

ITEM FOR FINANCE COMMITTEE

**HEAD 40 – EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Subhead 700 General other non-recurrent
New Item “Parent education”**

Members are invited to approve a new commitment of \$50 million for strengthening parent education.

PROBLEM

We need to enhance parent education to meet the needs of our community.

PROPOSAL

2. With the support of the Secretary for Education and Manpower, the Director of Education (D of E) proposes to create a new commitment of \$50 million to strengthen parent education and to encourage parents to participate in educational affairs.

JUSTIFICATION

3. Parents are the first teachers and closest mentors of their children. The behaviour and guidance of parents have a great impact on their children's development. Their participation at different stages of their children's schooling and partnership with schools are also essential to bring out the best in their children. Recognising the important role played by parents, the education reform which is now under way calls for greater involvement of parents in the education of their children.

4. The objective of parent education is to provide parents and married couples who are “parents-to-be” with the necessary skills and knowledge to raise their children. At present, government departments (Education Department, Social Welfare Department and Department of Health) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) deliver parent education through workshops, seminars and courses. Although these programmes are generally well subscribed, there is scope for improving their contents and expanding them to cover a larger number of parents. At present, various factors hinder the development of parent education. First, there is a lack of structured reference materials catering specifically to the needs of parents in Hong Kong. Second, some parents are either not aware of the importance of parent education or simply uninterested. Third, we do not have enough individuals with sufficient experience in parent education to deliver the programmes.

5. To address the above problems, we propose to provide financial support in the next two school years to -

- (a) provide the necessary reference materials and to help increase supply of trained individuals required for the effective delivery of parent education programmes; and
- (b) arouse the awareness of parents at large and encourage their active participation in the further development of parent education.

Development of reference materials

6. At present, organisers of parent education programmes largely rely on reference materials adapted from those of overseas. Some of these are not entirely applicable to Hong Kong. Although the Government and NGOs have produced some local reference materials on individual topics, there is no comprehensive package which sets out the needs of local children and the corresponding parenting skills required.

7. To better address local parents’ needs, we propose to engage experts in child development and parent education to develop a comprehensive package of reference materials for use in parent education programmes, and to compile easy-to-understand reference materials for parents. The package will be produced in two parts. The first will provide a structured framework on Hong Kong children’s physical, psychological and intellectual development at different stages, and the corresponding parenting skills required. The second part will focus on

/specific

specific themes, for example, on how to handle children with behavioural problems or children with special education needs. This package will form the basis for outreach and parent education programmes (see paragraphs 8 and 9 below) and for training the programme organisers (see paragraph 10 below).

Promoting parent education

8. Some parents know little about the importance of parental influence on child development, do not have time to attend parent education programmes, or are simply uninterested in the development of their children. We propose to proactively reach out to these parents with the help of NGOs, schools (including kindergartens) and parent teachers' associations (PTAs). We propose to provide a grant, on an application basis, for these organisations to run outreach programmes, including those to be conducted in the workplace of parents with the support of employers.

9. Furthermore, to add impetus to the development of parent education and to create impact on the parents community, we will organise territory-wide programmes that focus on raising parents' general awareness of their role in their children's development and education. We will invite NGOs, schools (including kindergartens) and PTAs to apply for grants to organise more parent education programmes at the district and school levels in the next two school years. Such programmes may cover a wide range of topics, such as parenting skills, information technology education and reading, with particular focus on the specific needs of parents in the district or school. We will also bring across the message of parent education through a publicity programme involving the media.

Training on the delivery of parent education programmes

10. Currently, parent education programmes are mostly delivered by social workers, teachers and psychologists. A larger number of programme organisers will facilitate an expansion in parent education programmes. We therefore propose to commission NGOs and tertiary institutions to organise training courses to build up a larger pool of social workers, teachers and parents equipped with basic knowledge of child development and parent education. Specifically, we believe there is much potential in grooming experienced parents to take a more active role in the delivery of parent education which emphasises information dissemination and experience sharing. Another objective of these training courses is to familiarise serving and prospective programme organisers with the proposed new package of reference materials.

/Implementation

Implementation plan

Encl. 11. The implementation plan is at Enclosure.

12. All successful applicants will be required to submit an evaluation report after the completion of the programme. All programmes will be monitored by the Steering Committee on Parent Education (see paragraph 21). We will evaluate the effectiveness of the initiative by the end of the 2002/03 school year.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

13. The estimated total non-recurrent expenditure is \$50 million, broken down as follows -

| | 2001-02 | 2002-03 | 2003-04 | Total |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| | \$'000 | \$'000 | \$'000 | \$'000 |
| (a) Production of reference materials | 2,200 | 780 | 780 | 3,760 |
| (b) Outreach programmes | 1,880 | 3,750 | 1,880 | 7,510 |
| (c) Parent education programmes | 10,700 | 14,200 | 3,600 | 28,500 |
| (d) Training of programme organisers | 630 | 1,250 | 630 | 2,510 |
| (e) Hire of parent education experts | 1,980 | 2,380 | 1,790 | 6,150 |
| (f) Administrative cost | 530 | 640 | 400 | 1,570 |
| Total | 17,920 | 23,000 | 9,080 | 50,000 |

14. Paragraph 13(a) covers expenditure for the production of the comprehensive package of reference materials on parent education for programme organisers, schools, PTAs and NGOs. It also covers the costs of producing resource kits, brochures and pamphlets on the basis of that package for distribution to parents and child-care workers.

15. As regards paragraph 13(b), the expenditure is for providing grants to non-profit making organisations to organise outreach programmes, including those targeting parents in the workplace. We estimate that some 300 such programmes will be sponsored.

16. Paragraph 13(c) covers the estimated cost of running some ten territory-wide parent education programmes by the Government, and sponsorship for about 3 000 school-based and district-based programmes to be run by non-profit making organisations. It also covers the cost of publicity campaigns on parent education.

17. As regards paragraph 13(d), the expenditure is for the training of some 1 000 programme organisers.

18. As regards paragraph 13(e), the expenditure is for employing three parent education experts on non-civil service contract terms to form an implementation team. The implementation team will develop the comprehensive package of reference materials, fine-tune the package in the light of feedback by parent education programme organisers, organise territory-wide parent education programmes, and provide advice to schools, NGOs and PTAs in organising parent education programmes, where necessary.

19. As regards paragraph 13(f), the expenditure is for employing three executive/clerical staff on non-civil service contract terms to process funding applications, liaise with schools and NGOs on the programmes, and to monitor progress of the programmes.

20. If Members approve the current proposal, we shall offset the supplementary provision of \$17.9 million required for 2001-02 by deleting an equivalent amount under Head 106 Miscellaneous Services Subhead 789 Additional commitments. The provision to be required in 2002-03 and 2003-04 will be included in the draft Estimates of the relevant financial years.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

21. The Chief Executive announced in his 2000 Policy Address that \$50 million would be set aside to support parent education and to encourage parents to participate in educational affairs. We set up a Steering Committee on Parent Education in December 2000 to consider how the earmarked funding could best be used. The Steering Committee is chaired by D of E and comprises representatives from relevant departments including Social Welfare Department and Department of Health, NGOs as well as key stakeholders such as schools, tertiary institutions, parents, employers and community members. The proposals in this submission are based on the recommendations of the Steering Committee.

22. We consulted the Board of Education on the above proposals on 9 April 2001 and the Board supported the proposals. We consulted the Education Panel of the Legislative Council on 23 April 2001. The Panel raised no objection to our proposals.

Education and Manpower Bureau
May 2001

Implementation Plan

| Item | Time frame |
|--|--|
| (a) Development of the comprehensive package of reference materials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education Department (ED) will set up an implementation team of parent education experts to develop the package. - The implementation team will start developing the package in July. The first part of the package will be ready in September 2001; the second part in March 2002. |
| (b) Production of reference materials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Production of the first part of the package of reference materials will commence in October 2001, to be followed by the second part in April 2002. - Reference materials will be produced throughout the two school years in the light of the demand. |
| (c) Outreach programmes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Applications from non-profit making organisations can be submitted starting from July 2001. - Programmes to be launched starting from September 2001. |
| (d) Training of parent education programme organisers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ED will commission NGOs and tertiary institutions to conduct training. - First batch of training programmes to be launched in October/November 2001 and the first batch of programme organisers to be ready to arrange programmes by November/December 2001. |
| (e) Territory-wide parent education programmes and publicity campaigns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First territory-wide parent education programme to be launched in around October 2001; five programmes to be organised each school year. - Two publicity campaigns to be organised each school year. |

| Item | Time frame |
|---|---|
| (f) District-based/school-based parent education programmes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Applications from non-profit making organisations can be submitted starting from July 2001. - First round of programmes to be launched starting from November/December 2001. |

Note: All funding applications will be vetted by the Steering Committee on Parent Education.