

ESU Tables Bread And Butter Issues

Workshop Focuses On Employment And Employability



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Prompted by the growing concerns of workers in their employment and employability, the Education Services Union held a workshop for both Ordinary and General Branch members touching on these issues on 6 June 2009 at NTUC Centre. The topics covered were close to the hearts of many and particularly relevant in this climate of economic uncertainty.

It included the rights of employees in the employment contract and changes to the Employment Act. ESU was also privileged to have officials from Ministry of Manpower like Senior Deputy Director Mr Tan Jing Koon and Head of Tripartite Programmes Mr Lim Tong Teck share on the recently announced National Wages Council Guidelines for 2009 and 2010 and the revised Tripartite Guidelines on Managing Excess Manpower. In addition, NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) officers also made presentations on the Skills Programme for Upgrading and Resilience and NTUC Education and Training Fund usage guidelines.

The workshop saw much interaction between participants who took the opportunity to find out more about their rights as employees under the law and also how best to tap on the various training initiatives to upgrade themselves. Given the possible financial hardships that might be faced by some members, ESU also presented training and welfare schemes available to ESU members. For instance, as a token of encouragement to members undergoing self-initiated training in NETF approved courses, ESU will also grant them an education incentive of 10 per cent of the course fee or \$50, whichever is lower. Needy members can also apply for the ESU Hardship Grant.

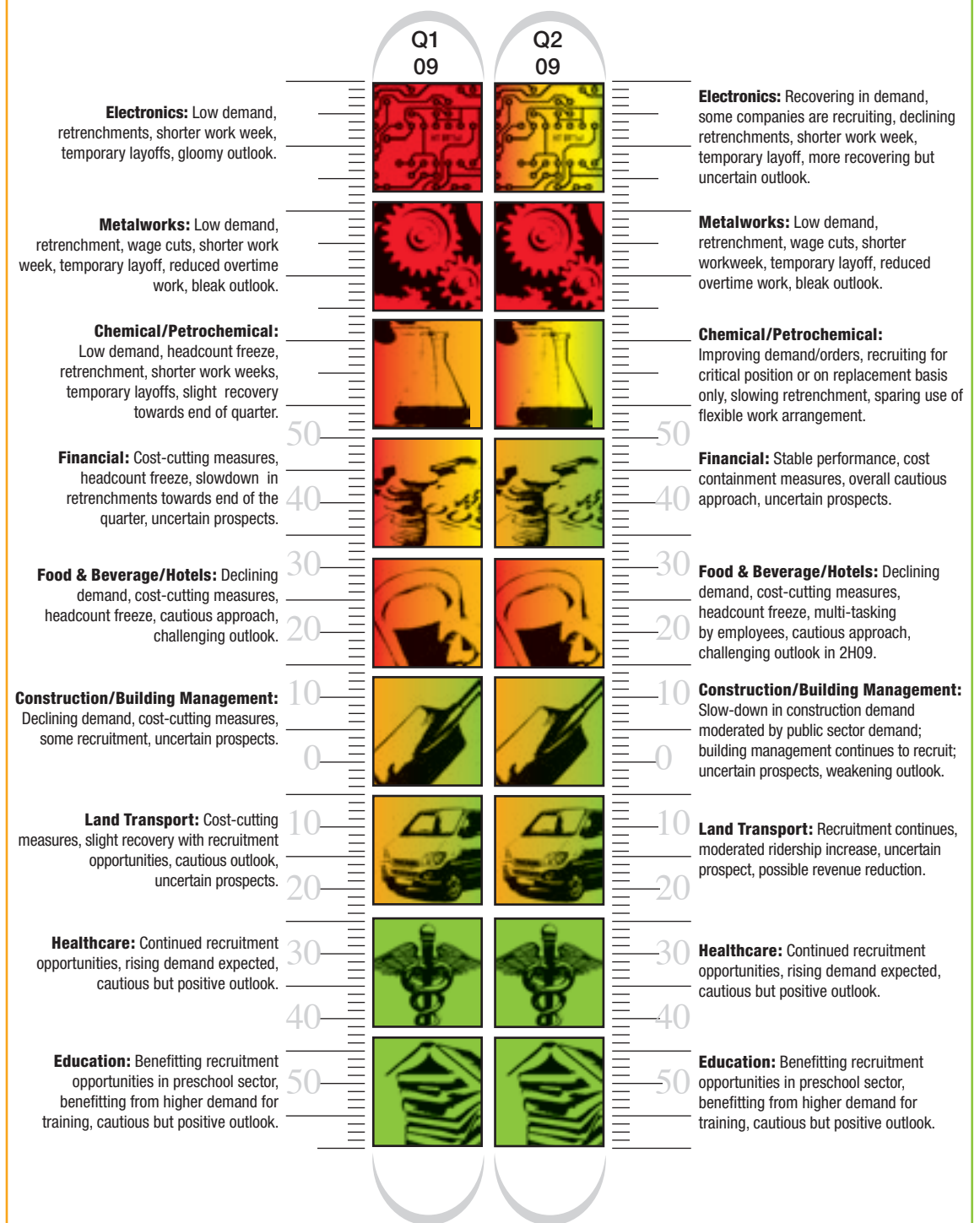
Participants were appreciative of the union's initiative to hold a workshop discussing bread and butter issues. Madam Maureen Soon, an Ordinary Branch member from Club HDB Child Care Centre, found the workshop discussions fruitful and the information useful in keeping members updated. Echoing her view was Madam Teo Lay Yan, a General Branch member from Sunny Bunny Montessori Child Care, who applauded ESU for holding such a workshop. She also requested for a follow-up workshop with more in-depth discussion on worker's rights and welfare. Encouraged by the positive responses, ESU plans to hold the next workshop in the second half of the year.

Getting Better

In Quarter 1, many sectors like Electronics, Metalworks, Chemical/Petrochemical, Food & Beverage/Hotels and Construction/Building Management were besieged by low or declining demand. Electronics, Metalworks and Chemical/Petrochemical sectors were also retrenching workers. Even the Financial Industry was making layoffs, even though cuts occurred mostly towards the end of the quarter.

Overall, things seem to be looking up in Quarter 2. The Electronics Sector is experiencing a recovery in demand while Chemical/Petrochemical is seeing improved demand/orders. In the Financial Industry, the situation is better, too, as retrenchments have stopped. Construction/Building Management and Land Transport industries continue to recruit while Healthcare and Education have maintained healthy hiring rates. The only underperforming sector is Metalworks. Workers should upgrade their skills to explore opportunities in recovering industries.

INDUSTRY THERMOMETER



LEGEND:

Red

Massive retrenchments, shorter work week, temporary layoff. Drastic decline in business volume. Environmental Scan: Gloomy outlook.

Amber

Moderate or no retrenchments, shorter work week, temporary layoffs. Decline in business volume. Environmental Scan: Weak or uncertain outlook.

Green

Stable and positive growth. Environmental Scan: Cautious but positive outlook.

Indicators: Purchasing Managers' Index down, Non-oil Domestic Exports (qtr-to-qtr: negative), Business expectations (negative), tourist arrivals (qtr-to-qtr: negative).