

Citation for Ms Ada Ho How-sim, Honorary Fellow

Mr Chairman of the Council,

Ms Ada Ho How-sim is a veteran professional in special education who has been teaching children with special educational needs (SEN) for some 30 years. During this period, she has been selflessly committed to the pursuit of equal learning opportunities and the right to education. Ms Ho has a deep passion for writing and, apart from her role as school principal, is also a well-known writer of children's literature. She is dedicated to fostering children's reading and encouraging them to appreciate culture and arts.

After her graduation from the Sir Robert Black College of Education, Ms Ho furthered her studies abroad in Australia, first obtaining her Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Technology Sydney, followed by a Master of Arts degree from Macquarie University, Sydney.

Not long after getting married, Ms Ho joined her husband for a business trip to Lagos in Nigeria, Africa. The trip was an unforgettable experience for her, leading her into a career in special education, helping children with special educational needs. Back then the African world was in turmoil. Even in a picturesque part of the country, many people lived in poverty and instability. Infant mortality was not uncommonly high, and there had even been an incident where a gynaecologist suffered a miscarriage resulting from a fall during an armed robbery at her clinic. Against all odds and in the face of danger, those weak, thin mothers still exhausted every means to keep and protect their babies. Ms Ho's experiences in Lagos triggered continual reflections on the fragility of life, and appreciated its preciousness all the more.

Later on, Ms Ho took up the position of Principal of HHCKLA Buddhist Po Kwong School, a school for children with moderate and mild intellectual disabilities, where she spent the next 21 years. Soon after she assumed the role as Principal, she began a school re-provision to modernise the poorly equipped village school. The space was greatly expanded from its initial capacity of 60 students to one that could accommodate over 300. More importantly, Ms Ho made great effort to open up the campus to the community. After years of Ms Ho's tireless work, a student hostel will be completed by the end of 2020 to cater for students with intellectual disabilities.

Apart from the quality of the learning environment, Ms Ho cares very much about the reform of the special education curriculum in Hong Kong. During her service as a principal, together with a group of other serving and retired principals of special schools, she set up a curriculum network (SAME network). The SAME network implements the concept of inclusive education, so that students with special educational needs can be educated under the same curriculum framework as in mainstream schools.

Ms Ho has been persistently striving for educational rights and interests of students with special needs. In 2009 and 2016, she respectively assisted parents in pursuing judicial review cases on the senior school age restriction for students with intellectual disabilities

and the right to native English teacher (NET) resources. The two judicial reviews prompted the Education Bureau to establish an extended learning mechanism for students with intellectual disabilities and hire NETs, as in mainstream schools. Since retiring from the position of principal, Ms Ho has continued her hard work in fighting for SEN students' causes, including continual education, rights to lifelong learning, expanded career spectrum, increased employment opportunities and enhanced living standards.

Ms Ho also continues to pay attention to the needs of SEN children in Hong Kong and those of their parents, keeping her voluntary work as consultant and management team member to many schools, as well as adviser to school sponsoring bodies and parent organisations. She is also a Consultant to the Centre for Special Educational Needs and Inclusive Education, and Guest Lecturer in the Department of Special Education and Counselling at The Education University of Hong Kong; as well as Project Consultant of the Faculty of Education at The University of Hong Kong, promoting training of special school teachers.

As well as being passionate about learning, Ms Ho has had a deep love in reading and writing since her childhood. In her secondary school days, she regularly contributed articles to newspapers and magazines. When she had her own children, she was made aware of the lack of local children's literature: only translated foreign stories or adaptations of fairy tales were available. She therefore had the idea of creating stories for children: original works that could express the thoughts of her children and students. In 1987, she published her first work of children's literature. To date, she has written around 180 books.

Ms Ho believes that reading is a life-enhancing experience. Through reading, people can learn from the experience of others and become wiser. She often visits different schools and public libraries to hold seminars and children's reading clubs to promote reading culture.

Since 2010, Ms Ho has been an Expert Adviser on Literary Arts for the Hong Kong Public Libraries, within the Leisure and Cultural Services Department. She is also the Chairperson of the Hong Kong Children's Arts Society. Under her leadership, the Society held the first Hong Kong Children's Picture Book Appreciation and Teaching Seminar in September 2019. The papers presented in the seminar have been compiled into a book, leaving an important footprint in children's picture book literature in Hong Kong.

The life of Ms Ho has not been plain sailing; yet she has never succumbed to adversity. Instead, she has lived according to the values that she holds dear to her heart. Ms Ho's husband passed away some 20 years ago. Though heartbroken and in grief, she shouldered all parental duties on her own and continued her role as the Principal of the special school. Not only that, she has continued to produce children's literature. Her two children and students of her school have been a strong driving force that has kept her moving forward. Ms Ho has also encountered tough challenges in health. A survivor of two bouts of cancer, she has manifested her passion for life and her unbeatable spirit. She is still fearlessly striving for equal education opportunities for students with special educational needs.

Mr Chairman, Ms Ho has dedicated her life to special education for 30 years. She has been tirelessly fighting for the rights of the underprivileged and continued her hard work in promoting the training of special school teachers, even after her retirement. In commending her significant contributions, on behalf of The Education University of Hong Kong, I present Ms Ada Ho How-sim to you for the award of Honorary Fellowship.

Citation for Ms Shirley Loo, BBS, MH, JP, Honorary Fellow

Mr Chairman of the Council,

Ms Shirley Loo, General Secretary of the Family Development Foundation, has always cared about society and been active in fostering family education. Her contribution towards moral education for young people is particularly impressive and widely recognised. Ms Loo has a deep passion for life and is determined to make use of her uniquely versatile position to inspire minds and share her feelings towards faith and life.

Ms Loo lived through a challenging childhood and adolescence, which had a huge impact on her, sowing the seeds of promoting family harmony, parental skills and building relationships with the opposite gender. Ms Loo was born prematurely, her face looked greenish purple and she had very weak breath. On the recommendation of a nurse of the Catholic hospital, Ms Loo was baptised: a move that opened the first door to her pilgrimage.

Born into a family of five, Ms Loo is the middle sibling of three. Her elder sister is the renowned pianist Ms Nancy Loo. The Loo family was a traditional Chinese family that had great desire for a son. Consequently, Ms Loo's parents always dressed her in boys' clothes, usually including a tie and shorts, and kept her hair short. When the long-awaited little brother was born, the Loo family had an abundance of love ready for him. Ms Loo felt she was not as talented as her elder sister and not as adored by her elders as her little brother. With a sense of low self-esteem, she struggled to find her value within the family.

The turning point came in Primary 3, when her four-page Chinese writing assignment was pinned on the classroom wall by her teacher as a commendation – the first time she felt recognised and appreciated. Shortly after Ms Loo proceeded to Pui Ching Middle School, she met the teacher who changed her life. Her Chinese teacher Ms Law Hill-mui once wrote a note of praise in Ms Loo's weekly reflective piece, saying that she could one day become a writer. Unintended as it may have been, this little compliment has remained in Ms Loo's heart ever since. For over 50 years, this has become a motivating power, leading her into a writing career, during which she has written countless works and become a widelyacclaimed author.

Ms Loo's father began to suffer depression when she was in Secondary 3. From then on, her parents were engaged in frequent fights over trivial matters. The stock market crash in the 1970s made the situation more difficult. Back then, Ms Loo's relationship with her father became tense to the point of breaking and Ms Loo considered her school as a shelter. Apart from writing, she was also encouraged by her physical education teacher to try various kinds of sports, including athletics and swimming, which exposed her potential and built her self-esteem. The diversified extracurricular activities helped Ms Loo build her self-confidence. These experiences gave her a deeper understanding of the importance teachers and education can have in changing a young person's life.

In Secondary 5, she applied to study overseas and was successful in getting a matriculation place in Montreal, Canada. Later on, she stayed in Canada for university, where she studied

mathematics at McGill University. It was also in Canada where she became acquainted with Rev Dr Peter Ho Chi-dik and they eventually became lifelong companions.

Ms Loo has loved writing since her childhood and she long dreamt of becoming a writer. Through writing, she wished to build bridges to bring people together, but facing strong opposition from her family, she compromised to study sciences at university, specialising in mathematics. She lived outside Hong Kong for 10 years, during which time she was in an English-speaking environment and her Chinese became rusty. To remain fluent in Chinese writing, she would jot down favourite words and sentences in small notebooks. She never gave up on her dream.

In the 1980s, Ms Loo went on mission to Taiwan with her husband. During this time, she met the editor-in-chief of a Christian magazine. Encouraged by her husband, Ms Loo approached the editor for a job and was recruited. Thus, her wish was granted and she became a full-time writer. In 1985, she returned to Hong Kong with her husband and took up the position as Editor of *Breakthrough* magazine, progressing to the position of Editor-in-Chief in 1992.

After leaving *Breakthrough*, Ms Loo established the Family Development Foundation with several good friends, who shared the same vision. Ms Loo took up the position as the Foundation's General Secretary, dedicated to promoting education for parents and children, running courses and publishing books on parenting. She is also a columnist for several local newspapers and often hosts television and radio programmes to inspire children and promote positive thinking. Furthermore, she has set up a Facebook page to have more interaction with her readers. For her beloved alma mater, Pui Ching Middle School, she has given parental talks and taught Chinese writing classes over a decade, in the hope of passing on the flame. On top of all this, Ms Loo never stops writing: producing widely acclaimed works full of positive energy and encouragement. Titles released in recent years include *A Bit of Light a Day*, *Words for a Clean Heart*, *A Good One Like Me and True Words to Friends*. Some of her works have won Hong Kong Publishing Biennial Awards.

With the help of her Christian faith, Ms Loo has been able to mend her broken relationship with her parents and to heal the scars in all of their hearts. Her regretful childhood has painstakingly taught her the importance of parental education and she always urges parents to be aware of their own emotions. Parents must allow themselves space when looking after their children, as they have to teach by example. Instead of concentrating on academic results alone, parents should pay more attention to their children's moral character. It is of utmost importance to spend more quality time with their children, so that they can get to know each other better.

In recognition of her contribution to family education, Ms Loo was awarded the Medal of Honour by the Hong Kong SAR Government in 2005. She was appointed Justice of the Peace in 2008 and awarded the Bronze Bauhinia Star in 2018. In 2020, she was named one of the Most Successful Women by women's magazine *Jessica*.

Ms Loo has been devoted to community services, holding many voluntary positions, including Adviser of the Presidential Advisory Group of The Education University of Hong Kong, Vice-Chairman of the Public Libraries Advisory Committee; Member of the Board of Directors of Hong Kong Education City; and Member of the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research, the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education and the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Mr Chairman, Ms Loo has made an enormous contribution to the promotion of family education in Hong Kong. She is dedicated to serving society by pursuing the well-being of the younger generation. On behalf of The Education University of Hong Kong, I present Ms Shirley Loo to you for the award of Honorary Fellowship, in recognition of her distinct contributions.