

REPORT OF
THE RECONSTITUTED WORKING PARTY
ON KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION

December 1995

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

1.1 The issue of unification of pre-primary services has been a key concern among pre-primary personnel in Hong Kong since the early 1980s.

1.2 In the Education Commission Report No. 2 (ECR2) (1986), it was recommended that :-

- (a) The unification of pre-primary services should be the goal. The only necessary categories of pre-primary institutions are half-day and whole-day” (para. V.7.2); and
- (b) The first and foremost task in the process of unification is to bring together the standards of kindergartens and those of child care centres so that all kindergartens employ trained teaching staff and achieve similar teacher : pupil ratios” (para. V.7.3).

1.3 The Executive Council discussed the ECR2 recommendations on kindergarten education in October 1989. It considered that unification in the near term would be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. In recognition of the fact that child care centres ¹ registered with the Social Welfare Department and kindergartens ² registered with the Education Department served different functions with different objectives and their standards of operation differed widely, the Council considered that the standards of kindergartens and child care

Note 1 : In this report, child care centres refer to day nurseries only and they serve children aged 2 to 6

Note 2 : Kindergartens serve children aged 3 to 6

centres should be brought closer. It recommended that the issue of unification of pre-primary services should be considered further by a working party on kindergarten education, adding that the possible goal of unification should not preclude the Government from making necessary improvements to kindergartens, while affording parents some protection from the resultant fee increases.

1.4 Subsequently, the Working Party on Kindergarten Education (WPKG) was formed in December 1989 under the chairmanship of the Deputy Director of Education. The terms of reference of the WPKG were to advise the Secretary for Education and Manpower on the following : -

- (a) progress in implementing approved measures for raising standards in kindergartens;
- (b) the need for, and the appropriate timing of additional improvement measures; and
- (c) the practicalities of unifying all pre-primary services.

1.5 From 1989 to 1994, the WPKG devoted itself to formulating improvement measures in kindergartens.

1.6 The Board of Education after a careful review of the situation by an Ad Hoc Sub-committee on Pre-primary Education recommended in May 1994 that in view of the wide disparity between the existing standards of kindergartens and child care centres and the fact that it will take time to close the gap, the unification of pre-primary services should be a long term goal. Nevertheless, steps should be taken to develop a common curriculum for use in kindergartens and child care centres, to design common teacher training courses mutually recognised by the Education Department and the Social Welfare Department, and to bring the standards of kindergartens and child care centres closer. However, improvement measures in kindergarten education should not be delayed by any attempt to unify pre-primary services.

1.7 At the motion debate on pre-primary education in the Legislative Council in November 1994, the Acting Secretary for Education and Manpower stated that the unification of pre-primary services was a very complicated subject and he entrusted the WPKG, which was to be reconstituted, to further study the issue and to submit recommendations to him and the Secretary for Health and Welfare before the end of 1995.

Terms of Reference and Membership of the Reconstituted WPKG

1.8 The WPKG was reconstituted in January 1995. Following the completion of its earlier tasks relating to improvements to kindergartens, the reconstituted WPKG (the Working Party) was requested to study the practicalities of unifying all pre-primary services. For this phase of its work, the Working Party is strengthened by the addition of four members comprising two representatives from the child care sector and one representative each from the Social Welfare Department and the Health and Welfare Branch.

1.9 Membership of the Working Party is as follows : -

Co-Chairmen	Miss Elaine CHUNG, JP (January 1995 to October 1995)	Deputy Director of Education
	Mr. KWAN Ting-fai (November 1995 to date)	Deputy Director of Education
	Mrs. Louise S.Y. WONG, JP	Deputy Director of Social Welfare
Members	Miss Mariana CHAN Wai-yung	Division Officer Hong Kong Council of Social Service
	Mr. CHENG Yan-chee	Principal Assistant Secretary Health and Welfare Branch

	Sister LAM Sau-ling	Headmistress Tack Ching Kindergarten
	Miss Annette LEE	Principal Assistant Secretary Education and Manpower Branch
	Professor Diana MAK	Head of Department of Applied Social Studies The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
	Dr. PANG King-chee	Deputy Director Hong Kong Institute of Education
	Miss WONG Lai-kuen	Executive Secretary Young Women 僑 Christian Association
	Mr. YIP Wah, JP	Manager New Generation English Kindergarten
Co- Secretaries	Mrs. NG CHEUK Man-ling	Principal Inspector Education Department
	Mr. CHAN Kam-chor (January 1995 - August 1995)	Senior Social Work Officer Social Welfare Department
	Mr. LAM Ka-tai (August 1995 to date)	Senior Social Work Officer Social Welfare Department

Meetings and Issues Discussed

1.10 From February to December 1995, the Working Party held ten meetings. Major issues discussed include : -

- (a) unification of pre-primary services in Hong Kong;
- (b) combined curriculum guide for kindergartens and child care centres;

- (c) entry qualifications and pay scales for kindergarten teachers and child care workers;
- (d) harmonised training for kindergarten teachers and child care workers;
- (e) requirements and standards of provision for kindergartens and child care centres;
- (f) operation of full-day Nursery Class in kindergartens;
- (g) modes of subsidy; and
- (h) fee assistance schemes.

Structure of the Report

1.11 Chapters 2 to 9 of this report set out an overview of the present situation as well as the recommendations of the Working Party on the issues discussed. Chapter 10 gives a summary of the recommendations of the Working Party.

Chapter 2

Unification of Pre-primary Services in Hong Kong

Pre-primary Services in Hong Kong

2.1 In Hong Kong, pre-primary services offered in kindergartens and child care centres have their own philosophical and historical origins.

2.2 Historically, child care centres were set up as a welfare service for the poor and disadvantaged children who could not be cared for by their parents during the day. However, due to social changes in the community such as an increasing number of working mothers and single parent families, child care centres are no longer restricted to children from low-income families. Some children stay in child care centres until they are admitted to Primary One.

2.3 The number of kindergartens has grown in response to the market demand by parents who, for various reasons, increasingly regard kindergarten education as an intrinsic part of their children's educational development. As at September 1994, about 85% of children in the age range of 3-5 were enrolled in kindergartens, while 10% attended child care centres and the rest were cared for at home. (Appendix I gives some basic statistics on kindergartens and child care centres.)

2.4 Kindergartens are registered with the Education Department which is under the Education and Manpower Branch and Child Care Centres are registered with the Social Welfare Department which is under the Health and Welfare Branch.

Overseas Experience on Unification of Pre-primary Services

2.5 The Working Party examined overseas experiences on unification of pre-primary services. The following features were observed:-

- (a) in most countries, early childhood education includes all types of services in a school, a centre or an institution for young children, among which are kindergartens and various types of child care centres, as in Hong Kong;
- (b) quality pre-primary services include both education and care elements;
- (c) child-centred programme/curriculum is being promoted in all types of pre-primary services;
- (d) well-trained early childhood services personnel is essential for an effective programme/curriculum. In countries including Australia and the USA, training courses are developed by integrating education and care to produce graduates capable of working in different types of pre-primary settings; and
- (e) due to the different emphasis in service nature, different types of pre-primary services are put under the administration and supervision of different ministries or government departments in most countries.

Need for Both Types of Services in Hong Kong

2.6 Pre-primary services in Hong Kong refer to the education and care services provided by kindergartens and child care centres, which serve children of a similar age group with the same developmental needs.

2.7 Pre-primary services should attend to a child's needs and enhance his balanced development in the physical, emotional, social and cognitive aspects. Irrespective of whether a child is enrolled in a kindergarten or a child care centre, it is important that he should be the central figure on whom programmes/curriculum are focussed. In order to meet the needs of children of

different ages and the social needs of their parents, a mixture of education and care services, with varying emphasis on these two elements, is being offered in kindergartens and child care centres in Hong Kong.

2.8 The Working Party, having considered the different philosophical origins and historical development of kindergartens and child care centres, concluded that these two types of pre-primary institutions with their differences in the mode of service delivery and the varying emphasis on education and care elements serve different social needs. Kindergartens place more emphasis on the education element and offer relatively shorter hours of service. Parents who send their children to kindergartens regard kindergarten education as an early part of the children's educational process, with a greater part of the necessary care being provided by the parents at home after school hours. Child care centres, on the other hand, in addition to meeting the educational needs of the children, have more emphasis on the care element during their longer hours of service. They also meet the social need of the family for child care assistance as an essential service. Many child care centres also provide occasional care or extended hours of service. While the two types of institutions have the same target age group and provide basic care and education elements, the emphasis is different and they thus have some fundamentally different functions.

2.9 While kindergartens and child care centres both serve children aged 3-5 years and have full-day and half-day programmes, they have different standards for the services. The Working Party considered that regardless of where young children are enrolled (in kindergartens or child care centres), they should be helped to develop to their full potential and that each and every type of pre-primary service should reach a standard which can be age specific and service specific.

2.10 On the other hand, the Working Party also noted that a high proportion of pre-primary children are enrolled in kindergartens. The variations in the quality of service in the kindergarten sector had been a cause of concern to the community. The Government therefore is committed to moving forward quickly to enhance the quality of kindergarten education by improving kindergarten teacher training and by introducing other appropriate measures. These improvement measures for kindergarten education should not be delayed by any attempt to unify pre-primary services.

Harmonisation as the Guiding Principle

2.11 Taking a pragmatic approach, the Working Party **recommended** that:-

- (a) unification of pre-primary services in Hong Kong should be pursued within a practicable administrative and resource availability context and on the understanding that not all aspects of operation for kindergartens and child care centres should necessarily be identical; and
- (b) harmonisation of various aspects of kindergarten and child care centre operation, where appropriate and practicable, should be pursued as a viable alternative to unification.

2.12 Under the guiding principle of harmonisation, the Working Party examined all areas related to the operation of the two services, which are detailed in subsequent chapters in this Report.

Chapter 3

Curriculum Guides for Kindergartens and Child Care Centres

Curriculum Guides issued to Kindergartens

3.1 The 'Guide to the Kindergarten Curriculum' providing reference and teaching materials for the Lower and Upper Kindergarten Classes was published by the Education Department and issued to kindergartens in 1984. It recommended learning through play and activities and an integrated approach around different teaching themes to cater for the needs and interests of young children and their full development. In 1987, the 'Guidelines on Nursery Class Activities' suggesting games and activities to develop social skills and to promote a balanced development of the 3-year-olds was issued to kindergartens for reference of Nursery Class teachers.

3.2 The above two publications were combined into a single revised 'Guide to the Kindergarten Curriculum' (1993) providing guidelines on curriculum planning for the Nursery, Lower Kindergarten and Upper Kindergarten Classes.

Curriculum Guidelines issued to Child Care Centres

3.3 The 'Activity Guidelines for Day Nursery' prepared by the Joint Social Welfare Department/Hong Kong Council of Social Service Working Group was issued to child care centres for reference in 1988 and revised in 1990. It recommends a programme of activities and a curriculum for children aged 2-6, which promote children's balanced development as well as learning through play, activities and experiences.

Amalgamation of Curriculum Guides for Kindergartens and Child Care Centres

3.4 After comparing the content of the existing 'Guide to the Kindergarten Curriculum' and 'Activity Guidelines for Day Nursery', the Working Party concluded that despite the differences in the age group being covered, they share a common view that balanced and all-round development of children should be achieved through child-centred and developmentally appropriate programmes with emphasis on learning through play, activities and experiences. The 'Guide to the Kindergarten Curriculum' puts more emphasis on education aspects, while the 'Activity Guidelines for Day Nursery' emphasises more on developmental and care aspects. They are complementary to one another.

3.5 The Working Party considered it desirable to have a combined curriculum guide covering both education and care aspects for kindergartens and child care centres. It **recommended** that the 'Guide to the Kindergarten Curriculum' and the 'Activity Guidelines for Day Nursery' should be amalgamated along the present scope and content into one curriculum guide covering both education and care for children in the age range of 2 to 6.

3.6 The first draft of the combined curriculum guide, 'Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum', was completed in September 1995. It consists of five chapters on conceptual and practical aspects of curriculum planning and child development, supplemented with a number of appendices containing practical suggestions on curriculum planning.

3.7 In September 1995, the Education Department held two consultation sessions with members of the Kindergarten Co-ordinating Committee of the Curriculum Development Council and solicited views of experienced kindergarten principals and teachers on the first draft of the Guide. The Social Welfare Department also held a consultation session with representatives of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service and the child care centre sector.

3.8 In November 1995, the Working Party accepted the second draft of the 'Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum' which was subsequently endorsed by the Curriculum Development Council in December 1995. It is expected that the Guide will be ready for distribution to kindergarten teachers and child care workers in the summer of 1996.

Chapter 4

Staff Qualifications and Pay Scales

Background

4.1 In 1990, the Education Department recommended a set of pay scales for each category of kindergarten teachers (Appendix II) and kindergarten operators were encouraged to pay their teachers according to these scales. However, the reality was that a great majority of trained kindergarten teachers were not paid according to the recommended pay scales as kindergartens are all private institutions which are not obliged to follow the recommended salary scales. Prior to September 1995, the minimum academic entry qualification to the kindergarten teaching profession was Secondary 3.

4.2 In the Governor's 1994 Policy Address, a commitment was made to improve the quality of kindergarten education by raising, with effect from September 1995, the minimum academic entry qualification of kindergarten teachers from Secondary 3 to two subjects at grade E in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE).

4.3 For child care workers, the minimum academic entry qualification is Secondary 3. With regard to pay scales, the Social Welfare Department also had a set of salary scales for child care workers (Appendix II), which were followed by aided child care centres.

Review

4.4 Between February and April 1995, the Government conducted an internal review of the qualifications and pay scales for kindergarten teachers and child care workers, taking into account the following factors : -

- (a) the need to harmonise the training of kindergarten teachers and child care workers;
- (b) the need to introduce the same minimum academic entry

qualification for kindergarten teachers and child care workers at HKCEE with two subjects at grade E;

- (c) the requirement for kindergarten operators to pay teachers in accordance with the recommended pay scales under the Kindergarten Subsidy Scheme; and
- (d) the pay and working conditions in one sector should not be out of line with another sector with similar clients/work.

4.5 It was considered that as both kindergarten teachers and child care workers serve the same pre-primary age group, their duties and responsibilities are broadly comparable. Differences in working conditions cancel each other out e.g. kindergarten teachers have more holidays and shorter working hours but have to look after more children. In view of the above and the fact that their entry qualifications and training will be aligned, a harmonised pay scale for kindergarten teachers and child care workers is justified.

Harmonised Pay Scale

4.6 The academic entry qualifications, training and job nature of both professions have been tested against the criteria used for assessing the ranking and pay of comparable posts within the Civil Service.

4.7 The following structure and harmonised pay scale for kindergarten teachers and child care workers were recommended :-

- (a)

<u>Training Rank</u> Untrained Kindergarten Teachers	Trainee child care workers
Training Pay Scale Pt. 4-5/6	Training Pay Scale Pt. 4-5/6

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| (b) | <u>Qualified Rank</u>
Qualified Kindergarten
Teachers (QKTs)

Master Pay Scale Pt. 7-18 | Child Care Workers

Master Pay Scale
Pt. 7-17 |
| (c) | <u>Kindergarten Principal/Child Care Supervisor</u>
Kindergarten Principal
Master Pay Scale Pt. 14-22/24* | Child Care Supervisor
Master Pay Scale
Pt. 14-22 |
- * depending on the
size of the kindergarten

4.8 It was also recommended that for conversion and subsidy purposes, no serving kindergarten teachers or child care workers should receive less than their existing pay.

4.9 As regards Qualified Assistant Kindergarten Teachers (QAKTs), the existing recommended scale i.e. Master Pay Scale Points 3-11 will continue to apply until this rank is eventually phased out.

4.10 The Working Party agreed that the package of harmonised pay scales for kindergarten teachers and child care workers would have the following advantages :-

- (a) the provision of a new training pay scale will give untrained kindergarten teachers an immediate gain in salary and increments while undergoing training;
- (b) the new Kindergarten Principal scale goes well above the existing ceiling of Master Pay Scale Point 18; and

- (c) Child Care Workers and Child Care Supervisors will receive increased salaries in recognition of their qualifications, training and responsibilities.

4.11 Other expressed views included :

- (a) some Members were concerned about the reduction of 3 salary points (from Master Pay Scale Point 10 to Master Pay Scale Point 7) for the initial entry point of QKTs. The effect of this would be minimal as the great majority of QKTs were currently paid lower than the existing recommended salary scale;
- (b) two Members considered that the maximum salary point for child care workers should be raised to Master Pay Scale Point 18. It was explained that the salary package was already a great improvement for child care workers. The maximum points for QKTs and child care workers were pitched differently because of the larger number of children for whom a QKT is normally responsible;
- (c) some Members suggested that the minimum academic entry qualifications to both professions should be further raised to five subjects at grade E in the HKCEE and requested that this should be set as a future goal;
- (d) two Members suggested that for Child Care Supervisors managing a child care centre with an exceedingly large capacity, they should have the same salary scale as kindergarten principals;
- (e) some Members urged that the revised salary package for child care workers should be implemented in September 1995, the same time as the package for kindergarten teachers; and

- (f) some Members recommended that the existing provision of an assistant supervisor for child care centres should be maintained and a senior teacher rank for kindergartens should be considered.

4.12 The Working Party **recommended** that : -

- (a) the minimum academic entry qualification for kindergarten teachers and child care workers should be raised to two subjects at grade E in the HKCEE;
- (b) one harmonised pay scale should be introduced for both kindergarten teachers and child care workers. The recommended scales comprise a training rank at the Training Pay Scale of 4-5/6, leading to a Child Care Worker/QKT rank with a pay scale of Master Pay Scale Points 7-17/18;
- (c) Child Care Supervisors and Kindergarten Principals (a new rank) should be paid on an overlapping scale of Master Pay Scale Points 14-22/24; and
- (d) for conversion and subsidy purposes, no serving kindergarten teachers or child care workers should receive less than their existing pay.

4.13 The revised salary package has been endorsed by the Executive Council and recommended to child care centres and kindergartens since September 1995.

Chapter 5

Harmonised Training for Kindergarten Teachers and Child Care Workers

Training Courses

5.1 As a pre-requisite for registration as a qualified kindergarten teacher with the Education Department or a child care worker with the Social Welfare Department, a person has to successfully complete a training course approved by the Director of Education or the Director of Social Welfare as appropriate.

5.2 Before the 1994/95 school year, the basic in-service training courses for kindergarten teachers were provided by the Education Department. Since the 1994/95 school year, the training courses for kindergarten teachers are principally organised by the Hong Kong Institute of Education. The basic in-service training courses for child care workers are principally organised by the Vocational Training Council's Lee Wai Lee Technical Institute.

5.3 The basic training courses for kindergarten teachers and child care workers are at present not mutually recognised by the Education Department and the Social Welfare Department. The only course recognised by both departments is the Certificate Course in Pre-primary Education (distance learning mode) organised by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

5.4 Short in-service development programmes for kindergarten teachers and child care workers are organised by the Advisory Inspectorate Division of the Education Department and the Training Section of the Social Welfare Department respectively.

Expert Group on Harmonised Training

5.5 The Working Party compared the training requirements and the core content of the basic training courses for kindergarten teachers and child care workers and found that they are very similar. The Working Party therefore recommended harmonising the two types of training.

5.6 The Working Party proposed that a framework of common core applicable to the basic training courses for kindergarten teachers and child care workers should be drawn up. Training institutions would then develop training courses according to the framework and seek recognition from the departments concerned for the purpose of registration.

5.7 The Working Party formed an Expert Group on Harmonised Training to study and to make recommendations on the detailed course content of the harmonised basic training courses for kindergarten teachers and child care workers.

5.8 The Expert Group consists of eight non-official members including one representative each from the Hong Kong Institute of Education, Lee Wai Lee Technical Institute, Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Hong Kong Baptist University, and four non-official members of the Working Party. The Principal Inspector (Kindergarten) of the Education Department and the Chief Social Work Officer (Family and Child Welfare) of the Social Welfare Department served as co-convenors of the Expert Group. The membership list is provided in Appendix III. A total of five meetings were held between September and October 1995 and a basic programme applicable to the training courses for kindergarten teachers and child care workers was worked out.

Basic Programme for Kindergarten Teachers and Child Care Workers

5.9 The Working Party endorsed the Expert Group's recommendation on a basic training programme for kindergarten teachers and child care workers, with its aim and objectives as set out in Appendix IV.

5.10 The basic programme comprises three parts, viz

- (a) Professional Studies and Curriculum Studies;
- (b) Special Studies; and
- (c) Practicum.

The course contents are set out in Appendix V. The Working Party noted that in working out these contents, the Expert Group had taken into consideration the in-service nature of the training programmes as well as the need to focus on work-related contents which are essential to both kindergarten teachers and child care workers. Such contents should invariably be covered in pre-service basic programmes. To allow a certain degree of flexibility to the training institutions, a list of major topics under each programme objective was considered sufficient to serve as a guide.

5.11 The Working Party also endorsed the Expert Group's recommendation that:-

- (a) the total number of contact hours for the basic programme should not be less than 360, with 330 hours as the minimum time allocation for Professional Studies and Curriculum Studies;
- (b) if the Professional Studies and Curriculum Studies take up only 330 hours, the remaining 30 hours can be used for conducting Special Studies, e.g. in-depth study of selected areas from Professional Studies or Curriculum Studies, academic studies, or general education; and

- (c) if the Professional Studies and Curriculum Studies have taken up 360 hours, the offer of Special Studies will become optional, depending on the resources of the training institutions.

A Minority View

5.12 The Working Party noted a Member's proposal to include a further 90 hours of academic studies and general education in the basic programme for kindergarten teachers. The Member considered that these studies are a major component of teacher education, and help to provide a broader academic knowledge base and raise the education level and competencies of the graduates.

5.13 The Working Party also noted that the Hong Kong Institute of Education is currently running a Qualified Kindergarten Teacher Education course with a duration of 450 hours which, on top of 360 hours, has included 90 hours for academic studies. This would, according to the Hong Kong Institute of Education, be important to develop student teachers' pedagogical content knowledge and foundational subject knowledge essential for the preparation of good kindergarten teachers.

5.14 The Working Party, however, had the majority view that:-

- (a) any additional hours above the basic programme of 360 hours are desirable but not essential for a basic in-service training programme;
- (b) an in-service basic training programme for kindergarten teachers and child care workers should accord priority on developing professional knowledge and skills;
- (c) with the minimum academic entry qualification set at 2 subjects at grade E in the HKCEE, the basic programme has assumed an academic knowledge base congruent with that level;
- (d) raising the educational level and broadening the academic

base of kindergarten teachers and child care workers is something additional to the basic training and should be achieved through raising the minimum academic entry qualification or provision of other courses specially designed for the purpose;

- (e) there have always been good responses to advanced courses in pre-primary education. Graduates of the basic training course who wish to broaden their academic base can pursue such courses or other academic studies rather than in the context of their basic training; and
- (f) the 360 hours recommended for the basic programme is only a minimum requirement. It does not restrict training institutions from running courses with more than the minimum 360 hours, if they deem necessary and have the resources to do so.

Mutual Recognition

5.15 Despite a Member's view that there should not be mutual recognition, the Working Party agreed with the Expert Group's majority view that mutual recognition should be given by the Education Department and the Social Welfare Department to all graduates of basic training courses developed according to the recommended basic programme regardless of whether they are working in kindergartens or child care centres for the following reasons:-

- (a) the basic programme has covered all major topics considered essential for the training of both kindergarten teachers and child care workers; and
- (b) as the activities and programmes recommended for children in kindergartens and child care centres are based on the same principles of child-centred approach and developmentally appropriate practices, the knowledge and skills acquired in the basic programme are applicable to both kindergarten and child care centre sectors.

5.16 In the deliberation, concern was expressed that with mutual recognition of basic training courses, trained kindergarten teachers might be attracted to move to aided child care centres as many kindergartens might not be paying their teachers according to the recommended salary scales. The Working Party, however, noted the fact that based on the annual output of trained kindergarten teachers and child care workers from the various training institutions and the planned schedule of expansion in the child care sector, its effect in creating a movement across the kindergarten and child care centre sectors would be minimal.

Monitoring

5.17 With regard to the suggestion of setting up a body to monitor the quality of training courses for kindergarten teachers and child care workers, the majority of the Members of the Working Party were satisfied that each training institution has its own monitoring procedures and accreditation mechanism for courses offered. Moreover, both the Education Department and the Social Welfare Department have assumed a role to monitor and approve training courses for the purpose of registration of qualified kindergarten teachers and child care workers respectively. The Working Party therefore considered setting up another monitoring body not necessary to avoid duplication of efforts.

Recommendations

5.18 Having regard to the views of the Expert Group on Harmonised Training for kindergarten teachers and child care workers, the Working Party **recommended** that:-

- (a) based on the basic programme proposed by the Expert Group, training institutions may develop their own basic training courses for kindergarten teachers and child care workers and seek recognition from the Education Department/Social Welfare Department for the purpose of registration;

- (b) the basic programme, comprising Professional Studies and Curriculum Studies, Special Studies, and Practicum, should have:-
 - (i) the aim and objectives as set out in Appendix IV;
 - (ii) the content as set out in Appendix V; and
 - (iii) the total number of contact hours not less than 360, with 330 hours as the minimum time allocation for Professional Studies and Curriculum Studies; and
- (c) mutual recognition be given by the Education Department and the Social Welfare Department to graduates of basic training courses developed according to the recommended basic programme so that they may work in either kindergartens or child care centres.

Chapter 6

Requirements and Standards of Provision for Kindergartens and Child Care Centres

Background

6.1 Kindergartens registered with the Education Department have to comply with the Education Ordinance and Education Regulations while child care centres registered with the Social Welfare Department have to comply with the Child Care Centres Ordinance and Child Care Centres Regulations. (Appendix VI compares the requirements/practices for child care centres and kindergartens.)

6.2 With a view to bringing the standards of the two sectors closer together, the Working Party discussed the following regulatory requirements and standards of provision : -

- (a) floor space requirement;
- (b) provision of kitchen;
- (c) staff to children ratio;
- (d) proportion of trained staff; and
- (e) registration and inspection.

Floor Space Requirements

6.3 According to Regulation 31 of the Child Care Centres Regulations, the minimum area of floor space required in respect of each child is as follows:-

- (a) 1.8 m² required per child with the area of any passageway, storeroom, kitchen, office, toilet facility or staff-room excluded; or
- (b) 2.3 m² required per child with the area of any passageway, storeroom, kitchen, office, toilet facility or staff-room included.

6.4 According to Regulation 40 of the Education Regulations, the area of floor space required in a classroom is as follows :

- (a) for the teacher - a floor space at least 1.5 m in width extending along the whole length of the wall in front of the pupils; and
- (b) for the pupil - an area of floor space of not less than 0.9 m² for each pupil.

6.5 While the calculation in child care centres takes full account of all activity areas used by the children, calculation of permitted accommodation in kindergartens takes into account the classrooms only.

6.6 The Working Party noted that the following set of improved floor space requirement for kindergartens was gazetted for implementation in 1986 :-

- (a) Half-day Kindergarten Classes
each classroom to have a floor space of not less than 2.4 m² for the teacher and not less than 1.2 m² for each pupil; and
- (b) Full-day Kindergarten Classes and Half-day Nursery Class
each classroom to have a floor space of not less than 2.4 m² for the teacher and not less than 1.8 m² for each pupil.

6.7 However, ECR2 recommended that implementation of the improved space requirement be deferred to 1990 subject to further review. In 1989, the Executive Council endorsed further deferment of the improved space requirement until other measures such as salaries for kindergarten teachers, teacher training and the Kindergarten Fee Remission Scheme had been substantially improved.

6.8 The Working Party noted the recommendation in the Manual of Kindergarten Practice that where outdoor facilities are not possible, there should be an indoor play area equivalent to the size of one classroom for every two classrooms in the school. For kindergartens in public housing estates and many private residential developments, the above recommendation has been adopted.

6.9 In its deliberations, the Working Party considered the following factors : -

- (a) the existing floor space requirement for child care centres;
- (b) the improved space requirements for kindergartens;
- (c) the priority of various improvement measures in kindergartens e.g. trained teacher proportion, teacher to pupil ratio, floor space requirement;
- (d) the implication of improvement in space requirement on provision of kindergarten places and school fees; and
- (e) major improvements made in pay scales for kindergarten teachers, teacher training and the Kindergarten Fee Remission Scheme.

6.10 The Working Party agreed that :

- (a) the existing floor space requirement for child care centres is acceptable;
- (b) the earliest year to implement the improved floor space requirements for kindergartens would be the 1999/2000 school year; and
- (c) to minimise the possibility of under-provision of kindergarten places, the improved floor space requirements for kindergartens should only apply to new accommodation and should not affect the permitted accommodation of existing kindergartens.

6.11 The Working Party noted that in child care centres, the calculation of space takes full account of all activity areas as consistent with the basis used for other child care services. On the other hand, the calculation of permitted accommodation in kindergartens takes into account the classrooms only as consistent with the basis used in primary and secondary education levels. The Working Party endorsed the existing methods of calculation of space respectively adopted by child care centres and kindergartens.

Provision of Kitchen

6.12 With reference to meals and menu in child care centres, Regulation 35 of the Child Care Centres Regulations states that :

- (a) all meals and refreshments provided for children in a centre shall be properly prepared from good quality and wholesome food, attractively served, and in sufficient quantity to meet the nutritional needs of the children and of a standard as set out in the Dietary Scales approved by the Director of Social Welfare; and
- (b) the menu of the meals to be provided shall be prepared in advance and be available at all times for inspection by the Director of Social Welfare or any inspector or medical officer appointed under Section 12 of the Child Care Centres Ordinance.

6.13 The provision of kitchen in child care centres is laid down in paragraph 2.3 of the Code of Practice for child care centres as follows : -

- (a) a child care centre caring for children for long hours should provide full meals, not merely snacks. The kitchen must be clean, bright, roomy, well-ventilated and properly and adequately equipped for the storage and preparation of food for all the children under care; and

- (b) the size of the kitchen depends on the number of children under care and the number of meals to be served. A reasonable size for a kitchen catering for 100 children would be about 20 square metres.

A list of equipment recommended for a kitchen to prepare meals for 100 or more children aged 2-6 years is stipulated in the Code of Practice for child care centres.

6.14 In respect of the provision of meals in full-day kindergartens, Regulation 46A of the Education Regulations states that :-

- (a) at every school providing full-day kindergarten education there shall be provided for each pupil undergoing that education at least one meal a day;
- (b) all meals and refreshments provided for pupils at a full-day kindergarten school shall be properly prepared in accordance with dietary scales approved by the Director of Education; and
- (c) the menu of the meals to be provided shall be prepared in advance and be available at all times for inspection by the Director of Education or any inspector of schools.

6.15 The provision of a pantry or a kitchen for kindergartens and meal provision in full-day kindergartens are described in detail in the Manual of Kindergarten Practice. The Manual states that meals for children should either be prepared in the kitchen of the kindergarten or be supplied by a licensed caterer.

6.16 The Working Party noted that the present arrangement of providing meals by a licensed caterer for full-day kindergarten pupils has been in practice in some kindergartens for over ten years. Two Members expressed a view on the need of a kitchen for children in full-day kindergartens and that new full-day kindergartens should be asked to provide a kitchen.

6.17 The Working Party considered that from the perspective of hygiene, nutrition and health, the kitchen should be a desirable provision for full-day kindergartens. However, should the requirement to have meals prepared in the kitchen be imposed on kindergartens, existing kindergartens will have practical difficulties in finding space for a kitchen. The expenses incurred by maintaining the kitchen for a small number of full-day pupils would also increase the overhead per child and hence the kindergarten fees.

6.18 The Working Party recommended that the existing practice of an optional provision of kitchen in kindergartens be maintained and that full-day kindergartens without a kitchen are required to buy meals from licensed caterers.

6.19 The Working Party also suggested that kindergarten operators to negotiate with licensed caterers for provision of good standard meals for their full-day pupils.

6.20 Regarding cases where a kindergarten and a child care centre in the same premises are sharing a common kitchen, the Working Party recommended that dual registration with the Education Department and the Social Welfare Department should be required. Assessment will be made with reference to the area and facilities available in the kitchen and the number of children served, so that in sharing facilities, the hygienic and nutritional standard of meals and food served to children in both sectors can be effectively monitored.

Staff to Children Ratio

6.21 In child care centres, the minimum number of staff required to be present and on duty shall be one child care worker for every 14 children or part thereof.

6.22 For kindergartens, the following staffing ratios are currently used:-

- (a) 1 teacher : 30 pupils for half-day Upper and Lower Kindergarten Classes;
- (b) 1 teacher : 20 pupils for full-day Upper and Lower Kindergarten Classes; and
- (c) 1 teacher : 20 pupils for half-day Nursery Class.

6.23 The Working Party was aware that, having regard to the recommendations of the ECR2, the Education Department has proposed the following age specific and service specific regulatory teacher to pupil ratios :

	<u>Half-day</u>	<u>Full-day</u>
Upper Kindergarten Class	1:20	1:15
Lower Kindergarten Class	1:20	1:15
Nursery Class	1:15	

6.24 The Working Party supported the ratios proposed above as the service provided by kindergartens is of a shorter duration compared with that of child care centres. The ratio of 1:15 for full-day Kindergarten Classes and for half-day Nursery Class is very close to the staff to children ratio of 1:14 for child care centres.

6.25 A Member expressed the view that in the long term, the teacher to pupil ratio for half-day Upper Kindergarten Class and Lower Kindergarten Class should be improved to 1:15. Other Members also showed concern that an improved teacher to pupil ratio would have impact on kindergarten fees.

6.26 The Working Party recognised that improvement in teacher to pupil

ratio in kindergartens should be examined against the supply of trained kindergarten teachers. It considered that the date of the implementation of the improved ratios for kindergartens should be reviewed after the 40% QKTs requirement has been implemented in the 1997/98 school year.

6.27 After deliberations, the Working Party concluded that the existing staff to children ratio in child care centres and the proposed improved ratios for kindergartens are acceptable.

Proportion of Trained Staff

6.28 According to Regulation 5(2) of the Child Care Centres Regulations, the number of trainee workers in a child care centre shall not at any time exceed 1/3 of the total number of the staff of the child care centre, i.e. 2/3 of its staff should be trained.

6.29 Kindergartens are required to employ at least 40% trained teachers (QAKTs or QKTs) as from September 1995, and will be required to employ at least 40% QKTs by September 1997.

6.30 The Working Party recognised that there are at present different minimum requirements on the proportion of trained staff in child care centres and kindergartens. However, due consideration should be given to the relatively large number of serving kindergarten teachers who require training in the coming years. It is expected that with more opportunities for training, the number of trained kindergarten teachers in the service will be on the increase, and hence a higher proportion of trained staff in kindergartens can be achieved over time.

6.31 The Working Party recommended that the proportion of trained teachers for kindergartens should be reviewed after the 40% QKTs requirement has been implemented in the 1997/98 school year.

Registration and Inspection

6.32 At present, kindergartens and child care centres are under the registration and monitoring of the Education Department and the Social Welfare Department respectively.

6.33 The Working Party noted that there has been suggestion that kindergartens and child care centres should be registered, inspected and monitored by one government department in order to ensure unified standards and uniform practice.

6.34 The Working Party considered that as long as the two sectors are to meet different social needs and their mode of service delivery and subsidy are not exactly the same, the existing practice is the most practical arrangement. The current registration and inspection responsibilities of the Education Department and the Social Welfare Department in respect of kindergartens and child care centres should therefore be maintained. The existing practice that kindergartens and child care centres need only be registered with the Education Department and the Social Welfare Department respectively should continue. Where there is shared use of common facilities, dual registration with the Education Department and the Social Welfare Department should be required.

Recommendations

6.35 The recommendations of the Working Party are as follows :

Floor Space Requirements

- (a) the existing floor space requirement for child care centres be maintained as follows :
 - (i) 1.8 m² required per child with the area of any passageway, storeroom, kitchen, office, toilet facility or staff-room excluded; or

- (ii) 2.3 m² required per child with the area of any passageway, storeroom, kitchen, office, toilet facility or staff-room included.
- (b) the following improved floor space requirements for kindergartens be implemented from the 1999/2000 school year:

For pupils

	<u>Half-day</u>	<u>Full-day</u>
Upper Kindergarten Class	1.2 m ² per pupil	1.8 m ² per pupil
Lower Kindergarten Class	1.2 m ² per pupil	1.8 m ² per pupil
Nursery Class	1.8 m ² per pupil	

For the teacher

2.4 m²

- (c) the improved floor space requirements for kindergartens would only apply to new accommodation and should not affect the permitted accommodation of existing kindergartens;
- (d) for calculation of floor space in child care centres, all activity areas available will be taken into account. For calculation of permitted accommodation for kindergartens, only individual classrooms will be taken into account;

Provision of Kitchen

- (e) the existing practice whereby the provision of kitchens for kindergartens is optional and that kindergartens with no kitchen are required to buy meals from licensed caterers be maintained;

- (f) a common kitchen shared by a kindergarten and a child care centre in the same premises should be registered with both the Education Department and the Social Welfare Department;

Staff to Children Ratio

- (g) the existing staff to children ratio of 1:14 in child care centres should be maintained;
- (h) the improved teacher to pupil ratios for kindergartens proposed below are acceptable:

	<u>Half-day</u>	<u>Full-day</u>
Upper Kindergarten Class	1:20	1:15
Lower Kindergarten Class	1:20	1:15
Nursery Class	1:15	

- (i) the date of the implementation of the improved ratios for kindergartens would be reviewed after the 40% QKTs requirement has been implemented in the 1997/98 school year;

Proportion of Trained Staff

- (j) the current requirement that 2/3 of the staff in child care centres should be trained is to be maintained while the proportion of trained staff for kindergartens will be reviewed after the 40% QKTs requirement has been implemented in the 1997/98 school year;

Registration and Inspection

- (k) the current registration and inspection responsibilities of the Education Department and the Social Welfare Department in respect of kindergartens and child care centres respectively should be maintained; and
- (l) where there is shared use of common facilities, dual registration with the Education Department and the Social Welfare Department should be required.

Chapter 7

Operation of Full-day Nursery Class in Kindergartens

Background

7.1 The White Paper on Primary Education and Pre-primary Services (1981) recognised that there were social needs for the operation of full-day kindergarten classes.

7.2 Hitherto, operation of Nursery Class in kindergartens is permitted only on a half-day basis. The reasons are firstly, it is educationally not necessary for 3-year-olds to have full-day education in a kindergarten; secondly, if 3-year-olds need full-day institutional care, a more home-like environment, a more relaxing programme and a higher teacher to pupil ratio as provided in child care centres would be more appropriate.

7.3 Regulation 89A of the Education Regulations stipulates that no pupil undergoing nursery education shall attend at a school for any period other than a period beginning and ending either before or after 1 p.m. on any day that he attends the school.

Emerging Need for Full-day Nursery Class

7.4 The Working Party noted that there is an emerging need for provision of full-day Nursery Class for 3-year-olds in kindergartens for the following reasons:-

- (a) the rapid social and economic changes within the Hong Kong society, including an increase in the number of working mothers and single parent families, combined with a reduction in the support hitherto provided by the extended family, have resulted in increasing social demands for full-day Nursery Class in kindergartens;

- (b) some parents prefer their children staying longer in an educational institution to acquire good self-care and social habits and to have more social interaction with their peers;
- (c) some parents prefer sending their children to full-day kindergartens rather than leaving them at home under the care of domestic helpers, grandparents, relatives, child minders or putting them in child care centres; and
- (d) the enrolment figures in many kindergartens in the afternoon sessions are unsatisfactory, resulting in many vacant classrooms. Operation of full-day Nursery Class should facilitate fuller use of school premises.

7.5 In its deliberations, the Working Party considered that full-day Nursery Class, as a new initiative, should be welcomed by some parents and kindergarten operators. It is logical to have full-day operation throughout the Nursery Class, Lower and Upper Kindergarten Classes. Parents will be provided with a choice between full-day child care centres and full-day kindergartens. Kindergartens experiencing a drop in their enrolments in the afternoon sessions will have a way to balance off the enrolments in the morning and afternoon sessions.

7.6 Two Members expressed reservations to allow kindergartens to operate full-day Nursery Class without the same staffing and space standard, and the provision of a kitchen as in child care centres. However, the majority view was that many kindergartens would have practical difficulty to find space for the provision of a kitchen, and this should not be mandatory for the kindergarten sector. The requirement to provide clean and nutritious meals whether by the institution itself or by licensed caterers would be more important.

7.7 As to other standards of operation, the Working Party considered that the requirements for full-day Nursery Class should be comparable to those of child care centres. Reference was drawn to the recommendations to improve space requirement to 1.8m² per pupil for half-day Nursery Class in the 1999/2000 school year, and to improve the teacher to pupil ratio to 1:15, the implementation date of which is to be reviewed after the 40% QKTs requirement has been implemented in the 1997/98 school year.

7.8 The Working Party **recommended** that the operation of full-day Nursery Class should be permitted with the following requirements :-

Teacher : pupils ratio	1:15
Floor space requirement per pupil	1.8m ²

7.9 The Working Party noted that as amendments to the Education Regulations will be required, it is unlikely that full-day Nursery Class in kindergartens can be implemented earlier than September 1997.

Chapter 8

Mode of Subsidy to Child Care Centres and Kindergartens

Background

8.1 In the past, admission to child care centres was limited to children from families with social needs and with an income below a prescribed level. Following the recommendation of the White Paper on Primary Education and Pre-primary Services (1981), child care centre places had been made available to all children with a need for full day care, but priority in admission to aided child care centres was still given to children from low-income families. Subvention to these centres was replaced in 1982 by a subsidy scheme. A Fee Assistance Scheme was concurrently introduced in 1982 to assist parents of low-income families with social needs in paying fees charged by child care centres.

8.2 All kindergartens in Hong Kong are privately run. However, non-profit-making kindergartens fulfilling certain requirements are eligible to apply for assistance from the Education Department. Starting from September 1995, kindergartens may also apply for a subsidy under the Kindergarten Subsidy Scheme operated by the Education Department.

Mode of Subsidy to Child Care Centres

8.3 Child care centres receive a subsidy equivalent to 5% of the approved fee based on the approved capacity. The purposes of the subsidy are as follows:-

- (a) to provide financial assistance to operators to cover cash flow problems arising from fluctuations in enrolment; and
- (b) to meet unexpected increase in cost in respect of recognised expenditure items such as food for children and administrative expenses.

8.4 Child care centres may also apply for a package of assistance from

the Social Welfare Department including:-

- (a) allocation of purpose-designed premises;
- (b) reimbursement of rent and rates, including management fee and maintenance charges;
- (c) cost for fitting-out and furniture and equipment through the Lotteries Fund; and
- (d) cost for major repairs and replacement of furniture and equipment through the Lotteries Fund.

Mode of Subsidy to Kindergartens

8.5 Non-profit-making kindergartens fulfilling certain requirements may apply for the following assistance from the Education Department:

- (a) reimbursement of rent and rates;
- (b) land grant at nominal premium for associated user with churches, non-profit-making primary schools, etc.; and
- (c) purpose-built premises at public housing estates at concessionary rents.

8.6 Since 1982, financial assistance has been provided for parents-in-need in the form of fee remission, under the Fee Assistance Scheme for Pre-primary Services. This was replaced by the Kindergarten Fee Remission Scheme in 1990.

8.7 In September 1995, the Education Department introduced a Kindergarten Subsidy Scheme, the aims of which are :-

- (a) to improve the quality of kindergarten education; and
- (b) to minimise the impact of fee increases on parents as a result of the Government's new regulatory requirements. These include raising the minimum academic qualifications of kindergarten teachers to the level of HKCEE with 2 subjects at grade E and the requirement of having at least 40% of trained teachers in each session of a kindergarten

with effect from September 1995.

8.8 The subsidy for the 1995/96 school year is \$695 per pupil per year, roughly 10% of the weighted average fee for half-day sessions of non-profit-making kindergartens for the 1994/95 school year.

8.9 To be eligible for the subsidy, kindergartens must be charging fees below a cut-off point and fulfilling certain conditions which include:-

- (a) meeting the 40% trained teacher requirement;
- (b) paying their teachers according to the government recommended salary scales; and
- (c) accepting a degree of government control such as monitoring of expenditure including the government subsidy.

The Working Party's Considerations

8.10 The Working Party noted the differences in the historical background and in the aims and functions of the two subsidy schemes. While child care centres have been provided as a family support service by the subvented welfare sector, kindergartens have always been operated by the private sector. The two subsidy schemes are also different in terms of their operation, eligibility criteria, basis of calculation and rate of subsidy.

8.11 The Kindergarten Subsidy Scheme has been introduced only recently and more time should be allowed for the Education Department to assess its effectiveness. The Working Party considered that it would be very difficult to harmonise the two modes of subsidy at the present stage. However, it recognised

the desirability of harmonising the two subsidy schemes, as kindergartens and child care centres are serving largely similar age groups, and consideration could be given to address this in the longer run.

8.12 A Member suggested to raise the level of subsidy to child care centres from the existing 5% to 50% because of the importance of pre-primary education in child care service and that parents should not be required to pay the full fee. The Working Party noted that a review on the financing system and the subsidy to child care centres was conducted in 1990 and the findings submitted to the Social Welfare Advisory Committee. A further review on the financing system was conducted in 1993 before the package was extended to the day care ~~cr~~銀 he sector. Both reviews considered the financing system and the mode of subsidy appropriate, as families which can afford to pay are obliged to contribute to the cost according to their means. The recommendations to retain the 5% subsidy and extend it to the day creche sector were endorsed by the Social Welfare Advisory Committee.

8.13 Some Members suggested that financial assistance from the Lotteries Fund should be made available to kindergartens and child care centres alike. The Working Party, however, noted that the Lotteries Fund was created for financing social welfare services where there is already a keen demand. It is unlikely for the Lotteries Fund to be extended to cover services in the education sector.

8.14 The Working Party **recommended** that the two existing modes of subsidy to child care centres and kindergartens, serving different purposes and functions, should remain unchanged at this stage.

Chapter 9

The Fee Assistance Scheme and the Kindergarten Fee Remission Scheme

Background

9.1 Following a recommendation of the White Paper on Primary Education and Pre-primary Services (1981), the Fee Assistance Scheme for Pre-primary Services was introduced in September 1982 whereby children from low-income families attending child care centres or kindergartens could apply for fee assistance provided that, in the case of child care centres, there was a social need for full day care. The Fee Assistance Scheme was administered by the Social Welfare Department and was applied to both kindergartens and child care centres until the end of August 1990.

9.2 In 1989, the Government approved a package of measures to upgrade the quality of kindergarten education by encouraging kindergarten operators to employ a larger proportion of trained teachers and pay them according to the recommended salary scales. As fees would have to be raised to meet higher staff cost, a new Kindergarten Fee Remission Scheme administered by the Education Department was introduced in 1990 to ensure that parents would not be deterred for financial reasons from seeking kindergarten education for their children. The administration of the Kindergarten Fee Remission Scheme has been transferred to the Student Financial Assistance Agency since April 1992.

The Fee Assistance Scheme for Child Care Centres

9.3 The Fee Assistance Scheme for child care centres is administered by the Social Welfare Department for low-income families which have a social need to place their children in full day care. Social needs refer to family circumstances such as:-

- (a) both parents are working; or

- (b) a single parent family or a broken family; or
- (c) a need for full day care for a mentally retarded child or a victim of child abuse; or
- (d) other circumstances as recommended by a social worker.

9.4 The Fee Assistance Scheme is means-tested. The level of assistance is based on a sliding scale. Parents' contribution is worked out according to the following principles:-

- (a) the family's household size and income after deduction of rent, subject to a maximum deduction of 30% of the total income;
- (b) maximum fee assistance would be granted if the income after deduction of rent is less than or equal to one and one-third of the standard rate under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme; and
- (c) where the income is above the level for maximum fee assistance, parents have to contribute at a rate of \$15 for each additional \$100 earned.

9.5 The amount of fee assistance granted in each case is the difference between the relevant maximum fee assistance level or the actual fee charged, whichever is the less, and the amount of contribution payable by the parents. The level of maximum fee assistance is adjusted each year with reference to the annual fee increases in aided child care centres which have taken inflation and the centres' accumulated surpluses/deficits into account.

9.6 The eligibility level of household income for fee assistance is also adjusted annually following the adjustment of the standard rate under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme for inflation reason or as a result of real improvement. Due to substantial real improvements in the standard rate in recent years, there have also been significant real improvements in fee assistance payment. At the beginning of each school year, staff of the Social

Welfare Department visit child care centres to assist parents to apply for fee assistance. The fee assistance is paid directly to the child care centre concerned.

9.7 In the 1994/95 school year, there were 10,659 successful applications for fee assistance, representing a take-up rate of 43% of all children enrolled in full-day child care centres.

The Kindergarten Fee Remission Scheme

9.8 Eligibility for Kindergarten Fee Remission is assessed on a point system which takes into consideration the applicant's household income and the number of dependants in the family. The point system was revised in 1991 and further revision was made in 1994 to bring it to parity with the Fee Remission Scheme for the senior secondary sector. The levels of fee remission are 50% and 100% of the actual fee charged or the weighted average fee of non-profit-making kindergartens, whichever is the lower. The average household income figures in the Fee Remission Reckoner applicable to kindergarten and senior secondary sectors are reviewed each year according to the civil service salary adjustment. Payment of fee remission is made to the kindergarten concerned directly.

9.9 In the 1994/95 school year, the number of successful applications under the Kindergarten Fee Remission Scheme is 30,120 representing a take-up rate of about 17% of all pupils enrolled in kindergartens.

The Working Party's Considerations

9.10 Considerations have been made to harmonise the two schemes or to draw them closer to each other. This is found to be not viable nor advisable for the following reasons:-

- (a) the two schemes cater for different parental needs and have different eligibility criteria and methods of means testing;
- (b) the average kindergarten fees are on the whole lower than that of the child care centres and the level of assistance

provided to parents under the two schemes is different. The need for a more elaborate scale for fee remission to kindergarten parents is not apparent;

- (c) the Kindergarten Fee Remission Scheme has just been brought to parity with the fee remission scheme for the senior secondary level, based on a Fee Remission Reckoner used also for other student financial assistance schemes in the school sector. The Fee Assistance Scheme has also been extended to the day cr銀he sector since September 1994. Any change to the two schemes would have repercussions on other financial assistance schemes for education or social welfare services, such as School Textbook Assistance Scheme, Student Travel Subsidies Scheme, Senior Secondary Fee Remission Scheme, Fee Assistance Scheme for day creche.

9.11 Suggestions were noted that the two schemes should be further improved to accommodate the merits of each other as far as possible, as well as the need for regular review of the Fee Assistance Scheme.

9.12 The Working Party **recommended** that the Fee Assistance Scheme and the Kindergarten Fee Remission Scheme should not be changed solely for the purpose of harmonizing the two Schemes.

Chapter 10

Summary of Recommendations

The recommendations of the Working Party are summarised as follows:

10.1 **Unification of Pre-primary Services in Hong Kong**

The Working Party recommended that :-

- a) unification of pre-primary services in Hong Kong should be pursued within a practicable administrative and resource availability context and on the understanding that not all aspects of operation for kindergartens and child care centres should necessarily be identical; and
- b) harmonisation of various aspects of kindergarten and child care centre operation, where appropriate and practicable, should be pursued as a viable alternative to unification.

10.2 **Curriculum Guides for Kindergartens and Child Care Centres**

The Working Party recommended that the 'Guide to the Kindergarten Curriculum' and the 'Activity Guidelines for Day Nursery' should be amalgamated along the present scope and content into one curriculum guide covering both education and care for children in the age range of 2 to 6.

10.3 **Staff Qualifications and Pay Scales**

The Working Party recommended that :-

- (a) the minimum academic entry qualification for kindergarten teachers and child care workers should be raised to two subjects at grade E in the HKCEE;
- (b) one harmonised pay scale should be introduced for both kindergarten teachers and child care workers. The recommended scales comprise a training rank at the Training Pay Scale of 4-5/6, leading to a Child Care

Worker/QKT rank with a pay scale of Master Pay Scale Points 7-17/18;

- (c) Child Care Supervisors and Kindergarten Principals (a new rank) should be paid on an overlapping scale of Master Pay Scale Points 14-22/24; and
- (d) for conversion and subsidy purposes, no serving kindergarten teachers or child care workers should receive less than their existing pay.

10.4 **Harmonised Training for Kindergarten Teachers and Child Care Workers**

The Working Party endorsed a harmonised training for kindergarten teachers and child care workers, and recommended that : -

- (a) based on the framework of the basic programme proposed by the Expert Group, training institutions may develop their own basic training courses for kindergarten teachers and child care workers and seek recognition from the Education Department/Social Welfare Department for the purpose of registration;
- (b) the basic programme, comprising Professional Studies and Curriculum Studies, Special Studies, and Practicum, should have : -
 - (i) the aim and objectives as set out in Appendix IV;
 - (ii) the content as set out in Appendix V; and
 - (iii) the total number of contact hours not less than 360, with 330 hours as the minimum time allocation for Professional Studies and Curriculum Studies; and
- (c) mutual recognition be given by the Education Department and the Social Welfare Department to graduates of basic training courses developed according to the recommended basic programme so that they may work in either kindergartens or child care centres.

10.5 Requirements and Standards of Provision for Kindergartens and Child Care Centres

The Working Party recommended that : -

Floor Space Requirements

- (a) the existing floor space requirement for child care centres be maintained as follows :
- (i) 1.8 m² required per child with the area of any passageway, storeroom, kitchen, office, toilet facility or staff-room excluded; or
 - (ii) 2.3 m² required per child with the area of any passageway, storeroom, kitchen, office, toilet facility or staff-room included.
- (b) the following improved floor space requirements for kindergartens be implemented from the 1999/2000 school year:

For pupils

	<u>Half-day</u>	<u>Full-day</u>
Upper Kindergarten Class	1.2 m ² per pupil	1.8 m ² per pupil
Lower Kindergarten Class	1.2 m ² per pupil	1.8 m ² per pupil
Nursery Class	1.8 m ² per pupil	

For the teacher

2.4 m²

- (c) the improved floor space requirements would only apply to new accommodation and should not affect the approved permitted accommodation of existing kindergartens;
- (d) for calculation of floor space in child care centres, all activity areas available will be taken into account. For calculation of permitted accommodation for kindergartens, only individual classrooms will be taken into account;

Provision of Kitchen

- (e) the existing practice whereby the provision of kitchens for kindergartens is optional and that kindergartens with no kitchen are required to buy meals from licensed caterers be maintained;

- (f) a common kitchen shared by a kindergarten and a child care centre in the same premises should be registered with both the Education Department and the Social Welfare Department;

Staff to Children Ratio

- (g) the existing staff to children ratio of 1:14 in child care centres should be maintained;

- (h) the improved teacher to pupil ratios for kindergartens proposed below are acceptable:

	<u>Half-day</u>	<u>Full-day</u>
Upper Kindergarten Class	1:20	1:15
Lower Kindergarten Class	1:20	1:15
Nursery Class	1:15	

- (i) the date of the implementation of the improved ratios for kindergartens would be reviewed after the 40% QKTs requirement has been implemented in the 1997/98 school year;

Proportion of Trained Staff

- (j) the current requirement that 2/3 of the staff in child care centres should be trained is to be maintained while the proportion of trained staff for kindergartens will be reviewed after the 40% QKTs requirement has been implemented in the 1997/98 school year;

Registration and Inspection

- (k) the current registration and inspection responsibilities of the Education Department and the Social Welfare Department in respect of kindergartens and child care centres respectively should be maintained; and
- (l) where there is shared use of common facilities, dual registration with the Education Department and the Social Welfare Department should be required.

10.6 **Operation of Full-day Nursery Class in Kindergartens**

The Working Party recommended that the operation of full-day Nursery Class in kindergartens should be permitted with the requirement of 1 teacher to 15 pupils and a floor space requirement of 1.8m² per pupil.

10.7 **Mode of Subsidy to Child Care Centres and Kindergartens**

The Working Party recommended that the two existing modes of subsidy to child care centres and kindergartens, serving different purposes and functions, should remain unchanged at this stage.

10.8 **The Fee Assistance Scheme and the Kindergarten Fee Remission Scheme**

The Working Party recommended that the Fee Assistance Scheme and the Kindergarten Fee Remission Scheme should not be changed solely for the purpose of harmonizing the two Schemes.

Basic Statistics on Kindergartens and Child Care Centres

	Child Care Centres (Figures as at Sept. 1994)	Kindergartens (Figures as at Sept. 1994)
Age	2 years to 6 years	3 years to 6 years Nursery Class : 3 years old Lower Kindergarten Class : 4 years old Upper Kindergarten Class : 5 years old
Provision of places	34,948 (including 28,807 full-day places and 6,141 half-day places)	213,731
Enrolment	30,593 (including 24,581 children enrolled in full-day child care centres and 6,012 children enrolled in half-day child care centres.)	180,109
No. of Institutions*	Aided day nursery: 203 (with provision of 22,929 places) Government : 1 (with provision of 113 places) Non-profit-making : 8 (with provision of 1,026 places) Private : 87 (with provision of 10,880 places) Total : 299	Non-profit-making (NPM) Kindergarten : 419 (with 112,416 pupils) Profit-making (PM) Kindergarten : 320 (with 67,693 pupils) Total : 739

	Child Care Centres (Figures as at Sept. 1994)	Kindergartens (Figures as at Sept. 1994)
No. of child care workers/teachers	3,414	8,107
Percentage of trained staff	87%	53.6%

- * As at September 1994, there were 18 非-registration' cases where part of the premises was registered for kindergarten purpose and another part registered for child care centre purpose with shared use of some facilities and areas.

**Recommended Salary Scales for
Kindergarten Teachers And Child Care Workers
Prior To September 1995**

<u>Kindergarten Teaching Staff</u>	<u>Child Care Centre Staff</u>
<p style="text-align: center;">Kindergarten Principal MPS Pt. 10-18 plus \$960 allowance</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Qualified Kindergarten Teacher MPS Pt. 10-18</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Qualified Assistant Kindergarten Teacher MPS Pt. 3-11</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Unqualified Kindergarten Teacher MPS Pt. 1</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Child Care Supervisor MPS Pt. 13-20</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Child Care Worker MPS Pt. 3-11 or 4-13 depending on qualifications</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Trainee Child Care Worker MPS Pt. 2-11 or 3-13 depending on entry qualifications</p>

MPS = Master Pay Scale

Expert Group on Harmonised Training

Membership List

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Principal Inspector (Kindergarten)

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Basic Programme for Kindergarten Teachers and Child Care Workers
Aim and Objectives

I. Aim

The overall aim of the Basic Programme for Kindergarten Teachers and Child Care Workers is to enable kindergarten teachers and child care workers to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes required of competent educators working in a variety of pre-primary settings.

II. Objectives

On completion of the Basic Programme for Kindergarten Teachers and Child Care Workers, students will be able to:

1. demonstrate an understanding of the value and the development of Early Childhood Education;
2. demonstrate an understanding of the various areas of early childhood development and learning;
3. demonstrate skills and attitudes required of a reflective, committed and caring pre-primary educator;
4. develop and maintain effective working relationships with parents and colleagues with the purpose of promoting learning and development in young children;
5. demonstrate an understanding of the health, nutritional and safety needs of young children;
6. provide a nurturing and stimulating environment and experiences to meet the individual and collective needs of children in different pre-primary settings;
7. plan, implement and evaluate a developmentally appropriate programme which includes play activities in various curricular and child development areas; and
8. demonstrate the ability to integrate the knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired and apply them to a pre-primary setting.

Basic Programme for Kindergarten Teachers and Child Care Workers
Course Content

The Basic Programme consists of the following parts: **Professional Studies, Curriculum Studies, Special Studies** and **Practicum**. The time allocation for each of the first two studies should range from 150 contact hours to 180 contact hours with the requirement that the total time allocation for these two studies should not be less than 330 contact hours. The length of the Basic Programme, excluding the practicum, should not be less than 360 contact hours. Where the total time allocation for Professional Studies and Curriculum Studies amounts to less than 360 contact hours, there should be Special Studies to take up the remaining hours.

Professional Studies (150-180 contact hours)

Objective 1

To demonstrate an understanding of the value and development of Early Childhood Education.

Topics

- 1.1 Value of Early Childhood Education
- 1.2 Development of Early Childhood Education: Historical and philosophical perspectives
- 1.3 Pre-primary services in Hong Kong

Objective 2

To demonstrate an understanding of the various areas of early childhood development and learning.

Topics

- 2.1 Concepts of development
- 2.2 Physical and perceptual development
- 2.3 Language and cognitive development
- 2.4 Social and emotional development
- 2.5 Children's learning
- 2.6 Learning through play
- 2.7 Children with special needs
- 2.8 Observation and assessment of child development

Objective 3

To demonstrate skills and attitudes required of a reflective, committed and caring pre-primary educator.

Topics

- 3.1 The role and responsibilities of a pre-primary educator
- 3.2 Self-evaluation and reflection
- 3.3 Qualities of a pre-primary educator

Objective 4

To develop and maintain effective working relationships with parents and colleagues with the purpose of promoting learning and development in young children.

Topics

- 4.1 Working with parents
- 4.2 Working with colleagues

Curriculum Studies (150-180 contact hours)

Objective 5

To demonstrate an understanding of the health, nutritional and safety needs of young children.

Topics

- 5.1 Health needs of young children
- 5.2 Nutritional needs of young children
- 5.3 Safety needs of young children
- 5.4 Daily routines for health, nutrition and safety
- 5.5 Child protection

Objective 6

To provide a nurturing and stimulating environment and experiences to meet the individual and collective needs of children in different pre-primary settings.

Objective 7

To plan, implement and evaluate a developmentally appropriate programme which includes play activities in various curricular and child development areas.

Topics

- 6.1 Arranging a safe and stimulating physical environment
- 6.2 Effective communication skills with young children
- 6.3 Self-control and appropriate behaviours in young children
- 6.4 The meaning of curriculum
- 6.5 Basic principles of programme planning, implementation and evaluation
- 6.6 Use of aids, materials, and equipment
- 6.7 Use of community resources
- 6.8 Gross motor and fine motor activities
- 6.9 Creative art and craft
- 6.10 Music and movement
- 6.11 Organised activities
- 6.12 Language arts
- 6.13 Social Studies
- 6.14 Early Science
- 6.15 Early Mathematics
- 6.16 Other play activities

Practicum

Objective 8

To demonstrate the ability to integrate the knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired and apply them to a pre-primary setting.

In the practicum, students should have the opportunities to visit pre-primary institutions, to be supervised in teaching practice, to share experience with peers and supervisors, and to make self-evaluation.

**Requirements/Practices in respect of Operation of
Child Care Centres (Day Nurseries) and Kindergartens**

Aspects	Child Care Centres	Kindergartens	
		Full-day Upper and Lower Kindergarten Classes	Half-day Upper and Lower Kindergarten Classes and Half-day Nursery Class
Staff : Child ratio	Minimum number of staff required to be present and on duty : One member of the staff for every 14 non-resident children or part thereof of 2 or more years of age (R 6(1) (c) of the C C C Regulations)	A teacher to pupil ratio of 1 to 20. (R 88(b) of the Education Regulations effective September 1990)	A teacher to pupil ratio of 1 to 30 for half-day Upper and Lower Kindergarten Classes. A teacher to pupil ratio of 1 to 20 for half-day Nursery Class. (R 88(a) & (aa) of the Education Regulations effective September 1990)
Trained staff	<p>A child care centre supervisor should have the following qualifications : 2 Es in HKCEE; successful completion of an approved child care training course; 3 years child care experience; and aged 25 or over, OR</p> <p>5 years experience as a child care worker which, in the opinion of the Director of Social Welfare, has been satisfactory; and aged 28 years or over (R 3(1)(a), 5(1A) & Part 1 of First Schedule)</p> <p>The Director of Social Welfare may remove the name of any trainee worker from the register if, within 1 year (or such longer period as he may permit), the trainee worker fails to complete successfully the relevant training course (R 4(5) of the C C C Regulations)</p> <p>The number of trainee workers appointed shall not at any time exceed 1/3 of the total number of the staff of the centre (R 5(2) of the</p>	<p>The Principal should be appropriately qualified. The Director of Education may withdraw his approval of the principal if it appears to him that the principal is not appropriately qualified. (Section 54 & 56 (aa) of the Education Ordinance.) Requirement on appointment of new principals is effective with the commencement of the 1989/90 school year.</p>	

Aspects	Child Care Centres	Kindergartens	
		Full-day Upper and Lower Kindergarten Classes	Half-day Upper and Lower Kindergarten Classes and Half-day Nursery Class
Floor space per child	<p>For a child aged 2 years and over,</p> <p>(a) 1.8m² required per child with the area of any passageway, storeroom, kitchen, office, toilet facility or staff-room excluded.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>(b) 2.3m² required per child with the area of any passageway, storeroom, kitchen, office, toilet facility or staff-room included.</p> <p>(R 31 and Second Schedule of the C C C Regulations)</p>	<p>For the teacher - a floor space at least 1.5m in width for the use of the teacher, extending along the whole length of the wall in front of the pupils, and</p> <p>For the pupil - a floor space of not less than 0.9m² for each pupil in the classroom. (R 40 of the Education Regulations) (New improved floor space requirement of 1.8m² per child for Full-day Upper and Lower Kindergarten Classes and Half-day Nursery Class, and a floor space requirement of 1.2m² for half-day Upper and Lower Kindergarten Classes have been deferred.)</p>	
First Aid	<p>At least one employee in every centre shall hold a valid certificate of competency in first aid recognised by the Director of Social Welfare. (R 43(2) of the C C C Regulations)</p>	<p>At least 2 teachers in every school should be trained in administering first aid. (R 55 (2) of the Education Regulations)</p>	
Meals and kitchen	<p>Meals and refreshments shall be properly prepared. Menu should be available. (R 35 of the C C C Regulations) (Chap 7 of Code of Practice)</p> <p>Provision of kitchen (para. 2.3 and 4.5 of Code of Practice)</p>	<p>Meals provision & Menu (R 46A of Education Regulations) (Para. 4.3 of Manual of KG Practice)</p> <p>Provision of Kitchen (Para. 1.6 of Manual of KG Practice) (In actual practice the requirement of a kitchen has been waived)</p>	No such requirements

Aspects	Child Care Centres	Kindergartens	
		Full-day Upper and Lower Kindergarten Classes	Half-day Upper and Lower Kindergarten Classes and Half-day Nursery Class
Nap	Children of age 2 years and over being cared for more than 4 hours in any day should be provided with adequate opportunities and facilities for undisturbed rest. Cots, bed and bedding should be provided. (R 37(3) of C C C Regulations) (para. 4.2 of Code of Practice)	Provision of opportunities for periods of indoor and outdoor activity and periods of rest. (R 42A of Education Regulations) Sleeping facilities (Para.1.7 of Manual of Kindergarten Practice)	No requirement for nap time and sleeping facilities
Fire precaution system	Smoke detection system and sprinkler system (R 29 of C C C Regulations) (para. 3.5 of Code of Practice)	Smoke detection system (R 37 of Education Regulations)	No such requirements
Activities	Provision of a programme of suitable activities appropriate to the ages and circumstances of the children including opportunities for periods of indoor and outdoor activity and periods of rest. (R 9 of C C C Regulations) (Chap 8 of Code of Practice)	Provision of opportunities for periods of indoor and outdoor activities and periods of rest. (R 42A of Education Regulations) Balanced programme (Para. 3.4.5 of Manual of Kindergarten Practice)	
Furniture and equipment	Adequate and suitable play equipment and child sized furniture (R 37(1) & 37 (2) of C C C Regulations) (Chap 4 of Code of Practice)	All schools shall be provided with adequate and suitable furniture and equipment. (R 49 of Education Regulations) (Para. 1.5 of Manual of Kindergarten Practice)	

Aspects	Child Care Centres	Kindergartens												
<p>Other practice :</p> <p>Holidays</p> <p>Typhoon period</p> <p>Operating hours</p>	<p>Public holidays</p> <p>Centres close when signal No. 8 or Black Rainstorm Signal is hoisted</p> <p>8 a.m. - 6 p.m. (Some centres have even longer service hours)</p>	<p>Approved holiday list (usually not exceeding 90 days)</p> <p>Kindergartens close when signal No.3 is hoisted/due to heavy persistent rain/due to deteriorating weather. (Department standing instructions)</p> <p>The time-tabled class activities should be over by 4:30 p.m. each day for full-day classes. (Para.3.5.1 (iii) of Manual of Kindergarten Practice)</p>												
<p>Staffing</p>	<p>Recognised staffing for a Centre with 100 places :</p> <p>1 Supervisor</p> <p>7 Child Care Workers (including one who may deputise the Supervisor as Assistant Supervisor)</p> <p>1 Clerical Assistant</p> <p>4 Minor Staff</p>	<p>Recommended interim target staff structure of six classroom kindergarten operating bi-sessionally (ECR 2 Chap V. para. V. 8.3) :</p> <table data-bbox="975 1115 1503 1350"> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Head Teacher</td> <td>QKT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>12</td> <td>Teachers</td> <td>2 QKT</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>8 QAKTs</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>2 Unqualified Kindergarten Teachers</td> </tr> </table> <p>1 Clerical Staff Clerical Assistant</p> <p>2 Janitors Workman</p>	1	Head Teacher	QKT	12	Teachers	2 QKT			8 QAKTs			2 Unqualified Kindergarten Teachers
1	Head Teacher	QKT												
12	Teachers	2 QKT												
		8 QAKTs												
		2 Unqualified Kindergarten Teachers												
<p>Government financial assistance</p>	<p>Financial assistance includes :</p> <p>(a) Fee Assistance (to needy parents)</p> <p>(b) Reimbursements of rent and rates</p> <p>(c) 5% subsidy</p> <p>(d) Capital grant for initial fitting-out, furniture and equipment (Lotteries Fund Grants)</p> <p>(e) Major repairs, replacement of furniture</p>	<p>Financial assistance includes :</p> <p>(a) Assistance to needy parents through the Fee Remission Scheme.</p> <p>(b) Rent and Rates reimbursement to non-profit making kindergartens.</p>												

	and equipment (Lotteries Fund Grants)	
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