

For information
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LegCo Panel on Education

Parent Education

PURPOSE

This paper informs Members of the proposals to strengthen parent education.

BACKGROUND

2. 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. The education reform which is now under way also calls for an increasing role of parents in the provision of education. It is therefore important for parents to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to raise their children and to create a good environment for their learning.

3. Government fully recognises the importance of parent education. Due emphasis has been made on this front over the years. At present, Government provides parent education through a variety of channels, including government departments and subvented non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

4. To give a further impetus to the promotion of parent education, 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. A Steering Committee was set up in December 2000 to consider how the earmarked funding could best be used. The Steering Committee is chaired by the Director of Education and comprises representatives from relevant departments/NGOs as well as key stakeholders, such as schools, tertiary

institutions, parents, employers and community members. The proposals of the Steering Committee, which have Government's support, are set out in paragraphs 5 to 10 below.

PROPOSALS

Development and production of resource/reference materials

5. At present, the resource/reference materials used by parent educators or distributed to parents are mainly adapted from those of overseas. Some of them may not totally fit in the local context. While various government departments and NGOs have produced some resource/reference materials, they are not developed in a systematic manner that cover the whole range of materials required for children at different stages of development. This has hampered our efforts in promoting parent education.

6. To better address local parents' needs, we propose to develop a comprehensive package of resource/reference materials on parent education. The package will be divided into two parts. The first part is a structured framework on Hong Kong children's physical, psychological and intellectual development at different stages, and the parenting skills required at these stages. The second part will focus on specific themes, for example, handling children with behavioural problems and children with special education needs. The package will form the basis for the training courses for parent educators (see paragraph 7 below) and parent education programmes (see paragraphs 8 and 9 below). We will also make use of the package to produce resource kits for schools and child-care workers, and brochures and pamphlets for parents.

Training of parent educators

7. Members will note from paragraphs 8 and 9 below that one of our other proposals is to organise more parent education programmes.

To do this, we will need a large number of quality parent educators to deliver these programmes. Currently, however, we do not have sufficient number of these. We therefore propose to organise training courses to build up a larger pool of quality parent educators who have the know-how to deliver parent education effectively.

Parent education programmes

8. The most effective way to enhance parenting skills is through parent education programmes. At present, while there are various kinds of workshops, seminars or courses on parent education, there have been calls from parents for organising more such programmes. We therefore propose to invite NGOs, schools and parent-teacher associations (PTAs) to apply for grants to organise more parent education programmes at various levels (i.e. territory, district and school levels), each with different target groups. The territory-wide programmes will aim at raising parents' general awareness of their role in children's development and education process. Programmes at the district and school levels will focus on the specific needs of parents in the district or the school, and will emphasise on how parents could take part meaningfully in educational affairs of their children.

9. The programmes in paragraph 8 above will be useful for parents who take an interest in the development of their children, and also have the time to attend such programmes. But we recognise that there are parents who either know little about the importance of parental influence on children development, or who for various reasons do not have time to attend parent education programmes. We therefore propose to actively approach these parents through organising parent education programmes in the workplace and other outreaching programmes.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10. The earmarked funding of \$50 million will be spent over a period of two school years (2001/02 and 2002/03). Tentatively, about

30% of the funding will be spent on development and production of resource/reference materials, and training of parent educators. The remaining 70% will be used on organising parent education programmes and other outreaching services. The detailed breakdown of the funding allocation is still being fine-tuned. We will be seeking funding approval from the Finance Committee in May 2001.

IMPLEMENTATION

11. ED will set up an implementation team comprising experts in parent education in June 2001 to develop the package of resource/reference materials, conduct training for parent educators and organise territory-wide and other parent education programmes. The first part of the package will be ready in September/October 2001, whereas the second part is expected to be completed by March/April 2002. Training courses for parent educators on the children's development framework will commence in October 2001 after the first part of the package is developed, whereas training on specific themes will commence in April 2002 after the second part of the package is ready.

12. NGOs, schools and PTAs will be invited to submit funding applications to organise parent education programmes and outreaching programmes in June 2001. They could submit funding applications to ED anytime during the two-year period and applications will be vetted on a quarterly basis. As NGOs/schools/PTAs are expected to make reference to the package of resource/reference materials in paragraph 6 above in arranging the programmes, the first round of grants for the parent education programmes will be disbursed in September/October 2001 to tie in with the development of the first part of the materials. We expect more parent education programmes to be organised after the whole package is completed in March 2002. As for outreaching services, the first round of grants will be disbursed in September 2001. All applications will be considered by the Steering Committee mentioned in paragraph 4 above.

CONSULTATION

13. We consulted the Board of Education in early April on the above proposals. The Board gave broad support to the proposals.

Education Department
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