

For discussion
on 8 May 2008

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Additional Financial Provision for Project Yi Jin

Purpose

This paper seeks Members' views on the proposal to continue providing financial support for Project Yi Jin (PYJ) from the 2008/09 academic year onwards.

Project Yi Jin

2. PYJ was launched in October 2000 to provide an alternative route and to expand the continuing education opportunities for Secondary 5 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 Finance Committee (FC) approved in May 2000 a commitment of \$200 million to provide funding support for students admitted to PYJ during the three academic years from 2000/01 to 2002/03. The funding support mainly takes the form of a 30% reimbursement of tuition fee for each module that is satisfactorily completed by the students, and also covers student support activities and publicity. Student Travel Subsidy and non-means tested loan are available for eligible students. In July 2002, the FC approved the reimbursement of tuition fee in full (100%) to needy students upon their successful completion of the modules. Having regard to the success of PYJ, the FC further approved in April 2003 the extension of the scheme for another two academic years till 2004/05. The commitment was further increased from \$200 million to \$435 million in January 2005 to continue the financial support for students admitted in the 2004/05 academic year and beyond.
4. The cumulative expenditure for PYJ is estimated to be \$417 million by the end of 2008-09. The remaining balance of the commitment of \$18 million will not be sufficient to meet the funding requirement for students admitted in the 2008/09 academic year and beyond.

Continuation of Project Yi Jin for the 2008/09 academic year and beyond

5. Throughout the years, PYJ has established its status as a practical alternative pathway for continuing education that better serves the needs of those students who may not be able to fully benefit from the traditional academic curriculum. It has become increasingly popular in recent years. The enrolment figures since the introduction of the programme in October 2000 are tabulated below -

Academic Year	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Change versus the previous year
2000/01	3 267 (77%)	985 (23%)	4 252	N.A
2001/02	2 085 (63%)	1 223 (37%)	3 308	-22%
2002/03	2 804 (81%)	647 (19%)	3 451	+4%
2003/04	2 880 (79%)	746 (21%)	3 626	+5%
2004/05	4 363 (81%)	1 018 (19%)	5 381	+ 48%
2005/06	4 147 (83%)	835 (17%)	4 982	-7%
2006/07	6 462 (80%)	1 613 (20%)	8 075	+62%
2007/08	7 994 (85%)	1 430 (15%)*	9 424	+17%
Total	34 002 (80%)	8 497 (20%)	42 499	

* projected figure

6. The New Senior Secondary Academic Structure will be implemented from the 2009/10 school year. We are currently reviewing together with the FCE the long term development and positioning of PYJ under the new academic structure.

7. Against the above background and in view of the following considerations, it is recommended that the existing PYJ should be extended till the 2011/12 academic year -

- (a) until the implementation of the new academic structure and the abolition of the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), PYJ will continue to offer a viable alternative pathway for those who have not performed well in the HKCEE;
- (b) the provision of financial assistance on a reimbursement basis under PYJ provides an incentive for students to work hard and increases their chance of completing the programme successfully;
- (c) the new academic structure will be implemented from September 2009 and the last batch of students under the current secondary system will

complete Secondary 5 in summer 2010. Although the majority of Secondary 5 leavers would have completed their full-time PYJ in the 2010/11 academic year, in order to facilitate those students (e.g. HKCEE repeaters, adult learners and part-time students) to complete their courses, the programme should last until the 2011/12 academic year; and

- (d) The first student cohort under the new academic structure will complete their senior secondary education and participate in the Hong Kong Diploma in Secondary Education Examination in summer 2012. The new PYJ-type programme offering an alternate pathway for students, if any, should be put in place for the 2012/13 academic year.

Financial Implications

8. To continue financial assistance for admissions in the 2008/09 to 2011/12 academic years, the estimated total additional funding required is \$355 million (\$373 million less \$18 million remaining from the existing commitment). The estimated funding requirement is as follows -

Academic year	Projected student population (full-time-equivalent) ¹	Estimated funding required (\$m) ²			
		Financial year	Fee reimbursement	Others ³	Total
2008/09	10 000	2009-10	106.5	4.0	110.5
2009/10	10 500	2010-11	111.9	4.0	115.9
2010/11	11 000	2011-12	117.2	4.0	121.2
2011/12	2 200	2012-13	23.4	2.0	25.4
Total	33 700		359.0	14.0	373.0

The exact amount of expenditure each year will depend on the actual size of the student population, the percentage of students eligible for full fee assistance under the means test, and the number of modules that the students can successfully complete.

¹ Assuming a 5% increase in student population in the 2008/09 to 2010/11 academic years.

² The majority of the estimated expenditure for an academic year, i.e. reimbursement of tuition fees, will normally be reflected in the subsequent financial year. The calculation of fee reimbursement includes a contingency provision of 10%.

³ Include student supporting activities, promotion and publicity.

Advice Sought

9. Subject to Members' support, we will seek the FC's funding approval on 13 June 2008 for the proposed increase of commitment by \$355 million from \$435 million to \$790 million to continue the financial assistance for students admitted in the 2008/09 academic year and beyond.

Background

10. At present, eight FCE institutions are offering PYJ programme, namely Caritas Community and Higher Education Service, City University of Hong Kong, Open University of Hong Kong, Lingnan University, Hong Kong Institute of Education, Vocational Training Council, Hong Kong College of Technology and Hong Kong Institute of Technology. The tuition fee currently charged by the institutions ranges from \$26,000 to \$28,000.

11. PYJ aims to upgrade students' knowledge through combining academic and practical skills training, with emphasis on biliteracy, trilingualism and information technology application. Students may take programme on a full-time or part-time basis. The programme consists of 600 contact hours, including 420 contact hours for core modules and 180 contact hours for electives. The core modules include Chinese Language, English Language I, English Language II, Mathematics, Information Technology, Putonghua and Communication Skills. As for electives, over 400 practical subjects are offered to cater for students' interest.

12. A student who has successfully completed the seven core modules and three electives will be awarded a full certificate. This certificate has been assessed by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications as comparable to five passes in the HKCEE for continuing education and employment purposes. For example, the certificate has been accepted by the Government as meeting the entry requirement of more than 30 civil service grades which require five passes (including English Language and Chinese Language) in the HKCEE.

Education Bureau
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