

WOMEN'S COMMISSION
Notes of the 80th Meeting held on 9 July 2015

<u>Present:</u>	Mrs Stella LAU Miss Annie TAM	(Chairperson) Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Vice-chairperson)
	Ms Teresa AU Ms Aruna GURUNG Dr. Maggie KOONG Ms Angelina KWAN Ms Leona LAM Dr. Trisha LEAHY Ms Juan LEUNG Mrs Miranda LEUNG Ms Yolanda NG Dr. Lawrence TANG Ms WONG Shu-ming Ms Catherine WONG Mr. Robert WONG Ms WONG Siu-wah Ms Yvonne YEUNG Mr. LAM Kai-tai	Director of Social Welfare (Acting)

<u>Absent with Apologies:</u>	Professor Cecilia CHAN Professor Shirley HUNG Mr. Philip TSAI Ms Sandy WONG Ms Rabi YIM Mr. DC CHEUNG	Principal Assistant Secretary (Constitutional & Mainland Affairs)5, Constitutional & Mainland Affairs Bureau
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<u>In attendance:</u>	Miss Fiona LI Ms Winnie CHAN Mr. Syrus TSUI Mrs Annie CHAN Mr. MC FUNG	PAS (Welfare)2 AS (Welfare)2A (Secretary) AS (Welfare)2C CEO(SD) Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Family and Child Welfare), Social Welfare Department
For Agenda Item 1	Dr Maggie KOONG	Convenor of Sub-committee on Objectives, Teacher Professionalism and Research under the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education
	Mrs Conny LI	Senior Education Officer, Education Bureau
For Agenda Item 2	Mr. Charles HUI	Assistant Commissioner (Employment Services), Labour Department
	Ms Catherine LAW	Senior Labour Officer (Employment Services)(Policy), Labour Department
	Mr. MA Kwok Kuen	Senior Labour Officer (Workplace Consultation Promotion), Labour Department

Item 1: Report of the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education (WoC 13/15)

1.1 With the aid of a powerpoint presentation, Dr Maggie Koong, Convenor of Sub-committee on Objectives, Teacher Professionalism and Research under the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education, briefed Members on the

recommendations of the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education (the “Committee”).

1.2 Mrs Conny Li, Senior Education Officer of the Education Bureau (EDB), said that following the Committee’s submission of the report to EDB on 28 May 2015, a consultation exercise had been held. EDB would further consider the recommendations made by the Committee after collecting public views.

1.3 Members were generally of the view that to strengthen the support for working parents (in particular women), kindergartens (KGs) should be encouraged to offer more whole-day (WD) and long WD (LWD) services. This was also conducive to unleashing their potential of joining the labour force, which was in line with the population policy. A few Members said that the proposed additional subsidy for KGs for the provision of WD/LWD services might not be sufficient for them to cover the extra costs for running WD/LWD services, which might discourage those who were currently providing WD/LWD services. Consideration should therefore be given to reviewing the funding arrangement with a view to

encouraging the provisions of WD/LWD services by the KGs operators, as well as to enabling the parents in need to have access to WD/LWD services at a more affordable cost.

1.4 Regarding the qualification and professional development of the KG teachers, some Members viewed that it was important to equip teachers with both the academic qualifications and professional knowledge. However, the University Grants Committee (UGC) had only funded 18 programmes on KG education so far. EDB and UGC should plan ahead and increase the programmes/trainings for the teachers with a view to bringing more young people to the KG education sector, and upgrading their qualifications in the long run. Some Members said that the salary of KG teachers would need to be reviewed so as to attract more people to enter the sector, which would help upgrade the quality of teaching.

1.5 Regarding the medium of instruction, a Member suggested that English should be integrated into the curriculum of KG education.

1.6 Some Members said that currently the education needs

of children of different ages (e.g. aged 0-2, 2-3 or 3-6) were taken care of by different policy bureaux within the Government. Consideration should be given to consolidating the efforts of different bureaux by a leading bureau. Moreover, extra resources (e.g. early intervention and assessment by the professionals from the education sector, assistance from social workers, etc.) should be provided for children with special needs so that their needs could be identified and addressed at an early stage.

1.7 The Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare (PSLW) said that as announced in the 2015 Policy Address, the Government would strengthen support for children with special needs and their families. Regarding early identification, professional assessment was conducted by the multi-disciplinary healthcare teams of the Child Assessment Centres operated by the Department of Health. As to early intervention, more subvented pre-school rehabilitation service places would be provided within the current Government's term. The Government would also launch a pilot scheme, funded by the Lotteries Fund, to invite operators of subvented pre-school rehabilitation services to provide on-site rehabilitation services,

to children with special needs who were studying in KGs or kindergarten-cum-child care centres. The operators were enthusiastic about this pilot scheme, and it was hoped that such pilot scheme would serve a substantial number of children waiting for the existing pre-school rehabilitation services.

1.8 The Director of Social Welfare (Acting) said that the Social Welfare Department (SWD) had all along been providing subsidies to NGOs to run a variety of child care services for children below the age of six. Currently there were around 30 000 child care places for children aged 0-3 (from aided, non-profit making and private child care centres and kindergarten-cum-child care centres). Amongst these, some 6 700 places were providing LWD services and some 1 500 were WD services.

1.9 From 2015-16 onwards, SWD would increase, by phases, the provision of places of Extended Hours Service (EHS) at aided child care centres and kindergarten-cum-child care centres in districts with high demand, with a view to increasing the total number of such EHS places from about 1 200 to some 6 200 places, representing a fourfold increase. This could alleviate

the pressure on working parents by allowing more needy pre-primary children (aged below six) to remain in the service units.

1.10 EDB thanked Members for their views which would be considered in due course.

Item 2: Women Employment - Promotion of Family-Friendly Employment Practices and Consolidation of Part-time jobs (WoC 14/15)

2.1 With the aid of a powerpoint presentation, representatives from the Labour Department (LD) briefed Members on the measures taken by LD on the promotion of family-friendly employment practices (FFEP) and part-time jobs.

2.2 Noting that LD had been putting lots of efforts in promoting FFEP to employers, a Member suggested that LD might consider approaching various women's networks formed by different professional organisations to further strengthen the promotional efforts in those sectors, in addition to the human resources management clubs formed under LD.

2.3 Some Members said that more publicity work targeting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) should be done with a view to cultivating a family-friendly employment culture and improving the family-friendly facilities across SMEs. A Member suggested that consideration should be given to promulgating the best practices for SMEs to follow or introduce an award for recognising those SMEs which had adopted good FFEP.

2.4 A Member added that the Family Council had also been advocating FFEP and suggested that LD might wish to explore how the efforts could be pulled together to raise public awareness of FFEP.

2.5 A Member said that most of the Hong Kong people were working under high pressure. It was important to cultivate a “homey” working atmosphere between colleagues so as to strengthen their mutual support at work.

2.6 Another Member said that without the necessary statutory backing, the implementation of FFEP would very much rely on individual companies' efforts. It would therefore be useful to widely share the successful experiences of enterprises in implementing FFEP to encourage more companies to adopt FFEP. Also, she suggested that LD might consider disseminating the information about FFEP to the employers through its employment services.

2.7 Mr. Charles Hui, Assistant Commissioner (Employment Services) of LD, thanked Members for their comments and suggestions which would be duly considered by LD. He said that LD would continue to enhance its publicity efforts in promoting FFEP with a view to cultivating a family-friendly employment culture, so as to facilitate employment for women and employees with family commitments.

Item 3: Confirmation of Minutes of the 79th Meeting (WoC 11/15)

3.1 The minutes of the 79th meeting were confirmed without amendments.

Item 4: Verbal Report by Working Groups

4.1 The Meeting noted the verbal reports made by the co-convenors of respective working groups.

Item 5: Secretary's Report (WoC 12/15)

5.1 The Meeting noted the Secretary's Report.

Item 6: Any Other Business

6.1 There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

**Women's Commission Secretariat
August 2015**