

Course Design on Basic Professional Education for Health and Safety

Officers in Hong Kong

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Abstract: In the workplace, occupational health and safety is under the control of health and safety practitioners. The prominent figure among the practitioners is the health and safety officer. Formal education for health and safety officers in Hong Kong only started several decades ago. The education thus provided is usually catered for obtaining the academic qualification for registration of Safety Officer with the Labour Department of Hong Kong, that is, obtaining the statutory status of registered safety officer. Apart from academic requirement, there is a need for practical work experience in order to fulfil the registration requirements. The health and safety officers practising in Hong Kong come from a variety of background before they join the study in health and safety. Nowadays, the kind of education for the health and safety officers can range from a certificate level programme to university degree one. The programmes currently offered are, in majority, part-time basis while there is only one fulltime. The fulltime one is a bachelor degree programme. As a consequence, there is a great variation in terms of competency in the health and safety personnel thus produced. It is uncommon for employers criticising that they have employed health and safety officers who are not competent enough in writing and communication skills for daily work practice. This article looks at the basic professional education system for health and safety officers in Hong Kong, that is, a review on different education programmes recognised by the Labour Department as the academic requirement for registration as registered safety officers. Health and safety education is a practical subject. There is a need for health and safety officers to make adjustment on the work, without compromising the basic principles in health and safety, in the course of their work. Therefore, a comment will be made on the need for improvement in course design in order to have a better curriculum tailored for the work requirement of health and safety officers in Hong Kong.

Introduction

Basic professional education for registered safety officers in Hong Kong is rather work-orientated. This is related to the fact that the job nature of health and safety professionals is traditionally guided by practical experiences and observations rather than theories. Health and safety knowledge is concerned with actual use or practice. Much of the curriculum is centred on the issue of control of hazards. However, the strong association with work situations has made much of the theoretical frameworks or ideas in health and safety becomes inferior in the workplace. Sometimes health and safety information is considered as impracticable or even ignored. It is not uncommon among many of the practising health and safety officers that it is impossible to stand on their health and safety viewpoints in front of members of other working groups. On detail examination, the phenomenon is related to the design of health and safety programmes for registration of

safety officers. The actual curriculum design is of crucial. Educational programmes in health and safety do not have a strong theoretical basis. Much of the information dispatched during teaching time is rather practical. Many students doing the programmes do not want to have much conceptual input which is regarded as too abstract and not important. These students only want to learn information that is practical, the kind of information that is sufficient to perform their work. As a consequence, competency among health and safety officers becomes doubtful. Complaints from employers about the inferiority on quality of work for health and safety personnel are common. This article examines various basic professional health and safety programmes recognized by the Labour Department of Hong Kong as registration for safety officer. Initially, there is a brief description on matters related to the work of health and safety officers, including the registration issue. An indepth discussion on the structuring and curriculum design of the programmes will be made. Comments on revision and improvement in course design are put forward for the benefit of making positive contribution to the competency of health and safety officers.

The Registration and the Work of Health and Safety Officers

According to Chapter 59Z Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Safety Officers and Safety Supervisors) Regulations, proprietors of selected industrial undertakings with employees of 100 or more have to employ a fulltime registered safety officer to manage the health and safety matters at work. This requirement became effective in 1986. In order to become a registered safety officer, an individual must satisfy both the academic and working experience requirements as stated under the law. It has been more than 20 years by now. Nowadays, the employment of registered safety officer is required by law in construction site, shipyard and container handling workplace (Justice Department, 2006). These trades are considered as high risk industries which have high accident rate at work. Many others trades, although not prescribed under the law, do employ registered safety officers to handle health and safety issues. Health and safety officers, safety and health managers, fire and safety officers, fire and safety engineers, safety officers, safety engineers and safety managers are some of the positions commonly filled by the registered safety officers (from now on named as health and safety officers).

The minimization of health and safety risk in the workplace is the prime goal of employing health and safety officers. The work of health and safety officers involves the identification, assessment, control and monitoring of hazards at work. On executing techniques of health and safety inspection, hazard identification, risk assessment and health and safety management, it is possible to bring about a reduction in health and safety risk, thereby preventing the occurrence of accident. The job of health and safety officers is primarily on the aspect of preventing unhealthy or unsafe occurrence. In case of accident involving injuries or death, health and safety officers can act promptly in providing first aid and proper management of the victims. On the education side, the training of health and safety officers started at certificate level. The Construction Industry Training Authority had its focus on construction health and safety. The Hong Kong Polytechnics set up programmes to train health and safety personnel for health and safety work in the construction and manufacturing sectors. The kind of institutional training at certificate level

was recognised by the Labour Department as one of the requirements for registration as safety officers during the British era. The certificate level courses were conducted on a part-time basis.

With the flourishing of the construction industry during the 70s' and the 80s' of last century, there was a sudden increase in demand for health and safety officers in the construction field. Although the training of health and safety personnel, including health and safety officers, had started well before the enactment on employment of health and safety officers, there was a shortage of these personnel in the market over the initial period of enactment of requiring to employing health and safety officers. This was related to the fact that many of those who got the registration did not end up in health and safety officer jobs or some of only completed the certificate programmes without getting registration. They simply remained engagement with their original jobs. However, situation change as the construction industry prospered over time. There was shortage of many kinds of construction personnel. The great shortage led to a surge in the salary for construction site workers. It was so for the payment of health and safety officers. As a consequence, the salary of health and safety officers increased dramatically; even at a certificate level of education qualification. At that time, a newly employed health and safety officers was much well paid as compared with the engineers and even many of the university graduates. The big difference in salary that could be earned for health and safety officers and engineers (even for chartered engineers) attracted engineers with registered safety officer status to shift their employment to health and safety jobs rather than engaged in engineering or construction work. The move of the later group did not resolve the situation of shortage of health and safety officer. It only alleviated the situation. The salary for health and safety officers remained high. It was noted that a considerable amount of health and safety officers worked in non-construction sectors. Even with an increase in intake of students for the training institutions, the shortage remained. The first diploma course in health and safety training only appeared in 1999. This diploma course in health and safety was offered by a university. This university adopted a flexible mode of study for students of health and safety. The students could have a choice on the number of courses enrolled for a semester. There was an innovative move to allow the students to finish the courses on their own accord with a maximum study period of three years. The ways of presentation of the university diploma stand distinctively from the other course providers. In addition, the open entry requirement for entry to the diploma in health and safety meant that many people could gain access for the education. As a result, the enrolment for health and safety programme for health and safety officers ranked first among all health and safety course providers for registration purpose. Higher qualification in health and safety was offered by the Chai Wan and Morrison Hill Branches of Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education. They offered Higher Diploma Programmes in safety and health, and safety and risk management respectively. Owing to the shrinkage in enrolment in the programmes, the higher diploma programmes were terminated after the last lot of graduation in 2006.

The need for more qualified health and safety personnel in health and safety work was greatly sought with the development of various training programmes in health and safety.

Companies renowned for good health and safety practice have coined, that competency in communication (both oral and written) is essential for contemporary health and safety officers. The call for university education was made more than 10 years ago. It was only in 2004 that the first locally run bachelor degree in health and safety come out. It was a four-year part-time degree offered by The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (previously called Hong Kong Polytechnics). A locally conducted fulltime bachelor degree was presented by the same university in 2005.

Nowadays, education for health and safety officers involved those courses required for registration purpose and those need for continuing education purpose. The later education programmes range from a few hours of certificate of attendance to master degree and doctoral programmes offered by overseas institutions. Although criticisms on the quality of some of these courses or programmes have surfaced to be of significance, the move to attain higher qualification for health and safety personnel is a result of personal, financial, educational and market issues that intertwined the health and safety field. In the following section, there is an examination on the curriculum of various Labour Department recognised health and safety programmes. Recommendations on improvement on these programmes will be made with the aim of training competent health and safety officers.

Health and Safety Courses for Registration as Safety Officer

1. Flourishing of health and safety programmes

In recent years, there is a great increase in the number of people studying occupational health and safety programmes and on the number of training institutions offering health and safety training. Currently nine intuitions were found offering health and safety training programme for safety officer registration purpose. The courses deal with health and safety issues at work. The increase was a response to the establishment of Chapter 509 Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance in 1997; enacted a short time before the return of Hong Kong under the sovereignty of China. Almost all workplaces in Hong Kong were covered by this ordinance. With a few exceptions, non-industrial workplaces like offices, laboratories, shopping arcades and educational institutions were included (Labour Department, n. d.). (The occupational health and safety aspect of the few exceptions were controlled under existing statutory requirements administered by other government departments.) Employers had to cater for the health and safety needs in the workplaces in order to satisfy the law requirement. In order to gain sufficient health and safety information for the purpose, many employers assigned their employees to take care of the health and safety issues at work or recruited consultants to manage the workplace health and safety. In order to have a much clearer picture on how to manage occupational health and safety, personnel responsible for health and safety, and some employers themselves too, swarmed to join the health and safety programmes. By joining the courses, they anticipated that it was possible for them to acquire a thorough understanding and methods to control health and safety matter arising at work. Hence, there was an increase in demand for health and safety courses, including those required for application as registered safety officers. With a significant number of potential students, it would be profitable to set up new health and safety courses to provide information to the ever increasing pool of students.

Consequently a number of educational institutions, mainly the continuing education sections, began to provide new courses for those who wanted to acquire academic qualification for registration as safety officers. Although profit making remains the prime factor contributed to the emergence and continued existence of health and safety education programmes, there are other factors too.

Taking part in the training of health and safety officers involves a type of health and safety educational training that is much more comprehensive than those short health and safety training courses commonly offer. (Giving health and safety training to workers is one of the main job responsibilities of health and safety officers. Usually the training courses last for about ten minutes to half day duration.) The former programmes usually extend for a period of one-year or equivalent time span. It would be a challenge for the course providers. This is especially so for those experienced health and safety officers offering such training. In another way, working as trainers can provide an alternative means of employment to health and safety officers. A few of them really shift to a fulltime employment in teaching occupational health and safety. Majority of the trainers remain part-time while they maintain their fulltime employment in health and safety as health and safety officers or engaging in health and safety consultation work. To many of the trainers themselves, they consider the involvement in teaching health and safety courses as an achievement in their life goal. They are able to share their experiences with students who are future health and safety officers. In addition, salary earned through training provision, although not a huge amount, provides an additional income for those part-time trainers.

On the receiver side, the students attending the health and safety training for registration as safety officers, there are two major issues that lead to their increased enrollment in health and safety courses. The first issue is what has been mentioned above, the assignment of health and safety responsibility by employers. Many employees with such assignment have no formal education in occupational health and safety area. In order to perform their work effectively, they have to join courses in specialized institutions. Participate in courses offering by formal educational institutions is considered as being able to provide quality proved type of education for the need of their work. With the booming of construction industry and the high salary payment to health and safety officers, many people coined that they could have a better salary and better way of life by working as registered safety officers. This represented an improvement in personal or family situation financially. In fact many of the graduates from the training courses for safety officer registration have their income double or even quadruple by working as health and safety officers as compared with the income of their previous job.

Apart from gain in income for the receivers, there is an enhancement in personal achievement. On studying health and safety, the students can improve their health and safety sense which enable them to control and guard against hazards at work, thereby reducing the risk of injury or death. In terms of educational achievement, it is related to the attainment of educational qualification. Owing to the mature applicants and open entry entrance requirements of many of the health and safety training courses for safety officer

registration, quite a number of students with low education background can get access to the study. Some of these students do not possess a certificate or diploma qualifications, or even attain a Form 5 secondary school education level. The completion of the study in these health and safety courses will be an accomplishment of a “high” qualification. This has both a social and psychological impacts on the students concerned. However, for many of the students, the obtainment of a high income remains the most important driving force for their pursuit in occupational health and safety education.

2. The choice of health and safety programmes: certificate, diploma or degree level

Safety and health programmes for safety officer registration are currently offered at different educational levels: certificate, diploma, postgraduate diploma and bachelor degree levels. Majority of the programmes are part-time programmes. Only the degree programme presents both fulltime and part-time streams. On examination through the development of different courses, different types of certificates and diplomas were involved. Name like certificate, certificate of proficiency, post-experience certificate, continuing education certificate, diploma, continuing education diploma, higher diploma and postgraduate diploma were used or being used by health and safety training institutions. The development of health and safety courses at different educational level has led to an increase in choice of course by students. However, the thriving of different programmes represents a response to the market. Basically all the certificates (including certificate of proficiency, post-experience certificate, continuing education certificate) are one-year or one-year equivalent course. This is the shortest time requirement for courses recognized by the Labour Department for registration. Students enrolled in these certificate courses could have the benefit to attain the academic qualification for registration in a relatively short period of time. In addition, studying at certificate level is considered by some students as “easy to get a pass” since the requirements for graduation for certificate level programmes are not so stringent as other types of programmes since the workload for assignments are not that much. Some others students have their preference for certificate level programmes since institutions offering such programmes have a long tradition in offering health and safety education. Comparatively, the certificate level programmes can be more competitive in cost consideration. The course fee for these programmes is charged at a lower rate.

With the coming out of the first diploma course in health and safety, there was a change in behaviour in the choice of courses. Although cost consideration remained one of determining factors in the choice, there were others issues that led to an increase in enrollment in this new diploma over the initial period of presentation; at least for a period of for the initial three years. The number of enrollment in this diploma mounted dramatically. The enrollment figures ranked top among all the health and safety courses for registration purpose. Several factors led to the sudden rise in enrollment figure for the diploma course. For students seeking health and safety education for registration, a diploma level of education represented a more preferable higher level of academic achievement as compared with the certificate programmes. In additional, there were flexibility factors that provided added values for those enrolling in the diploma. The certificate type of programmes offered the

traditional type of “fixed” schedule pattern. The fixed pattern involved a one-year study of the entire curriculum of the courses with no choice in contents of study. For the diploma course, there was flexibility in choice of courses. Students could choose the required number of courses for graduation among the options provided. Besides this, students were allowed to complete the whole programme in three-year time. This meant that students could carry on with their study at their own pace. This was particularly popular for those students who might be tied with some other work, family or personal matters over their study period. By having flexibility in choice and study time, these students could simply suspend their study for a short period of time to deal with their own matters. There was another attraction for the diploma programme.

Traditional certificate programmes in health and safety did have minimal entry education or working qualification for entrance requirements. The new diploma programme adopted an “open entry” entrance requirement. The lifting of education or working requirements meant that people without the requirements could enroll the diploma programme. The open entry condition was in-line with the goal of the providing institution on fulfilling the need for life-long learning. As a consequence, the way of presentation of the certificate programmes were considered as rather rigid in educational or administrative senses. Although it is more expensive to have the whole diploma curriculum completed as compared with the fee for a certificate programme, it worth.

In terms of payment of programme fee, the certificate programmes required the payment of the whole sum of programme fee in one go or by installments. On the contrary, there was no need for students of the diploma course to make such large sum of payment. They were only required to pay for the courses they enrolled, that is, the equivalent amount of payment for one, two or whatever the number the course they enrolled. In addition, there is no need for application fee for the diploma programme. (There was a charge on application fee for the certificate programmes.) It was noted that some of the students doing the diploma programme came from the low income group. The completion of the diploma and the subsequent acquirement of the safety officer registration with the Labour Department represented a step forward for their income. Within their limited capacity to pay for the course fee, it was preferable to pay bit by bit over the period of their study. In a way that was in a small amount that they could afford in connection with their money earned for each payment. To sum up, there are benefits in education accomplishment, study pattern and mode of payment in studying the new diploma programme.

3. Impact of having a new diploma programme

All the innovations that had been adopted by the new diploma programme did not only result in great number of enrollment in the programmes. It also led to other major impacts that were significant in terms of education administration, course design and quality of the health and safety education programmes.

a. Education administration

With the increase in enrollment, there was a concurrent increase in workload for the

administrative staff dealing with course administration which involved applications, venues allocation for lectures and examinations, printing of course materials, compilation of academic records and enquiries. With a high enrollment figure, there was a tendency for the institution not to allow any fall in enrollment in view of monetary concern with respect to fee collected for the diploma programme. This resulted in need for more promotion to support a further rise in enrollment. It was uncommon that the educators in charge of the programme complained of spending more and more time in education promotion and administrative work while making lesser and lesser effort to make improvement or innovations in teaching.

In reviewing the rise in enrollment figure for the new diploma programme, it was evidence that the increase in student intake could be attributed to the enactment of Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance, the high payment for being a health and safety officer and the open entry issues as mentioned above. The increase in enrollment was partly owing to the fact that many graduates of the certificate courses enrolled in the diploma programme in order to upgrade their education level. With the flexibility in course design and open entry, many people who wanted to become a registered safety officer tended to join the diploma programme instead of the certificate programmes for a higher educational achievement. There was one other issue that was responsible for students taking the diploma rather than the certificate. It is related to the working experience required for obtaining the safety officer registration. The work experience as stated in the law was working as “a full time safety officer” (Justice Department, 2006). The Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Safety Officers and Safety Supervisors) Regulations was amended in 2002. Before the date, the work experience required for a diploma graduate was only one year while it was two years for the certificate graduates. The difference of one-year working experience had promoted the choice for the diploma programme rather than the certificate one for people seeking for health and safety officer study for registration purpose.

The move to enrolling diploma programme rather than a certificate one is greatly sought, the enrollment situation for certificate programmes was subject to pressure. Dropping in enrollment resulting in reduction of number of classes to be offered was evidence. The successfulness of the diploma programme in terms of innovative programme design with subsequent increase in student intake and rise of income through getting of programme fee, the offering institution stood distinctively among different course providers. The type of course design had provided a framework of reference for design of programmes in health and safety field later.

b. Course design and quality of education

With the success of the diploma programme, there was a tendency for other health and safety programme providers to replicate or follow the structure of the diploma. It should be noted that many of the institutional providers for health and safety programmes are actually the section of the institutions dealing with continuing education. One of the main goals of continuing education of the institutions is for profit making. Following some of the design of the diploma programme would be considered as having a potential of recruiting more students and hence the possibility of an increase in revenue. However, the provision of a

flexible programme structure as the first diploma in occupational health and safety required investment in different areas in view of an increase in workload. Two main areas needed for attention on the provider side are the size of administrative and teaching staff, and the availability of teaching venue. On the receiver side, there should be an enrollment of sufficient number of students to enable the provision of a range of choices of courses under the programme. With the orientation towards profit-making, there is a need for a minimum number of enrollments for individual course in order to have a gain in operation. Otherwise, the course without sufficient enrollment would not be offered. For some of the continuing education section, there must at least a balance of payment in running a course. With the considerations, some of the certificate programme providers dared not to have dramatic change on their programme structure. A bit of change, nevertheless, took place. For one of the institutions, a new diploma programme is set up on top of the certificate programme. Owing to the market situation of favouring the diploma, the certificate course was finally discontinued, leaving the diploma programme.

Another peculiar phenomenon exist nowadays is the emerging of different types of diploma programmes in health and safety area. In order to get hold of sufficient number of students, appealing name such as professional diploma was used. For the sort of diploma in health and safety offered by one institution, a higher Form 7 secondary school entry requirement of education level is needed while the entry to the diploma is at Form 5 secondary school. However, there remains a mature student entry requirement: aged 25 or above, and with relevant working experience. The mature student entry requirement for other diploma programmes are aged 21 – 23 or above, and with relevant working experience. Having a mature student entry is a way to promote learning for adult students, yet this is considered as a way of getting more students.

In connection with the entrance requirements, relatively high entry qualifications are needed to enroll two certificate programmes. These two programmes were offered by two institutions with the longest history of offering health and safety programmes for safety officer registration. One of them has the entry requirements: a bachelor degree in building, construction, civil, structural and surveying, with one year of working experience, having recommendation from employer and with experience in construction work (preferably). On reviewing previous record, the entry requirements were much lower. Graduates from this institution were criticized as having poor quality in health and safety knowledge. Usually they only have a lower pay as compared with graduates of other institutions. However, this certificate programme remains attractive due to the low programme fee, as low as half of the charge for the diploma programmes. In order to rectify the poor reputation situation, the administrative of this certificate programme imposed a high entry requirements at degree level in order to make sure that the graduates thus followed would be of quality.

With the exception of the bachelor degree programme, all the programmes for safety officer registration recruit some mature candidates. The need for an entry education level is only to satisfy the institutional requirement for education formality. The intake of mature students has certain striking impacts on the education system of Hong Kong. On the

positive side, it provides a channel for those without formal education qualification to attain an acceptable education standard on completion of the programme requirement. An alternative route for education is maintained for individual to achieve their life goal in search for knowledge. On completion of the programme, the mature students can accomplish the level of educational competency required for the health and safety jobs. By working as a health and safety officer, it is possible for these graduates to get a high salary payment and hence providing a means for improvement in quality of life. On the aspect of instruction and teaching, recruitment of mature candidates, quite often, means that there is disparity in education level of students of the same class. This would tend to cause difficulty for teachers in terms of time used for teaching and level of health and safety knowledge to be taught. Critics on the quality of students thus produced have been suggested.

c. Programme contents

Health and safety job is a rather practical one. Many of the tasks involved concern with what can be done, that is, reasonably practical. People tend to focus on what they can achieve with limited available resources. In the workplace, it is not uncommon that workers neglect health and safety in order to finish their work within the required timeframe and budget. Therefore, the objective for health and safety training programmes in Hong Kong is to provide information to students to manage health and safety matters in an appropriate manner. For all the locally run programmes offered for safety officer registration in Hong Kong, basic concepts in health and safety are included. The statutory requirements, particular those administered by the Labour Department, are the central part of the programmes. Risk and health and safety management have become a necessary part of safety officer training programmes since the enactment of Chapter 59AF Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Safety Management) Regulation in 2000 and the amendment to the Chapter 59Z Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Safety Officers and Safety Supervisors) Regulations in 2002. In addition, there is a focus on health and safety practice as applied to work environment or special industries. Since construction industry is the most hazardous industrial sector in Hong Kong, construction health and safety is the commonest focus for most the programmes. Nowadays with the greatest number of accident for catering industry (Labour Department, 2006; Occupational Safety and Health Branch, Labour Department, 2006; Occupational Safety and Health Branch, Labour Department, 2006, August), specialized course target to manage health and safety issues in catering industry is made in two programmes. The reason for inclusion of health and safety aspects for particular work environment or special industries is to attract personnel from respective work setting or industries to join the course of study. There is a connection to the concern on work-related or job-orientated training. Many of the teachers teaching such special occupational health and safety areas are themselves working or had worked in the actual workplaces or industries involved. They are able to provide useful suggestions or information to handling problems or issues at work. Students much enjoy being able to obtain hands-on knowledge to manage their distinct work issues.

In connection with the contents of the programmes, there is one strange phenomenon that is concerned with students of construction health and safety. For institutions with special

course in area of construction health and safety, there is a high chance for those students who are working in construction sites to fail the course. These students usually think that it would be relatively easy for them to study this course as compared with other courses of their programme. However, the failing rate for these students does not match with the expected outcome. On analysis, it has been identified that most of students from the construction field, in general, has a relatively low educational standard as compared with students from other trades. The low academic achievement in the past may contribute to the unsuccessfulness in getting a pass in the course. In addition, the presumption of students having practical work experience in construction can satisfactory perform in dealing construction matter in an academic setting may be an illusion. Being accustomed to the study materials, these students tend to pay less attention to details presented during lectures or on preparation for examination. Hence, the chance of failure would be much higher than expected. It is important for course in specialized area, like construction health and safety, be well structured in a way that leaving no unclear information to students. Contents should be properly structure and related to the thinking of work situation rather than copying relevant information from books alone.

A Breakthrough in Health and Safety Education in Hong Kong

The introduction of diploma level education in health and safety area represents a breakthrough in the development of health and safety education in Hong Kong. The presentation is marked by innovative structure tailor for flexibility in study. The initial success of this programme in achieving a high enrolment with consequential huge revenue had caught the green eyes of other health and safety programme providers. However, on reviewing the performance for this diploma programmes recently, there is a down-sizing situation with a drop in enrollment for this diploma. Several reasons are responsible for the drop. The most traumatic one is concerned with the recession that affected the economic situation of Hong Kong over the last few years. During the time, the construction industry was greatly affected. This industry was one that employed most of the health and safety officers in Hong Kong. The kind of employment was tied with the statutory requirement for registered safety officer employment for construction industry. Having not much construction work in progress in Hong Kong meant that the need for health and safety officers in the construction industry, hence the overall employment of such personnel, was rather meager. With the flourish of health and safety programmes for safety officer and the surge of students in studying health and safety courses, many of the potential students have already completed their study in health and safety area, the possibility of a big fresh flow stream of students will not possible. In order to sustain a profitable sum, the management tries to look for different strategy. Discounts in course fee become available. At the present time, there are discounts for early-bird enrollment, group enrollment, fulltime students, old students, staffs and senior citizens. Education is managed in a way like business with a market-orientated approach. There are rumors on the quality of such kind of education that administered. In the programme description for one of the programmes, there is a description on health and safety programmes in Hong Kong (Department of Building Services Engineering, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, n. d.):

There are no in-depth studies and high-level training offered by local universities alone (though there is some collaboration with overseas universities) on safety engineering at all. The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers (HKIE) is considering whether a discipline of 'Safety Engineers' should be identified. But before doing so, there must be well-structured degree programmes offered by local educational institutes, and strong research and development activities.

The sort of description has given out information on the need for high-level training for health and safety personnel. A fully locally-run part-time bachelor degree programme in occupational health and safety was presented in 2004. The fulltime version of the programme has commenced since 2005. The establishment of health and safety programme at a bachelor degree level represents another challenge in the development of health and safety education in Hong Kong. Although the thought of setting up degree programme by entirely locally-conducted have got underway for a number of years, the proverb only came true two years ago.

Conclusion

In contemporary era, approach to education has been advocated by many of the administrators or educators. Profit making is suggested to be the determining issue for the survival of education programmes. Programmes with a negative balance in the revenue should be discontinued as they are not marketable in a sense that is not responding to the need of the market. However, education is more than a commodity in the commercial or business sector. It is about the transfer of knowledge, the kind of information that should be available to all people in a fair deal. Equal opportunity to education and fairness in education should be the norm. Without such thinking, doing education or teaching is like running a business. With the various choices in occupational health and safety programmes in Hong Kong, there should be a move towards the achievement of higher academic standing and concurrently with the availability of health and safety knowledge to all those in needed. Occupational health and safety is about protection of people at work. There is a need for training competent personnel. Making profit in expense of quality of education in health and safety will result in generating incompetent personnel who cannot function effectively in protecting people at work. We need knowledgeable and capable personnel to conduct health and safety education. In course design, especially at a basic level, effort must be made to ensure the delivery of proficient education.

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