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For immediate release

To: News/ Education Assignment Editors

**Feedback of Ethnic Minority Parents on the
Review of ‘Guide to Pre-primary Curriculum’ (2006) – Executive Summary**

Hong Kong Unison facilitated 6 Parent Focus Groups in five districts including Yau Tsim Mong, Yuen Long, Sham Shui Po, Kwai Chung and Chai Wan, to collect the views of around 50 ethnic minority parents from 29 August to 13 September, on the proposed recommendations in the captioned Executive Summary. The parents met with the Education Bureau (Curriculum Development team) on 28 September and made a submission to the Education Bureau (EDB) today (30 September).

The Review

The Curriculum Development Council conducted a review of the ‘Guide to Pre-Primary Curriculum’ (2006), hereinafter ‘2006 Guide’ to align with the objectives of the Free Quality Kindergarten Policy starting 2017-18. Some of the key emphases of the review are of particular concern to ethnic minority children, for example, language education, catering for the diversity of children including children with different cultures, living habits, and languages, promoting an inclusive culture, improving home-school cooperation, students’ understanding of their identity in the community, etc.

Kindergarten is the first step for non-Chinese children to learn Chinese and receive formal education; the level of Chinese skills acquired by the time they graduate from kindergarten will affect their primary school choice; it will also determine whether they will end up in former designated schools. Ethnic minority parents expressed that they are not only concerned with whether their children can catch up with the Chinese language subject, but also whether they can handle learning all other subjects including mathematics and general studies in Chinese without basic Chinese abilities since most mainstream primary and secondary schools use Chinese as the medium of instruction.

As such, ethnic minority parents hope the revisions to the ‘2006 Guide’ would enable their children to receive an equal and equitable early childhood education.

Learning and Teaching

It is stated in the Executive Summary that in order to improve the bridging over between early childhood education and primary education, children should *“possess a decent awareness of the language and learning attitude; for Chinese language in particular, children should have rich listening and speaking as well as basic reading and writing experience so that they will be prepared to use the language as a learning and communication tool.”*

Ethnic minority parents mentioned that currently many local kindergartens mistakenly assess NCS students’ learning needs; for example, some kindergartens think that because ethnic minority children do not speak Chinese, the most effective way to teach is to separate non-Chinese children



from their Chinese counterparts and place them in different classes and sessions, or they should be taught using English. However, English is also not the mother tongue of many ethnic minorities.

Parents hope that kindergartens would follow the recommendation from the Executive Summary, “not to form groups by ethnicity or the languages used at home” as learning the language through interacting with Chinese classmates is a better approach. Also, ethnic minority children should not be taught easier content. Instead teachers should adopt different teaching approach to support Chinese learning of ethnic minority children.

Individual and Community

Hong Kong is a diverse society; apart from Chinese, there are also local residents of different races. Instead of asking children to gain “preliminary understanding of Chinese culture and identity as a Chinese person” in kindergarten, children should be allowed to learn about the racial and cultural diversities in Hong Kong. For example, when discussing race-related topics, children should be taught terms like “Hong Kong Pakistani/Hong Kong Nepalese” instead of using only “Pakistani/Nepalese” so as to affirm the local identity of ethnic minority children and increase their sense of belonging to Hong Kong.

Home-school Cooperation

Although the importance of home-school cooperation was already emphasized in the ‘2006 Guide’, till today many ethnic minority parents find it hard to communicate with kindergarten staff. Parents hope the EDB could remind kindergartens that “Chinese kindergarten” means schools which adopt the local curriculum, rather than schools that only use Chinese to communicate with parents. Parents expressed the need for interpretation/translation so that they can establish close communications with teachers and have better understanding of their children’s progress in kindergarten. They also requested the EDB to upload the Kindergarten Quality Review Reports in English to allow parents who cannot understand Chinese to be informed of how kindergartens are implementing the curriculum guideline.

Expectation of Free Quality Kindergarten

According to the Free Quality Kindergarten Policy which will be implemented next September, the EDB shall provide extra funding equivalent to the salary of a kindergarten teacher to kindergartens with 8 or more non-Chinese speaking students to foster Chinese language learning. The EDB should also provide guidance on how the extra funding can be appropriately spent on effective measures to avoid repeating the lack of accountability from primary and secondary schools currently receiving similar mode of funding. The spending of the funding should also be accountable and transparent to parents and students. Otherwise, the resource will be rendered ineffectual.

Conclusion

Hong Kong Unison urges the EDB to take ethnic minority kindergarten education and their needs seriously, and prompt kindergartens to adopt suitable support and teaching approaches for children of diverse races through reviewing ‘Guide to Pre-primary Curriculum’. The EDB should ensure that ethnic minorities enjoy equal opportunities to learn in pre-primary education so that they can be on the same playing field as their Chinese counterparts when they enter primary education.



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