

Submission on Self-financing Post-secondary Education

Our Background and Commitment in Education

The Society of Jesus has been providing quality education in the world for over 450 years, and in Hong Kong for almost a century. To further our vision in education, we have proposed establishing the Jesuit Liberal Arts College as a private, self-financing and non-profit university to meet Hong Kong's needs. Our time-tested experience in liberal arts education and the synergetic international network of Jesuit universities will provide a quality education choice for students.

We had expressed interest to the Education Bureau for the Queen's Hill site to develop a self-financing tertiary educational institution.

The Jesuits have an important mission to promote faith that does justice, which should thread through different missions, including education. Currently, we maintain the largest, most extensive and oldest education system in the world, with over 200 higher educational institutions in 40 countries.

It is of common consensus that Hong Kong's tertiary education needs further development. Our vision of establishing an international university here specializing in liberal arts will provide additional quality education choices for students, as well as strengthen Hong Kong's strategic positioning as an international city.

Jesuit education is characterized by academic excellence, a concern for the development of the “whole person,” and a commitment to the common good rather than self-interest. It aims to educate students who will acquire depth and breadth of knowledge and imagination, develop spiritual insight, act with moral and ethical clarity, achieve success in their careers and personal lives, and become leaders-in-service to others.

Jesuit liberal arts education is committed to the proposition that the liberal arts provide the best foundation for developing the knowledge, skills, and values that will allow a college graduate to be a successful leader throughout a lifetime – a lifetime in which he or she will experience multiple careers, jobs, roles, challenges, and opportunities in the rapidly changing twenty-first century. Such preparation, for a better-self and a better society, is the goal of a liberal education.

Our Views

Our views on self-financing post-secondary education predicate on our beliefs that:

- Hong Kong should further develop tertiary education to satisfy needs of students and Hong Kong's development.
- The direction of development should not focus merely on quantity, but also on education quality and variety of choices.
- The development of self-financing tertiary education is an important supplementary strategy to Hong Kong's current education system based primarily on public funding.

Given our conviction, we are concerned about the recent discussions on the area. Specifically, we observe that:

- There is speculation that the Government is considering changing usage of the various sites expected for tertiary education to housing purpose.
- Public discussion and media coverage mix up various issues, thus creating potential misperceptions, prejudices and biases that may hinder, rather than enhance future developments of Hong Kong's tertiary education.

If these misperception, prejudice and bias continue, public opinion in tertiary education may be swayed negatively. If the Government withdraws its policy commitment in developing tertiary education, public and international confidence will subside. Hong Kong will suffer a great loss.

As a result, we advocate for maintaining an informed, intelligent and fair discussion on the issues. Looking forward, we concur to the aspirations of University Grants Committee's review report in 2010, and the Government's continued policy commitments over the years to further develop Hong Kong's tertiary education. We consider the following views are particularly relevant nowadays:

1. Hong Kong should continue increasing degree places to satisfy the demand for education and support Hong Kong's social and economic development needs;
2. Hong Kong should cater quality tertiary education that widens choices and opportunities for students;
3. Hong Kong should keep on internationalizing her tertiary education system to strengthen her status as an education hub, that develops students with global visions;
4. Education should be placed on par in priority with other policies concerning livelihood;
5. Self-financing tertiary education must be further developed, not curtailed
6. The tertiary education system should be enhanced from experience learned to ensure quality service delivery.

Last but not the least, we want to underscore that if Hong Kong compromises education now, she will thereby compromise her social and economic development, and the well-being of our future generations.

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