

Clerk to Subcommittee to Study the Implementation of Free Kindergarten Education
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central
Hong Kong
(Email: sc_ed_fke@legco.gov.hk)

25 June 2015

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: Panel on Education - Subcommittee to Study the Implementation of
Free Kindergarten Education**

I would like to make some comments and recommendations with regard to the Report of the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education published on 28 May 2015 (LC Paper No. CB(4)1102/14-15(01)).

1. **The analysis of the report is incomprehensive.** The Committee has been based primarily on examples of half-day kindergarten services as the frame of reference for evaluation. I recommend the Committee to acknowledge and give full attention to the discrepancies between half-day and whole-day kindergarten services in terms of their models of operation, funding, and pedagogy. The report in its current form is far from comprehensive and can hardly respond to the increasing demand for whole-day kindergarten services in Hong Kong.
2. **The Committee relies too heavily on overseas experiences to inform local practice.** Although the attempt to make references to research reports outside Hong Kong is laudable, I suggest the Committee to enrich the discussion by referring to local studies on kindergarten education. For instance, the Committee cites only two studies in the context of North America (Brownell, et al., 2015; Votruba-Drzal, et. al. 2008) to argue the possible drawbacks of whole-day kindergarten services. Indeed, there is ample literature to address the debate on whole- versus half-day model of service delivery. I strongly urge the Committee to reevaluate the pros and cons of attending whole-day kindergarten by referring to studies in the context of Asian communities such as Singapore, Japan, China, and Hong Kong, in particular.
3. **The report has paid scant attention to accommodate students with special needs to mainstream kindergarten education.** The concept of integrated education was first introduced to Hong Kong since the 70s. The report, however, is unable to shed light on how the kindergartens can be refined in order to engage in integrated education. In view of the shortage of manpower

and resources, the Education Bureau should allocate additional resources in supporting kindergarten to align with the current policy strategy that emphasizes the importance of early identification, early intervention, and more importantly, the adoption of an inclusive approach in mainstream schooling to cater for students' individual differences. Moreover, the report has failed to indicate what kinds of specific in-service training programmes are advised to be offered to kindergarten teachers regarding to the advancement of existing services. The government should provide adequate financial support to encourage teachers to acquire post-qualification trainings in this respect.

4. **The recommendations on staffing are inattention to the need of existing small kindergartens offering whole-day and long whole-day services.** As noted in the report, only 19% of local kindergartens operate solely half-day classes. For the majority of kindergartens (i.e., 81%), whole-day and long whole-day services are provided in response to the increasing number of dual working parents, single parent families, and grandparent carers in Hong Kong. Notwithstanding the Committee is of the view that parents do not need to pay for kindergarten education for their children, the recommendations in the report have disregarded the main impediment to quality education in relation to teacher burnout. I sincerely hope the Committee to suggest down-to-earth measures in supporting the overstressed and overloaded teachers, especially in small kindergartens offering whole-day and long whole-day services.

To conclude, I am disappointed with the existing Report of the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education since it is noticeably far from applicable to local context and unable to address to the tangible needs of dual working parents, students with special needs, burning out teachers, and small kindergartens offering whole-day and long whole-day services.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Yours faithfully,



Lam Oi Ping
Nursery School Principal