

Prof. Peter P. YUEN

Dean of the College of Professional and Continuing Education (CPCE), The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Professor in the Department of Management and Marketing, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Continuous professional development and lifelong learning: Needs assessment and way forward for Hong Kong

This Study aims to assess the needs of Hong Kong's industries and businesses for continuous professional development (CPD) and lifelong learning (LLL) as well as the state of development of organisational learning (OL) in selected industries and businesses. The Study consists of two stages. The qualitative stage adopts a data-driven approach through which the analytical framework is derived from the data collected from focus group discussions and in-depth interviews of employees, employers, relevant officials, and course providers. A total of 133 informants participated in the exercise. The text data is organized with the aid of the NVivo software. The subsequent quantitative stage collects data via a questionnaire survey. A total of 544 completed questionnaires was received.

Results show that industries and businesses in Hong Kong show concern for CPD, and recognise its importance. Government, industry/business sector, and training / education providers have put in effort in setting up a series of mechanisms to support CPD and LLL. Courses that are in high demand -- such as language and management-related topics -- have ample supply. For more specialised or manufacturing-related courses, the supply tends to be scarce. The importance of non-credit bearing short courses is recognised. All are supportive of Government's Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) scheme, as well the Qualifications Framework (QF) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) schemes. Most working individuals are familiar with Continuing Education Fund (CEF) and many have received support from the Fund. Not many companies provide flexible work arrangements for employees undertaking training. There is room for most companies to increase their training resources. Under-staffing is a common problem.

Government is recommended to take the lead in coordinating various stakeholders for CAT. It should further promote QF, and establish mechanisms to enable credit accumulation on a lifelong basis. It should review CEF's policy details, including the range of eligible subjects and the amount of entitlement for each eligible applicant. Employers are recommended to provide flexible working hours for employees pursuing training or further study.