

For discussion
on 12 June 2017

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Measures to Promote Parent Education

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the strategies, implementation and latest development of parent education promoted by the Education Bureau (EDB).

Background

2. Parent education covers a wide range of education activities to equip parents with the skills and knowledge in parenting and foster their development as competent parents, examples of which include well-being of mother and child, parenting skills, physical and psychological development of children, parent-child communication, family harmony, guidance on the proper use of the internet, and prevention of youth drug abuse and crime problems, etc. As pointed out in the submission to the Panel on Education of the Legislative Council in December 2014 (LC Paper No CB(4)210/14-15(06)), parent education is being promoted collaboratively by different Government bureaux and departments with focus and contexts appropriate to their policy portfolios. In other words, apart from the EDB, other Government bureaux and departments, such as the Home Affairs Bureau, Social Welfare Department, Department of Health, Narcotics Division and Hong Kong Police Force, have been taking forward parent education work under their respective purview. Moreover, established in December 2007, the Family Council¹ has been serving as a cross-sector and cross-bureau platform for studying family-related policies and promoting a culture of loving families in the community. Through its Happy Family Info Hub, an online platform, the Family Council shares information on parent education provided by different policy bureaux and other organisations.

¹ The Home Affairs Bureau provides secretariat services for the Family Council. The Family Council comprises a non-official Chairman, 15 non-official members drawn from different sectors (including the academic, business, education and social welfare sectors), three official members (i.e. chairmen of the Commission on Youth, Elderly Commission and Women's Commission) and four government representatives (i.e. the Secretary for Home Affairs, Secretary for Education, Secretary for Labour and Welfare and Head of Central Policy Unit).

3. The EDB is tasked to provide quality school education service for students to promote their whole-person development, offer ample opportunities for them to develop their diverse interests and talents, and foster their life-long learning capabilities. Parents are key stakeholders in the school education process. Hence, the EDB's strategies for promoting parent education are focused on kindergartens, primary and secondary schools as the platform for promotion of home-school co-operation and development of home-school partnership. Schools and parents can work in partnership to facilitate students' learning and healthy development through this platform.

Implementation

Promoting the establishment of Parent-Teacher Associations

4. Set up in 1993 pursuant to the Education Commission Report No.5, the Committee on Home-School Co-operation² (CHSC) has been actively encouraging schools to form Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs). As of the 2016/17 school year, apart from the provision of a \$5,000 Set-up Grant, an annual grant of \$5,267 has been provided for meeting the recurrent expenditure of existing PTAs. Currently, there are about 1 400 schools in Hong Kong with PTAs, including all government and aided schools as well as nearly one third of kindergartens. To support the operation and development of PTAs, the CHSC has published the "Parent-Teacher Associations Handbook" for the reference of PTAs and schools. Training programmes are organised by the EDB for PTA executive committee members. Self-initiated district-based Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations (FPTAs) have also been established in 18 districts for coordinating PTAs in their respective districts and organising district-based parenting activities.

5. With the establishment of PTAs and FPTAs, closer ties and collaboration as well as communication channels have been established between parents and schools. The parent education talks and activities organised by PTAs and FPTAs not only enhance parents' understanding of the physical and psychological development and needs of their children for better parent-child relationship but also facilitate mutual support and learning through sharing of parenting experience.

² CHSC comprises the chairperson, an ex-officio member from the EDB, educators from kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools and special schools, and parents of local school students and professionals.

Support for home-school co-operation activities

6. Apart from the Set-up Grant and the annual grant, each school can apply for project grants for a maximum of two activities, capped at \$5,000 each, for organising parent education or parenting activities. The Subsidy for Joint Home-School Co-operation Project, capped at \$10,000 for each activity, is available for application by schools/PTAs under the same sponsoring body or in the same district for organising large-scale activities jointly. FPTAs can apply for subsidies for holding three district-based parenting activities each year. The amount of subsidy is subject to the nature and number of participants of each activity. In the 2016/17 school year, PTAs and FPTAs organised about 3 400 activities of a great variety on home-school co-operation and parent education, covering such topics as supporting children in learning or growth, nurturing positive values and raising happy kids, with a total funding of about \$26 million from the EDB.

7. The CHSC often jointly organises various large-scale home-school activities with other organisations, such as the annual “Parents Also Appreciate Teachers Drive” for expressing gratitude to teachers. In the 2015/16 school year, it co-organised the “I’m with YOU” Award Scheme with the Ocean Park for commending students with positive energy and teachers and parents for nurturing such positive values. The CHSC also launched the “We Did It” Award Scheme in collaboration with the Hong Kong Disneyland Resort for recognising outstanding students from special schools and parents of special schools who actively participated in home-school co-operation activities. In the 2016/17 school year, the CHSC will continue to hold large-scale home-school co-operation activities with the above organisations, such as the “Happy Kids · Bountiful Life” Award Scheme in recognition of students who remained positive in the face of adversity and the “I’m with YOU” Award Scheme for commending students with outstanding volunteer service.

8. Parents have a great impact on the healthy development of their children. Parents and schools both play an important role in helping students manage their stress and emotional problems. In view of public concern about the psychological and mental well-being of students, the EDB has disbursed a special Home-school Co-operation (HSC) Grant of \$5,000 to all public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools in 2016 for organising talks or activities on children’s mental and psychological well-being for parents.

9. Moreover, the Quality Education Fund (QEF) welcomes applications that offer a wide range of parenting activities, encourage parents and teachers to play an active role in the whole-person development of children jointly, promote parent education and strengthen home-school co-operation for equipping parents with knowledge on nurturing children's personal growth with a view to fostering whole-person development of children. Launched in the 2014/15 school year, the Parent Education: Healthy Start Home Visit Programme under the QEF Thematic Network Scheme aims at training and empowering teachers and parents to promote the holistic healthy development of their pre-primary children.

Useful information for parents

10. The CHSC website is a portal providing parents with up-to-date school information or useful information, such as the Primary and Secondary School Profiles, information on parent education and home-school co-operation activities. The RTHK Programme Archive of the website enables parents to revisit radio and television programmes on parenting. The EDB also disseminate important messages and hot issues on education to parents through the e-Bulletin for Parents on EDB website and a newspaper column entitled "Education Update" of the Headline Daily.

11. The CHSC organises or co-organises with the EDB or other organisations various activities in respect of education policies, and learning and development issues of particular concern to parents each year, including talks, workshops and sharing sessions for FPTAs. In the 2015/16 school year, the CHSC jointly organised two talks on students' physical and psychological development with FPTAs and regional associations of school heads. The talks delivered by a psychiatrist provided parents with information on how to identify and support students with emotional and stress problems as well as other parenting skills. In the 2016/17 school year, the CHSC continues to hold similar talks and actively promote the Happy Kids Charter. A seminar on "Happy Home-School Co-operation · Happy Kids", colouring, drawing and slogan competitions on the theme of "Happy Kids · Bountiful Life" have been organised. The FPTAs will also be encouraged to organise thematic activities on Happy Kids Charter. In the 2016/17 school year, the CHSC organises or co-organises about 70 workshops and talks for parents for promoting home-school co-operation, introducing education initiatives and policies, disseminating parenting skills and equipping parents with the necessary skills

and knowledge about helping their children in the respect of learning and development.

Supporting the learning of students

12. In the light of the new development in the education landscape, the EDB holds various kinds of talks for parents regularly. For example, to tie in with the implementation of the senior secondary curriculum under the New Academic Structure, a talk on the senior secondary curriculum and subject choices for secondary two to four students has been conducted. The Parents' Corner has also been created at the New Academic Structure Web Bulletin. To dovetail with the implementation of the Fourth Strategy on IT in Education, the EDB conducted regional and school-based talks for parents in the 2015/16 school year. The "Unite for a Better Internet" information kit on e-learning has been developed and relevant teacher professional development programmes will be launched to further support parent education in the 2016/17 school year. Parents play an important role in supporting and encouraging their children to pursue their life goals in accordance with their interests and abilities. To enhance parents' understanding of life planning education, a parents' corner has been added to the Life Planning website. Talks and seminars have been held and leaflets distributed to parents to provide them with information about further study opportunities, various industries, and vocational and professional education and training. We will continue to encourage the Business-School Partnership Programme to invite parents to participate in suitable activities. The CHSC has held a number of talks on life planning education, for example by inviting academics and top athletes to share their experience with parents, in order to encourage parents to get involved in the planning of further studies and careers of their children, and help their children develop positive values and outlook towards life. The CHSC has also joined hands with the Hong Kong Police Force in holding talks for parents of non-Chinese speaking students to introduce the multiple pathways available and encourage them to play a role in the life planning of their children.

Support for parents of students with special educational needs

13. The EDB has produced the "Guide for Parents on Whole School Approach to Integrated Education" to help parents better understand their roles and the ways to support their children with special educational needs (SEN). To equip parents with knowledge and skills in helping their children with learning difficulties, the EDB organises a series of regional parent workshops on

enhancing students' literacy and numeracy skills every year. Educational psychologists and speech therapists work together with school personnel such as student guidance personnel/social workers and teachers to help parents acquire the necessary knowledge and skills of parenting through consultation and school-based training. As for students with greater difficulties in learning and social adjustment, their parents will be invited by schools to meetings for formulation of individual education plans. The EDB has also produced information leaflets and resource packages on various types of SEN for parents' use and reference and jointly organised briefings and seminars with other government departments and non-governmental organisations to support parents of students with SEN.

Strengthening home-school co-operation at policy level

14. Schools regard parents as partners and maintain close liaison and collaboration with them through various channels. Home-school co-operation is one of the Performance Indicators under the "School Development and Accountability Framework". Schools can make reference to the views of parents collated from the Stakeholder Survey provided by the EDB for formulation of appropriate school-based policies to enhance parent education and to promote home-school co-operation, which are conducive to student development and learning as well as self-improvement of schools. The EDB also seeks the views of CHSC on various education measures and appoints parent representatives to relevant committees.

Implementation of Parent Education in Other Regions

15. We have made reference to the implementation of family education, including parent education, in the Mainland, England, Australia, Singapore and Taiwan. Given the diverse social, historical and cultural contexts, the legal systems, parenting requirements and mode of implementation for family education of these places are different. Family or parent education is mainly promoted by national organisations in the Mainland, by social welfare authorities in Singapore and Australia and by education authorities in Taiwan and England. In England, courts may make mandatory requirement for parents of juvenile offenders to undergo parent education. Similarly, legislation of both Singapore and Taiwan provides that parents who fail their duties of taking care the physical and psychological development of their children may be subject to mandatory parent education.

16. Regarding support, Australia, Taiwan and Singapore provide non-profit-making organisations or support groups with subsidies for running family education activities. In Singapore, the Ministry of Education encourages the setting up of parent support groups in schools and provides funding support for these groups to organise parent education or parenting activities, which is similar to the practice of Hong Kong. It is learned that Australia, Singapore, the Mainland and Taiwan have set up designated parenting websites for providing information to parents through electronic means. Mobile apps have been developed by Singaporean and Australian governments for providing parents with convenient access to information on parent education, child development and parenting skills.

Latest Development

17. To further enhance parent education, the EDB is actively planning to launch a parent education mobile website shortly to provide parents with useful information on different stages of development of children from kindergarten to primary and secondary school levels. The mobile website will cover parenting skills, reminder alert of important dates, such as dates of making choice of schools for Primary One Admission and release of allocation results, and relevant multi-media information to facilitate easy navigation.

18. The CHSC has engaged an outside organisation to conduct a study on the current means of communication between parents and schools and the effectiveness of such means with a view to identifying an effective way of communication for sharing with schools and parents.

19. The EDB will further strengthen parent education and solicit the support of the CHSC/PTAs for different education policies when necessary. Take life planning education as an example, the success of life planning education may hinge on whether parents can change certain preconceived notions, e.g. their children will be successful only if they are admitted by a university. It takes time for the idea that “every trade has its masters” to sink in. We will continue to promote parent education proactively through various means, including the social media. We are producing a micro-film series on life planning education to be broadcast online with parents included as a target audience group. In tandem with the expansion of Life Planning Education District Development Networks, through the participation of FPTAs, the EDB will work hand in hand with parents to strengthen and enhance life planning education at the district level. Regarding the mental and psychological well-being of students, the

CHSC, together with FPTAs and regional associations of school heads, will continue to hold talks for parents to provide them with relevant information for identifying and supporting students with emotional and stress problems, promote positive parenting to enhance young people's resilience against adversity. The CHSC will continue to promote the Happy Kids Charter. A series of talks on "Raising Happy Kids" will be held to provide parents with information about improving their kids' concentration, addressing the emotional and behavioural problems of their children, enhancing children's resilience against adversity and establishing an effective means of communication with their children.

20. To tie in with the implementation of the Free Quality Kindergarten Education initiative from the 2017/18 school year, the EDB will actively encourage the establishment of more PTAs in kindergartens so that home-school co-operation and parent education can take place as early as possible.

21. Looking ahead, education is one of the priority policy areas of the next term Government. Government investment in education is going to increase. We will maintain communication with and gauge the views of the sector and parents through various means in order to identify ways to promote home-school co-operation more effectively and strengthen the partnership between parents and schools for facilitating the learning and healthy development of students.

22. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

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