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Panel on Manpower

Background brief prepared by Legislative Council Secretariat

Project Yi Jin

Purpose

This paper gives a summary of past discussions held by Members on Project Yi Jin (PYJ).

Background

2. PYJ, which was formerly known as Project Springboard, 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 students' knowledge through combining academic and practical skills training, with emphasis on biliteracy and trilingualism and information technology application.

4. Students who have successfully completed the programme will be awarded a full certificate. The certificate has been evaluated by the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation as comparable to five passes in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education for the purposes of continuing education and employment.

5. The Government provided funding for student support activities and the reimbursement of tuition fees to students for five academic years from 2000-01 to 2004-05.

6. At its meeting 30 March 2000, the Panel on Manpower was briefed on the measures to promote employment, training, retraining and continuing education in the 2000-01 Budget. Members were informed that the Administration would launch Project Springboard, a skill-based programme to be run on a self-financing basis, in October 2000.

7. The title of the programme was changed to PYJ on 25 April 2002 to avoid resemblance to the name of a charitable organisation.

Approval of commitment at the Finance Committee meeting on 26 May 2000 for three academic years from 2000-01

8. At its meeting on 26 May 2000, the Finance Committee approved a commitment of \$200 million to support Project Springboard (subsequently renamed as PYJ) for three academic years from 2000-01 and the development of a website on continuing education.

Proposal to increase the fee reimbursement for 2002-03 academic year

9. At its meeting 27 June 2002, the Panel on Manpower was briefed on the Administration's proposal to increase the fee reimbursement for needy students of PYJ in the 2002-03 academic year.

10. Members were informed that the programme, which comprised 10 modules, had a total cost of \$30,000. Students who satisfactorily completed each module would be reimbursed 30% of the tuition fee paid for that module. The Administration proposed to increase the reimbursement from 30% to 100% of the tuition fee for needy students.

11. A member considered that the mode and level of subsidy for students of the programme should be consistent with that for secondary school students as the curricula of the programme were analogous to secondary education level. Some members suggested that the upper limit of family income for determining the eligibility for full reimbursement of tuition fee should be set at a level equivalent to the amount of monthly entitlement to Comprehensive Social Security Assistance payment plus the amount of monthly tuition fee for the programme.

12. The Administration advised that the mode and level of subsidy under different financial assistance schemes for different categories of students varied from one to another, and that the mode of subsidy for the programme had been unique since its implementation. While agreeing that the curricula of the programme were analogous to secondary education level, the Administration considered it not practical and inappropriate to change the mode of subsidy for the programme at that stage. Instead, the Administration considered it

necessary and appropriate to provide greater assistance to students who wished to take up the programme but were unable to do so due to a lack of financial means. To achieve this, the Administration proposed to increase the reimbursement of the tuition fee from 30% to 100% for needy students.

Approval of increasing the rate of fee reimbursement at the Finance Committee meeting on 15 July 2002

13. At its meeting on 15 July 2002, the Finance Committee approved the Administration's proposal to increase the rate of fee reimbursement under Project Yi Jin from 30% to 100% of the tuition fee for needy students with effect from the 2002-03 academic year. The additional expenditure of about \$7.8 million on fee reimbursement would be met from the \$200 million commitment for PYJ.

Review of Project Yi Jin

14. At its meeting 28 March 2003, the Panel on Manpower was briefed on the Administration's review of PYJ.

15. The Administration advised that after a detailed review, the Administration considered it desirable and appropriate to continue with the existing 30% reimbursement arrangement in view of the prevailing financial stringency. Under the arrangement, more training places could be provided so that more people would be able to benefit from PYJ.

16. The Administration informed members that a series of discussions had been held with FCE regarding the feasibility of lowering the level of tuition fees for the Project. FCE was actively examining the issue but had not yet taken a decision on it.

17. The Administration also informed members that a review would be carried out in 2005 to examine the readiness of PYJ to be run on a 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.

18. A member considered that the Administration should conduct a comprehensive review of the provision of continuing education for adult learners. The member suggested that the mode of operation of PYJ and ways to reduce its level of tuition fee should be looked into when the subject of continuing education for adult learners was discussed.

Relevant papers

19. For details of the discussions, members may wish to refer to the following documents -

Minutes

- (a) minutes of the meeting of the Panel on Manpower on 30 March 2000 (LC Paper No. CB(2)1767/99-00) issued vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1770/99-00 on 26 April 2000;
- (b) minutes of the meeting of the Finance Committee on 26 May 2000 (LC Paper No. FC162/99-00) issued in October 2000;
- (c) minutes of the meeting of the Panel on Manpower on 27 June 2002 (LC Paper No. CB(2)2590/01-02) issued vide LC Paper No. CB(2)2591/04-05 on 16 July 2002;
- (d) minutes of the meeting of the Finance Committee on 15 July 2002 (LC Paper No. FC24/02-03) issued in November 2002;
- (e) minutes of the meeting of the Panel on Manpower on 28 March 2003 (LC Paper No. CB(2)1787/02-03) issued vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1788/02-03 on 23 April 2003;

Papers

- (f) Administration's paper for the meeting of the Panel on Manpower on 30 March 2000 (LC Paper No. CB(2)1492/99-00(03)) issued vide LC Paper No. 1508/99-00 on 28 March 2000;
- (g) Administration's paper for the Finance Committee meeting on 26 May 2000 (Paper No. FCR(2000-01)19)) issued vide LC Paper No. FC124/99-00 on 23 May 2000;
- (h) Administration's paper for the meeting of the Panel on Manpower on 27 June 2002 (LC Paper No. CB(2)2362/01-02(12)) issued on 21 June 2002;
- (i) Administration's paper for the Finance Committee meeting on 15 July 2002 (Paper No. FCR(2002-03)31)) issued vide LC Paper No. FC104/01-02 on 8 July 2002; and
- (j) Administration's paper for the meeting of the Panel on Manpower on 28 March 2003 (LC Paper No. CB(2)1485/02-03(05)) issued on 14 March 2003.

20. The above papers are also available on the website of the Legislative Council (<http://www.legco.gov.hk>).

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