

Notes of the Twenty-second Meeting of the Children's Rights Forum

Date : 12 August 2014 (Tuesday)
Time : 3:00 p.m.
Venue : Covered Play Area,
Henry G. Leong Yaumatei Community Centre,
60 Public Square Street, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon

Attendance:

Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau

- 1) Mr Gordon LEUNG, JP Deputy Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs
(Chairman)
- 2) Mr Michael YAU Principal Assistant Secretary for Constitutional and
Mainland Affairs (Acting)
- 3) Miss Bonnie YIM Assistant Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland
Affairs

Non-government organisations Representatives

- 1) Against Child Abuse Dr Jessica HO
Ms LEE Yu-po
- 2) Hong Kong Unison Ms Annie LI
Ms Karen LAW
Ms Shamaila Khan

Alysha
Komal
Shamsa
Mahood Saad
Yasmeen
Aljon Rae Grospe
Christian Karlos Pua
Hannah Embuscado

Raheela Khan

- 3) Kid's Dream
呂詩婷
李洛希
簡彥滔
陳逸晴
徐浩生
- 4) Playright Children's Play Association
周寶頤女士
- 5) United Nations Children's Fund
馮素霞女士

Voices of Youth

鍾穎峰
葉可淇

Attendance by Invitation:

Discussion Item (I)

- 1) Mr LO Pui-lam
Chief Curriculum Development Officer (Chinese),
Education Bureau
- 2) Ms LEE Yee-lai
Curriculum Development Officer (Chinese),
Education Bureau

Discussion Item (II)

- 1) Mr Alex WONG
Chief Social Work Officer (Family & Child Welfare)1,
Social Welfare Department
- 2) Dr Karen TSO
Senior Medical and Health Officer (Family Health
Service), Department of Health
- 3) Dr Dorothy CHAN
Associate Consultant (Paediatrics), Prince of Wales
Hospital

1. Introduction

1.1 The Chairman welcomed representatives of non-government organisations (NGOs) and children representatives to the meeting.

2. Discussion Items

(I) Enhanced Support Measures in Learning Chinese for Non-Chinese Speaking (NCS) Students (Paper No. CRF 4/2014)

2.1 2.1.1 The Chairman invited the representative of the Education Bureau (EDB) to give an account of the Government's enhanced support measures in learning Chinese for NCS students.

2.1.2 Mr LO Pui-lam pointed out that the measures for supporting and encouraging NCS students to master the Chinese language, facilitating their adaptation to the local education system and early integration into the community were put forward in response to the initiative of supporting ethnic minorities in education and employment set out in the 2014 Policy Address. Starting from 2014/15 school year, the EDB would provide primary and secondary schools with the "Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework" ("Learning Framework"), including the introduction of an Applied Learning (Chinese) (ApL(C)) subject in senior secondary level, hence facilitating NCS students to obtain a Chinese qualification to articulate to multiple pathways. He also briefed the meeting on the series of measures and strategy for supporting schools as well as implementation details of the "Learning Framework". Mr LO advised that learning and teaching materials would continue to be developed and a platform for teachers to share their experiences and resources would be set up. Schools might also apply for professional support services to meet their individual circumstances and development needs.

2.1.3 Ms LEE Yee-lai gave a detailed account of challenges the NCS students met in learning Chinese, including difficulties in recognising and writing Chinese characters. She also briefed the meeting on teaching resources that supported the teaching of Chinese (such as a list of graphemes of Chinese characters and on-line lexical list) which facilitated students' self-learning. Ms LEE pointed out that some primary and secondary schools had launched the Big Brothers and Sisters Reading Scheme to help

NCS students learn Chinese through reading and enjoy the reading experience. With respect to difficulties of NCS students in writing Chinese, Ms LEE advised that apart from adopting the approach of improving writing by speaking, teachers would use different tactics to meet different learning needs. To provide a conducive environment for NCS students in learning the Chinese language, signs in both Chinese and English were put up in schools to help NCS students recognise Chinese characters. Learning with peers also allowed students to give full play to their talents and learn from one another. Ms LEE further pointed out that the organisation of diversified activities by schools might enhanced understanding among students from various ethnicities with different background and help promote mutual acquaintance.

2.1.4 Ms LEE Yee-lai said that, extra-curricular activities such as visits to homes for the elderly organised by schools would enable NCS students to get to know Hong Kong, facilitating their personal growth. She also pointed out that close home-school co-operation would also help students adapt to school life.

2.1.5 Ms LEE Yee-lai reiterated that the “Learning Framework” was mainly designed to provide NCS students with multiple pathways. Students might choose to enroll in different language courses such as Chinese Language in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination, ApL(C), or participate in examination of the General Certification of Education (GCE) etc. according to their language competency.

2.2 Comments and questions on enhanced support measures in learning Chinese for NCS students put forward by attendees and children’s representatives, as well as consolidated responses from government representatives were as follows:

2.2.1 In respect of the “Learning Framework”, some attendees expressed concerns about the training opportunities for teachers, the design and use of teaching materials and the injection of related resources.

2.2.2 Mr LO Pui-lam advised that the EDB would work hand-in-hand with schools to provide practical tools and teaching reference materials to facilitate teachers to implement the learning framework. Schools would also adapt school curriculum according to their own circumstances. Territory-wide workshops / seminars would be conducted to promote

professional sharing and wider dissemination of good practices. Mr LO reiterated that the “Learning Framework” was to help NCS students achieve expected learning outcomes through small-step learning, and to facilitate them to obtain recognised Chinese qualifications to articulate to multiple pathways.

2.2.3 Some attendees enquired about the details of qualifications of the “Learning Framework” recognised under the Qualifications Framework, and public examinations and pathways that NCS students might choose.

2.2.4 Mr LO Pui-lam said that currently NCS students might take the core subject of Chinese language or other internationally recognised Chinese qualifications such as General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), GCE, etc. to obtain a Chinese qualification for further studies and / or employment. As an alternative qualification for NCS students, an ApL(C) subject would be introduced by phases starting from 2014/15 school year. ApL(C) would be pegged at Qualifications Framework Levels 1 to 3. The results would be recorded in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education certificate. The EDB was collaborating with relevant stakeholders (e.g. post-secondary institutions) to ensure that the qualifications concerned would be recognised for further studies and employment. The ApL(C), which provided a simulated applied learning context for NCS students to learn Chinese, allowing them to integrate into the Hong Kong community, was highly practical. In response to a children’s representative’s comment that the curriculum of ApL(C) subject was easier than that of the Chinese Language subject, Mr LO said that different curriculum designs had their own characteristics and the ApL(C) subject was able to meet the actual needs of NCS students in daily living and employment.

2.2.5 In response to some attendees’ comment about the unavailability of specific details of the ApL(C) subject, Mr LO said owing to time constraint, he was not able to give an account of the detailed content at the current meeting, but most of the detailed information in relation to Applied Learning had been uploaded to EDB’s website for access by students and teachers.

2.2.6 Some attendees enquired whether the support measures would be introduced in secondary schools and in what ways the funding would be

used.

2.2.7 Ms LEE Yee-lai advised that the support measures also covered NCS students in secondary schools, e.g. the Reading Scheme would also be implemented in secondary schools. In addition, the support software would provide an interface with simple English to facilitate operation. Mr LO Pui-lam supplemented that resources allocated to schools should be used properly, as such schools would be allowed to use the resources flexibly in the light of their own circumstances and were responsible for working out initiatives to support NCS students.

(II) Comprehensive Child Development Service (Paper No. CRF 5/2014)

2.3 2.3.1 The Chairman said that the topic of Comprehensive Child Development Service (CCDS) was suggested by the Family Council. Representatives from the Social Welfare Department (SWD), Department of Health (DH) and the Hospital Authority (HA) were invited to conduct a brief introduction.

2.3.2 Dr TSO said it was announced in the 2005 Policy Address that the Government recommended to launch a Head Start Programme on Child Development (later renamed as the “Comprehensive Child Development Service”). As a joint initiative of the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB), Education Bureau, DH, HA and SWD, CCDS aimed to identify and meet, at an early stage, various health and social needs of children (aged 0 to 5) and their families so as to foster healthy development of children. It made use of the Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs) of DH, the hospitals under HA and other relevant service units, such as Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) and pre-primary institutions, to identify at-risk pregnant women, mothers with antenatal / postnatal depression, families with psychosocial needs and pre-primary children with health, developmental and behavioural problems, etc. Needy children and families identified would be referred to the appropriate service units for follow up. Dr TSO and Dr CHAN elaborated on the identification and handling of four categories of target clientele, namely at-risk pregnant women, mothers with antenatal / postnatal depression, families and children with psychosocial needs and pre-primary children with health, developmental and behavioural problems, and the respective follow up work.

2.3.3 Dr TSO and Mr WONG briefed the attendees of the co-ordination

mechanism in respect of CCDS since its launch in 2005 and the progress of its phased implementation, and gave an account of the strategy of providing support to the needy families and the relevant follow-up work. Mr WONG pointed out that the ISFCs received in total about 2 300 referrals in the past year. Upon receiving the referrals, ISFCs had made suitable arrangement of services according to the needs of individual families or had referred them to the appropriate service units for follow up. For example, ISFCs might provide parenting training to postnatal mothers with depression, or arrange child care service for these mothers.

2.4 Comments and questions on CCDS put forward by attendees and children's representatives, as well as consolidated responses from government representatives were as follows:

2.4.1 Some attendees pointed out that it had been reported that child and adolescent psychiatric services were highly insufficient in Hong Kong and parents or children with emotion or behavioural problems were being referred to psychiatric service. The attendees enquired if CCDS could only offer referral service and could not provide timely treatment.

2.4.2 Dr CHAN indicated that early identification and strengthening parents' awareness of various behavioural problems could help reduce the number of cases significantly. Dr CHAN also indicated that CCDS was only fully implemented in August 2013, it might need more time to see the results. Moreover, NGOs were also providing relevant services such as parenting programmes and parenting training. Dr CHAN supplemented that monitoring would be strengthened in cases where traces of soft drugs were found in newborns to prevent child abuse and in the hope that services to babies were not provided only from the medical point of view, but also for improving the environment for their growth and providing them with appropriate support.

2.4.3 Some attendees pointed out that providing children with residential care home service might not be the best solution, but in cases where parents were incapable of looking after their children, the children might have suffered greater harm. Hence, the attendees suggested the efficiency of CCDS could be evaluated on the basis of the statistics now available. They also pointed out that both the prevention and intervention services had room for improvement and reference could be drawn from overseas

practices, such as arranging visits to families with newborns .

- 2.4.4 Dr CHAN pointed out that HA currently did not have extra resources to fully evaluate the efficiency of CCDS. However, hospitals in individual hospitals cluster (e.g. the New Territories East Cluster) had been conducting statistical analysis on their own to evaluate the efficiency of their services. Dr CHAN expressed that consideration might be given to providing more support to fathers under the current CCDS.
- 2.4.5 An attendee expressed that investment in children might yield high returns and asked how was the Government going to perform the role of central co-ordinator more efficiently and put in more resources on children.
- 2.4.6 The Chairman briefly explained the Government's resource allocation mechanism. He pointed out that the central would issue an operating expenditure envelope to each bureau annually for the Secretaries of individual bureaux to distribute the allocated resources to departments under their purview for meeting their operational expenses. A resource allocation exercise was conducted by each government department every year to lay down the work plan and draw up the estimates for the coming year during which the department could review the outdated service or adjust the mode of service provision and relevant policy bureau might conduct internal redeployment of resources or adjustment accordingly.
- 2.4.7 Mr WONG indicated that although CCDS was just fully implemented in 2013, he agreed with the attendees that it could be evaluated at an appropriate juncture. He provided an example that the Government had commissioned the University of Hong Kong in 2010 to conduct a comprehensive review of the ISFCs. The consultant had put forward 26 recommendations which were highly conducive to improving the service provision. He pointed out that consideration might be given to commissioning an independent consultant to conduct a review of CCDS later with a view to improving cross-sector co-operation in identifying and providing appropriate services to children and families in need.
- 2.4.8 Some attendees indicated their wish to have a high-level platform for the exchange of views on children affairs, such as a Children's Commission. The attendees also put forward some suggestions in respect of the Children's Rights Forum, such as enhancing promotional efforts, inviting

more NGOs which took an interest in children affairs to the Forum, the mechanism to reflect children's views to relevant policy bureaux and adopting a more child-friendly approach for exchange of views to facilitate children to provide views on different policies. The attendees also suggested that more ethnic minority children should be invited to future meetings.

2.4.9 The Chairman said that Members' views on different issues would be passed to relevant policy bureaux. The Chairman also indicated that the Secretariat had been following up on the suggestions put forward by the attendees, such as organising the Forum in different districts and after school hours. The Secretariat would also consider and follow up on the suggestion of enhancing promotional efforts put forward by the attendees at the current meeting. [Given that the attendees had great concerns on the operation mechanism of the Forum and the issue of setting up a Children's Commission, the Secretariat was asked to arrange a meeting for all parties to discuss the issues.] The Chairman however reiterated that the current mode had served its function, rendering the Forum an efficient mechanism for children organisations to express their views on different issues.

(Post-meeting note: Views and issues contained in paragraphs 2.3 to 2.4 had been relayed to the Family Council for appropriate follow-up actions.)

2.5 The Chairman thanked attendees and children representatives for attending the meeting, giving their views on various child-related issues. The Chairman welcomed suggestions on measures to improve the discussions at the Forum.