

**The proposal of outsourcing adult education courses**  
**Response to the list of questions raised by members of the Panel on Education of**  
**Legislative Council at the special meeting on 7 April 2003**

- (1) Whether the various initiatives of education and training opportunities proposed by the Administration to meet the diversified needs of adult learners e.g. Project Yi Jin and Workplace English Training Courses can dovetail with formal academic qualification related courses e.g. university studies, and whether these qualifications will be recognized as formal academic qualification of primary and secondary studies?

To meet the changing social needs, the demand of a knowledge-based economy and their individual needs, adult learners will need a continuing education system that is more diversified and flexible than the existing mode of adult education courses provided by us.

For those learners aged between 15 to 19, we can arrange day-time school places for them in the public sector schools. The eight senior secondary schools coming into operation in September 2003 will provide diversified curricula, practical and vocational training to suit different abilities and needs of the young adult learners. After graduation, they can further their studies through relevant Diploma, Associate and Bachelor Degree courses. Many alternative programmes supported by the Government also lead to recognized qualification upon successful completion. The completion of the Project Yi Jin will lead to a qualification comparable to five passes of HKCEE for employment or further studies purpose. Courses under the Continuing Education Fund are either quality assured by the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation or are run by the continuing education arm of self-accrediting universities. To encourage more course providers to offer courses leading to recognised qualifications, the Government will also establish a qualifications framework that will provide objective benchmarks for qualifications in different sectors including mainstream academic education, continuing education and vocational education.

- (2) Whether Government subvention will be provided to course operators and fee remission to students in need after outsourcing if the proposed two-year transitional period is over; and

- (3) If yes, whether the amount of fees for adult education courses can be maintained at the present level in the future?

We plan to commission non-profit-making operators to run the existing adult education courses for two years from September 2003. We will ensure that the selected course operators will continue to run the existing courses for all the existing learners until they complete a key stage of study in two years or earlier. All the existing learners will continue to pay the course fees at the present level over the next two school years.

We will require the selected operators to continue to run the existing adult education courses for the learners after these two years and to indicate in their tender documents other measures such as scholarships and fee remission schemes to help learners who are in need of financial assistance. The fees of these courses require the approval of EMB.

In fact, the Government strives to provide diversified education and training opportunities for various levels of the community to proceed on continuing education and life-long learning in the broad sense. The adult education services should not be restricted to the existing three types of evening adult education courses. In recent years, the Government has also introduced various other initiatives of education and training opportunities to meet the diversified needs of adult learners. Project Yi Jin provides an alternate route and expands the continuing education opportunities for adult learners through combining academic pursues with practical skills training. The Workplace English Training Courses raise the standard of English among the adult learners. Youth Pre-employment Training Programme, Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme, Skills Upgrading Scheme, Retraining Courses of the Employees Retraining Board and various courses offered by the Vocational Training Council can enhance the employability and competitiveness of the adult learners. The Continuing Education Fund subsidizes adults with learning aspirations to pursue continuing education and training courses. The Government will review the Continuing Education Fund with a view to include more programmes at the basic levels, and take appropriate steps to ensure that adult learners will not be deprived of education due to lack of means.

- (4) Whether the Continuing Education Fund can be used as Government subvention to adult education courses so that future course fees will be maintained at the present level?

We will encourage training providers to offer more courses to meet the diversified needs of adult learners under the current ambit of the Continuing Education Fund. Also, we will review the scope and operational arrangements of the Fund with a view to broadening its scope to include more courses at the basic levels to benefit more people. In addition, we will explore the feasibility of redeploying part of the fund to provide subsidy/loan to learners in need of financial assistance.

- (5) Whether future course operators will be required to hire teachers with relevant university qualifications and experience for adult education courses?

We will require the selected course operators to employ teachers with suitable qualifications and some Government Evening Secondary School Course (GESSC) experience. Relevant university qualifications are required.

- (6) Whether a long-term and comprehensive plan for outsourcing including the monitoring system to ensure the quality and continuity of future adult education courses has been set out, and if yes, the details of this plan?

The selected operators should be non-profit-making charitable organizations. They should have rich experience in providing continuing education services and good track records in these services. To monitor their services, we will conduct inspections to ensure quality service. The learners will also play an important role in monitoring the performance of the operators. We will collect views from the learners on their involvement in the monitoring system. Besides, the selected operators are required to prepare and submit the annual evaluation reports to us by the end of each school year. For accounting and auditing purposes, they are also required to keep separate ledger accounts to reflect all the chargeable income and expenditure. These accounts should be properly kept at the centres for inspection by EMB from time to time. Furthermore, they are required to submit the annual audited accounts for examination. To maintain continuity, we will request the selected operators, to employ, where appropriate the existing teaching staff who are professionally qualified, experienced and committed. The selected operators are expected to continue the operation after two years. They should be able to provide suitable and diversified learning programmes to meet the needs of the learners and to advise them on alternative learning progression pathways. We will require the selected operators to propose such plans in the tender documents.

- (7) Whether the Administration will consider that for the sake of smooth transition, EMB should continue to operate some of the three adult education courses after September 2003?

In line with the principle of small government, we would not continue to operate the adult education courses from September 2003. To ensure smooth transition, EMB will hold joint meetings with the selected operators, centre heads and regional supervisors of the existing courses to work on the handover arrangements.

- (8) Whether EMB has consulted the heads of the three adult education courses on its proposal of outsourcing adult education courses, and if yes, when the consultation was conducted and what was the response of these heads;
- (9) Why EMB informed the Panel on Education in its paper submitted for the Panel meeting on 17 February 2003 that the heads of the three adult education courses supported the direction of change and the transitional arrangements; and
- (10) Why EMB did not consult the centre officers in-charge of Government Evening Secondary Schools?

On 23 January 2003, EMB officers met the centre heads and regional supervisors of the existing adult education courses, including GESSC. Views on the adult education services were exchanged, including outsourcing of the adult education courses. We noted that certain centre heads of GESSC preferred to maintain status quo situation of the course. Nevertheless, they were of the view that no matter what the future arrangement would be, the needs of the community and the learners should be met, and the needs of the existing learners should be of prime consideration. Any change should be proceeded gradually by stages so that the existing learners should be least affected. The transitional arrangement was worked out along this direction. We consider that, in principle, the arrangement has echoed the view of the above meeting in respect of the direction of the future development of adult education services.

Education and Manpower Bureau  
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