



維多利亞教育機構

**Victoria Educational Organisation**

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

23 February 2014

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Public Engagement Exercise on Population Policy**

Attached please find my submission on population policy, focusing on women's labour force participation.

Should you have any enquiries, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you very much for your consideration.



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“Promoting Women’s Labour Force Participation”  
Submission to Steering Committee on Population Policy  
by Dr. Maggie Koong

## Introduction

In its population policy consultation paper released in October, the Government points out that the ageing population and the shrinking labour force will pose various challenges to Hong Kong, and suggests to draw female homemakers into the labour force as one of the ways to solve the problems. According to a survey, the potential of this population can be readily unleashed if we could provide appropriate child care or after-school care services.

Today the domestic division of labour in Hong Kong continues to be largely gendered and women still shoulder a bulk of child care. Also, despite the lack of financial support, single mothers and new arrival women often need to give up their full-time employment or work part-time in order to take care of their children. As a result, they become the working poor and may encounter various poverty-related problems. If we want to encourage female homemakers to work or re-join the labour force, we must have effective measures to help them combine work and family. Focusing on the female carers of young children aged 0-6, I hereby propose the following measures:

### **1. Increase early childhood “educare” services and subsidies**

Present situation:

At a Legislative Council meeting in April 2012, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare noted that the populations below age 3 were around 132,000 (2009), 136,000 (2010), and 142,000 (2011). However, according to the Social Welfare Department’s 2013 data, there were only a total of 1003 subvented day care places for infants between 0 and 2 years<sup>1</sup>, and the fees vary from about \$3000 to over \$5000. There were as well 29,527 subvented full-day places for children aged between 2 and 6 in kindergarten-cum-child care centres<sup>2</sup>, which normally charge about \$2000 to over \$5000.

Because of their work constraints, women of dual-income families and single mothers, in particular, highly demand full-day early childhood educational and care services. There needs to be appropriate measures to target the special needs of these disadvantaged groups.

Besides, the high fees of full-day early childhood educational and care services have put many families, even dual-income families, off from enrolling their children. Although children between 3 and 6 years are eligible for the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme, since the voucher subsidy is not enough to cover full-day programme fees, needy families still need to apply for the Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme and pass the means test in order to obtain additional subsidies to pay the difference. If families of infants aged between 0 and 2 years and of toddlers between the age of 2 and 3 years want to receive subsidies for full-day child care services, they must pass both the “social needs” test and the means test. To pass the “social needs” test, both parents must be working, and one of them needs to work at least 120 hours a month, while the other needs to work at least 104 hours a month. Single-parents also need to work at least a certain hours a month to pass the test. In contrast, families’ eligibility for and level of assistance are assessed using the Adjusted Family Income (AFI) mechanism ( $AFI = \text{gross annual income of the family} / \text{number of family members} + 1$ ). The current AFI threshold for full level of assistance is \$32,534.

#### Recommendations:

- a) When planning for our population policy, the Government should refer to the latest population figures and statistics. It should re-examine and rearrange full-day infant and child care service quota and operating hours according to the demographics, family income, and demand and supply of services of each district. Support should especially be provided for children of working poor families (Appendix 2) to facilitate the employment of their mothers.
- b) As recommended in the *Research Report on the “Child Carer Support Project”* by the City University of Hong Kong<sup>3</sup>, which studied supportive measures for children and child carers in different countries and regions, the Government should provide a universal child care allowance and an allowance for carers of children with special needs.
- c) The Government may adopt the principle of “proportionate universalism” and

increase its support for needy families with a scale and intensity that is proportionate to the level of disadvantage. At the same time, it may relax the thresholds of both the “social needs” test and the means test to assist more low-income or working poor families.

## **2. Actively promote family-friendly policies**

Present situation:

Women of dual-income families and single mothers have a high demand for full-day child care services due to their work constraints. Besides full-day early childhood educational and care services, the Social Welfare Department also provides various child care support services, including the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project, Home-based Childcare, Occasional and Extended Hours Services. Nevertheless, many families are still unable to obtain the services they need as there appears to be a mismatch of resources — in some districts the demand well exceeds supply, while in other districts services are underutilised. Many parents also worry about the quality of community carers in the neighbourhood- and home-based programmes as many of them are untrained.

In addition, the operating modes and hours of the services cannot fulfil the needs of some of the dual-income and disadvantaged families. Women of these families often need to work on weekends and public holidays. However, right now only the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project provides services during public holidays. Other services are unable to support these mothers as they only operate from Monday to Saturday afternoon.

At the Legislative Council meeting on 6 June 2013, councillors debated a motion on “actively promoting family-friendly policies” and urged the Government to develop targeted policies and supportive measures for working parents, such as increasing the places for child care services and extend the operating hours.

Recommendations:

- a) In many dual-income or single-parent families, the caring of infants and young children has long relied on the support of the family network (non-working family members), and grandparents have especially been an important supportive resource for many families. Nonetheless, the support children receive from the family

network is declining, as their grandparents may not live nearby or the grandparents may need to work themselves. Therefore, there is a great need to review the effectiveness of current child care service provision and examine the demand and supply in different districts in order to determine the number of child care places and operating hours needed to support women's labour force participation.

- b) Since 2002, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has urged its member countries to facilitate parents to strike a balance between work and family life. In its *Family-Friendly Workplace Practices*, the OECD advocates workplace measures that complement family-supportive resources and child development to allow parents more choices in taking care of their work and family, hence to improve gender equality in employment opportunities. These family-friendly workplace measures include: child care, tax/benefits and paid parental leave which comprises maternity leave, paternity leave and child care leave.
- c) The Government should approve the motion on “actively promoting family-friendly policies” and formulate policies to provide allowances and leaves. For instance, depending on their needs (post-C-section care or breastfeeding), post-natal mothers may apply for a maximum of half-year unpaid leave in addition to the 10-week statutory paid maternity leave. The Government may refer to the statutory leave entitlements (especially the leave for sick children) in OECD countries<sup>4</sup>.

### **3 Strengthen parent education and guidance**

Present situation:

Although there are stationing school social work services in most primary and secondary schools, very few early childhood institutes (see Appendix 3) have social workers to provide parent education in Hong Kong. According to the data of the “Preschool Children Development Research Project”, low-income families often have difficulties in eliciting help from professionals on parenting problems. Therefore, it is recommended to strengthen service provision by establishing stationing kindergarten social work service instead of relying on referral social work services. In this way, social workers can better utilise early childhood institutes as a platform to reach out to and support families in need as well as to provide early identification and intervention. Earlier this year, the Hong Kong Student Aid Society and the Social Work



Department of Hong Kong Baptist University held a press conference on the “Research on the family needs of Tin Shui Wai”<sup>5</sup>, in which they also urged the Government to provide stationing social work service in all Hong Kong kindergartens in order to provide families of young children timely services and prevent tragedies.

While the “Comprehensive Child Development Service” piloted since 2005 has been implemented in all districts of Hong Kong, it has not satisfactorily solved the problems related to infant and child development, particularly the negative impacts of poverty on infant and child development, in the Hong Kong society (see Appendix 4).

#### Recommendations:

- a) I have proposed at the Family Council meeting earlier this year to provide fee-free in-home guidance service for families with infants and children aged 0-3. Please refer to the Shanghai *0-3-Year-Old Children Plan of Care and Education* for a similar service model.
- b) In order to strengthen the provision of parent education and counselling services, the Government may also refer to the example of the Seoul Early Childhood Education and Development Institute<sup>6</sup>, which was established by the South Korean Government to support parent education.
- c) The Government may establish stationing social work service in kindergartens, especially in those located in disadvantaged areas, to better support working mothers and provide timely intervention for needy children.

#### Summary

Although it is commonly agreed that “women hold up half the sky”, many of them still face various problems daily, such as the lack of support for working mothers and the absence of family-friendly policies. If we want women to play to their strengths and increase the labour force participation rate, we must provide appropriate and timely support for working women and potential female labour. Therefore, policymakers must find ways to help women relieve their work and family pressures and to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life.

Dr. Maggie Koong  
23 February 2014

**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup>Based on the numbers of government-subsented places for 0- to 2-year-olds shown on the Social Welfare Department's lists of child care centres (as at 6 September 2013) and kindergarten-cum-child care centres (as at 31 August 2013).

<sup>2</sup> As 3- to 6-year-olds who study in non-profit-making kindergarten-cum-child care centres are eligible to apply for voucher subsidies for educational services, the number here represents only the number of full-day places for care services.

<sup>3</sup>Leung, L. C., Hong Kong Federation of Women's Centres, & Tin Shui Wai Community Development Network (2013). *Research report on the "Child Carer Support Project"*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Federation of Women's Centres & Tin Shui Wai Community Development Network.

<sup>4</sup> OECD (2006). *Starting strong II: Early childhood education and care*. On p.24 there is a table of comparison that shows the statutory leave entitlements in various member countries, as shown below:

**Table 1.1. Provision of statutory leave entitlements in selected OECD countries**

	Maternity leave in months		Paternity leave in months		Parental leave in months		Total post-natal leave	Leave for sick children	
Australia	√	Statutory but unpaid	×		√	12	F	12 (0)	×
Austria	√√√	3.5	×		√√*	22	F	24 (24*)	√√√ 0.5
Belgium	√√√	3.5	√√√	0.5	√√	6	I	9.5 (9.5)	√ 0.5
Canada <sup>1</sup>	√√√	3.5	√	< 0.5	√√√	8.5	F	12 (11.5)	√
Denmark	√√√	4	√√√	0.5	√√√	7.5	F	10.5 (10.5)	×
Finland	√√√	4	√√√	1	√√√	6	F	36 (36)	√
France	√√√	3.5	√√√	0.5	√√*	33	F	36 (36*) <sup>2</sup>	√ < 0.5
Germany	√√√	3.5	×		√√*	34	F	36 (24) <sup>3</sup>	√√√ 1
Hungary	√√√	5.5	×		√√√	31.5 <sup>4</sup>		36 (36)	√√√ <sup>4</sup>
Ireland	√√	4.5	×		√	6.5	I	12 <sup>4</sup>	√√√ < 0.5
Italy	√√√	4.5	×		√√	10 <sup>5</sup>	I	12.5 (12.5)	√ <sup>5</sup>
Netherlands	√√√	3.5	√√√	< 0.5	√	6	I	8.5 (2.5)	√√√ 0.5
Norway	√√√	2	√	0.5	√√√	10	F/I	11.5 (11.5)	√√√ <sup>6</sup>
Portugal	√√√	5.5	√√√	1	√	6	I	11.5 (5.5)	√√√ 1.5
Sweden			√√√	0.5	√√√	16	F/I		√√√ <sup>7</sup>
United Kingdom	√√	12	√√√	0.5	√	5-6 <sup>6</sup>	I	18	√ <sup>6</sup> ?
United States	×	<sup>8</sup>	×		×			0	×

<sup>5</sup>*Singtao Daily* (January 8, 2013). Groups advocating to establish stationing kindergarten social work services to prevent domestic violence.

<sup>6</sup> The Seoul Early Childhood Education and Development Institute was established by the South Korean Government to support early childhood development. It is like a theme park and a multi-purpose educational centre, which provides teacher training, student and parent education services all at one place.



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## 推動婦女勞動力

孔美琪博士呈人口政策督導委員會意見書

### 引言

政府十月份發表人口政策諮詢文件，則指出人口不斷老化和勞動人口萎縮的影響，其中建議可以考慮吸引料理家務女性加入勞動市場，在當中有調查發現只要做好託兒服務或者課餘託管的服務，便可釋放這些勞動力。

現今的香港仍受到傳統的性別分工，照顧孩子的責任仍主要落在母親身上。另外，單親媽媽及新來港婦女在缺乏支援下，也因照顧的重擔而放棄全職工作，又或只可做兼顧，因而亦出現在職貧窮並顯生其他相關問題。若要家庭主婦重投勞動市場，則要做好相關措施，以助婦女面對家庭和事業兩者兼顧的平衡。就照顧 0-6 歲嬰幼兒的家庭主婦能重投勞動市場，現提出以下的建議措施：

### 1. 增加幼兒教育照顧 (educare) 的服務與津貼

現況：根據 2012 年 4 月立法會的會議，勞工及福利局局長指香港 3 歲以下兒童的人口數目為 13.2 萬 (2009 年)、13.6 萬 (2010 年)，和 14.2 萬 (2011 年)。然而，社會福利署 2013 年的資料，全港為<sup>1</sup>0-2 歲嬰兒提供日託育嬰的資助幼兒中心總名額只有 1003 名，費用由 3 千多至 5 千多元；為 2-6 歲幼兒提供全日服務的<sup>2</sup>非牟利幼稚園暨幼兒中心總名額則 29,527 名，費用由 2 千多至 5 千多元。

雙職家庭及單親家庭的婦女因工作需要，對全日幼兒教育照顧的服務需求更為殷切，社會應特別針對弱勢社群對全日教育照顧的服務需要。

此外，全日幼兒教育照顧服務費用高昂，一般雙職家庭也難以負擔。另為 3-6 歲在學幼兒而設的學券計劃，資助金額不足支付全日制費用，需要再申請「幼稚園幼兒中心學費減免計劃」，並通過入息審查方獲補貼不足餘額。而 0-2 歲嬰兒及 2-3 歲幼兒需要接受全日幼兒服務，則需要通過「社會需要」審查及入息審查，方可獲得減免學費資助。「社會需要」審查指申請人及其配偶均需要工作，其中一方每月工時要超過 120 小時，另一方則要超過 104 小時；單親家庭則申請人需要工作超過指定時數，方符合申請資格。而入息審查是按「調整後家庭收入」(家庭全年總收入／家庭成員人數+1)訂定申請人學費減免資助額，調整後家庭收入少於 \$32,534



方可獲得全免資助。

建議：a) 在人口政策的制定，參考人口統計資料，按地區人口、年齡及家庭經濟入息等的統計數據資料，制定及增加嬰幼兒全日服務名額，並需檢視各區託兒服務之供求，重新及有效地提供託兒服務名額及時間，尤其是在職貧窮家庭的幼兒（附件二），以支援婦女就業的問題。

b) 正如<sup>3</sup>香港城市大學進行「照顧兒童支援計劃」研究報告，當中參照了不同國家和地區在照顧兒童及照顧者支援的措施進行研究，因而建議提供全民照顧兒童津貼及特殊照顧者津貼。

c) 建議政府可採取「按比例普遍主義」(Proportionate Universalism)方式，增撥對弱勢家庭資源的投放及傾斜，並放寬「社會需要」審查及入息審查的門檻，以體恤收入/ 入不敷支幼兒家庭的限制。

## **2. 積極推動家庭友善政策**

現況：雙職家庭及單親家庭的婦女因工作需要，對託兒服務的需求殷切。除全日制幼兒教育照顧的服務外，社會福利署提供多種託兒的支援服務，包括：鄰里計劃、社區保母、暫託及延長服務，可是服務仍出現不足情況，其中原因是出現資源錯配的問題，有地區出現求過於供的情況，有地區出現使用率不足的情況。另外因照顧兒童的社區保母未接受專業培訓，難使家長安心使用服務。

此外，部份支援服務的形式及時間，未能支援雙職家庭及弱勢家庭工作的婦女，因她們普遍也需要週末及公眾假期工作，惟現只有鄰里支援幼兒照顧服務有部份假期提供服務外，其他也未能支援婦女工作而假日託兒的需要。

在2013年6月5日的立法會會議上，議員就《積極推動家庭友善政策》議案曾作辯論，其中建議政府需要因時制宜，定出針對性的政策及支援，如增加幼兒託管服務名額，以及改善託管時間以涵接在職父母的工作時間。

建議：a) 在傳統私領域上，大多數雙薪家庭或是單親家庭的勞動者，嬰幼兒照顧方面多依賴家族網絡(非工作者)的支持，特別是祖父母已成為家庭內幼兒照顧的重要支持。然而，近年來受祖父母不住附近及其因工作無法照顧之影響，家族網絡對幼兒的扶助功能逐漸降低。因此，確實有需要檢討現行託兒服務的成效，並需檢視各區託兒服務之供求，重新及有效地提供託兒服務名額及時間，以支援婦女就業的問題。

b) 自2002年以來，經濟合作發展組織(OECD)建議其會員國須協助父母在工作與小孩間取得平衡，建議參考OECD「家庭友善政策

(Family-Friendly Policy)」，以促進適合家庭資源與幼兒發展的方式，協助父母調和工作與家庭生活的政策，並增加父母在工作與照護上的選擇，提升就業機會上的性別平等，當中家庭扶助措施包括：托育津貼(Childcare)、兒童津貼(Child Benefit) 及給薪育嬰假(Paid leave)等三種類型，而給薪育嬰假主要包括：產假、陪產假及兒童照顧假等三項。

c) 政府需要確實《積極推動家庭友善政策》，制訂政策提供津貼與假期，其中建議除法定十周分娩假期之外，婦女產後可按需要（如剖腹產子休養、餵哺人奶等）申請最多半年停薪留職假期，並且可參考<sup>4</sup>OECD 提供照顧患病孩子的假期。

### **3 加強親職教育與育兒指導服務**

現況：現時中、小學也有駐校社工服務，然而幼兒教育則有駐校社工服務（參附件三），利用學校平台提供親職教育。根據「學前幼兒發展研究計劃」的資料顯示，低收入家庭面對子女管教問題，難以得到專業人士協助，建議駐校而非轉介模式的社工服務，善用幼兒學校作平台主動接觸及支援有需要的家庭，直接疏解家長育兒問題，並可作出及早識別與介入有問題及需要的家。本年初，<sup>5</sup>香港學生輔導會舉行記者招待會公佈委託浸會大學社會工作系，就「天水圍幼兒家庭需要」研究結果，有關團體也倡議政府在全港幼稚園設立駐校社工，及早識別有需要協助的幼兒家庭，減低悲劇的發生。

縱然由 2005 年開始試驗的「兒童身心全面發展服務」至今已擴展至全港各區，惟仍未能滿足及解決現時社會上嬰幼兒發展問題，尤其是貧窮問題對嬰幼兒發展的影響（參附件四）。

建議：a) 本人就這議題，於年初在家庭事務委員會上也曾提出早期教養方案，推行新生嬰兒家庭上門指導服務，為 0-3 歲嬰幼兒的家庭免費提供上門育兒指導服務，而這模式可參考在上海市推行「0-3 歲早期教養方案」。

b) 可以參考<sup>6</sup>韓國首爾幼兒教育振興院，由政府設立及支援進行家長教育工作，加強家長教育與輔導的工作。

c) 可適當地利用幼兒學校作平台，在幼校設立駐校社工，尤其是弱勢社群居住的地區，支緩在職婦女照顧家庭育兒兼工作的壓力，並協助解決弱勢社群兒童的發展需要。

### **總結**

現今婦女雖然被認為能「頂半邊天」，但不少仍面對各樣生活問題，如缺乏對婦女就業支援、家庭友善政策等。若要婦女能發揮所長，增加社會勞動人口，便要

讓在職婦女及潛在女性勞動力提供適切的支援，讓婦女能適當的工作與家庭取得平衡，以免基層婦女因照顧家庭而被困於家中，未能投入市場工作。基此，政策制訂者有責任調和工作與家庭生活所顯現的壓力，制訂相關政策讓婦女擁有足夠資源，並能達成所期望的工作與家庭的平衡。

孔美琪博士

二零一四年二月二十三日

註釋：

<sup>1</sup> 根據社會福利署日間幼兒中心名單（截止 2013 年 9 月 6 日）及幼稚園暨幼兒中心名單（截止 2013 年 8 月 31 日）顯示 0-2 歲受資助名額計算。

<sup>2</sup> 由於就讀非牟利幼稚園暨幼兒中心 3-6 歲班可申請學券資助，故只計算非牟利幼稚園暨幼兒中心的全日名額。

<sup>3</sup> 梁麗青、香港婦女中心協會、天水圍社區發展網絡(2013)《「照顧兒童支援計劃」研究報告》，香港婦女中心協會、天水圍社區發展出版。

<sup>4</sup> OECD (2006)《Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care》P.24 比較會員國提供的家長假期，見下表：

Table 1.1. Provision of statutory leave entitlements in selected OECD countries

	Maternity leave in months	Paternity leave in months	Parental leave in months	Total post-natal leave	Leave for sick children
Australia	√ Statutory but unpaid	×	√ 12 F	12 (0)	×
Austria	√√√ 3.5	×	√√* 22 F	24 (24*)	√√√ 0.5
Belgium	√√√ 3.5	√√√ 0.5	√√ 6 I	9.5 (9.5)	√ 0.5
Canada <sup>1</sup>	√√√ 3.5	√ < 0.5	√√√ 8.5 F	12 (11.5)	√
Denmark	√√√ 4	√√√ 0.5	√√√ 7.5 F	10.5 (10.5)	×
Finland	√√√ 4	√√√ 1	√√√ 6 F	36 (36)	√
France	√√√ 3.5	√√√ 0.5	√√* 33 F	36 (36*) <sup>2</sup>	√ < 0.5
Germany	√√√ 3.5	×	√√* 34 F	36 (24) <sup>3</sup>	√√√ 1
Hungary	√√√ 5.5	×	√√√ 31.5 <sup>4</sup>	36 (36)	√√√ <sup>4</sup>
Ireland	√√ 4.5	×	√ 6.5 I	12 <sup>4</sup>	√√√ < 0.5
Italy	√√√ 4.5	×	√√ 10 <sup>5</sup> I	12.5 (12.5)	√ <sup>5</sup>
Netherlands	√√√ 3.5	√√√ < 0.5	√ 6 I	8.5 (2.5)	√√√ 0.5
Norway	√√√ 2	√ 0.5	√√√ 10 F/I	11.5 (11.5)	√√√ <sup>6</sup>
Portugal	√√√ 5.5	√√√ 1	√ 6 I	11.5 (5.5)	√√√ 1.5
Sweden	√√ 12	√√√ 0.5	√√√ 16 F/I	18	√√√ <sup>7</sup>
United Kingdom	√√ 12	√√√ 0.5	√ 5-6 <sup>5</sup> I	18	√ <sup>6</sup> ?
United States	× <sup>8</sup>	×	×	0	×

<sup>5</sup> 〈團體倡幼兒園設駐校社工輔導防家暴〉(2013 年 1 月 8 日)。《星島日報》。

<sup>6</sup> 由韓國政府設立、支援幼兒成長的首爾幼兒教育振興院，儼如一個主題樂園，是集幼师培訓、學生學習和家長教育於一身的多功能教育中心。