

主旨: consultation document on population policy
附件: reply to popuation policy.pdf

21 February 2014

Secretariat of the Steering Committee on Population Policy,
26/F, Central Government Offices,
2 Tim Mei Avenue,
Tamar,
Hong Kong.

Dear Sirs,

Consultation Document on Population Policy

The HKU School of Professional and Continuing Education would like to submit the following responses to the Consultation Document on Population Policy which are in response to the five sets of questions posted in each of the Chapters.

Chapter 2: Unleashing the Potential of Existing Population

1. HKU SPACE and other continuing education units are well placed to provide vocational and academic courses that would encourage female homemakers to work or re-join the labour force. We are able to offer programmes in both daytime and evening on a part-time or full-time basis. The wide range of programmes we offer provide many opportunities. Support for sections of population to take courses could be in the form of financial support, e.g. vouchers, and child care facilities which could release the female homemakers to study.
2. In terms of extending working life, HKU SPACE adopts a flexible approach because of its use of fixed term appointments which can be applicable across many age ranges.
3. As with female homemakers the wide range of courses offered both part-time and full-time, and easily accessible locations of learning centres can help in terms of re-training/re-skilling of other groups as necessary. These considerations also apply to other sub-groups such as ethnic minorities, new arrivals etc. HKU SPACE would wish to work with government and business to provide suitable opportunities.

Chapter 3: Enhancing the Quality of our Home-grown Talent

Manpower projections worldwide are notoriously unreliable as long term guides to the talent and skills required. Advances in technology demonstrate how quickly job requirements may change. Given the impact of rapidly changing technology on job creation it may be unwise to predict future career prospects too prescriptively but to concentrate on providing broad based education and skills for the younger generations.

In terms of education, what is required is a broad based preparation which provides students with transferrable skills, particularly in terms of language, communication, numeracy, IT etc. A Liberal Arts approach in general is a good preparation in future specialization. Our post-secondary education courses, particularly in our Community College, already provide such broad based preparation for the work force or for further study. We agree that measures to increase collaboration between employers and education institutions would be most helpful in this respect and we stand ready to work with employers' organisations to provide such a forum.

HKU SPACE programmes already provide substantial opportunities in vocational education in a number of area on both a part-time and full-time basis and this approach is perhaps more effective than seeking to segregate academic and vocational study. More could be done to encourage the concept of lifelong learning such that young people would be ready to return to learning on a part-time basis following a period of full-time education. The CEF fund has been a great support in the past 10 years but it is limited (to \$10,000 per individual) and bureaucratic. It may also have encouraged employers not to support learners and direct them instead to the CEF which is perhaps an unfortunate consequence for a worthy initiative. Our own student surveys suggest that this may be the case and more work should perhaps be done to look at this aspect.

The Hong Kong work force went through a rapid period of re-skilling in 1980s and 1990s largely provided by a market response amongst Continuing Education providers. Care must be taken by government in regulating the sector through such measures as the QF not to dampen the ability of the market to deliver programmes in areas that are in need. HKU SPACE supports the QF strongly. This works well at the level of accredited qualifications but more could be done in terms of credit accumulation and transfer and the accumulation of short accredited courses which would have to be done initially at the institutional level.

Chapter 4: Complementing our Existing Population and Workforce with New Sources

The issues that form barriers to this are the high cost of housing and the quality of the environment, particularly air quality. In addition, there is the problem of supply of school places for non-Chinese speakers. These are urgent to address if external recruitment of talent is to be a success.

Chapter 5: Fostering a Supportive Environment for our People to Form and Raise Families

The questions raised should be looked at further in order to address the issue of encouraging larger families. Paying for such measures does raise questions of general government fiscal policy and fairness of the tax base which need to be addressed. As mentioned earlier, the affordable housing and quality of environment are important in encouraging family growth as well as child care and educational opportunities. HKU SPACE is willing to help at the post-school, post-secondary level.

Chapter 6: Embracing Opportunities in an Ageing Society

HKU SPACE already offers incentives to the elderly to take a wide range of programmes in its well-located learning centres. It is acknowledged that more could

be done and this is an area that is an active part of our consideration of strategy going forward. Government encouragement of the elderly to take courses could be productive and perhaps in this segment a voucher scheme could well be easier to administer and have more immediate impact.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'John Cribbin', with a stylized, cursive script.

John Cribbin
Deputy Director (Academic Services)