

WOMEN'S COMMISSION
Education Department's Programmes Related to Women

INTRODUCTION

This paper : -

- (a) briefs Members on the work of the Education Department in promoting fair and equal education opportunities for women in Hong Kong; and
- (b) invites Members' views and comments on existing education programmes and initiatives by the Education Department.

BASIC DAY SCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

2. It has always been the policy of the Education Department (Department) to provide equal education opportunities to students of both sexes. Nine-year universal basic education is available in day schools to all children aged 6 to 15, regardless of their sex since 1978.

3. The Department believes that it is important to cultivate positive values and attitudes among students, such as gender equality and respect for others. In this connection, the development of students' sensitivity to related concepts/issues is accorded great importance and forms one of the priority areas in curriculum design/delivery. In recommending subject curricula for use in schools, the Curriculum Development Council, a free standing advisory body appointed by the Chief Executive to advise Government on matters relating to curriculum development for the local school system, will ensure that all recommended curricula are gender neutral and can be taken by students of both sexes.

4. Ample opportunities are provided for students to acquire an

understanding of issues like mutual respect and equality between the sexes, and develop positive values through the teaching of various school subjects at different levels such as General Studies at primary level, Social Studies, Geography, Civic Education and Economic and Public Affairs at secondary level. The Department has issued curriculum guidelines to schools to provide directions on the design of programmes and learning activities relating to education about gender position and equality in schools. As for supporting learning materials, the Department has issued the 'Guiding Principles for Quality Textbooks' to all publishers in Hong Kong to remind textbook writers that there should be multiple perspectives and balanced viewpoints on issues, the content and illustrations of textbooks should be free from bias such as over-generalisation and stereotyping, and should not carry any form of discrimination on the ground of gender, race, religion, culture or disability.

5. The Department has also issued circulars to remind schools to ensure equal opportunities for participation and learning by all students, and to promote the concepts of equality and equity by eliminating all forms of discrimination in sex, class, race, disability and other aspects. In this connection, a circular to inform schools about the 'Sex Discrimination Ordinance' (SDO) was issued in September 1996. A related circular on 'Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination' was issued in May 1999 to draw all schools' attention to Article 10 of the 'United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women' on equality in education and the need to comply with the legislation in delivering the curriculum. During school inspections or visits, officers of the Department see to whether any form of discrimination exists in school arrangements for curriculum planning and streaming of students. Where discrimination is found, the Department will urge schools to make appropriate rectification.

6. Courses, seminars, and workshops on sex and civic education are organised to enhance teachers' understanding of these issues and to encourage them to develop an open and positive attitude towards these issues. Local tertiary institutes have been commissioned by the Department to run courses on civic and moral education for teachers and principals since 1997. Themes related to the issues are included in topics/ modules such as 'equality and human rights education', and 'human rights and civic education'.

7. The Department has also produced different sorts of supporting resources such as teaching packages on civil education and personal and social education, and Education Television (ETV) Programmes to strengthen teachers'

competency in addressing the issues.

ADULT EDUCATION SERVICES

8. The Department provides adult education through structured, formal courses in the evening run by the Adult Education Unit and informal programmes run by non-government organisations under the Adult Education Subvention Scheme.

9. The formal courses provide primary and secondary education for all people aged 15 or above, who have missed the opportunity of formal education earlier in life and are interested in further studies in the evening. Details of the formal courses are set out in Annex A. In the 2000/ 2001 school year, a total of 13,795 places were offered in the formal courses run by the Adult Education Unit. It can be noted that around 65% of enrolment in formal adult education courses in the 1998/1999, 1999/2000 and 2000/2001 school years are female students. It reveals that there is a steady trend of more female students enrolment in adult education courses provided (please see Annex B for details).

10. Programmes under the Adult Education Subvention Scheme are operated within a prescribed purview to complement and supplement the formal courses. About 24,665 participants enroled in the programmes run by non-government organisations under the Subvention Scheme in the 2000/2001 school year. Details of the programmes under the Subvention Scheme are set out in Annex C. Despite the fact that these services are provided to all adult learners, about 81% of enrolment in these programmes are female students over the 1998/1999, 1999/2000 and 2000/2001 school years (please see Annex D for details). To meet the needs of female learners, in particular, housewives and newly arrived women from the Mainland, some of the programmes under the Subvention Scheme are specifically designed for these target groups. For examples, there are programmes on basic parenting for women, life adaptation for newly arrived women, basic literacy in Chinese for women and stress management for women. In the 2000/2001 school year, the Department subvented a total of 29 programmes operating 65 classes that are targeted for women. The programmes range from basic literacy/generic skills training, training on integrative skills and role adaptation, to acquisition of more specific knowledge/ skills for further work and studies. A list of the programmes is at Annex E. It is estimated that about 1,250 women would benefit from these programmes.

11. In the Department's recent review on adult education, it was identified that among the various target groups, the number of newly arrived women from the Mainland and women hoping to better equip themselves for further education/vocation would be on the increase. In view of this, the Department will offer a more flexible mode of learning and a range of learning modules to further address the needs of these groups.

12. In addition, the Financial Secretary announced in the Budget Speech in March 2001 that a sum of \$72 million would be earmarked under the ambit of the Education and Manpower Bureau for the operation of practical adult education programmes with a focus on basic literacy and generic skills. It is anticipated that these programmes will help enhance the opportunities for further education and employment of target groups (including women) with low educational attainments.

13. A new initiative on parental education is in the pipeline. An amount of \$50 million is earmarked to fund programmes for parents with children attending schools. Relevant government departments, the Committee on Home-School Cooperation, parent-teacher associations of schools and various non-government organisations will work together to deliver parent education services relating to educational aspects.

ADVICE SOUGHT

14. Members are invited to :

- (a) note the existing education programmes provided by the Department; and
- (b) give views on how to enhance existing education opportunities provided by the Education Department, particularly with respect to adult education, for women.

Adult Education Courses provided by the Education Department

Adult Education Course (General Background)

The course provides free primary education which covers the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy. The subjects offered include Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics and General Studies at the primary level. The course is organised at three levels: Lower, Middle and Upper, being equivalent to Primary 3 - 4, Primary 5 and Primary 6 in day schools respectively. The course duration for each level is one year.

Government Evening Secondary School Course

The Government Evening Secondary School Course consists of both Chinese and English sections. The course offers seven subjects to students in Secondary 1 to 3, six subjects to students in Secondary 4 & 5 and four subjects to students in the Sixth Form, which is a 3-year course.

English Course

The course provides participants with an opportunity to learn the English Language at the following levels:

- Primary level (Primary 4 to Primary 6) 3 years
- Secondary level (Secondary 1 to Secondary 5) 5 years
- GCE Ordinary Level 1 year

Annex B

**No. of Female Students Studying in the
Adult Education Courses from 1998/1999 to 2000/2001 School Year**

Course	No. of Female Students			No. of Students of the Course		
	1998/1999	1999/2000	2000/2001	1998/1999	1999/2000	2000/2001
Government Evening Secondary School Course	4351	4323	4110	7312	7616	7517
English Course	3562	2146	2173	3084	2705	2820
Adult Education Course (General Background)	1196	1037	856	1353	1176	1006
Total	7998	7506	7139	11749	11497	11343

Adult Education Subvention Scheme

Under the Subvention Scheme, subvention is provided for non-government organisations to run basic adult education programmes within a prescribed purview to complement and supplement courses provided by the Education Department. In the 2000/2001 school year, 102 non-government organisations are subvented to run 720 adult education programmes within the following purview:

- Basic Chinese literacy courses
- General education courses
- Re-orientation and Cantonese language courses for new arrivals to Hong Kong from the Mainland
- Social and moral education courses
- Labour education courses
- Pre-vocational training programmes
- Special education courses
- Careers education courses
- Pre-retirement/retirement education courses
- Job-oriented courses

These subvented programmes are mainly conducted in the evenings in a great number of venues all over the territory.

No. of Female Students enrolled in the Adult Education Subvention Scheme
1998/1999 – 2000/2001 School Year

School Year	No. of Female Students	No. of Male Students	Total
1998/1999	24,430 (81.4%)	5,567 (18.6%)	29,997
1999/2000	21,727 (81.0%)	5,093 (19.0%)	26,820
2000/2001	Not Available	Not Available	24,545 (Estimated)

Annex E

Subvented Programmes for Women / Housewives
2000/2001

No.	Name of NGO	Name of Programmes for Women/Housewives
1.	Caritas - Hong Kong	Adjustment Programme for Newly Arrived Women Computer Programme for Single Women Job Training for Newly Arrived Women Knowledge of Marriage Laws & Mental Health for Women Stress Management Course for Ex-Mentally Ill Women
2.	HK Evangelical Church Fanling Family Centre	Basic Putonghua Course for Women Emotion Quotient Classroom for Women Human Relationship & Communication Course for Women
3.	HK Federation of Women's Centre	Adjustment Course for Newly Arrived Women Assertive Training Programme for Women Basic Cantonese Course for Newly Arrived Women Basic Parenting Course for Women Basic Putonghua Course Course for Basic Communication between Couples Course for Women & Health Education Course for Women & Work Legal Literacy Programme for Women Pre-retirement Course for Old Women Stress Management for Women Women's Empowerment Programme
4.	HK Macau Conference of Seventh-day Adventists	Basic Literacy in Chinese for Women
5.	Light and Love Home	Basic Literacy in Chinese Course for Housewives
No.	Name of NGO	Name of Programmes for Women/Housewives
6.	Methodist Epworth Village Community Centre	Life Adaptation Course for Newly Arrived Women
7.	Shatin Women's Association	Effective Learning for Children Marriage Counselling
8.	SKH Diocesan Welfare Council	Basic Putonghua Course for Women Sharing Group for the Newly Arrived Women
9.	Society for the Aid & Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers	General Education Course for Female Ex-drug Abusers Leadership Training Course for Ex-drug Abusers (Female)
	Total:	29 Programmes