

平等機會婦女聯席的信頭

Letterhead of Hong Kong Women's Coalition on Equal Opportunities

Paper No. CB(2)201/99-00(01)

To: the joint meetings of the Legco Panels on Education
and Legco Panel on Home Affairs

25/10/99

Re: Secondary School Places Allocation System

The Hong Kong Women's Coalition on Equal Opportunities comprises of 9 women's organisations with specific interest on discrimination against women.

We understand that the Legco Panel on Education will be discussing the Formal Investigation Report conducted by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) on the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System on 26/10/99. We would like to express our opinion on the report.

We, first of all, welcome the publication of the report. We believe there are many structural discrimination based on sex still exist in society and it is the responsibility of the EOC to reveal these discrimination to the public and to ensure that the government take positive steps to eliminate them.

It is important to note that the Education Department does not deny the existence of sex discrimination within SSPA, in fact, it has been placed there deliberately. The reasons provided by the Education Department is feeble and without sound justification. It is also alarming to know that SSPA has been in operation since 1978 without major changes, this is surely unhealthy as education should be in pace with society and Hong Kong is city with rapid changes.

The report pointed out that:

- Girls needed higher SSPA scaled scores than boys to get into Band 1 in 11 out of 18 school nets.
- Girls needed higher scores than boys to get into 60 out of all the district banding within the 18 school nets.
- Over the past 5 years, more boys than girls got their first choice of school.
- 2,469 more boys than girls got their first three choices of schools.

The Education Department claimed that boys develop later than girls do and hence favourable treatment for boys is necessary, otherwise, more girls would enter the popular schools and more boys would enter the less popular ones. The Education Department said that this would create huge operational problems for two-sex schools.

The Education Department cannot provide any sound and credible evidence or research to support its claim on the development of boys and girls. If the current policy and system is based on assumption and operational convenience, then it is dangerous and bias. This will deprive many girls the fair chance of good education and long term career development.

The Education Department defended SSPA by saying that, to be fair to boys, a fixed number of boys and girls must be maintained in co-education schools. However, according to EOC's report, this policy deprived girls, as well as boys from entering into school of their choice. This invalidates the whole basis of the favourable treatment for boys enforced by the Education Department.

The Government must set example of its commitment to the elimination of sex discrimination and the principle of equal opportunities, the very basis of the Sex Discrimination Ordinance introduced by the Government. The Legislative Council has a duty to ensure that the Government complies with the law. We urge members of the Legislative Council to support the recommendations made by the report and ensure a review of the SSPA system.

Yours sincerely,

H.K. Women's Coalition on Equal Opportunities