

## Dr. Suet Lin HUNG, Shirley



Dr. Suet Lin HUNG, Shirley is an Associate Head and Associate Professor of the Department of Social Work, Hong Kong Baptist University. At present, her teaching and research work is on areas of women and family, gender and social work, gender and social policy, narrative therapy, and group and community work. She has conducted research studies and published extensively on gender, social work, social policy and community development. She has been renowned for her strong commitment and rich experience in working with vulnerable groups and disadvantaged families. She was honoured the award of "Outstanding Social Worker" by the Hong Kong Social Workers Association in 1996 and the "60th Anniversary Distinguished Alumni Award" by the University of Hong Kong in 2010. She was the Chairperson of the Social Workers Registration Board 2010-2013.

### Title

*An Overall Review of Child Care Policy in Hong Kong: Its Impact on Women and Children*

### Abstract

Informed by the dominant gender ideology that women are the natural and best caregivers of young children, child care services for children ages 0-12 have been minimally available in Hong Kong. They are only provided to families with parents, in particular the mothers, who cannot provide care due to exceptional circumstances, such as ill health, imprisonment or disability. The development of crèche services for those under aged 3 has been stagnant since the late 1970s. Moreover, the Hong Kong government has not made any further attempt to re-assess child care service needs since the late 1990s, despite the significant changes in the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the society. It was only in the 2013 population policy consultation that the government had made it explicit the need to expand the workforce by unleashing the potential of female homemakers which has led to public concern on child care service policy in Hong Kong.

This presentation will provide an overall picture about the historical development of child care services in the local context. In addition, findings of a research study conducted by the presenter together with the Hong Kong Council of Social Services on the child care arrangement of families of various income will be shared to shed light on the current situation of child care services and its impact on women and children. The findings reveal that the key issue is the absence of planning in child care services which is not only informed by traditional gender and family ideologies, but also neoliberalist ideas of welfare. The presenter proposes that an integrated approach that takes into consideration of child development, women's advancement and family well-being should be adopted to reform policies on child care in order to enhance social development and respond to the needs of families.