

Letterhead of Hong Kong University Students' Union

15th February, 2001

Miss Flora Tai
Clerk on Education Panel
Legislative Council, HKSAR

Dear Miss Tai,

**Matters concerning the reduction of funding allocation to
the government-funded institutions in 2001-2004 Triennium**

I get to know that there will be a meeting on Education Panel concerning the UGC funding allocation to the government-funded institutions in 2001-2004 Triennium. I am glad that if you could pass this piece of submission to the members for considerations and discussion.

(A) The negative impacts on budget cut

The Hong Kong University Students' Union (HKUSU) has put emphasis and concerns on the Hong Kong education development and recent policy reforms, such as the curriculum-based charging system, UGC funding indicators, students' grants and loans scheme, high tuition fee as well as the commercialization of education, Regarding to the reduction of UGC funding to institutions, we would like to express our concerns for your consideration. Our concerns are:

1. Though our government encourages the institutions to 'transform' or 'sell' their research products to private or commercial sectors to fund and finance their own projects, there is not enough and sufficient conditions for the institutions in Hong Kong to do so. Besides, the situation of over-emphasize on research at the expense of the teaching process will harm the teaching performance and students' qualities ultimately. Worst still, some fundamental curriculums like humanities and philosophy are difficult to undergo such kind of 'transformation' or treat their research project as products to be exchanged in the market, the budget cut will seriously hamper the development of these subjects and further restrict the variety of the subject choices for the students. It is unrealistic and inappropriate for the government to have a significant funding reduction.
2. As institutions are facing the insufficient funding allocation, they will try all means to reduce the operation costs by reducing staff employment, reducing those 'non-value-added' courses and programs, reducing students' support facilities and other capital development. These actions and responses will detrimental to the teaching qualities and the general performance of students. Real cases like: limited resources to update the library book storage, fewer tutors and lecturers or other professorial grade lecturers, heavy administrative workload taken up by academic staff after the reduction of non-teaching staff, etc.
3. Apart from streamlining or reducing the 'necessary expenditure', there will be a danger for the students to bare heavier financial burden, such as the reduction of grants and loans of government, increase the tuition fee, etc.

4. To secure the number of student intakes and places of the institutions, institutions will then try all means to 'attract' students and 'sell' programs regardless of the qualities and affordability concerning their individual circumstances. The trend of commercialization of education will be strengthened and intensified, such as over-emphasis on the Information Technology or business programs but downplay the importance of humanities programs, over-emphasis on technical training responding to the needs of business or economy, etc. It is not a desirable phenomenon as institutions will focus on the marketing skills on how to 'target' the potential 'buyers' by putting money on advertising or others at the expense of the qualities of the programs and students. Ultimately, there will be an imbalance development of curriculum and damages on the qualities of future society.

In views of the above concerns and analysis, we believe it is unreasonable and improper for the government to announce the budget cut in the coming Triennium.

(B) Suggested actions

As the government has withdrawn the relevant documents during the Legislative Council meeting on 9th February, there is possible time leg for the government officials, UGC representatives, institutions' heads and other groups to reach a new compromise on funding allocation. Suggested actions are:

1. Finance Bureau representatives explain the budget allocation to the field of Education.
2. UGC and government officials discuss and arrange the calculation of Students' Unit Cost.
3. Institutions explain the drawbacks and negative effects of the budget cut of last Triennium to the government officials and UGC.
4. UGC and government officials are better to relate the impact of budget cut of higher institutions (or the overall budget allocation to institutions) with the long-term education objectives and aims posed by the Chief Executive and the Education Commission.
5. Consultation period should be arranged for institutions, political parties and the public before UGC submits its funding proposals to the Legislative Council for adoption.

I am glad that if the honorable Legislative Council members could share with us their valuable comments and stance on the above matters. I believe that their opinions would enrich the understandings of fellow students concerning these matters and further stimulate them to develop a more thorough and insightful idea on other education matters.

Last but not least, I would like to seek for your approval in visiting the Education Panel meeting regarding to the discussion on agenda item V.

Looking forward to your favorable reply. Thank you for your genuine help.

Yours sincerely,

Chang Wan Ki, Gloria
President, HKUSU