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Panel on Education

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 8 May 2008**

Project Yi Jin

Purpose

This paper summarizes the concerns of Members about Project Yi Jin (PYJ).

Background

2. PYJ (previously named Project Springboard) was launched in October 2000 as a bridging programme to provide an alternative route and expand the continuing education opportunities for secondary school leavers and adult learners. PYJ is a skill-based programme, with emphasis on biliteracy and trigualism, information technology application and practical skill training. The Programme comprises 10 modules with a total of 600 contact hours, including 420 contacts hours for core modules and 180 contact hours for electives. The seven core modules include Chinese, English I, English II, Putonghua, Mathematics, Information Technology and Communication Skills, whereas electives include a wide variety of practical subjects to cater for students' interest.

3. The Programme is run by member institutions of the Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions (FCE) on a self-financing basis. A student who has successfully completed the Programme will be awarded a full certificate, which is comparable to five passes in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) for continuing education and employment purposes.

4. The tuition fee of each module of the Programme varies depending on its contact hours, ranging from \$2,600 to \$3,400. The total tuition fee for completing the Programme is about \$30,000. The Finance Committee approved in May 2000 the Administration's proposal to reimburse 30% of the tuition fee to students who have successfully completed each module. In July 2002, the Finance Committee further approved the proposal to reimburse the 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 Finance Assistance Agency (SFAA).

Members' concerns

5. Before the reorganization of Government bureaux on 1 July 2007, PYJ fell within the policy areas of the Education and Manpower Bureau, and matters relating to PYJ were discussed by the Panel on Manpower. After the reorganization, the Education Bureau is responsible for PYJ. The areas of concern raised by members about PYJ are summarized below.

Financial assistance

6. Members were concerned that except for those students who could pass the means test for full reimbursement of tuition fee, students had to shoulder a tuition fee of \$21,000 over a period of one to two years (depending on whether they were pursuing the Programme on a full-time or part-time basis) for completing the Programme with the 30% reimbursement. Many low-income families could not afford such a high level of tuition fee. Members requested the Administration to consider providing reimbursement for 50% of the tuition fee and to explore ways to reduce the level of tuition fee for the Programme.

7. According to the Administration, some 15% of the students admitted in the 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 academic years had received full reimbursement of tuition fee as needy students, and on average, they could successfully complete and claim reimbursement for an average of eight modules. As for the other students, they could successfully complete and claim reimbursement for an average of seven modules.

8. The Administration had reviewed the operation of PYJ in 2004 and considered it more appropriate to use the available fund to provide more training places than to enhance the benefits for selected students. Students who could not afford to pay the tuition fee in advance could apply for financial assistance under the Non-means-tested Loan Scheme administered by SFAA. With the average number of student intake increasing from 3 659 in the first four years since the launch of PYJ to 5 381 in the 2004-2005 academic year, FCE had indicated that, the tuition fee could be reduced from \$30,000 to \$28,000 in the 2005-2006 academic year. The Administration assured

members that it would continue to explore with FCE the possibility of further lowering the tuition fee.

Effectiveness of the Programme

9. Members noted that when PYJ was launched in 2000, there was a large number of non-engaged youths, and PYJ was intended to be a bridging programme for secondary school leavers and adult learners to gain solid foundation for employment and further education. Members were concerned about the effectiveness of PYJ in achieving its objectives, in particular whether the PYJ qualification was recognized by employers.

10. The Administration advised that since the introduction of PYJ in the 2000-2001 academic year, 32 000 students (as at October 2006) had benefited from the Programme. The Programme had been popular and welcomed by students and parents, as reflected in the steady increase in annual enrolment. About 6 000 and 7 000 students had enrolled in the Programme in the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 academic years. The Administration conducted a tracking survey on the graduates of PYJ in early 2004 to evaluate the effectiveness of the Programme. It was found that PYJ had fulfilled its purpose of providing an alternative educational pathway and expanding the continuing education opportunities for the low achievers in the HKCEE. At the time of the survey, 37% of the respondents were pursuing further studies, 36% were working and 17% were working and studying at the same time. For those who were pursuing further studies, over 90% were taking full-time Associate Degree, Pre-Associate Degree, Higher Diploma, Diploma and Certificate courses. The survey also revealed that the respondents generally found that their capabilities for self-learning and lifelong learning had improved after attending PYJ. For those who were working, 89% managed to secure a job within six months of completion of PYJ. The survey also captured feedback from parents, employers and teachers of PYJ graduates in Associate Degree and other programmes. The majority of them expressed a positive view towards the Programme.

Future development

11. Members considered it appropriate to incorporate the practical and vocational elements under PYJ in the secondary school curriculum to increase the range of subject choices for students. However, to avoid overlapping of programmes and wastage of resources, members were of the view that the provision of vocational education by secondary schools and the Hong Kong Institute of Education (IVE) should be coordinated. Members noted that with the proposed implementation of the new senior secondary academic structure in the 2009-2010 school year, a wide range of career-oriented programmes would be included in the curriculum. Members were concerned about the way forward for PYJ which was also skill-oriented.

12. The Administration advised that with the implementation of the new academic structure in the 2009-2010 school year, more practical and vocational elements would be incorporated in the new senior secondary curriculum to cater for the diverse needs of students. The Administration introduced, as a pilot scheme, the Yi Jin/Secondary Schools Collaboration Project (the Collaboration Project) in 10 secondary schools in the 2004-2005 school year. Each secondary school paired up and worked with a member institution of FCE to operate the pilot scheme. FCE members were responsible for teaching three of the 10 PYJ subjects at their own campuses, and the participating schools with qualified teachers offered classes for the remaining seven subjects. The Collaboration Project had enabled the offer of practical and vocational subjects in secondary school curriculum. There was no overlapping of programmes offered by secondary schools and IVE. The Administration would review the Collaboration Project and the positioning and curriculum of PYJ to tie in with the implementation of the new senior secondary curriculum. In the long term, PYJ might provide continuing education opportunities for senior secondary graduates under the new academic structure.

Relevant papers

13. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
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Relevant papers on Project Yi Jin

Meeting	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Manpower	30.3.2000 (Item III)	Minutes Agenda
Finance Committee	26.5.2000	Minutes FCR(2000-01)19
Legislative Council	14.3.2001	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 55 - 57 (Question)
Legislative Council	17.10.2001	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 32 - 33 (Question)
Legislative Council	9.1.2002	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 64 - 67 (Question)
Legislative Council	27.2.2002	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 47 - 55 (Question)
Panel on Manpower	27.6.2002 (Item V)	Minutes Agenda
Finance Committee	15.7.2002	Minutes FCR(2002-03)31
Panel on Manpower	28.3.2003 (Item VI)	Minutes Agenda
Finance Committee	25.4.2003	Minutes FCR(2003-04)4
Panel on Manpower	16.12.2004 (Item VI)	Minutes Agenda
Panel on Education	3.1.2005 (Item I)	Minutes Agenda
Finance Committee	14.1.2005	Minutes FCR(2004-05)37

Meeting	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Manpower	20.1.2005 (Item I)	Minutes Agenda
Panel on Education	3.6.2005 (Item I)	Minutes Agenda
Panel on Manpower	20.10.2005 (Item II)	Minutes Agenda
Panel on Manpower	24.10.2006 (Item I)	Minutes Agenda

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