



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEETING ON APRIL 10 2006

Position Paper

The first consideration of the Hong Kong Council of Early Childhood Education and Services (CECES) is for the health and education of children aged 3- 6 years old.

15,290 children aged 3-6, representing 98% of the aged group are currently enrolled in Hong Kong's 1,040 preschools. 751 of these schools are in the non-profit-making sector while 289 are private independent. These figures demonstrate dramatically the importance of questions involved in Early Childhood Education (ECE).

Although the system of inspection is in place in the ECE field, we have a long way to go in developing **high quality programmes** and **teacher education schemes**. These issues are linked with manpower expertise and economics.

Hong Kong has now achieved the first steps in training teachers up to the Qualified Kindergarten Teachers (QKT) level. The next step is to aim for the Higher Diploma or Certificate in Education (CE). The final aim for the Early Childhood field is to provide a Bachelor of Education (BEd) training for preschool teachers.

A child's learning between birth and 6 is phenomenally fast. By 2, normal children, without being taught, will have picked up a whole language, with all the vocabulary and grammar to form correct sentences. At 3 years old, children are further picking up at least 10 new words every day, and can apply these immediately in every day communication. They can understand difficult concepts of cause and effect through their brain activity.

At 4 years old, they know how to tell a lie to an adult in order to avoid punishment. At this age, lying is not a fault but shows a child's intelligence, imagination, and the ability to use high order thinking skills.

Our present teaching strategies are still based on tradition methods of isolating practice for academic skills. Teachers, on the whole, are not cognizant of how to maximize the great potential of our studnets. Students coming out of the school system often lack a working knowledge of the natural, physical and social science, and do not have the kinds of minds that will create new knowledge in these areas.

We must now put our resources into raising the quality of our preschools. We must keep school fees low so that even the poorest children in Hong Kong are not neglected because of their inability to pay fees. We must ensure that qualified teachers are paid properly so that they stay in the field and we do not waste resources in training them and losing them to other industries.

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Government resources should be spent in helping schools **develop their curriculum as a priority**. The following considerations are critical in raising the standard of the ECE profession:

1. A more thorough understanding and knowledge of child development
2. A readiness to deal with individual differences and characteristics of children
3. A higher level of knowledge of the various disciplines
4. An awareness of the values of our culture.

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