, cultural and legal systems in the Mainland and promoting communication between HK and Mainland officials. The programmes have received very positive feedback. Participants considered the programme highly effective in enhancing their understanding of the Mainland systems, and found the programme and administrative arrangements very satisfactory. So far about 1,500 civil servants have attended these programmes.

(2) Programmes conducted by the National School of Administration (NSA)

4. We commissioned the NSA to organize a two-week Advanced National Studies Programme for directorate officers since 1999. As at the end of 2005, ten classes have been organized and attended by 182 directorate officers. The programme aims at deepening participants' understanding of the current issues and policies as well as the latest developments in the Mainland, and promoting contact between HK and Mainland officials. The programme covers major topics like the Basic Law, public policies, reforms in government, state-owned enterprises and the economy, relations between central and regional governments and so forth. The programme (which consists mainly of lectures/talks delivered by distinguished scholars and senior government officials) has been highly rated by the participants.

5. To enhance the training offered to members of the Administrative Service, we commissioned the NSA in 2004 to organize a one-week national studies programme tailor made for directorate Administrative Officers. Since April 2005, three classes have been organized, attended by more than 40 directorate AOs. We will continue organizing the programme next year. Our objective is to enroll, into this programme within the next two years, all directorate AOs who have not previously attended similar training.

(3) Foreign Affairs Studies Programme

6. In 2004, we entered into agreement with the China Foreign Affairs University, commissioning them to organize a one-week Foreign Affairs Studies Programme for directorate and other officers involved in external affairs. The programme covers foreign affairs, protocol and other related topics. Two classes have been organized so far for 36 officers.

(4) Thematic Study Programme

7. Thematic study programmes have been organized since 1991 through the coordination of HKMAO. Taking mainly the form of familiarization visits to different provinces and cities, the programme aims at enhancing participants' general understanding of the systems in the Mainland as well as developments under a particular theme. As at the end of 2005, 56 visits have been organized for more than 1,000 civil servants. The themes selected in the last two years include "Reforms of State-owned Enterprises", "Promotion of Sports and Cultural Activities and Development of related Infrastructure", "Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development" and "Development of the Middle Region: Wuhan's Economy and Port Development" ... etc.

(5) Civil Service Exchange Programme with the Mainland

8. We initiated the civil service exchange programme with the Mainland in 2002. Under the programme, civil servants are attached to the governments of the other side for three to six months with a view to widening exposure, sharing experience and expertise, and fostering partnership and communication between both parties. We have entered into exchange agreements with Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou as well as Guangdong (which includes the provincial government and the Guangzhou and Shenzhen municipal governments). As at the end of 2005, 33 HKSARG civil servants and 48 mainland officials have participated in the programme.

9. The scope of exchange covers many disciplines, ranging from infrastructure development, traffic management, city planning, health, environmental protection, port administration, landscape architecture, to management of the civil service, trade and IT technology. The programme has been very successful. Participating departments and individuals of both sides have found the programme very useful in enhancing partnership and communication. The programme also helps attachées better understand the host cities as well as the work culture of their counterparts.

(6) Seminars on national studies subjects related to national studies

10. We work closely with local institutes and invite local scholars to conduct, for civil servants of various ranks, seminars on the latest developments and current issues in the Mainland. The seminars cover a comprehensive range of topics, including political and government reforms, the legal system, economic and social changes, state-owned enterprises, foreign affairs and WTO, fiscal and tax policies, administrative and civil service systems etc. Other special subjects include international trade conflicts, impact of changes to Renminbi's exchange rate, further development of the Pan-PRD region, fight against corruption, protocol for receiving Mainland officials and topics on Chinese culture.

11. We have also invited officials and scholars from the Mainland to speak at seminars conducted in Hong Kong. For instance, professors from the Tsinghua University, Zhongshan University and Beijing Normal University have talked on subjects related to the Basic Law, fight against corruption, political and economic developments, civil service reforms, environmental protection as well as the language policy in the Mainland. We have also invited officials from the Ministry of Education and the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the HKSAR to speak on different topics in their field.

12. In the past 5 years, more than 26,000 civil servants from different ranks have attended the seminars mentioned in paragraphs 10 to 11 above.

(7) National Studies Portal

13. Since 2002, we have established a learning portal on national studies in our website “Cyber Learning Centre Plus”, providing a convenient mode of learning which allows civil servants to pursue national studies at their own pace. The portal has been further enhanced in mid-2005, offering a more comprehensive range of information about the Mainland, from the political and civil service systems, through the economy, to the legal framework and geographical data. In-depth analysis of current issues is also available. To help keep civil servants abreast of latest developments in the Mainland, we have also included, in the portal, sections on current policy documents, important speeches and useful linkages. The enhanced National Studies Portal has been very well-received, recording a hit rate of over 55,000 since its launch in July 2005.

The Way Ahead

14. In the year 2000, we had about 220 civil servants participating in our three national studies programmes available then : the Tsinghua Programme, the NSA Programme and theme-based visits. Since then, we have added a number of new programmes, including the Peking University Programme, the Special NSA Programme for Administrative Officers, the Foreign Affairs Studies Programme, and the Civil Service Exchange Programme that covers Shanghai, Beijing, Hangzhou and Guangdong. We now offer over 300 training places a year through a diverse range of activities, enabling participating civil servants to better understand the Mainland and to establish networks with their counterparts. In addition, we have also facilitated the study of national issues and developments through the National Studies Portal and the many local seminars that we organized.

15. To further promote cooperation within the Pan-PRD Region, the Constitutional Affairs Bureau has organized study tours to the Region between the end of 2004 and the end of 2005. Provinces visited include Hainan; Jiangxi; Sichuan; Fujian; Hunan; Guangxi; Yunnan and Guizhou. Participants met with representatives of the local governments and visited local enterprises and infrastructures. These study tours have greatly enhanced participants’ understanding of the Pan-PRD Region and fostered contact with the various governments of the Region.

16. With the imminent establishment of the new HKETOs in Shanghai and Chengdu and the expansion of the Guangdong HKETO, there will be even closer collaboration between HKSAR and the Mainland. We anticipate even more frequent contacts between civil servants of both sides.

17. Looking ahead, we will further enhance our national studies training programmes through enhancing the number of seminars we roll out, enriching our online learning resources, exploring more learning topics and training activities, and strengthening partnership with the relevant institutes. We will also work with the Constitutional Affairs Bureau to organize study tours to the Mainland. Our overall objective is to deepen civil servants' understanding of the latest developments in the Mainland as well as to facilitate exchange and closer ties with our Mainland counterparts.

Civil Service Bureau
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