

For discussion
on 13 May 2010

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Increase in Financial Commitment for Project Yi Jin

Purpose

This paper seeks Members' views on the proposal to increase the financial commitment for Project Yi Jin (PYJ) to meet the projected funding requirement until the 2011/12 academic year.

Project Yi Jin

2. PYJ was launched in October 2000 to provide an alternative pathway and to expand the continuing education opportunities for Secondary 5 school leavers and adult learners. The programme is run by members of the Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions (FCE)¹ on a self-financing basis. A PYJ student is awarded a full PYJ certificate when he/she passes all 10 modules of the programme. The certificate has been assessed by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications as comparable to five passes in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) for continuing education and employment purposes.

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 also available for eligible students. In July 2002, the FC approved the reimbursement of tuition fee in full (100%) to needy students who have passed the means test upon their successful completion of the

¹ The FCE was established in 1994 to promote lifelong learning in Hong Kong. Its current membership consists of the continuing and professional education (CPE) units of the eight University Grants Committee-funded institutions and other major providers of CPE programmes in Hong Kong.

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 twice from \$200 million to \$435 million in January 2005 and from \$435 million to \$790 million in June 2008.

4. Since the introduction of PYJ in October 2000, a total of over 69 000 students and adult learners have joined, and the PYJ has become increasingly popular in recent years. The annual enrolment has increased significantly from an average of about 4 200 per annum during 2000/01 to 2005/06 academic years to over 15 000 in the current academic year. The enrolment figures since October 2000 are tabulated below –

Academic Year	Full-time	Part-time⁽¹⁾	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 (80%)	1 970 (20%)	9 964	+23%
2008/09	8 217 (76%)	2 630 (24%)	10 847	+9%
2009/10	12 232 (80%)	3 000 (20%) ⁽²⁾	15 232	+40%
Total	54 451 (79%)	14 667 (21%)	69 118	-

Note: (1) Full-time equivalent is used to count the number of part-time students.

(2) Provisional figure.

5. The overall passing rates (for all 10 modules) of the full-time students in the past three academic years are 64%, 63% and 66% respectively.

Continuation of Project Yi Jin until the 2011/12 academic year

6. In 2008, PYJ was extended until the 2011/12 academic year. This has taken into consideration the implementation of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) Academic Structure in September 2009. The last batch of students under the current secondary school system will complete Secondary 5 in summer 2010. Although the majority of Secondary 5 leavers would have completed their one-year full-time PYJ in the 2010/11 academic year, 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.

7. In seeking an increase in commitment from \$435 million to \$790 million in 2008, it was envisaged that the additional fund of \$355 million would be sufficient to cover the financial assistance for students admitted in the 2008/09 academic year and beyond, until 2011/12. However, the number of students enrolled in PYJ since 2008/09 is significantly higher than our previous projection. At the end of 2009-10, the cumulative expenditure for PYJ was about \$544 million. The remaining balance of the commitment of \$246 million will not be sufficient to meet the projected funding requirement for students admitted in the 2010/11 academic year and beyond. In order to meet the funding requirement until the 2011/12 academic year, the financial commitment will have to be further increased.

Financial Implications

8. To continue financial assistance for admissions to the PYJ programme until the 2011/12 academic year, the estimated additional funding required is \$280 million. The estimated funding requirement is calculated as follows –

Academic year	Student number ²	Financial year	Actual expenditure (\$ million)	Estimated expenditure (\$ million)	Additional funding requirement (\$ million)
2000/01 to 2008/09	53 886 (actual)	2009-10 and before	544	-	-
2009/10	15 232 (provisional)	2010-11	-	175	-
2010/11	21 000 (projected)	2011-12	-	71	174
2011/12	9 000 (projected) ³	2012-13	-	-	106
Total	99 118	-	544	246	280

9. The expenditure is mainly for the reimbursement of tuition fees for the

² The student population is sum of the number of full-time students and the number full-time equivalent part-time students. It is projected that the demand for PYJ will continue to increase in the 2010/11 academic year as there will be no places for Secondary 5 repeaters in the government and aided secondary schools in the year.

³ The projected number of students will decrease in 2011/12 as the majority of Secondary 5 leavers would have completed their one-year full-time PYJ in the 2010/11 academic year.

eligible students⁴. Other expenditure includes student support activities, promotion, publicity, studies and surveys. The exact amount of expenditure each year will depend on the actual student number, the percentage of students eligible for full fee assistance under the means test, and the number of modules that the students can successfully complete.

New PYJ type programme under the New Academic Structure

10. The first student cohort under the NSS academic structure will complete their secondary education and participate in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination in 2012. We are working with the FCE to consider the merits and feasibility of providing a new programme based on the PYJ model under the new academic structure. We have completed the first stage of the study. Based on the findings of the study, PYJ has successfully provided an alternative pathway for those who have completed Secondary 5 with unsatisfactory HKCEE results to obtain a formal qualification. The programme is a worthwhile option for young people to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes for both work and further studies. The PYJ experience has also exerted a very positive influence on the students' personal growth, people skills and career planning.

11. The NSS academic structure is designed to create more flexible and broad-based learning opportunities for all students during six years of secondary education. The new curriculum can better cater for students' different aptitude, abilities and needs. Nevertheless, having regard to the benefits of the PYJ, we see merits in continuing a programme based on the PYJ model to provide a viable "second chance", at least at the initial stage after the implementation of the NSS Academic Structure. There will also be adult learners who wish to acquire the basic qualification to pursue further studies and employment. There is therefore a need to develop a new programme to cater for these demands. We are now considering the development of a new programme which if adopted, could be put in place from the 2012/13 academic year onwards.

⁴ All PYJ students are currently eligible for reimbursement of 30% of the tuition fees paid for each satisfactorily completed module, subject to their having passed an overall assessment and having achieved 80% attendance or above for the module as confirmed by the institution. For needy students meeting these assessment and attendance criteria and passing the means test for full grant administered by the Student Financial Assistance Agency, they can receive 100% reimbursement of the tuition fees paid for each satisfactorily completed module.

Advice Sought

12. Subject to Members' support, we will seek the FC's funding approval in June 2010 for the proposed increase of commitment by \$280 million from \$790 million to \$1,070 million to continue financial assistance for students admitted to PYJ until the 2011/12 academic year.

Background

13. At present, nine FCE institutions are offering PYJ programme, namely the continuing and professional education arms of the City University of Hong Kong, Open University of Hong Kong, Lingnan University, Hong Kong Institute of Education and Hong Kong Baptist University, Vocational Training Council, Caritas Community and Higher Education Service, Hong Kong College of Technology and Hong Kong Institute of Technology. The tuition fee currently charged by the institutions ranges from \$27,500 to \$29,500.

14. 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. A wide range of practical subjects are offered as electives to cater for students' interest.

15. The PYJ 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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