

## Administrative arrangements and a curriculum for a university training programme for adult educators in Hong Kong

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### Abstract

*Background:* In the early 1980s, the author of this article researched, in her M.Ed thesis, the state of adult education in Hong Kong with regard to its general support and delivery through university channels. At that time, adult education had a separate identity and, since, has generally become vocationalized, credited or subsumed into postsecondary education and part-time higher education. Dr. Shak's recent book to be published: Lifelong Education: Consensus in Characteristics and Practices (2008), describes what adult education has evolved into globally. In this article, her research of the 1980s is revisited and considered in contemporary context.

*Aims:* The study explored a training programme for adult educators in universities in Hong Kong. Administrative arrangements, including funding, staffing, the provision of facilities, and a curriculum were of key focus. Interviewees were immersed in the adult education of their era.

*Method:* An examination of administrative arrangements and development of curriculum was done based on a needs assessment model. Identification of problems was based on literature internationally, and questionnaires and interviews with respect to relative stakeholders.

*Results:* Findings were that, for adult education, universities were ideal for training administrators and specialists who could, in turn, provide part-time in-service training for volunteers and part-time teachers. Further, an appropriate curriculum was devised.

*Conclusion:* Dr. Shak's research of some 25 years ago yielded seven recommendations, all of which--of interest--now characterize (in some form) not only education in Hong Kong, but also continuing education and lifelong education globally today. This article provides information that highlights the historical, conceptual, and empirical development of adult education and its derivatives that point the way to the future.

**Key Words** - Adult, Education, Training

## 行政管理安排及為香港成人 教育人士提供成人教育的大學培訓課程

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### 摘要

*背景:* 早在20世紀80年代,在她的碩士論文裡,作者已經研究了在香港通過大學的管道為成年人教育提供支持和幫助的狀況。那時,成人教育已經成一種另類的個體,成人教育被稱為職業培訓教育或兼職教育。在石博士快將出版的書:終生教育:特點和實踐的共識(2008)中寫到成人教育怎樣走向全球化。在她的文章中,在20世紀80年代的研究被重新認識並被運用到現在。

*目的:* 她的研究涉及在香港的大學為成人教育人士提供的成人教育培訓課程。管理安排包括:資金,員工,設施規定和課程內容是其重點。

*方法:* 管理安排和課程發展的研究是以評估標準的需要為基準。問題的發現是以國際文學,問卷調查以及對相關人士的訪問為基準的。

*結論:* 結果發現:對於成人教育,大學是一個提供管理培訓和培訓專門人才理想場所,因為它可以提供培訓給志願人員和兼職教師。而且它可以制定合適的課程。

*總結:* 石博士25年前的研究提出7點建議:成人教育不僅在香港,應該是世界性的終生教育。這篇文章提出了成人教育的歷史,理論,和經驗的發展,以及其他發展的趨向。

**關鍵字:** 成人、教育、培訓

Note: the manuscript was edited by Dr. Douglas J. Thom, Professor of Educational Leadership, Lakehead University, Canada

## **Introduction**

Adult Education has become a worldwide movement, especially important for nations which have attained their independence and have needed means to educate their people for a new order pertinent to the type of government running the states. Developing nations need it to solve their social, political, and economic problems, be they related to agricultural, industrial, rural, or urban communities. The future world needs it to survive - education is its salvation. Hong Kong needs it to cope with the fast economic, social, and neighbouring political changes, because education, be it for adults or children, is to broaden one's mind and develop one's faculty to cope with change. Adult education helps adults to adjust to change. Indeed, adult education (more recently called "continuing education", "social education", or "lifelong learning") programmes, are expanding, but traditionally there has been little in the way of a systematic training programme available for adult educators in Hong Kong. Just how "continuing education" is defined within a particular country, including Hong Kong, with respect to terms of the services programmes, and the programme providers is controversial - a fact that need be accepted.

In this article, research on adult education in Hong Kong from the 1980s is revisited. The purpose of this is to show how things have changed and evolved adult education into what it is today in Hong Kong and, through projection, globally. This article does not attempt to provide an exhaustive list of the vast references with respect to the field-- this would be presumptuous; rather, a list of salient

works - the best of the old and new - is provided. These References pertain to definition (Hostler, Nagle, 2008; Shak, 2008, and Sutherland, 2006), classic works (Boshier, 1980; Friere, 1973; Kidd, 1973; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005), and mainstay periodicals in the field (Adult Education; Convergence: An International Journal of Education; UNESCO; and Yearbook of Adult Education)." This piece is timely as the entire field of adult education, continuing education, and lifelong education is deficient in research publications. Its contents assist in bringing clearer boundaries to current definitions. The theoretical underpinning for the research study described was a needs assessment model, along with the relevant literature of the 1980s.

[ A Sample Questionnaire For Interviews can be found in Appendix A, which indicates the depth and breadth of this study].

## **Results From Researching the Host of Those Involved in Hong Kong Adult Education in the Early 1980s**

From Hong Kong situations and information provided by the consultative groups, it was amply demonstrated that adult educational needs in Hong Kong covered a wide range, but that more attention should be given to career and occupational training.

The training of adult educators was needed to promote awareness and to provide adult education courses, as well as to take care of part-time and in-service training programmes of the many volunteers and paid part-time staff of adult education.

It was generally felt that government had a great responsibility in providing adult education to the public and that government financial support, up until

then, had not been enough.

The problems identified with respect to non-teaching staff in the subvented agencies appeared to rest with some root causes that had to do with finance, working hours, space shortage, lack of training and recognition, and that problems with the teaching staff centred around low pay, lack of training on teaching adults, and lack of time and facilities.

Some basic differences between teaching secondary school age students and teaching adults were identified. The need for a corps of trained adult educators in Hong Kong, then and in future, seemed inevitable.

Training could be done in the university as well as in the colleges of education and the polytechnic, but expert opinions from literature and examples from overseas seemed to point the way for a university training programme for administrators and specialists.

It was not considered a good idea to have a separate department for adult education, although the subvented agencies' representative, not fully understanding the implication, preferred to have a separate department dealing with training and research. The researcher did not advocate a separate department either, since adult education was not strong enough to rally support for such a move.

Also concerning postsecondary programmes, it did not seem opportune to introduce a totally new programme entitled Certificate in Adult Education on the same level as the Certificate of Education and Advanced Diploma in Education but the introduction of some basic courses in the then existing Certificate

in Education and Advanced Diploma in Education appeared to be more favourable. A specialized Certificate, titled "Studies in Adult Education", or an alternative titled "Adult Education: Approaches and Management" would be appropriate.

Therefore, the following was proposed:

1. An elective of 15 to 20 hours' duration be incorporated in the existing Certificate in Education on one of the following topics:
  - (a) An Introduction to Adult Education, or
  - (b) An introduction to Lifelong Education. The purpose is would be to stimulate prospective teachers, many of whom may already have a part-time job teaching adults, into taking up adult education as a field of study in future and channeling them into thinking of education as a lifelong process.
2. An elective component--A Certificate of 108 hours' duration in the Advanced Diploma in Education of the existing Faculty of Education of the universities titled "Studies in Adult Education," for new lecturers, or an alternative: "Adult Education: Approaches and Management", for personnel involved in management. A detailed curriculum would be developed for this elective component.
3. A Master Degree in Education with specialization in Adult Education following from (1) or the Certificate in (2), the elective of the Advanced Diploma.

### **General Recommendations**

Based on information brought to light from the study, recommendations were addressed to the

following sectors in Hong Kong:

1. the government of Hong Kong,
2. the universities and other institutes of higher learning capable of providing training for trainers in adult education,
3. the educational and social institutions, and
4. associations for continuing education.
  - a. Considering that adult education was needed in Hong Kong for educational, socio-economic, and political reasons, it was recommended that government should give more attention to its development than it had hitherto done.
  - b. Considering that there was no official government department body taking up the responsibilities of co-ordination, programme planning, and teacher training for Hong Kong, it was recommended that an official body be set up consisting of official and unofficial members to co-ordinate, plan, and develop adult education and any activities related to adult education, such as music, sports, recreation, arts, consumer and family life education, which were to be under separate councils and boards so that efforts would not be duplicated and tax payers' money wasted.
  - c. Considering that adult education was needed for different sectors of the community at different levels and adult educators were needed to promote and organize, as well as to teach courses for adults, it was recommended that the existing universities, the teachers training colleges, and the Polytechnic expand their curriculum to include courses for the training of adult educators at the teaching and administrative levels.
- d. Considering that adult education had become a field of studies, and research is needed for improvement and advancement, it was recommended that the universities should encourage more research in this field.
- e. Considering that adult education was a worthwhile activity much needed in this age of knowledge explosion and change, it was recommended that educational institutions and social institutions take up the role of promoting adult education by releasing staff to participate in training programmes and also provide part-time and in-service training to their own staff.
- f. Considering the mediocre response to the subvention scheme for adult education, due probably not only to the lack of trained personnel but also to the lack of knowledge of the scheme and lack of know-how in running adult education programmes, it was therefore recommended that associations for continuing education, in conjunction with the Adult Education Section of the Government's Education Bureau, take up the work of promotion and publicity, especially geared towards those organizations that would be potential providers, such as those listed in this study.

### **A Final Special Recommendation**

Considering that there had never been enough university training programmes for adult education, it was recommended that the education departments of the universities would make an enquiry of those educational institutions whose staff would be potential participants, to find out if the proposed programme would be

acceptable and if any modifications were needed.

### **The Contemporary Situation in Hong Kong**

Contrasting the research information just received with the state of things today brings some enlightenment - including as pertains to a contemporary definition of "continuing education" for Hong Kong. The following is updated information:

1. There are no more teacher training colleges in Hong Kong. In 1995, all the teacher training colleges were combined into one single Hong Kong Institute of Education, with the new campus in Tai Po. It is trying very hard to attain university status.
2. There are now eight, not two, recognized universities in Hong Kong.
3. The polytechnic has been upgraded to university status.
4. Four universities in Hong Kong have a "Faculty of Education", not "education department". [When we said "Education Department", we usually meant the ED of the government. Now, the government one is "Education Bureau" (EDB).
5. All teachers must be trained in Hong Kong. There are no more permitted teachers. Besides the Institute of Education, the Faculty of Education of the universities provide a "Post Graduate Diploma in Education" (PGDE). We use the term "PGDE" and not "Certificate of Education"

(Parts 1. to 5., Alice Woo, Bishop's Delegate for Catholic Schools in Hong Kong, personal communication, August 29, 2008).

6. The policy context has changed. Subvented adult education run by EDB was contracted out to non-profit provider HKCT during the previous EMB days and has become a minor provision. The major block of government funding, for adult education, disbursed by the Labour and Welfare Bureau, goes to vocationally-oriented and training-related schemes such as CEF, ERB, and the Skills Upgrading Scheme.
7. The Programmes are offered by HKIED and HKU SPACE at a postgraduate level in training teachers in this sector. Also, there is the City and Guilds training programme, which is very popular with private sector trainers.

This article has many faces including theoretical, practical, idealistic, realistic, and nostalgic.

### **The Contemporary Situation Globally**

To understand the contemporary situation globally, one should refer generally to the book *Lifelong Education: Consensus in Characteristics and Practices* [to be published by Singapore: East Asian Forum for Adult Education (EAFAE)] by this article's author, Dr. Therese Shak.

To summarize:

The field of adult education tends not to have clear boundaries; and

Tied to the above point, there are quite a number of definitions and approaches to

the type of adult education that should be offered by different countries with differing contexts.

This article and Dr. Shak's recent book to be published by EAFAE- are of critical mind. In this article, revisiting the first author's research of the 1980s serves a major purpose regarding comparing and contrasting - historical and current/solicited views then and now. This research study sought both to look at the possibility of introducing adult education programmes for educators in universities, and at the support that existing programmes received from government in terms of intensifying them, including resourcing, in order for the programmes to achieve intended outcomes. Of interest is that results from that research are now in evidence as new knowledge in Hong Kong and elsewhere. University support of adult education and its derivatives is the norm, as well as support from many other sources. There is currently a rich body of literature on training of post-compulsory education teachers in the United Kingdom and the TAFE sector in Australia. Mature models to emulate or use for comparison currently exist, meaning that, at hand, is a statement of commonalities across cultures with respect to adult education. This article perhaps will serve as a valuable catalyst for refining.

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## Appendix A

### Sample Questionnaire For Interviews

The following questionnaire indicates the depth and breadth of this study.

To: Directors or representatives of voluntary organizations receiving government subvention for adult education programmes.

Purpose: To obtain information on:

- a. the needs for adult education in Hong Kong,
- b. the need for trained adult educators in Hong Kong, and
- c. administrative arrangements and a curriculum for a university training programme for adult educators in Hong Kong.

## PART A

1. In your opinion, what are the five most important educational needs of adults in Hong Kong?
2. Please comment on how well the needs you have mentioned have been met.
3. In your opinion, how much responsibility does the government of Hong Kong have in providing adult education service to the public?
4. Comment on the level of financial support for adult education provided by the government of Hong Kong.
5. Are you able to identify any problems with the staff (not teachers) who are working in adult education in your organization?
6. Are you able to identify any problems with the staff teaching adults in your organization?
7. In your opinion, what are some of the main differences between teaching secondary-school-aged students and teaching adults?

8. Please comment on the need for a corps of trained adult educators in Hong Kong, for now and in the future.
9. Should the universities of Hong Kong provide training for adult educators?
10. What is your opinion on the proposal that a separate department of adult education be set up in the Education Department in the University of Hong Kong to look after the needs of adult education in terms of training and research?
11. What do you think about the idea of having some basic courses in adult education incorporated into the existing teachers' training programmes in the University of Hong Kong, such as:
  - i. Postgraduate Diploma in Education, and
  - ii. Master Degree in Education?

## **PART B**

Which of the following courses would you like your adult educators to have?

(Please first read through the list and then tick 10 from across all the categories, i.e. anywhere from the list.)

### **History and Concepts**

The History and Philosophical Concepts of Adult Education

Adult Education in the World Perspective

The Sociology of Adult Education

Adult Education and Societal Changes

Adult Education and Development

The Socio-economic Background Related to the "Development of Adult Education in Hong Kong Past, Present and Future"

The Philosophy of Work and Leisure

The Issues and Policies of Adult Education

### **Administration**

The Career of an Adult Educator

The Planning, Organizing and Managing of Adult Education Institutions

### **The Adult Learners**

The Psychology of Adulthood and the Theory of Change

The Psychology of Adult Learning

The Adult Learner

### **Programme Planning**

Methods of Identifying Adult Educational Needs

The Designing of Adult Education Curriculum and Activities

### **Methods of Teaching and Learning**

The Multi-Methods of Adult Teaching and Learning

Communication Skills

Self-learning Techniques

The Use of Multi-Media as Adult Teaching and Learning Aids

### **Evaluation**

Assessment and Evaluation Methods

### **Counseling**

Theory and Practice in guidance and Counseling of Adult Learners

The Organization of Occupational Information and Career Guidance Service

### **Special Types of Adult Education**

Distance Education

Community Work and Action

Literacy and Adult Basic Education

Education for the Elderly

Extension Work and Programmes

Industrial Education

Commercial Education

Consumer Education

Health Education

Family Life Education

Civic Education

Political Education

Prison education

Vocational Training Education

Continuing Professional Education

### **Practical Work**

The Writing of Course Materials for Adult Learners

The Production of Audio Visual Aids for Adult Learners

Visits to Adult Education and Related Institutions

Observation of Classes and Activities

Curriculum and Programme Design Practices

Adult Teaching and Activity Practices

### **Research Methods**

Basic Statistics

Research Methodology

Computer Concepts and Basic Programming

## **PART C**

Please feel free to comment below on any other aspects of the development of Adult Education (especially those regarding the training of adult educators) in Hong Kong, which you feel are important.

## **PART D**

(To be used for analytical purposes. No individual will be identified in the study or anywhere else.)

Name: Mr./Mrs./Miss \_\_\_\_\_  
or Anonymous

Sex: Male Female	Age: Less than 30 years 30 to 39 40 to 49 50 +
Position: Teaching Administration	
Teaching Experience: in Day School ____ years in Evening School ____ years in Degree Courses ____ years in Extra Mural Courses ____ years	Administration Experience: in Day School ____ years in Evening School ____ years in Degree Courses ____ years in Extra Mural Courses ____ years

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