



Pioneering Service Model to Support Kindergarteners

A recent territory-wide survey reveals that more than 20,000 children with special educational needs (SEN) are studying in ordinary kindergartens in Hong Kong. While integrated education has been implemented in primary and secondary schools, kindergartens have received little support to do so. Without systematic training, over 10,000 kindergarten teachers are challenged with handling the learning, emotional and behavioural problems of special needs children. To relieve the plight in preschool education, Heep Hong Society has launched a two-year pilot project to support children at ten kindergartens under the sponsorship from the Lee Hysan Foundation,

while at the same time established the Academy for Professional Education and Development (APED) to provide early childhood educators with the training they urgently need.

At present, more than 7,000 children are on the waitlist for government-subsidized preschool rehabilitation services. On average, they have to wait 18 to 24 months. While waiting, the majority of parents have no choice but enrol their children in ordinary kindergartens. Unfortunately, preschool teachers are unable to provide the support they need owing to the lack of resources. In August and September 2014, the Society interviewed 142 teachers and principals from ten participating kindergartens about their self-efficacy in teaching SEN children. Over 90% of the respondents felt that they could not effectively prevent, handle or manage children's disruptive behaviours; were



▲ The Society provides school-based support services at 10 ordinary kindergartens.

▼ The professional team offers advice and consultations to parents.



▲ Children can receive individual and group trainings at five EETCs.

uncertain of their expectations of SEN children; and failed to teach SEN children to follow classroom regulations, therefore making the progress suffer. They expressed the desire for professional guidance and practical courses so that they could become better equipped for and more confident of teaching SEN children.

Teachers Feel Helpless With Little Support

Ms Elaine Chiu, Principal of CWBC Pre-School Education Lui Ming Choi Kindergarten, said that 10% of their students had SEN, including those with autistic tendencies, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia and speech delay. Teachers may have basic SEN knowledge but find it hard to put into practice. Principal Chiu said, 'Children's inappropriate behaviours would cause disruption to class and teachers have to guide them, manage the classroom and teach at the same time. They are worn out.'

Teachers feel especially helpless when dealing with classroom difficulties. Ms Rosana Ho, Principal of New Jade Elementi Kindergarten, recalled that there was a student with autistic tendencies who often screamed, pushed tables and walked around the classroom. An assistant was called in to look after the child so that the teacher could teach the class. 'Some new teachers found the challenge too overwhelming and considered resignation.' Principal Ho asserted that teachers need special education training and kindergartens do not have sufficient resources to support children with different learning needs. Under the current policy of integrated education, only primary and secondary schools receive government subsidies to provide training for teachers and support services for SEN children.

Ms Emily Leung, a teacher, expressed, 'SEN Children need special care, and we have to be equally attentive towards other children. We are under stress. Taking training courses will help but the fees are high. If the government can give us time and financial support, it will lift some weight off our shoulders, enabling us to improve our teaching quality.'

Equipping Teachers and Parents

In response to teachers' urgent demand for professional training, the Society launched the 'Early Intervention and Integrated Support for Kindergarten Students with Special Educational Needs' project in September 2014 under the sponsorship from the Lee Hysan Foundation. The innovative service model offers school-based support, children training and parent education to ten kindergartens in Hong Kong.

A team of educational psychologists, therapists, social workers and special child care workers meet with the

principal, teachers and parents to develop the most suitable support strategies. They observe classes, demonstrate effective methods of classroom management; follow up on 'individualised educational plans' for children; help kindergartens cultivate the spirit of whole-school participation and care for children with learning difficulties. They also empower teachers and parents with theories and skills of teaching SEN children through APED's training courses and seminars.

Individual and group training and therapies are provided at the Society's five Early Education and Training Centres (EETCs) for participating students who are waiting for subsidised services. The benefit from training in speech, social, fine motor, gross motor, self-care, motor-coordination, cognitive and behavioural management abilities, is on par with shortened waiting time.

The team also offers parents home training advice, seminars, family counselling and consultation to help them understand the needs of their children and parenting techniques, as well as improve their own psychological qualities.

Principal Chiu said, 'Heep Hong's professional team provides all-round training for our teachers, including testing, trial teaching, class observation and evaluation. It has been only two months into the project and we have witnessed encouraging results. Our teachers are more confident in classroom management. There is less disruption in class and students are more engaged in learning. Not only our teachers but also parents are very glad to see the improvement.'

Ms Nancy Tsang, Director of the Society, said, 'This pioneering project will benefit thousands of kindergarten children, educators and parents. We are conducting an effectiveness study with the University of Hong Kong and will share the results with the government and the sector. We hope that this innovative service model will serve as a reference for the development of support services for kindergartens and SEN children.'



▲ APED offers a variety of professional training courses to teachers and parents. Enrolment is now open.

People's Profile



◀ All the adaptive chairs in SPWC are revamped or built by Chu Tat-yue.

Witnessing children's progress is the greatest encouragement for Chu Tat-yue; his respect for children is the warmest blessing for the families.



I Have Your Back

Chu Tat-yue is everything his name represents – sophisticated and gentle. He has served Heep Hong Society for almost 18 years and is now Occupational Therapist Assistant at Shui Pin Wai Centre (SPWC). In daytime, he assists occupational therapists in children's therapy sessions. After class, he would turn his mind to modifying or making adaptive chairs in his workshop. A father, a quiet hard-worker, Tat-yue is like an elder brother to the children.

Tat-yue had been crafting furniture as a carpenter before joining the Society. Once, a set of parents brought their daughter to the centre and they were not comfortable with the idea of adaptive chairs. When they saw Tat-yue caring and meticulously tailor the chair for their daughter, and decorate it with her favourite cartoon characters, they gradually came to appreciate the idea. Sing Lai, Centre-in-Charge of SPWC, said, 'Tat-yue always takes a step further for the children. His determination and dedication goes beyond job duties. It is earnest respect for the children. Our colleagues and parents can feel that, too.'

An adaptive chair costs HK\$6,000 in the market. Children in centres can use the chairs for free and each chair is custom made for each child. Several years ago, Tat-yue designed a 'Mickey Mouse' chair for Chun-chun, who suffered from cerebral palsy. After Chun-chun graduated, she could not find a chair that she liked. She cried and wanted her chair back. Tat-yue shared the secret of his mastery – carpenters in general do not notice or understand the children's needs very well; the chairs they make are not well fitted and do not include hemming or the chest plate to improve the comfort level. That said, it is the genuine love and care for children that counts the most.

Over the years, Tat-yue has made dozens of new chairs and revamped hundreds of them, and he remains humble about his craft. While he still looks for breakthrough in flexibility and comfort level, his ultimate goal lies beyond the perfection of technique. He said, with conviction, 'I hope when the children sit on the chair, they don't feel a necessity, but rather a genuine liking for their own chair; and the parents see their children not as special-needs but unique.'

A Humble Craftsman with a Big Heart

Adaptive chairs are chairs tailor-made for children with physical disabilities. They are equipped with adaptive aids, such as a special platform to support the legs and elastic belts to stable the head, to help children with physical disabilities perform training and learning activities in a proper and comfortable posture. A new chair takes eight days to one month to make. In his narrow and stuffy workshop, which was transformed from a store room, Tat-yue is often soaked in sweat, but he never complains. 'I remember this boy who was born without kneecaps. When he first came to the centre, he could not bend his knees. I made him a chair and adjusted it for him every year, and I noticed his knees bending more and more. When he graduated, he no longer needed the pedal to support his legs. It is moments like this which make my efforts worthwhile.'



▲ The only chair for Chun-chun – the 'Mickey Mouse' chair.



▼ Mindfulness exercises help children live life with curiosity and benevolence.



▲ Some children are weighed down by the heavy workload at school and experience emotional distress.



▲ Children will learn to live in the moment and handle stress with calmness.



▲ With healthy self-esteem, children with different abilities can live a bright future.



◀ Positive self-esteem and experiences of success help children cope with adversity.

Mind in Knots: Anxiety in Children

The anxiety level of 30% of primary 4 to primary 6 students is at an alarming level, as reported in a recent survey of the Hong Kong Institute of Education. A high level of anxiety may evolve into anxiety disorder. At present, 8 to 10 in every 100 school children are suffering from anxiety disorder according to the statistics of the Department of Health. The situation cannot be ignored.

Growing up is a challenging process. It is natural for children to feel anxious from time to time. Following are some common causes of anxious feelings: (1) temporary separation from parents or caretakers resulting in a level of age-inappropriate anxious emotions; (2) stage fright, feeling scared or nervous to talk to strangers or answer questions in class; and (3) an excessive fear of animals, darkness or heights.

Anxiety could disturb sleep, cause body pain and irritable mood. Children will find it hard to concentrate. In the long run, it will affect their lives, learning and social relationships. In one of the more severe cases which Mr Stanley Chan, Educational Psychologist of Heep Hong Society, has come across, a child suffered from social anxiety and selective mutism. He talked a lot at home, but since kindergarten, refused to utter a word outside home. His school had to arrange a telephone examination for him. The situation persisted to primary 5 until he received assessment and began cognitive behavioural therapy.

How to Ease Children's Anxiety

If children experience anxious emotions, parents can follow this advice: First, avoid blaming the children and try to help them understand their emotions through story books. Second, show empathy towards the children's emotions and encourage them to face their emotions. For example, if a child has stomach pain because of his fear for examinations, his parents can say, 'We understand that you worry about the exam so much that you have a stomach upset. Let us find a way to cope with your worries together.'

Parents can use a reward scheme to encourage the children to overcome their fears. If a child is afraid of talking to strangers, his parents can give him a reward when he says thank-you to the shop assistant. When the act of thank you becomes a constant behaviour, his parents can reward him only when he verbally asks for his favourite sweets from the shop assistant. This will encourage him to face social situations.

Mindfulness Training and Professional Help

Parents need to evaluate children's anxiety. They should empathise with adaptive fear. For example, it is normal to feel scared when children stand at the edge of a cliff. The fear is adaptive in the sense that it prevents them from getting too close to danger. If the fear is not adaptive, such as the fear for cobras or rare objects which have little impact on everyday living, parents can handle the situation with ease. If anxious feelings seem out of proportion, age-inappropriate, and greatly affect children's daily life and learning, parents should consult a psychologist or medical specialist.

Research in the UK has shown that mindfulness-based intervention can effectively relieve stress and anxious emotions. The regular practice of mindfulness exercises, such as walking meditation, breathing meditation and body scan, can transform our relationships with emotions. We will learn to observe our emotions from a psychological distance. As a result, emotions will have less influence on our lives and behaviour.' 🧘

.b Mindfulness Experience Course

The Supportive Learning Project will offer the '.b Mindfulness Experience Course' during March to May 2015. Children aged from 10 to 14 years old are welcome to join. For details, please visit <http://slp.heephong.org>.

Improve Self-Image Enhance Self-Esteem

Three-year old Yuet suffers from dwarfism. Every time she takes the MTR, she measures her height at the Giraffe ruler. She always looks up to her mother, filled with expectations, and asks, 'How much taller am I?' Her doting parents are very protective and caring. They would ask their maid to carry Yuet's schoolbag or help her get objects from a place out of her reach. Although Yuet is academically bright and speaks eloquently, she slowly develops a feeling of inferiority. 'My classmates do not want to play with me because I am short,' she said.

13-year old Hong is optimistic, brave and empathetic. He is a model student, and a playwright and actor for his school's drama club. No one would have thought that he was diagnosed with speech delay at age three. His speech was disorganised, and he had a limited vocabulary. He created stories for his comics, but was unable to share them with others owing to his poor expressiveness. Despite that, he was not afraid to talk to people. He said, 'At first, my classmates and teachers did not understand what I was talking about, but I kept on trying so that I could improve my communication skills.' In order to help Hong enhance his vocabulary, his mother introduced everything to him – 'This is a lamppost, a restaurant, a supermarket....' As days went by, Hong's speech and language ability improved, and so were his social life and play-writing. 'Now, my classmates say I am too long-winded,' he joked.

Both Yuet and Hong have developmental disorders, but why do they value themselves differently? Ms Alice Keung, Educational Psychologist of Heep Hong Society, attributed it to the difference in self-esteem. Yuet has relatively more unhappy experiences. Over-protectiveness could render her feeling helpless, and she gradually loses self-confidence. Alice advised that parents should help Yuet understand that

height does not define a person, and let her play to her strengths and experience success. For instance, a better way is to place objects within her reach and let her get them by herself. When she feels that she could achieve the same as other children have, she will develop independence and self-confidence. In contrast, Hong's mother helped her son with his weaknesses as well as nurtured his talents. This taught him that everybody is different, and that success will come with hard work.

Fostering Positive Values

Alice explained that self-esteem is determined by self-belief and self-worth. From two years old onwards, infants will become aware of their existence. They get to know themselves through interacting with people and the environment, and slowly develop self-esteem. If parents can instill positive values in their children and recognise their efforts regardless of success, children will become more confident. When they grow up, they will be able to face adversity with optimism. 🌟

▶ Learning self-care skills is a way of fostering self-confidence and self-esteem.



Sponsorship & Fundraising Events



Children join in the toasting at the 'Paint A Brighter Future' Charity Dinner.



Children are excited to see the beautifully decorated Christmas tree at Island Shangri-La's Christmas tree-lighting ceremony.



Heep Hong children present hand-made gifts as a token of thanks to Kowloon Shangri-La.

Corporate Partners



Last year's mid-autumn charity sale raises over HK\$60,000 for the Society.



Autistic youth tour Kowloon Shangri-La to get a first-hand feel of hotel operations.

Heep Hong Charity Dinner Raises 3.3M for Children Training Fund

The 'Paint A Brighter Future' Charity Dinner was held on 10 October 2014 at Island Shangri-La, Hong Kong. Mr Eddie Ng Hak-kim, Secretary for Education, attended the dinner as the guest of honour. Internationally acclaimed jazz singer Mr Howard McCrary and local pop artist Miss Fiona Sit lent their artistry to the dinner with their marvelous performances. Thanks to the support from Island Shangri-La, our corporate partners, all sponsors, donors and supporters, the event raised \$3.3M for the Children Training Fund, which will be used to provide immediate training opportunities for 600 children from low-income families who are waiting for subsidised rehabilitation services.

natures purest, 'Teddy & Ele' Christmas Charity Sale

For the seventh consecutive year, natures purest, the specialty store of organic baby products, mounted a Christmas charity sale to raise funds for the Society. It selected nine products from its 'Teddy & Ele' Christmas Charity collection for charity sale, complemented with a thank-you card drawn by children from Heep Hong. Every dollar of the sale was donated to the Society to benefit special needs children and their families.

Heep Hong and Grand Hyatt Team Up to Send Christmas Blessings

Twenty children from Wan Tsui Centre joined in singing Christmas carols with the senior management of Grand Hyatt Hong Kong at the hotel lobby to kick start the festive season on 19 December 2014. Grand Hyatt also threw a wonderful Christmas party for nearly 200 children and parents with Santa Claus giving out presents to every child. Everyone had a lovely and blessed afternoon. Our deepest gratitude goes to Grand Hyatt for their enormous support.

Island Shangri-La, 'McMug the Red-nosed Reindeer' Charity Sale and Christmas Tree-lighting Ceremony

The charity sale of 'McMug the Red-nosed Reindeer (Limited Edition)' launched by Island Shangri-La, Hong Kong, last Christmas met with overwhelming response with the first lot of mini speakers sold out on the first day. Partial proceeds will be donated to the Society for the purchase of teaching materials and organising social adaptation programmes. Our special thanks go to Island Shangri-La and all donors who have made purchases or donated the gifts to our children.

Mr Peter Wan, Vice Chairman of the Society, was invited to officiate at the Christmas tree-lighting ceremony of the Hotel on 3 December 2014. Children from Fu Cheong Centre performed carol singing and dancing to express our gratitude to Island Shangri-La for its long-standing and unreserved support of children with special needs.



We sincerely thank natures purest and every donor for their generosity.



A Heep Hong child presents a handmade souvenir to Mr Philip Yu, General Manager of Grand Hyatt Hong Kong (left).



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Kowloon Shangri-La Helps Children Shine

Since 2012, Kowloon Shangri-La, Hong Kong has been a supportive partner of Heep Hong Society in helping children and youth with special needs. Its staff have actively participated in many volunteering and fundraising initiatives of the Society. 'Children with special needs should enjoy equal opportunities. We are very glad to help them through our partnership with Heep Hong,' said Patsy Chan, Director of Communications of Kowloon Shangri-La.

Pre-job Training for Autistic Youth

At present, the majority of services for autistic individuals are intended for school-age children. As children move on into adulthood and work, they need support services tailored to their developmental needs. Kowloon Shangri-La, in collaboration with Island Shangri-La, organised the first 'Career Talk for Autistic Youth' for young adults and their parents from Hoi Fu Centre in March 2014. In addition to sharing of job interview tips by the hotels' human resources managers, participants were also given a hotel tour to experience the daily operation of various departments. After the talk, Kowloon Shangri-La offered an internship for one of the participants to assist in producing moon cakes.

Fundraising Charity Sales

Kowloon Shangri-La has been an ardent supporter of the Society. Apart from recruiting volunteers for flag days, it has initiated various charity sales to benefit the Society. Last autumn, its 'Helping Children Shine - Moon Cake Charity Sale' raised over HK\$60,000 for the Society. To add a personal touch, the drawings of Heep Hong children were printed on the gift boxes.

Earlier in November 2013, the hotel co-organised the 'McDull Christmas Tree' (Limited Edition) Charity Sale with Island Shangri-La and donated partial proceeds to the Society. Over HK\$700,000 was raised. The hotels were very thoughtful and invited the donors to send personal holiday greetings directly to Heep Hong children. Many children from low-income families had a heart-warming Christmas, thanks to the special arrangement.

Special thanks go to the following donors* (in random order)

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*which made donations of HK\$10,000 or above to Heep Hong between July and November 2014.

For online donation, please go to www.heephong.org/donation.

- ▼ The Society was recognised as an 'Outstanding Inclusive Organisation'.



▲ Ms Carol Yip and Professor Daniel Shek officiated at the opening of Pak Tin Centre new site.



New Vision, Mission and Core Values

For more than 50 years, Heep Hong Society has dedicated itself to helping children and their families to achieve their best and building an inclusive society. As children become teens and adults, they are faced with different challenges. To respond to their changing needs and better support them in education and career, the Society goes to great lengths to develop more new services for whole-person development with concerted efforts from parents, practitioners and partners.

After reviewing the future development plans and consulting with all stakeholders, the Society has developed a new set of vision, mission and core values to manifest its aspiration and commitment to responding to the times and demand for services. Let us create a brighter future for children and youth with diverse needs and their families with all our HEART!

Vision

We pioneer and create a better tomorrow for children and youth with diverse needs.

Mission

Maximising potential, empowering families, facilitating inclusion

Values

Holistic Family Support
Equal and Inclusive Opportunities
Advancement to Full Potential
Responsiveness and Innovation in Teamwork
Transferring Knowledge for Professional Development

New 'Happy Community' Social Adaptation App

Happy Community is an iPad App to help children learn to adapt to social situations. Developed by the Special Child Care Worker team of Heep Hong Society, the App stores five social stories, including 'dentist appointment', 'dining at Chinese restaurants', 'taking public transport', 'going to the cinema' and 'playing at the park', and the accompanying sequence cards and picture cards. The user can create as many as eight picture cards and rearrange the card sequence anytime. The App offers language choices of Cantonese and Mandarin, traditional and simplified Chinese.

Pak Tin Centre Celebrates Relocation

To mark the relocation of Pak Tin Centre to Shui Tin House, an opening ceremony was held on 6 December 2014. Officiated by Director of Social Welfare Ms Carol Yip Man-kuen, the event was attended by over 130 guests, including partners, fellow practitioners and parents.

Pak Tin Centre was the first Education and Training Centre in Hong Kong. Over the past 33 years, it has provided early intervention for thousands of children with developmental disorders. Decorated with the theme of transport, the 3,400-square feet new site houses a range of specialised therapy rooms, training rooms and a library and continues to provide quality treatment and support services for children and families in need.

Heep Hong Named Outstanding Inclusive Organisation

Heep Hong Society was recognised as 'Outstanding Inclusive Organisation' in the 2013-14 Talent-Wise Employment Charter and Inclusive Organisations Recognition Scheme co-organised by the Labour and Welfare Bureau, the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee, the Hong Kong Council of Social Service and the Hong Kong Joint Council for People with Disabilities, for its efforts on enhancing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The Society will continue to foster an inclusive culture and provide equal opportunities for all staff to achieve their full potential.



◀ The Happy Community App is available in LITE and full versions for download from Apple's App Store.