



MEDIA NOTICE

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Mainstream education too rigid and lacking choices **Overwhelming support of “We Need Choices” conference** **shows parents in need of education options**

The first parent-initiated education conference in Hong Kong, “We Need Choices”, saw overwhelming support from over 400 parents and educators, who joined 20+ overseas and local speakers October 11 and 12 to explore many alternate education models such as Finnish education and Democratic Schooling.

Organized by EDiversity Ltd., a newly founded charity, and co-organised by the Faculty of Education of the University of Hong Kong, the 2-day conference aimed to promote choice and diversity of education in Hong Kong. “As parents, we know that each of our children is an individual, with individual characteristics, talents, interests and needs. We want that individuality to be nurtured – not suppressed... and for that to happen, we do indeed need choices: choices which the mainstream education systems around the world don’t necessarily offer,” Says Professor Stephen Andrews, Dean of HKU’s Faculty of Education, in his opening address.

Professor Kai Ming Cheng, Chair Professor of HKU Faculty of Education, added in his taped presentation that the next generation will face a more challenging environment and the current school system does not prepare for it: “What we have in schools is far too rigid. What our young people would need to learn in order to face a very challenging life, is far more than what schools now can offer.”

EDiversity is founded by parents and individuals who are concerned about the Hong Kong education system. A broad range of topics were covered in the group's maiden conference. It was the first time that homeschooling representatives from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Mainland China sat together to share their experiences. Ms. Yuan Fang Yan, a researcher from the 21st Century Education Institute in Beijing, said in Mainland China there are 2,000 known practising homeschooling families, mostly located in Guangdong and Beijing, and the government is adopting a “non-interference” attitude. Mr. Tim Chen, aka the “Homeschool Godfather” of Taiwan said, since homeschooling was legalised in 1997, Taiwan homeschool families have taken to the streets many times, so nowadays Taiwan homeschoolers enjoy a much fairer learning environment.



Other popular sessions included Dr. Stephen Krashen, Professor Emeritus at the University of Southern California, who says leisure reading is a much more effective way to learn English than the traditional way of studying through textbooks and drilling. Mr. Niko Lindholm, Sales Director of Tribalearning and formerly the overseer of exporting Finland's education system, explained the success of Finland's world acclaimed system is due to a 'trickle up' education reform. Its success is due to quality teachers and the trust placed upon teachers by the government.

Many expressed that an education conference like this needs to be held annually. Due to the overwhelming support and demand, EDiversity is actively planning next year's conference, including many topics such as homeschooling and students taking a gap year.

For details about EDiversity, please visit: www.ediversity.org

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