

THE DIRECT SUBSIDY SCHEME

Recently a lot of consideration has been given to the Direct Subsidy Scheme by many schools in Hong Kong including Wah Yan College. This has been reported in the newspapers. Some people seem to have got the impression from reports in the newspapers that Wah Yan has made a decision to accept the D.S.S. This of course is not true.

We should naturally give due consideration to any options offered by the Education Department which may allow us the possibility of providing a better education for students. But consideration and decision are two different matters.

In fact the Direct Subsidy Scheme is not something new. This scheme was proposed over 10 years ago by the Education Department. It remains fundamentally the same except that recently the Department has made a slightly more generous offer.

No doubt the D.S.S. has its attractions and advantages. It provides certain freedoms to the school concerning curriculum, number of subjects, medium of instruction, pupil admission, number of teachers, number of students in each class and the charging of school fees. However these attractive freedoms are given with a very heavy financial responsibility on the part of the sponsoring body and school management. The school becomes responsible for all the salaries, major repairs, equipment etc. The major income will have to come from school fees, with some recurrent subsidy by Government based on the number of students in the school.

No doubt, it is the freedoms that make the scheme attractive to past students and some parents. They want the best for the school and see D.S.S. as a way to develop Jesuit ideals of education and provide an attractive environment for students' growth and development, without the restrictions of the present system. We appreciate very much their hopes and concerns.

However having considered the advantages and disadvantages, the Jesuits as the Sponsoring Body, have decided that we will not join the D.S.S. as it stands at present. The main reason is that we do not want our school to be mainly for the rich. We want our schools to be open to be of service to the poor. This is part of our spirit. The financial burden on parents especially in this world recession would be very heavy as well as the financial burden on the Management.

What is an alternative option? We realise that we need to continue to improve and develop the education we provide in Wah Yan. To do this we must make it possible for the teachers' workload to be reduced. They must have more time to deal with all the paper work required by the school and the Education Department; to carry out their responsibilities for clubs and extra-curricular activities; to prepare their classes; to update themselves in this fast changing world by reading and participating in courses and workshops; to have more time to deal with the many different needs of individual students - physical, intellectual and emotional as well as look after their own family life. So whatever money is made available either through Government or donations to the school should be spent on employing part-time or even full-time teachers. This will improve the quality of education in Wah Yan College as well as personal care.

Secondly, we have joined the School Improvement Programme and hopefully our development plan to provide more and better facilities for the school will be approved by the Education Department soon.

Rev. Alfred Deignan, S.J.
Regional Superior
Society of Jesus