

Message from the Chairperson – Creating a Level-playing Field – Improving the Quality of Life for Persons with a Disability

**Creating a Level-playing Field –
Improving the Quality of Life for
Persons with a Disability**



Mrs Patricia Chu, EOC Chairperson

Imagine a sports ground with running tracks. There is one track with an uneven surface while another is bumpy. The remaining ones are all flat. Which runners are more likely to win? The answer is obvious.

Students with a disability are like runners on unlevelled tracks. They may not be able to compete on a par with other students because of their disabilities. If, however, reasonable accommodations and adjustments to meet their special needs are provided, the playing field is leveled and they will be able to demonstrate their real capabilities.

Equal Opportunities Begin at School

The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) advocates equal education opportunities for everyone, regardless of whether they have a disability. In support of the integrated education policy and to enable teachers to have better understanding of anti-discrimination principles, legal provisions and practical ways to handle equal opportunities issues in the school setting, the EOC launched a new web-based training programme "Equal Opportunities Begin at School" with the Education and Manpower Bureau in June 2004. Through an interactive process on the web, teachers learn about different practices that allow equal access to education for all students and ways to accommodate students with special educational needs.

Disability as Part of Human Diversity

According to UN estimates, one in ten of the global population, or 600 million people, have a disability. Up to three quarters of them live in the developing world. In Hong Kong, the estimated number of persons with a disability by the Census and Statistics Department was 269,500 in 2001. This figure does not include the number of persons with chronic illness, which was estimated at 882,700. These people could be our neighbours, friends or even family members.

A global treaty protecting and promoting the rights of people with disabilities is now being prepared by the United Nations. The draft treaty is based on a number of principles including dignity, individual autonomy, independence of persons with disabilities, their full inclusion as equal citizens and participants in all aspects of life, respect for differences and acceptance of disability as part of human diversity.

Ah Bun's Case

There are many aspects of how a society can work towards inclusion. Ways to ensure equal opportunities in education and employment, accessibility of buildings and roads, availability of services... all of these

will improve the quality of life for persons with disabilities. As we live in an information economy, access to ICT (information and communication technology) and rehabilitation technology assist persons with a disability to live independently and meaningfully.

The familiar story of Ah Bun (Mr. TANG Siu-bun), a quadriplegic, highlighted how ICT can provide persons with a disability with the potential to live in dignity and participate in community life.

Ah Bun is paralyzed from the neck down since an accident in 1991. In March this year, he wrote an email to Hong Kong's legislators seeking their help to let him die. After the media reported his appeal, many mobilized to support and help him. Encouraged by the public response, Ah Bun has changed his mind and pledged to make the most of his life. An initially sad story has ended up on a note of hope, which has touched the hearts of many.

Making Life Worth Living

Ah Bun's case has raised the issue of whether enough has been done to provide people like him with the best quality of life possible. We know that the provision of a special wheelchair to provide higher mobility, or IT equipment that helps people communicate with others can make a big difference for persons with a disability. The despair that Ah Bun had felt raised public concern about the value of life. Our society should act on what can be done to help all people with disabilities overcome the hurdles they face to lead better lives.

As I pointed out at the Global ICT Summit held recently in Hong Kong, ICT can add meaning to life, so it is important to make it accessible for everyone. Non-discriminatory service standards and accessibility by the disadvantaged must be clearly entrenched as a government policy.

Bridging the digital divide so that different sectors of the community benefit from ICT development, requires concerted efforts and co-operation of all stakeholders in the public and private sectors. To promote the importance of e-inclusion, the EOC set a precedent in 1999 by launching its revamped Home Page featuring six modes, which is user friendly to persons with a disability. Since then, the EOC has been playing a catalyst role by encouraging different sectors to take up similar initiatives. The EOC has also worked closely with IT professionals in empowering disadvantaged communities. A case in point is our support for the Web Care Campaign launched by the Internet Professionals Association since 2001. We have also provided funding to community initiatives for promoting IT accessibility.

There must be a place for everyone in our society, and people with disabilities should not be deprived of the dignity and opportunities to realize their aspirations. Ah Bun and other persons with a disability deserve an equal footing in our society, as each and every one of us stands to benefit from a level playing field.

Education for All

Education for All

"Ensuring equal opportunities in education is of paramount importance to a child with a disability, just like everybody else. While we recognize that some of the students with disabilities may benefit more by studying in special schools, yet there are students or parents who prefer mainstream schools where they believe learning can be maximized. A child should not be denied the option just because of his or her disability. Every child should be allowed to make the choice," said Mrs Heidi Tong, Convenor, Support Group on Integrated Education.



Integrated Education in Hong Kong

In 1997, the government launched a two-year pilot project to integrate students with disabilities in mainstream schools. Nine schools, and a total of 49 students with special educational needs, participated in this project at the time. By adopting a whole-school approach, the schools were encouraged to establish a policy to create an inclusive environment, and mobilize staff to support students with special educational needs. With the continuous promotion of the scheme, 116 schools are now adopting the whole-school approach to integration. [1]

Integration in Action

SKH Yat Sau Primary School has embarked on the integrated education scheme since 1997. 23 students with special educational needs are now enrolled in the school. Principal Lam Seung-wan is the mastermind behind the whole school approach, and all staff share the responsibility to establish an inclusive environment.

"Through integration, we hope to enable students to learn and live in a diverse community which respects differences," Mr Lam said. Making integration work relies on the collaboration of various factors, including teaching support, student participation, and communication with parents.



Principal of Yat Sau Primary School Mr Lam Seung Wan

Teaching Effectively

Before implementing the scheme, the school arranged for its teachers to attend professional training, through which they learned more about the characteristics of students with different disabilities and their needs.

Ms Anthea Cheung Yuen-yin, teacher and the Project Coordinator of Integrated Education at Yat Sau said, "The resource teacher and the learning support assistants, who organized and coordinated the integration projects in our school, also collaborated with the other teachers in lesson planning and cooperative teaching. This enabled all teachers to grasp effective teaching techniques in an integrated setting."



"Apart from the standard curriculum, we have also introduced extra-curricular options in order to help development of multiple intelligence of the students. For example, we have found that some students with special educational needs have a strong sense of rhythm.

To stimulate their interest in learning, the school introduced the African drum class this year," Ms Cheung added.

Mr Lam said, "Inevitably, the implementation of these measures would increase the workload of our teachers. But, they also see it as a good chance to widen their horizons."

Peer Support



Student Ambassador

"Ah Ming and I have been very good friends since Primary One. Not only do we study together, we also share the same interest. Both of us like drawing buses. He is good at outlining and I am responsible for colouring. Academically, we are also good partners, as Ah Ming always gets good grades in English and I, on the other hand, perform better in mathematics," said Chi-wing, a Primary 5 student, who has been serving as Student Ambassador for two years at Yat Sau. Despite her young age, she already appreciates that every individual is different.

Ah Ming, diagnosed with mild autism, is also a student of Yat Sau. In his first year of primary school, he was very moody and had difficulties getting along with his classmates. In view of his special needs, the teacher arranged for him to sit next to Chi-wing, who took the initiative to help him and tried patiently to communicate with him. After one year, Ah Ming started to improve his social skills. He is a much happier person now, and inspired by Chi-wing, he has volunteered to be Student Ambassador this year.

50 students are serving as Student Ambassadors at the moment. Their job is to befriend and support school friends who have special educational needs, and create a harmonious atmosphere within the school.

Mr Lam said, "With the implementation of the Student Ambassador Programme, I am glad to see that all our students, with and without disabilities, are making progress, in terms of both academic achievements and social skills."

Communication is the Key



As Convenor of a parents' group, Support Group on Integrated Education, Ms Heidi Tong said, "We believe that integrated education should be the general direction for providing education for students with disabilities. In order to pursue quality integrated education services for our children, parents have to be involved in policy making, implementation and evaluation of the integrated education scheme. The underlying principle is that the diverse needs of students must be recognized and we must cater for different styles and rates of learning. The key words are: effective education for all."

Mr Lam also expressed that effective communication with parents was one of the crucial factors, and the biggest challenge, in implementing the scheme. A parent once told him that she did not want her son to be seated next to another child who had learning difficulties. She worried that the student's hyperactive behaviour would distract her son and affect his academic performance. She insisted that the inclusive setting would only benefit students with disabilities, but not the rest of the class.

Mr Lam said, "In view of her concerns, we made extra effort to explain to her that integration would in fact benefit both parties. My words proved to be true after six months. Through the process of taking care of his classmate, the parent discovered that her son became more independent and showed greater acceptance and concern for others. She was pleased with her son's changes, and agreed that despite the differences, every student had something to gain from the integrated environment."

Equal Opportunities in Education

Education is a crucial factor for the development of our society. Every child should have equal opportunities in access to and meaningful participation in education. The Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO), which aims at eliminating and preventing discrimination against persons with disabilities, ensures that right.

[1] For more details, visit <http://emb.gov.hk/>

EOC's Resource List of "Education for All"

Code of Practice (COP) on Education under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance

The COP on Education is to assist schools to develop policies and procedures that prevent and eliminate disability discrimination, and to provide educators with practical guidance on making provisions for students with disabilities.

Disability and Education Series

This set of 8 leaflets outlines individual cases, assessment services, auxiliary aids and techniques of inclusive education.

New E-learning Programme "Equal Opportunities Begin at School"

The programme is designed to assist educators to develop policies and appropriate practices that allow equal access to education through a tried and tested interactive process.

Training Module on Eliminating Disability Discrimination

This training module aims to familiarize social workers and educators with the legal concepts under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance.

TV Docu-drama Series - A Mission for Equal Opportunities

The docu-drama series, comprising different stories of sex discrimination, disability discrimination and family status discrimination, is based on real-life cases. The programme features analyses of discriminatory acts and the legal perspective of equal opportunity issues.

TV Series - Equal Opportunities School

This is a Cantonese TV series for young students. It features analyses of discriminatory acts and equal opportunities issues at school in a lively and easy-to-understand approach.

Other Useful Resources

1. Centre for Special Needs and Studies in Inclusive Education <http://www.ied.edu.hk/csnsie>
2. Heep Hong Society - Child Rehab <http://childrehab.heephong.org>
3. Special Education Resources Centre of the Education and Manpower Bureau <http://serc.ed.gov.hk>
4. Support Group on Integrated Education <http://www.iehk.org>

Log on Now – the New E-learning Programme for Teachers

Log on Now – the New E-learning Programme for Teachers



Animated videos and real-life film clips - the impact of the DDO on the educational environment is lucidly explained.



Officiating at the launching ceremony: Mrs. Betty Ip, EMB's Principal Assistant Secretary (left); Mrs. Patricia Chu, EOC Chairperson (centre) and Ms Florence Chan, EOC Senior Training Consultant (right).

School principals, teachers, parents and representatives from rehabilitation groups participated in the launching ceremony of the e-learning programme "Equal Opportunities Begin at School" to demonstrate their support of equal access to education for all students.

The new web based training programme, jointly developed by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB), is designed to help teachers learn about the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO) and how to accommodate students with special educational needs. Teachers who have successfully completed the programme will be awarded 4 CDP hours.

Address : <http://equaled.hkedcity.net>

“Have Your Say on Family Status” Youth Debate Competition

“Have Your Say on Family Status” Youth Debate Competition

The two-month event, jointly organized by the EOC and the Kowloon Women's Organisations Federation (KWOF), aimed to enhance public awareness of the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (FSDO). The project encouraged young people to reflect on related issues, and attracted applications from 67 secondary schools. Sixteen teams were selected to take part in the competition. Three rounds of debate were held from 17 April, and the finals were staged at Olympian City 2 on 30 May 2004 (Sunday).



Words from the Participants

"The competition offered us a chance to discuss the importance of family status and to review the meaning of equality. I'm honoured to be one of the participants, and hope that this kind of event will be held again next year."

Lau Chi-lam

St Teresa's Secondary School

"We have learned a great deal about equal opportunities between men and women, and between persons with or without family status. The experience has also broadened our horizons. The EOC's Resource Center was a great help to us in preparing for each match. We enjoyed the friendly atmosphere of the competition."

Cheng Shuk-man

Munsang College (Hong Kong Island)

"The motions were in-depth, and allowed us to study a few social problems. Different aspects of these issues are not normally covered in the newspapers. But through the process of debate, as we searched for evidence and came up with reflections, the arguments that we examined could be as comprehensive as a constitutional development report."

So Tak-him

Baptist Lui Ming Choi Secondary School



The winners! The champions from PAOC Ka Chi Secondary School, and EOC Member Mrs. Peggy LAM.

"It is difficult to strike a balance between work and family, as these are entirely different in nature. However, if one can get more support from society, and forge better understanding between family members, this is not impossible to achieve."

Lo Wing Kai

Po Kok Secondary School

"After rounds of debate, not only were we given a chance to polish our debating techniques, we had also developed a better understanding of the government's structure, public policies and strategies."

Casey Tong, Karen Ma, Susanna Leung and Fung Wing Yan

True Light Middle School of Hong Kong



Participants, adjudicators and organizers of the "Have Your Say on Family Status" Youth Debate Competition.

Results of the Finals

Champion Match (Motion: Family Status Discrimination is Prevalent in Hong Kong)

Champion : PAOC Ka Chi Secondary School

1st Runner-up : True Light Middle School of Hong Kong

Best Debater : Fung Wing Yan, True Light Middle School of Hong Kong

Second Runner-up Match (Motion: The government should encourage employers to hire persons with family status)

2nd Runner-up : Munsang College (Hong Kong Island)

3rd Runner-up : Po Kok Secondary School

Best Debater : Chiu Ka Man, Po Kok Secondary School

You can tune into the highlights on the EOC website

(http://www.eoc.org.hk/eoc/otherproject/eng/color/youthcorner/programmes/debate_fs/index.htm)

Family Status Discrimination Case – No Feeding Please

Family Status Discrimination Case

No Feeding Please



The Complaint

Jane accompanied her sister and niece, together with her six-month-old son Jamie, to a department store on a weekday afternoon. While they were busy looking for gifts, Jamie started crying, seemingly wanting a feed. So Jane settled herself in a discreet corner and began breastfeeding him. Just as she started, the store manager came and shouted at her, "Some customers might feel offended seeing you breastfeeding here. You better pack your stuff and leave now!"

Though Jane felt embarrassed and distressed, she insisted to stay until Jamie was fed. She said, "The manager, of course, was not happy, and so she called the security guard. The two just stood by my side staring at me. I felt extremely frustrated at that point, and burst into tears. My sister told them to leave me alone, but they did not listen." Jane finally

finished feeding her baby, but the experience was so depressing that she never wanted to breastfeed in public again.

What the EOC did

Jane lodged a complaint with the EOC against the department store and its two employees concerned. She grumbled, "What did I do to deserve this kind of treatment? I was just trying to feed my baby."

An EOC investigation officer explained to the respondents the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance in relation to provision of goods and services. The respondents came to realize that they should adopt an accepting attitude and improve their communication with customers so as to meet their needs.

The parties involved agreed to settle the case by early conciliation. The store manager and the security guard, represented by their employer, issued a letter of apology to Jane and delivered it personally to the EOC office. The management of the department store agreed to formulate a baby-caring policy and to provide a small nursing room for its customers.



What the law says

Under the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (FSDO), it is unlawful to discriminate against a person with family status in respect of goods, facilities or services received from hotels, guest houses, banks, insurance companies, bars, cinemas, restaurants, theatres, retail shops, travel agencies, etc. Family status means the responsibility for the care of an immediate family member. An immediate family member is a person who is related by blood, marriage, adoption or affinity.



Disability Discrimination Case – Pass or Fail?

Disability Discrimination Case

Pass or Fail?

The complaint



Katie finally got the job, having survived rounds of interviews and tests. She was offered a two-year employment contract by an educational institute for the post of administration officer.

"I was required to take a pre-employment medical check-up. But my supervisor told me that I could commence work while waiting for the result," said Katie. "A week after I was on board, they terminated me because my medical report stated that I was unfit for appointment." Katie's blood test showed that she had a low level of haemoglobin, which implied that she had anaemia of unknown cause. "I was told to pack my personal belongings and leave the office immediately. It was humiliating!"

Shortly after, Katie was hired by a social services organization for a similar position, but the job came with reduced salary and benefits. "Isn't that good proof enough of my capability, despite my low haemoglobin?" Katie

decided to lodge a complaint with the EOC against her ex-employer.

What the EOC did

Katie's ex-employer told the EOC investigation officer that they had not treated Katie any less favourably than any other candidate. A representative of the educational institute said, "The requirement of passing the medical examination applies to all job applicants. According to the doctor's assessment, Katie would not be able to meet the inherent requirements of the job, as possible fainting attacks and other symptoms of anaemia might affect her concentration, and cause danger to her in the new stressful working environment."

Katie refuted, "The medical test is only a general assumption of my present condition. It has no sufficient grounds to project how I would perform my job duties. My family doctor, who has been aware of my case for years has never told me that I am unfit to work. Shouldn't the institute consult more professional opinions before making the decision? If they really thought that I was unable to perform the inherent requirements, had they ever considered providing me with any kind of accommodation?"

To resolve the dispute, the two parties agreed to proceed to conciliation.

The educational institute agreed to provide Katie a monetary compensation, and would issue a letter stating that she was not terminated. The institute also agreed to formulate an equal opportunities policy within the organization in order to eliminate discriminatory practices.



What the law says

According to EOC's Good Management Practice Series, pre-employment medical examinations are not prohibited under the law. However, if the purpose of the examination is to discriminate against an applicant on the ground of disability, it may contravene the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO). It is recommended that the tests be relevant to assessing whether an applicant is able, with or without any adjustment, to perform the inherent requirements of the job.

Employers should remember that, in most cases, having a disability does not adversely affect a person's general ability. They should ensure that reasonable accommodation was available to enable the applicant to carry out the inherent requirements of the job.

EO Reaches the Community

EO Reaches the Community



Hundreds of people, with and without disabilities, say "I love you" in sign language to pay tribute to mother's love. Officiating at the ceremony (from left to right): Mr. Benny Cheung, Chairperson of Hong Kong Federation of Handicapped Youth (HKFHY); Mrs. Patricia Chu, EOC Chairperson and Mr Derek Ko, Vice-chairperson of HKFHY.



Director of Social Welfare Mr. Paul Tang, JP (centre left); EOC Chairperson Mrs. Patricia Chu (third left); IproA Chairperson Dr. Elizabeth Quat (second left) and famous artiste Mr. Aaron Kwok (centre right) with a group of overseas IT ministers and experts pledge their support for bridging the digital divide at the Global ICT Summit 2004.



Women leaders in their national costumes reaffirm their common goal of striving for gender equality at the Global Summit of Women held in Seoul, Korea. Mrs. Carrie Yau (centre left), Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food; Mrs. Patricia Chu, EOC Chairperson (centre right); and ministers from Iraq (left) and Guatemala (right) exchange experience in improving the status of women.



EOC Chairperson Mrs. Patricia Chu (centre) with a group of health care professionals and wheelchair users at the Seminar on Wheelchair Transportation Safety. (<http://www.eoc.org.hk/EOC/GraphicsFolder/Speechs.aspx>)

Around the World

Around the World



More Women Join Hardhat Jobs



More than US\$10 billion dollars has been set aside to repair the damage in lower Manhattan after the "911 attack". With worker shortages in the construction trades and federal quotas for hiring women in government-funded projects, organizations across the New York City are reaching out to women for the highly paid jobs.

"We want to make sure the rebuilding of Lower Manhattan is done by a diverse workforce that is reflective of the diversity of New York City," said Amy Peterson of Lower Manhattan Development Corp., which sponsored a free informational conference to introduce women to careers in the construction industry.

Traditionally, women are not encouraged to enter the construction field. However, companies are now willing to hire women workers as they have proved to do the job well. With more acceptance, more women are seeing construction as a positive career move.

Information Source:

<http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm/dyn/aid/1772>

A Modern Tribute to Femininity and Disability

"Alison Lapper Pregnant", a 12 ft tall contemporary marble sculpture of a pregnant, naked and disabled woman, will be installed in the world's famous Trafalgar Square in spring 2005 for about 15 months. The art piece's model Alison, is less than 4 ft tall, and was born with no arm and shortened legs as a result of phocomelia, a congenital condition. She has suffered tremendous insults about her disability. "I work, I pay tax, I support myself but I haven't got equal rights yet. I hope a million people will look at me and maybe change their minds," said Alison.

According to its sculptor Marc Quinn, "Alison Lapper Pregnant" is a tribute to femininity and disability. He believes that it will symbolize Alison's success in conquering her own circumstances and the prejudices of others.

Information Source:

<http://news.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2004/03/17/nlapp17.xml>

Russia's First Public Service Announcements on Integrated Education

Perspektiva, a Russian non-governmental organization promoting access to education and employment for young people with disabilities, has developed its first animated public service announcement (PSA). It has successfully created recognizable characters in its PSA that interest both the young and the old. The advertisement catches viewers' attention and makes them think about the need to integrate children with disabilities into mainstream schools.



The new PSA runs on 4 national TV stations, free of charge. Feedback has been very positive.

Information Source:

http://www.disabilityworld.org/01-03_04/arts/perspektiva.shtml

New Fully Accessible Hotel in Greece



A hotel designed for persons with physical disabilities has just opened in Crete, offering breathtaking views of the Mediterranean Sea. The hotel has its own specially adapted mini-bus which carries persons on wheelchairs safely around the city.

The Eria Resort provides a gym with a separate physiotherapy area. Rooms are fully equipped with electrically adjustable beds and emergency call system. Bathrooms are spacious with shower chairs installed. Also available on request are electric or manual wheelchair, and other assistive devices.

Information Source:

http://www.disabilityworld.org/01-03_04/access/eria.shtml

社區活動巡禮

Events Calendar

「繽紛彩虹—攝影比賽」

Photography Competition
"Over the Rainbow"

10/9/2004

香港聾人協會
Hong Kong Association of the Deaf
www.hongkongdeaf.org.hk/monthly.htm

弱能兒童武術小組

Martial Arts Group for
Children with a Disability

09/07/2004-10/09/2004

銅鑼灣家庭支援及資源中心
Causeway Bay Family Support and
Resource Centre
2806 1835

勁舞親子樂

Family Dancing

19/7/2004-6/9/2004

北區家庭支援及資源中心
North District Family Support and
Resource Centre
2682 2634

男士會 - 心聲分享

Men's Club - Sharing
Sessions

明愛北屯門家庭服務
Caritas Family Service- Tuen Mun
(North)
2466 8622

"I Seek Me" 服務計劃 (籌款、比賽和領袖訓練計劃)

"I Seek Me" Service Plan for
Persons with and without
Disabilities (Fund Raising,
Competitions and Leadership
Training)

7/2004-6/2005

香港復康力量
Hong Kong Rehabilitation Power
http://www.rehabpower.org.hk/AYP/AYP_service.pdf

無限創意 - 展藝畫坊

Arts Gallery: Creativity Infinity

明愛培立學校
Caritas Pelletier School
http://www.hkedcity.net/special/museum/view.phtml?work_id=1712