

Submission to LegCo – Tom Ledger

The current voucher scheme already significantly reduces parental financial stress, as well as enhancing the fundamental choice for parents to choose the kindergarten for the children. With an enrolment percentage of about 100%, this evidently is already a highly functional and successful system. Great diversity already exists in the form of school premises. Providing free kindergarten education will only harm the very group it is trying to help: parents and students.

Simply because a fraction of poor families cannot foot the bill for some kindergartens, this should not deprive other parents their freedom of choice. Through homogenizing the system, offering authentic free kindergarten education in Hong Kong would in fact threaten the accountability and quality of kindergarten education on the whole. Parents now have the freedom to choose the best one that suits their needs.

If the system becomes totally curriculum controlled, then there is no difference between kindergartens at all. The transition from all private education is only increasing the two-tiered gap between state run, and private run kindergartens.

Despite more people than ever being able to afford private education, there will always be losers. And this minority that complained to the State has somehow created the bureaucratic response to minimize discontent, and in the process homogenized the system.

Take the example of the average middle class working mum. She only wants the best for her son, who is four years old. Previously she had the choice to save, set aside money for his kindergarten, and choose the one that offered the best services. She looked around for weeks before finally settling on one. Certain aspects of the curriculum appealed to her.

Yet now that choice has become a non-choice. There is no difference between one kindergarten and the other. There is a total disincentive to set aside and plan for her son's future. She has lost the control over her son's future.

Freedom of choice underpins the free-market ideals that are the envy of other countries that exist in Hong Kong. Give back this choice to these parents, who deserve it.