

## **HONG KONG WOMEN PROFESSIONALS AND ENTREPRENEURS ASSOCIATION**

### **OPINION ON THE CONSULTATION DOCUMENT, “Reforming the Academic Structure for Senior Secondary and Higher Education”**

In this document are presented the views of the members of the Hong Kong Women Professionals and Entrepreneurs Association (HKWPEA) on the EMB’s consultation document regarding education reform. The HKWPEA is a non-profit organization with a mission to enhance professional standard, training, and business opportunities and provide mutual support for its members. Ranking high on the Association's agenda is to respond to the HKSAR Government on various policy consultations.

After reviewing the consultation document and having sought additional input from both HKWPEA members and others who are experts in the educational field, we would like to **strongly endorse** the proposals that are put forward in the consultation document. We believe that the proposed changes are consistent with educational trends occurring in other parts of the world and that **it is imperative for Hong Kong to make these changes** in order to address the needs of modern society in Hong Kong as well as maintain external competitiveness.

We believe the broad-based curriculum design, including approximately 50% coverage of a compulsory core of English, Chinese, mathematics, and liberal studies, will equip students with a strong foundation of basic knowledge while allowing them to develop individual interests in the remaining 50% of elective subjects and other learning activities. However, we urge that measures be taken in the reform design to ensure that Hong

Kong's most gifted students, who are coping well with the current curriculum, will be given no less opportunity than what is now available to develop their talents.

We also endorse the planned assessment and reporting approaches that include both standards-referenced and norm-referenced assessment. However, we understand that developing such a system will require the use of experts and that it may be necessary to seek help from outside of Hong Kong in order to find enough professionally qualified people to carry out this work. We believe that it is imperative for the EMB to create a system of assessment that is not only reliable and valid from a technical point of view but also will be seen as fair from the point of view of the public, in particular the students' who are being assessed and their families'. The inclusion of an externally-moderated school-based assessment component will also be valuable in maintaining student motivation and provide a more complete picture of student ability.

Regarding the provision of supporting measures to carry out the proposed changes, we suggest:

1. The EMB should improve the way that the proposed changes are being communicated to the public and to secondary school teachers. The changes represent an opportunity, not a threat, and they should be presented in a much more positive light. Given the changing demographics, continuing the current system will result in a net loss of students over time. The restructuring is a way of making use of existing resources in order to provide more (and hopefully better) education to Hong Kong's young people. Not only will it allow those in the

education sector to maintain their employment, but it provides them new opportunities for self-development.

2. Further, we urge the EMB to consider carefully whether the existing provisions for professional development (Point 5.18 in the document) are adequate. In order for the proposed changes to be successful, teachers in the new system must feel prepared and confident in their abilities to shift to the new curriculum. The EMB is urged to consider new approaches to professional development in order to achieve this objective. We also suggest that school teachers receive training in phases with support from school heads.

In conclusion, the HKWPEA **strongly supports the implementation** of the “3+3+4” system in September 2008. As our membership includes professionals and entrepreneurs from a wide variety of backgrounds, including many in the education sector, we hope the EMB will feel free to call upon us in the future to offer our assistance in implementing the proposed reforms.

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