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Advocacy

Future pillars of our society is rooted in child education

Globally, there might not be a common direction in child education for the past decades but there is one thing in common - they are all geared to the actual situation and practicable regardless of whether they are universal measures or targeted at children with special needs. According to statistics of the Education Bureau in September 2015, there are more than 180,000 children aged 3-5 which implies that there is a huge number of families being affected.

The fiscal surplus of Hong Kong in 2017 is 92.8 billion, with such a handsome profits, the government can design an inclusive, harmonious, innovative and competitive Hong Kong. In order to achieve comprehensive and fair allocation of resources and the principal of justice, the Council of Non-profit Making Organisations for Pre-primary Education (CNOPE) proposed the following recommendations:

1. **Child education is the foundation of life long education, it is not a commodity, it should not be operated by a market-oriented mechanism.**
2. **Re-plan the policy on care and education for children aged 0-3**

Services provided by child care centres and nurseries of the Social Welfare Department has come to a standstill for more than 20 years. They have long departed from the practical needs and standards in terms of service quantity, standards, regulations and fees. The government should review the subvention mode, manpower ratio, qualification of nursery teachers and their salaries. A people-oriented government should collaborate with all departments and districts concerned to ensure resources are in place, as well as to encourage community and NGOs to operate innovative service in order to provide diversified service which could meet the needs of parents and children flexibly.

3. **Implementing a truly free child education policy**

It is the right of every child to enjoy free and quality education, therefore, it should be free be it in half-day, whole day or long whole day mode.

4. **Focus on research, monitoring and planning of children development**

We suggest setting up a data bank for children aged 0-8 so as to grasp their potential needs on medical, education, rehabilitation and community facilities etc.

5. **Enhancing professionalism of nursery teachers**

The government should introduce degree programmes for nursery teachers and establish salary scales for diploma and degree holding teachers in order to attract and retain quality teachers. The government should provide allowance for school based development to promote and develop research and sharing among professionals, eventually developing a children-oriented curriculum suitable and cater to the uniqueness of Hong Kong.

6. **Rendering appropriate support to children's diversity, promoting social inclusion**

In view of the diversity of children and complexity of families, the government should provide enough support for schools since early identification of problems and effective support are crucial. These include a "support first then assess" integrated education policy, a nursery teacher with special education qualification to monitor closely and adjust the curriculum to support children with special education needs. Other means such as providing more social workers to station at schoolsto identify crisis at an early stage, maintaining a certain ratio of non Chinese students or mildly intellectual disabled children, all these enable children to learn mutual inclusion, respect, care and love when they are small.

The future of Hong Kong is rooted in quality education to our children today. The government should address to the needs of working parents and their long working hours. The government should have long term and effective planning in order to realise a policy that is child-oriented, focus on the family, and provides free quality child education. The commercialisation of child education phenomena should be rectified, instead, to re-position care and education for children aged below 3, to re-structure and plan a robust system, to establish cross departmental collaboration mechanism for a sustainable and stable quality development. It is important to ensure that our children can receive quality education irrespective of background or ability, and ultimately meeting the target of children come first.

We always take child education seriously and are dedicated to mobilising social inclusion, We highly recognise the recommendations by the Council, if they could be implemented, all stakeholders will benefit.

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