White Paper applicable to Senior Education Policies in the Senior Population

1. Background:

As medical treatment developed and overall societal culture & values advanced, our country officially moved towards a senior society as defined by the UN in 1993; predicting when the senior population will reach 3.282 million in the year 2017, they will account for 14% of the total population thus becoming an aged society. The proportion of seniors to the rest of society is one of the indicators by which a country or society's development is measured. The senior population structure can be seen as either an achievement or challenge to societal development. An advanced age with fewer children present in our country's population structure will undoubtedly have a significant impact on economy, medical care facilities and family responsibilities - such as; a high burden on the country's economy, drop of economic growth, change of the country's population structure and narrowing of family structures. In order to respond to such inevitable impacts, scholars proposed relevant countermeasures; such as a retirement at the reduction of aging rate, the encouragement of childbirth, improvement in the quality of social health care for the aged, developing improved leisure activities for seniors, promotion of social participation and learning opportunities.

2.Vision and consequent implementation thereof:

(1)Vision

Education is the only way to respond to a society with a higher percentage of senior citizens. The general population of Taiwan must accept that we are facing a severe challenge regarding this issue and treat it with respect and an appropriate attitude in order to adapt to the changing structure of our society. Therefore, the Ministry of Education announced this visionary and practical "White Paper on Senior Education in a Society of Senior Citizens" on November 2006, which is aimed educating our entire society. The main objectives of this vision are lifelong learning, health and happiness, independence and dignity, and social participation.

(2)Implementation

   i.   To protect learning rights and interests and to promote physiological and psychological health for seniors of our society.

   ii. To promote adaptability in family and social life for seniors after retirement at the reduction of aging rate.

iii. To provide seniors with opportunities of reeducation and to re-participate in social life, and reduce circumstances of being rejected and isolated

iv. To establish a friendly social environment for seniors without any age discrimination.

Providing seniors with continuous education opportunities and re-participation in social networks to reduce rejection and isolation.

Therefore, in order to raise the issue of our aging population with the younger generation, senior education must be working from childhood through the years of official school and tertiary education, making students attend to their needs and to understand and respect seniors. Integrate Grade 1-9 curriculum in all fields and issues with basic education and encourage senior (occupational) high schools, colleges and universities to offer the courses relating to the seniors. The departments and institutes concerned can adjust their curriculums accordingly in occupational education to have manpower available to take care of the seniors, while auditing systems can provide seniors with learning opportunities in colleges and universities. More educational tasks for the aged can be comprehensively promoted through social & local educational networks.

3.Promotion strategy
  (1)Construct lifelong learning systems and integrate educational resources for seniors.
  (2)Create educational options for seniors and provide multiple learning opportunities.
  (3)Reinforce educational opportunities for the previously disadvantaged seniors.
  (4)Promote and upgrade re-application of manpower for seniors.
  (5)Assist seniors to adapt to family life in their senior years, their close family members can play a strategic role in this process of co-learning.
  (6)Integrate successful senior education concepts into official education. Handle educational and communicational activities between generations.
  (7)Set up additional learning places for the education of seniors and establish a foothold in the community.
  (8)Promote professional literacy of educational personnel for seniors.
  (9)Construct an educational information website for seniors.

The increasing senior population is an inevitable trend in all developed countries. The announcement of this White Paper is to promote the implementation of educational

rights for seniors, and to help seniors to successfully adapt to their changing circumstances. The public must grow towards developing a positive attitude towards seniors and recognize the constructive role they play within society, without facing the societal issue of age discrimination.