

H K S Standard

18/9/97

Bad reputation of practical schools 'detering students'

By Ella Lee

MOST young people with schooling problems are unwilling to go to practical schools, fearing they will be labelled "bad students", a survey has found.

The survey, "Youth's view on Alternative Education Opportunities", was conducted by the Hong Kong Council of Social Services (HKCSS) from April to June 1996.

The council interviewed 243 young people under 15 who had not yet completed Form Three and were receiving outreach or school social work counselling.

The council yesterday urged the government to "diversify" study choices for students who could not adjust to mainstream education.

There are two practical schools — in Yuen Long

and Stanley — providing a mixture of academic studies and practical subjects such as computers, textiles, metal work and commercial studies.

The survey found that although 60 per cent of the respondents knew about the practical schools, most were unwilling to apply as they wanted to "stay in mainstream education".

Only 30 per cent of the respondents had heard about the special schools for maladjusted children.

Jane Tsuei Pik-shan, HKCSS children and youth division officer, said yesterday many young people feared that they would be discriminated against if they joined "alternative" schools, including apprenticeship schemes.

Ms Tsuei said the government should update the

curriculum of the practical schools to make it more attractive.

"The government should review if subjects such as metal work and navigation are outdated," she said.

"There should be a bridging system for students to continue their studies in Form Four and Five after graduating from the practical schools."

She said the label on the practical schools and the special schools, that they were only for bad students, should be eradicated.

The council also called on the government to set up practical schools in each region to cater for more students.

Winnie Ying Fung-sau, leader of the Hong Kong Christian Services Yuen Long outreach social work

team, said it was very difficult for a Form Three student to find a job in such a competitive society without good vocational training in schools.

The survey found 10 per cent of the respondents were neither studying nor working. More than 70 per cent said there were too many subjects in secondary education and a third said the subjects were "useless" and "too difficult".

And half said they could not understand the lessons and books because they were in English.