



What is the problem?

In recent years one common theme of concern that kept coming up during conversations is the difficulty of finding people to take up electrical contracting as their career. The same problem seems to exist at various working levels, from electrical technicians and supervisory staff to engineers and executives. The rate of recruitment cannot keep up with the rate of retirement and attrition. As a result there is a shortage of talents, and the average age of the people in the industry is on the increase.

When the Hong Kong Electrical Contractors' Association Education Foundation was set up, its main objective was to encourage young people to join the electrical contracting trade through the granting of scholarships to bright or needy students. The first targets were graduates from universities, including diploma students at the Polytechnic University. Later it turned out that more and more university graduates and diploma holders had looked for greener pastures outside the electrical contracting trade. Even the few that remained preferred government institutions or design consultants to traditional electrical contractors. It seemed that most of the higher qualified young people were deserting the trade. Reluctantly, the Education Foundation switched its attention to graduates from technical training schools. The scholarships were thus diverted to the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education schools under the Vocational Training Council, and to the Construction Industry Training Authority.

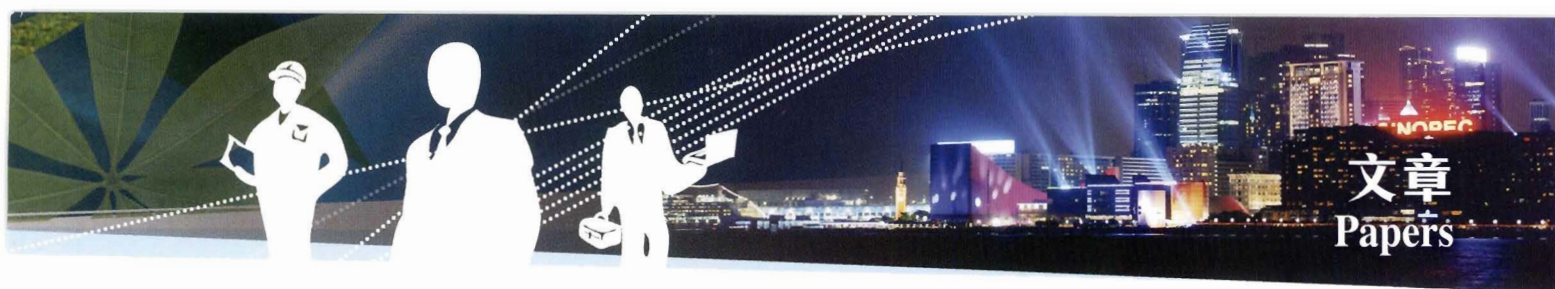
Recently, there are signs that even enrolment at technical training schools is coming down. If this is the beginning of a trend, then the implications on the development of the electrical contracting industry could be worrying. On the other hand, this could be a temporary phenomenon, as young people were attracted to other jobs that were in abundance during

問題何在？

近年來同業們在閒談時都常常提到一個問題，就是擔心電機工程行業，越來越難找接班人，無論從行業的基層開始，如電器技工，以至監管人員，以至工程師，行政人員等，都有相同的現象——在職者年紀老化，退休或轉職流失漸多，而新入行的年青人，卻漸漸減少，醞釀著青黃不接的形勢。

香港電器工程商會當年成立教育基金，並派出獎學金，目的正是鼓勵年青人加入電器工程行業；最初的對象是大學畢業生，包括理工大學的文憑課程畢業生，後來發覺拿著文憑或學位的年青人，大都另謀出路，而餘下投入電機工程的，卻以選擇政府機構或顧問機構居多，反而傳統的承造工程行業，似乎吸引不到這些持有高級學術資格的年青人。因為這個問題，教育基金改變了對象，轉而派出獎學金給一些接受過技術訓練的學員，例如職業訓練局轄下，香港專業教育學院，及建造業訓練局的畢業生。

這幾年，有一些跡象，選擇電機工程技術課程的年青人都減少了，如果這是一個新的趨勢的話，對業界將來的發展，當有一定的影響，但如果是因為2008年前經濟太好，其他行業暫時吸引了不少年青人，那又當別論，究竟情況如何？是一個值得探討的話題。



the economic upturn before 2008. One way or the other, the subject is certainly worthy of our attention.

Changes of the Hong Kong economy

When people choose jobs, good prospects are an essential consideration. With the Hong Kong economy continually changing, career prospects of the electrical contracting industry have also been shifting as well. Today service industries such as finance, tourism, and logistics account for the majority of Hong Kong's Gross Domestic Product. Finance, in particular, has been hailed as the future of Hong Kong's economy. All these service industries have attracted many young job-seekers.

Electrical contracting, on the other hand, had basically been following the steps of the construction industry. After the collapse of the property market in 1997, the number of household units built in the public and the private sectors have remained low even since. And there is no sign of any obvious trend of increase in the foreseeable future. After the financial tsunami of 2008, things took a worse turn. So the Hong Kong Government introduced a number of infrastructure projects to boost the economy. However these projects are one-off expenditures and will not sustain the industry in the long term. Furthermore, the projects are relatively large and thus will only benefit a small number of contractors. Most of the other companies would still be struggling in a difficult market. This predicament is quite obvious and would not have escaped the sharp eyes of the young job seekers. Under these circumstances, we could hardly expect them to show much interest in joining the electrical contracting industry.

Expectations of the Young

In order to attract young people into the industry, the very first step would be to understand their expectations and aspirations. There are questions to ask ourselves. To start with, are the starting salaries on the low side compared with other industries? Or are they lower even compared with other employers within the electrical engineering industry, such as government bodies and large institutions? Of course salary levels are basically a commercial decision and would thus follow the rule of supply and demand. Because of this, salary levels do affect the number of interested applicants one gets and their quality.

Another question would be how many young people would choose electrical engineering as a lifelong career, or at least as a springboard for further development. The answer would depend on their view of the prospects of an electrical engineering career, of the stability of the career, and of the influences on the industry due to the developments of the Hong Kong economy. One should note that it is the views of the young people that matter, not the view of us who are already in the industry.



香港經濟之轉形

年青人選擇職業，好的出路是重要考慮因素之一，而在經濟一直在轉形的香港，工程業的前景和出路也隨著轉變，服務行業如財經、旅遊、物流等迅速增長，佔香港生產總值之大部份，尤其是財經業，更被視為未來之經濟支柱，這些服務行業，吸引了不少就業青年。

反觀電機工程，主要是跟隨著建造工程發展，但自從1997年後，地產業一蹶不振，無論公共或私人屋宇的建造，數目都大不如前，而且亦看不到將來有顯著增長的趨勢，2008年金融海嘯後，政府推出一列基建工程，以振興經濟，但這些建設都是一次過的，不能長期維持行業之生存，而且工程龐大而集中，只能令少數的承辦商受惠，行內大部份的公司，仍然是處於嚴峻的掙扎狀態，這情況是有目共睹的，而就業的年青人，亦會明白這個情況，試問他們那會有太大的興趣，來加入這個行列呢？

年青一代的需求

如果我們能夠了解年青一代的需求，對於吸引他們入行，便起碼行對了第一步，例如，薪酬的起點是否太低，或是平均薪酬也比其他行業為低，甚至乎比同是電機工程行業，其他的僱主如政府和大機構為低呢？當然薪酬的高低是一項商業決定，亦受供求的定律主宰，正因如此，入行者的人數和人才的質素，都可能隨著薪酬的水平而變動。

又例如，有多少年青人，會考慮投身電機工程，作為一個終身的行業呢？或者起碼作為事業的一個跳板呢？這便要看看他的對電機工程行業的看法，他們心目中這行業的前途，香港經

How about the values of the younger generation? Would a job on construction sites be considered inferior to working in the office? Would working on sites be regarded as too much on the tough side? As for mainland China, there are many opportunities there. But how many young people would be willing to give up the comfort and convenience of Hong Kong and rough it out in a new environment in the mainland? And if indeed construction sites and mainland China are considered secondary choices, can such a view be changed at all?

On top of all that, can the education system of Hong Kong play a role?

The Education system

Education is a matter of perpetual controversy, whether in Hong Kong or elsewhere in the world. Here issues like 'mother tongue as medium of instruction', 'the 3-3-4 system of interface between secondary school and university', 'the through train from primary to secondary school', and 'smaller sizes of classes' have caused much confusion and antagonism for quite some time. But to ascertain what is the best education system is a complicated and difficult, if not impossible task, for there are just too many interested parties. For example there are the Education Bureau, the University Grants Committee, the Professional Teachers' Union, the teachers, the parents, and the students. And among these parties it does not appear that there is a consensus as to whose interest is at stake. No wonder the controversy continues. If we consider training, then we also have the Vocation Training Council, the Construction Industry Training Authority, and the Employees Retraining Board. The list goes on.

Any system has room for improvement, and the education and training systems in Hong Kong is no exception. But we must admit that the present systems in Hong Kong already provide diverse and sufficient choices for the young people. So we should not be bogged down by issues such as allocation of resources and the scope and contents of curricula. Over valuation of one's opinion leads to arguments, which in turn undermines the process to achieve the task. Take the example of registration of construction workers. There are just too many entrenched parties principally interested in building their own castles. As a result little is achieved so far. (Electrical workers are an exception, because most workers are already registered before.)

For the young people who have gone through the present education and training systems, they should be well prepared to take up employment in society. The electrical engineering industry should be no exception. Please try reflecting on this. For those of you who have been young people some years ago. Regardless of how you have acquired your qualifications and expertise, and regardless of how inadequate the facilities and training were then compared with now, haven't you successfully become a member of the industry?



濟發展對行業的影響，行業的穩定性如何等等，而應注意，要緊的是他們的看法，不是我們行內人的看法。

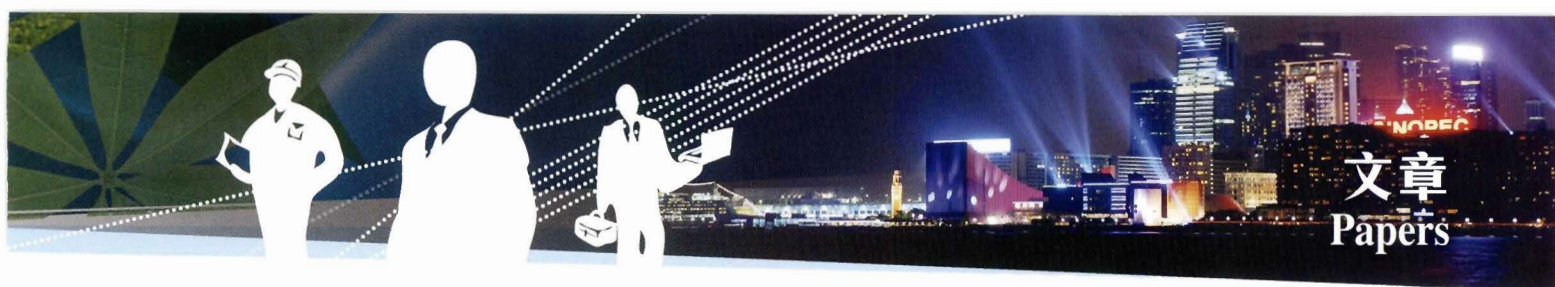
還有，年青人的價值觀又會有何不同呢？舉例來說，一份在寫字樓的文書工作，是否被認為是比地盤工作較為高尚呢？或者，地盤工作是否被認為是太辛苦，又例如，國內發展的機會不少，但有多少年青人樂意放棄香港的舒適和方便，而走到陌生的地方去闖事業呢？要是落地盤或去國內被認為是次等工作，這種價值觀又是否可以改變過來呢？而香港的教育制度，又是否可以幫一把呢？

教育制度的配套

教育制度是永遠具爭議性的，外國如是，香港也如是，母語教育、三三四制、一條龍、小班教學，令人難以適從，但是要問甚麼是最好的制度，亦不是簡單地可以解答的，因為既得利益者太多了，有教育局、有大學教育資助委員會、有教育專業人員協會、有教師、有家長、還有學生們，究竟誰是真正的主人翁，似乎還未弄清楚，爭議那能停下？若把培訓和教育放在一起，那麼還要加入職業訓練局、建造業訓練局、再培訓局等，真令人有些百花齊放的感覺。

任何制度都有改良的餘地，香港的教育及培訓體制也不例外，但現行制度給予年青人的選擇，是多元化及足夠的，故此我們不必為資源投放的問題，或課程範圍的問題，太過執著，通常執著更多，爭議就更多，事情則做不成了，例如建造業工人註冊工作，各方努力在雞蛋裏挑骨頭，成績之差，有目共睹（電氣工人因已註冊在先，情況例外）。

現在年青人接受教育和培訓，是足以應付他們投入社會謀生的，電機工程行業也不例外，若要求證，請曾經是年青人的各位試問



Conclusion

The nurturing and development of the younger generation is a long and involved process. We should not profess to be able to influence the values or views of young people, let alone within a short period of time. By the same token, it is difficult for us to adjust and change our own thinking to align with the values and views of the young.

The education and training infrastructure of Hong Kong is adequate to prepare young people to choose their career in electrical engineering. Whether they will eventually make the choice depends on many other factors. These include the positioning of the electrical engineering industry within the evolving economy of Hong Kong, prospects of the industry in the evolving framework, salary levels, job benefits and welfare, promotion prospects, travel requirements, working environment, and the comfort level of the job.

Some of these factors are beyond our control, while for some other factors something could be done. The decision to take action and to increase the attractiveness of the electrical engineering industry in order to draw in more new blood has to rest with the employers. The decision depends on the requirements of individual companies and how they view the urgency of these requirements. They are likely to differ from one company to another.

The HKECA Education Foundation's role is to deliver a message to students that the electrical engineering industry needs them and welcomes them. The Foundation intends to continue its work in this role. As for the job of actually looking for the right people, it could only be done by you.

自己，無論您們出身如何，無論以前的教育和訓練是否落後於現在，您們是否都已成功地成為這個行業的一份子呢？

結論

培育年青一代是一個漫長的過程，我們不能妄想短短的時間內，把他們的想法或價值觀改過來，同一原理，要我們把價值觀與年青人認同，亦不容易；香港的教育及培訓配套，足以給與年青人作為選擇電機工程行業的準備，但最終他們是否選擇電機工程，是受很多其他的因素影響的，其中包括電機工程行業，在轉形中的香港經濟的定位及前景，以及這行業的待遇，包括起薪點，員工福利，晉升機會等，又包括工作環境，出差到境外的須要，及整份工作的舒適程度等。

這些因素，有些是我們控制不到的，但也有些是在可以改變的範圍內的，至於是否真的要付諸行動，來提升電機工程行業的吸引力，藉以幫助尋找新一代的接班人，那就視乎事情的需要性和急切性，而每一家公司的情況都是不同的。

教育基金的作用，是對學生們傳達一個信息，電機工程行業是需要他們，並歡迎他們的，而且我們很希望教育基金能夠繼續發揮這個作用。至於尋找接班人的工作，恐怕各位要親力親為了。

Recipient Organization	接受本會捐助之教育機構	Amount 銀碼
2007-2008		
Vocational Training Council	職業訓練局	\$60,000.00
Hong Kong Polytechnic University	香港理工大學	\$3,000.00
Skill Upgrading Scheme – E&M Excellent Student Award	技能提升計劃 —— 機電精英獎	\$2,500.00
Construction Industry Training Authority	建造業訓練局	\$2,000.00
		共 Total \$67,500.00
2008-2009		
Vocational Training Council	職業訓練局	\$57,000.00
Hong Kong Polytechnic University	香港理工大學	\$3,000.00
Vocational Training Council – HK Youth Skill Competition	職業訓練局 —— 港區青年技能競賽	\$5,000.00
Construction Industry Training Authority	建造業訓練局	\$2,000.00
Chan Ka Man	陳嘉文	\$5,000.00
Winner of 5th Guangzhou Hong Kong Macau Youth Skill Competition	第5屆穗港澳青年技能競賽冠軍	
		共 Total \$72,000.00