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\$20m invested in a training centre

Money in the bank for BOC

By STANLEY LEUNG

The Bank of China has invested about \$20 million in its modern, computer-equipped training centre in Mount Davis Road.

It moved to its present address in April 1982 and has since seen the coming and going of more than 5,000 senior and junior employees.

The BOC Training and Development Centre was first set up in late 1979 with two classrooms in a building in Central — hardly enough room for a banking organisation with some 10,000 employees.

Since then the growth of training programmes has been astonishing. Apart from the Mount Davis Road headquarters, the centre has three branches — in Central, Kowloon and Tsun Wan — with a total of 12 large lecture rooms and all the latest teaching aids.

The deputy general manager of the personnel division under the BOC's Hongkong and Macau regional office, Mr Ma Ching-hua, said the training programmes were still expected to expand to keep level with the expansion of the bank's operations.

One aim of the centre, among other things, was to cope with China's modernisation programmes and to help maintain the territory's prosperity and stability, Mr Ma said.

"Britain has endorsed the

common aim of maintaining the territory's prosperity and stability. To this end, the BOC has supported local industries and opened courses on industrial financing last year.

"Due to the fact that China has become more and more open, the BOC is actively participating in international business and business relating to China's modernisation programmes," he said.

"And we have to train up the required people for this purpose."

He said the recent opening up of 14 coastal cities in China also had implications regarding BOC training programmes.

To cope with the latest demand, he said, the bank was going to run courses on "project financing" which would train people in evaluating and handling large, complex projects such as hotels and factories.

Mr Ma also said the increasing complexity of the markets, evolution of technology and changing business tactics required all levels of staff to study and catch up with developments.

As far as top level management is concerned, seminars are held regularly with leading economists and academics to exchange ideas on new banking theories.

In recent years, he added, the BOC had engaged in more

tion.

In addition, the BOC has to spend more than \$1 million each year in running the centre and its three branches with their 25 full-time staff members.

The 26 automatic teller machine (ATM) terminals installed in the building are mainly used for the training of bank tellers who have the chance to learn and practise how to proceed with transactions through the machines.

The terminals are linked up with the 14 BOC sister banks' main computer net-

work.

Mr Ma said about 30 per cent of the training courses were devoted to the training of new employees, mainly tellers.

During an intensive, two-week programme, new tellers are taught how to operate ATM machines, count bank notes quickly and accurately, handle complaints and use calculators. They also take an introduction course in general banking theory.

He said the BOC realised that other banks in Hongkong attached much importance to employee attitude, so new tellers are also taught, with the help of video-cassette recorders, how to be polite to customers.

One distinctive feature of the programme is the "model bank" set up to give trainees immediate practical experience.

Other "customers" the centre serves are the mid-level managers who take up 40 per cent of the total number of courses.

"We have reached the policies to train up these mid-level management staff who will be the future 'masters of the bank.' And their loyalty to the bank has been encouraging, especially in the 1973 monetary crisis."

The courses provided for mid-management include banking law, public relations, engineering insurance, cheque management as well as other specialised bank services.

"We have more than 10 full-time lecturers who have been serving in the 14 sister banks in Hongkong and

Macau for quite some years to take the courses. We also invite university lecturers to take night courses mainly in the three centre branches," he said.

The part-time lecturers come from the Chinese University, the University of Hongkong and Hongkong Polytechnic.

Mr Ma said it was an illusion that many senior officials came from China. "There are very few employees seconded from China — as many as 99 per cent of the senior-level management are local people."

But he admitted that more than 20 officers from BOC branches in China came to Hongkong every year to work and learn.

These people would attend some of the courses and take up posts in one or other of the sister banks for one or two years to gain on-the-job experience. After that, Mr Ma said, they return to their original banks in China.

The BOC also sends more than 10 mid-level management staff, including some university graduates joining the bank in recent years, to the BOC's branches and corresponding banks overseas, usually on a six-month basis.

As to whether the BOC's pay scale was high enough to attract enough people, Mr Ma said it fell behind those of foreign banks, but they had "fringe benefits" to compensate for this.

For instance, employees with five years' service are entitled to housing at about one-third of the market price.