

LegCo Panel on Manpower
(meeting to be held on 20.3.2003)

Review of Project Yi Jin

Purpose

This paper reviews the effectiveness of Project Yi Jin (PYJ) and seeks Members' views on its future.

Background

2. PYJ was launched in October 2000 as a bridging programme to provide an alternative route and to expand the continuing education opportunities for secondary school leavers and adult learners. The programme is run by the Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions (FCE) on a self-financing basis.

3. The Programme aims to upgrade student's knowledge, through combining academic and practical skills training, with emphasis on biliteracy and trilingualism and information technology application. There are six core subjects i.e. Chinese, English, Putonghua, IT/Computer, Quantitative Skills and Communication Skills. In addition, some electives such as Tourism, Multi-media and IT Networking Support are offered.

4. Students who successfully complete the programme will be awarded a full certificate. This full certificate has been evaluated by the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation as comparable to five passes in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), for the purposes of continuing education and employment. Holders of the full certificate can further their studies in the FCE member institutions. The Government has also accepted the holders of the full certificate in the application for more than 30 civil service posts which require five passes (including English and Chinese) in the HKCEE.

5. With an allocation of \$200 million approved by the Finance Committee in May 2000, the Government provides funding for student support activities and the reimbursement of tuition fees to students for three academic years from 2000/01 to 2002/03. The reimbursement arrangement is to provide an additional incentive for students to work hard and to complete the modules.

6. Of the approved commitment, it is estimated that approximately \$107 million will have been used for the implementation of PYJ for the three academic years, leaving an unspent balance of about \$93 million. A breakdown of expenditure for the three academic years 2000/01 to 2002/03 is at Annex 1.

Evaluation of Programme

7. The number of full-time and part-time students enrolled in the programme in 2000/01, 2001/02 and 2002/03 academic years were approximately 4 200, 3 300 and 3 400 respectively. The majority of these were young people who did not achieve five passes in the HKCEE. Some twenty percent were adult learners.

8. For 2000/01 and 2001/02, out of a total of 5 556 students who have completed the Programme, 3 141 (56.5%) obtained results of passes in 10 subjects and were awarded full certificates. 2 415 (43.5%) obtained results of passes in less than 10 subjects and were awarded, where appropriate, certificates for the relevant subjects only.

9. We have carried out surveys on the first and second year graduates of PYJ. For students who obtained full certificates, the survey showed that some 55.1% of respondents were pursuing further studies, 27.2% were working, 12.8% were working and studying and 4.9% were neither working nor studying. For students who did not obtain full certificates, 44.6% of respondents were pursuing further studies, 34.9% were working, 13.1% were working and studying and 7.4% were neither working nor studying. Details are at Annex 2.

10. For students who had obtained full certificates, many of them were able to continue their studies in Pre-Associate Degree, 2-year or 3-year Associate Degree, Higher Diploma, Diploma and Certificate courses. Details are at Annex 3.

11. For students who had taken up jobs, a breakdown of job types is at Annex 4.

12. The above results show that PYJ has performed an effective role as a bridging programme. It has successfully helped some secondary school leavers and adult learners to obtain the necessary qualification to continue their studies. Graduates of PYJ have also found jobs on the basis of the qualification obtained. It has fulfilled its objective to provide an alternative route and to expand the continuing education opportunities for secondary school leavers and adult learners.

Financial Assistance under the Programme

13. The programme comprises ten modules and the cost of each module varies between \$2,600 and \$3,400, with the total cost standing at about \$30,000. As approved by the Finance Committee in May 2000, students who have satisfactorily completed each module will be reimbursed 30% of the tuition fee paid for that module. In July 2002, the Finance Committee further approved the reimbursement of tuition fee in full to needy students upon successful completion of each module. Needy students are defined as those who are eligible for full assistance under the means-test for the secondary school sector administered by the Student Financial Assistance Agency. For example, for the 2002/03 academic year, students from a 4-member family with total family income not exceeding \$8,500 a month will be eligible.

14. Our records show that the overall passing rate of modules is about 85%. Some 10% of students have received full reimbursement of tuition fee as needy students.

The Proposal

15. When PYJ was introduced in May 2000, the intention was to provide financial assistance for three academic years only at an estimated total cost of \$200 million. Given the success of the PYJ and the present economic climate, we propose to continue the scheme for another two years, i.e. until the end of the 2004/05 academic year. A review will be carried out in 2005 to examine the readiness of PYJ to be run on a fully self-financing basis, taking into account its level of recognition and acceptance amongst stakeholders, the prevailing economic conditions and the financial position of the Administration.

16. Meanwhile the Administration will continue to explore in conjunction with the FCE ways to reduce the level of course fees for the Programme. Some providers have indicated that they would continue to run PYJ courses even without government financial support.

17. When the proposal for full reimbursement of tuition fee to needy students was put to the Finance Committee in July 2002, some members suggested that the Administration should examine the feasibility of providing further financial incentives to students of PYJ. We have considered this suggestion. As the Programme already provides arrangements for 30% or 100% reimbursement of tuition fees for eligible students, who may also apply for financial assistance under the Non-means-tested Loan Scheme to pay the tuition fees upfront, and in view of the prevailing financial stringency, we consider it more desirable to use the remaining funds to provide for more training places than to enhance the benefits for selected students.

Financial Implication

18. The expenditure on PYJ for each school year will depend on the size of student intake, the passing rate of respective modules, and percentages of students eligible for full fee assistance under the means-test. Assuming a student intake of 3 500 (both full-time and part-time) each year, a 10% eligibility rate for full fee assistance, and an average passing rate of 85% for the modules (all figures based on past trend), we estimate that the annual expenditure including publicity and student support activities will be around \$46 million. We have earmarked sufficient provision in the relevant subhead to meet the financial requirement of PYJ in 2003-04. We will make sufficient provision for subsequent years in the annual draft Estimates.

Advice Sought

19. Members are invited to comment on the proposal as set out in paragraph 15 above.

Education and Manpower Bureau
March 2003

Actual/Estimated Expenditure for Project Yi Jin

<u>Item</u>	<u>Financial Year</u>			
	<u>2000-01</u> \$ million	<u>2001-02</u> \$million	<u>2002-03</u> \$million	<u>2003-04</u> \$million
(a) Reimbursement of tuition fee	-	24.4	18.3	35
(b) Support (Student support programmes, publicity, etc.)	3.0	6.3	9.7	11
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Total:	3.0	30.7	28.0	46

(Note: Project Yi Jin was launched in October 2000. Reimbursement of tuition fee and student support programmes for the first school year will be reflected in 2001-02 financial year. Full tuition fee reimbursement for needy students was introduced in October 2002 and its effect will be reflected in 2003-04 financial year. The projected expenditure for 2003-04 has included fee reimbursement for all current students including part-time students who will graduate in July 2004.)

Current Status of PYJ Graduates

Status	2000-2002		Total
	Full Certificate Holder	Non-Full Certificate Holder	
(a) Studying	55.1%	44.6%	52.2%
(b) Working	27.2%	34.9%	29.3%
(c) Studying and Working	12.8%	13.1%	12.9%
(d) Neither Studying Nor Working	4.9%	7.4%	5.6%

Note: The total number of graduates in 2000-02 is 5 556. The number of students who have responded to the survey is 3 222. The response rate of the survey is 58%.

PYJ Students in Subsequent Study

2000-2002

Full Certificate Holder Non-Full Certificate Holder

1. *Mode*

Full-time study	60.4%	16.4%
Part-time study	16.1%	7.1%

2. *Level*

Pre-AD	8.8%	1.6%
AD (2 years)	3.4%	0.6%
AD (3 years)	1.6%	0.0%
Higher Diploma	15.6%	2.5%
Diploma	21.9%	4.5%
Certificate	17.9%	7.7%
S6	0.6%	0.3%
Repeat S5	1.0%	0.4%
Further/repeat PYJ	0.8%	3.8%
Other	4.6%	2.2%

PYJ Students in Employment

	2000-2002	
	<i>Full Certificate Holder</i>	<i>Non-Full Certificate Holder</i>
1. <i>Mode</i>		
Full-time employment	53.0%	21.7%
Part-time employment	15.8%	9.5%
2. <i>Type</i>		
Government	6.1%	1.5%
Government-funded organization	5.8%	1.3%
Private: Commerce	16.0%	6.8%
Private: Manufacturing	5.9%	3.0%
Private: Service	26.8%	15.4%
Other	7.8%	3.7%
3. <i>Nature</i>		
Manufacturing	4.8%	2.1%
Sales	10.9%	4.8%
Restaurants	4.7%	3.4%
Hotels and Boarding Houses	0.9%	0.7%
Transport	3.9%	2.7%
Finance	1.5%	0.3%
Real Estate	1.5%	0.6%
Service	23.4%	12.0%
Construction	3.6%	1.2%
Other	12.4%	4.6%
4. <i>Job Title</i>		
Manager and Administrative	0.8%	0.2%
Professional and Associate Professionals	3.3%	0.8%
Clerks	23.2%	8.0%

Service Workers	13.9%	8.8%
Shop Sales Workers	9.9%	5.2%
Craft and Related Workers	0.8%	0.8%
Machine Operators	3.3%	1.8%
Other	13.3%	5.9%