ABSTRACT

Studies on Singapore’s Chinese education abound. However, few have contributed to the research on female educationists and Chinese girls’ education in Singapore.

The objective of this thesis is to examine the historical background of Chinese girls’ education in Singapore and the influential work of Mdm Liew Yuen Sien as an educationist.

Besides analyzing the characteristics of the Chinese female population in the early twentieth century and the problems faced by them, this thesis also examines the factors leading to the emergence of Chinese girls’ schools in Singapore.

The progress in Chinese girls’ education gained impetus from influential feminist and revolutionary movements in both the East and the West. Young Chinese intellectuals, influenced by these movements became the first supporters of Chinese girls’ education. Hence, the impact of these movements and the campaigning for modern Chinese girls’ education are also analyzed. Attention is also given to the types of education provided by the early Chinese girls’ schools and the problems faced by them.

Through this thesis, the significance of the contributions of Mdm Liew Yuen Sien to the educational world in Singapore was highlighted. Mdm Liew Yuen Sien was the principal who held the longest service in Nanyang Girls’ High School. A remarkable and visionary educationist, her guiding principles in education had influenced both her students and the development of Chinese girls’ education in Singapore. Besides expounding on her career and education ideals, researches on her life story, ideology and character were also carried out. These, together with her achievements and literal work, help to provide an insight into her psyche and how it has shaped her education ideals.

Due to the lack of emphasis and studies on the subject, difficulties prevail when gathering material and information. Apart from reports and articles in local and foreign newspapers and periodicals, there is little reference material on the subject. However,
information gathered during interviews with the family of Mdm Liew Yuen Sien and the alumna of Chinese girls’ school, has to some extent compensated for the lack.

It is hoped that this thesis will offer some new insights to those interested in the research of female educationists and Chinese girls’ education in Singapore and will encourage more researches on the subject.