

Ninth Management Seminar for the Heads of National Statistical Offices in Asia and the Pacific

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“Developing Professional Capability for National Statistical Systems”

Statement of Macao, China

Established in 1984, the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) is responsible for the compilation of official statistics of Macao. With a centralized statistical system, DSEC is empowered to coordinate, supervise and give guidance to the undertaking of statistical activities in the territory. Over the past 25 years, DSEC accords high priority in strengthening the technical and analytical skills of the staff to address emerging social issues, increasing needs of data users, as well as challenges arising from its responsibilities,

However, recruiting qualified local residents, especially with tertiary education, was not an easy task during the mid-1980. At that time, DSEC relied primarily on sending colleagues to attend training courses of international organizations and/or short-term training in Portugal, or inviting resource persons of foreign agencies to organize topic-specific trainings such as the followings:

- Questionnaire design;
- Sampling technique;
- Fieldwork Procedures;
- Data Analysis; and
- Data dissemination.

In 1995, with a view to develop an achievable career path for the existing staff and ascertain professional knowledge of new entrants, DSEC collaborated with the Macao Polytechnic Institute in organizing a diploma course on “Organization and Methods on Statistics” plus an auxiliary course “Supplementary Training on Statistics” that was open to the staff and local residents with senior secondary education. As regard those having higher education in other areas of study, they could just attend the auxiliary to attain the same qualification. Students were required to take an entrance exam prior to course admission, while selection of DSEC staff was also based on the recommendations of the respective Department Head. In fact, offering these two courses was part of the capacity

building of the staff and a strategic move to secure the professional capability of potential human resources.

Favourable outcome of the courses helped to stabilize the working team of DSEC; however, the programme was suspended, among other factors, on account of the economic recession near the turn of the century. After China's resumption in the exercise of sovereignty over Macao in 1999, rapid economic growth has generated the resources needed but opening the gambling sector has intensified the problem on shortage of human resources. Similar to most of the service industries, DSEC has considerable difficulties in recruiting qualified staff to handle rising data requests, to keep up with the latest development in official statistics and the growing concern on the ageing staff.

Alternatively, DSEC takes another approach to develop professional capability of new staff. Firstly, to participate an in-house departmental training that enables them to familiarize with the major projects and surveys; secondly, to attend courses and workshops of international organizations according to work performance and area of work; thirdly, to evaluate application of course knowledge to practical work.

In respect of the senior level of staff, namely department heads and deputy directors, they are expected to participate more actively in regional and international conferences, seminars and forums to encourage broader exchange of views, sharing of experiences, and more importantly, networking with participants from other national statistical offices.

Moreover, DSEC takes advantage of the outreach programme of SIAP in organizing training courses in Macao, which is more beneficial to the host institution and cost-effective in terms of staff participation.

In conclusion, we trust that the notion of developing professional capability has expanded beyond the boundary of enhancing the "employability" of an individual. In accordance with our experience, developing professional capability is an essential part of the capacity building of the staff and the institution as a whole; therefore, DSEC will ensure that adequate resources will be allocated to the capacity building, in training and in technical support, to the staff, while DSEC will also benefit in turn from the experiences and dedication of the team.