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13/6/1977

# Adult schools get caning

Adult education services failed to get a pass mark yesterday.

Their development was described as "far from satisfactory."

Co-operation between organisations providing such services is poor.

And there is not enough money.

The caning came from the Chairman of the Hongkong Association for Continuing Education, Miss Therese Shak.

She said there is not enough co-ordination and co-operation between voluntary bodies, the Government and education organisations.

Voluntary agencies and non-profit making bodies do not receive subsidies for their work.

Often they have trouble making ends meet.

She said Government figures revealed that an aver-

age of 259,600, or 49.64 per cent, of the secondary school aged children were not at classes between 1970 and 1975.

"They are now in their late teens or early twenties and form the core of potential clients for adult education," she said.

In a competitive society like Hongkong knowledge and special skills are the prerequisites to earning a reasonable living.

But under the highly-selective education system many young people are forced to interrupt their studies. They fail to obtain places in secondary schools or because they need to work to support their families.

However, many youngsters still want to continue their education. The Caritas Continuing and Adult Education Service report for

1976-77 showed a twelve-fold increase in enrolment in the past eight years.

Miss Shak hopes the Green Paper on senior secondary and tertiary education will provide development guidelines.

She said her association recommended:

- A concrete policy should be spelled out.

- A five-year plan to subsidise non-profit making agencies offering adult and continuing education.

- About \$46,600,000 should be set aside for subsidies.

- A co-ordinating body should ensure quality is maintained.

Subsidies should cover at least adult literacy classes, primary and secondary schools for adults, and vocational and professional courses.

Miss Shak said: "It would

be expensive for the Government to set up a separate programme."

It would be more economical to subsidise non-profit making schools and voluntary agencies.

"On the basis of a subsidy of about \$149 for each student a month, the association estimates that \$46,600,000 would be required to subsidise 259,629 students a year.

"This represents only 0.57 per cent of this year's Budget and only 2.9 per cent of the education budget.

"At present more than 60 per cent of the education budget goes towards subventions for secondary schools.

But adult education services provided by voluntary and non-profit making organisations play an equal, if not more important, role."