OMEP – Hong Kong 2010 Annual Report

by

Maggie Koong May Kay, President

The events and activities reported below cover the period between December 2009 and December 2010.

The year under review has been particularly fruitful for OMEP–HK, as it marks a clear increase in our activities for early childhood advocacy and shows palpable and concrete actions that have touched the lives of many children at home and elsewhere.

Our membership and influence continue to grow. This is partly the result of our broader partnerships with likeminded institutions to achieve improvements in ECE in Hong Kong and abroad, and partly the benefit of sustained effort to forge ever stronger relations with other OMEP national committees, efforts that have paid off in closer collaboration and exchanges of research and development..

1. *OMEP-HK 17th Annual General Meeting*

The Seventeenth Annual General Meeting (AGM) of OMEP-Hong Kong took place on December 11, 2009 at Causeway Bay Kai Fong Welfare Association Building, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong. The speaker was Prof Chou Su Hui, Flora from Hsin Chu University of Education, Taiwan. She delivered a talk on Creativity and Teaching, which was inspiring and practical for over 100 participants.

2. *Seminars*

This year, the eighteenth Annual General Meeting of OMEP-Hong Kong is scheduled to take place on November 18, 2010. After the AGM there will be a seminar with our honorable guest, Prof. Sharon Lynn Kagan, whose topic is "Focusing on Quality: Rethinking Early Childhood Development and Education" and the session will be chaired by Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson, World President of OMEP. Two prominent and well respected ECE experts will also partake in the session to examine the current ECE policy in Hong Kong and its role in defining high quality ECE programmes.

3. *International Activities and Relations*

3.1.

On August 11-13, 2010, OMEP welcomed people from around the world to its 26th World Congress, which took place in Göteborg, Sweden. The theme of the congress was "*Children - citizens in a challenged world*". The foundation for the event rests on UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The three day event offered lectures, workshops, seminars, visits to preschools and primary schools and social activities. What united the participants was an interest in children's rights and education for sustainable development in a local and global context. OMEP – Hong Kong was represented by a delegation of 20 people who presented a number of papers. A

fact sheet on ECE in Hong Kong was prepared by Dr. Hazel Lam and Ms. Amelia Lee and distributed at the Asia-Pacific regional meeting during the world assembly. Dr. Hazel Lam also promoted the upcoming world assembly and conference in Hong Kong. Our world president, Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson, was re-elected as our World President. Mrs. Maria Aparecide Salmaze from Brazil was elected as the new regional vice president for Latin America. Membership now includes Cyprus and Ivory Coast. Altogether, OMEP has 63 national committees. The Project on Education for Sustainable Development (phase 2) and the Toy Library have been endorsed. Higher OMEP visibility and recruitment of young members were also thoroughly discussed.

3.2.UNESCO Early Childhood Conference

The first *World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education* took place in Moscow on September 27-29 under the auspices of UNESCO. Entitled "Building the Wealth of Nations", this conference aimed to reaffirm ECCE as a right and as a foundational step for national prosperity. 1000 participants from 193 UNESCO member states attended the conference and I represented OMEP as one of the NGO observers, and met other OMEP members, such as Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson, our world president, Nirmala Rao, Victoria Peralta, our Latin America president, Zhou Jing and Feng Xiao Ha.

3.3. OMEP World Project on Education for Sustainble Development

OMEP World Project on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) – consisting of 28 national reports and 9,142 participating children – has completed phase one and is launching phase two, which will involve the participation of 60 national committees. It aims to promote the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) relating to sustainability, an area where OMEP has taken the lead by exploring how to educate our young to care for the environment. The OMEP World Assembly 2010 in Göteborg, Sweden, has decided to continue and expand the ESD project with ESD in practice.

In part 1 of the ESD project, interviews with children were conducted in order to collect information about their thoughts, comments and understanding of the OMEP 2010 Congress logo. In part 2, ESD in practice is inspired by the 7 Rs: respect, reflect, rethink, reuse, reduce, recycle and redistribute. Participants will be asked to work with children around the 7 Rs in early childhood settings and to collect information and further understanding of young children's ideas and actions. Dr. Hazel Lam is the project leader and the contact person if you are interested in joining the research project

3.4.UNICEF's ECE Global Network Meeting

I attended the UNICEF's ECD Global Network Meeting in Brussels on October 20-22. The meeting mainly dealt with how best to promote comprehensive ECD programmes that address children's needs in a holistic manner. Lack of commitment to mobilize resources and to put ECD issues on national agendas were recognized as the greatest impediment to progress. The meeting aimed to leverage collaborative relationships with strategic partners to drive results for young children, specifically in the areas of ECD research and policy development. I am happy to report that OMEP is more visible than ever on the international arena and that the Global Network Meeting has provided us with a unique opportunity to showcase our work and to develop new and more cooperative and integrated initiatives for the benefit of children.

3.5 OMEP-US

On behalf of OMEP – Hong Kong, I attended the OMEP-US meeting at the NAEYC conference on November 3, which was held in Los Angeles, California.

4. *Special Projects*

OMEP – Hong Kong donated US $500 to the Haiti Emergency Appeal. OMEP altogether raised over US$20,000 for Haiti's earthquake. OMEP –Canada has already supported a psychotherapist to Haiti. A proposal on supporting the Normal School for early childhood teachers and the renewal of the ECE teachers' library will be the major focus on the residual sum. OMEP World has established two funding schemes to subsidize developing countries in need of financial support, and the children's fund for helping the most vulnerable children. OMEP Hong Kong will participate generously in this special fund through fund raising activities to OMEP members.

5. *Visits from Teachers of Western China*

A delegation of Western China teachers visited us in Hong Kong, the sixth visit of this kind. Under the leadership and coordination of Dr. Hazel Lam, and in collaboration with OMEP – China, the participants attended lectures and seminars at the Hong Kong Institute of Education and Baptist University, visited schools and conducted cultural activities with Hong Kong teachers. Upon their return, the teachers wrote a report on their exchange.

6. *Advocacy role of PEVS (Primary Education Voucher System)*

Hazel Lam represented OMEP to attend the review meeting in mid November and OMEP strongly advocated for professional development and high quality programme. OMEP has been invited by Legco's Education Panel to attend a special meeting on reviewing the voucher system on December 17. Views from OMEP members will be solicited before submitting our written comments to the educational panel.

7. *Challenges in 2011*

While contributing to the continuous refinement of research-based educational policies, OMEP-Hong Kong must also remain engaged in the ongoing education dilemmas: the question whether preschool education should become compulsory and, if so, how to differentiate between half-day and full-day schools; the education of minority and most vulnerable children; and the continuing use of developmentally inappropriate curricula in some Hong Kong preschools.

A current concern is also the review of the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme (PEVS). As one of Hong Kong's professional organizations, we want to ensure the affordability of Early Childhood Education, accessibility to Quality Education and accountability of Kindergartens. With several initiatives in place under PEVS, OMEP-Hong Kong strongly supports Hong Kong's increased emphasis on ECE and realizations of children's rights through its continual goals in providing high quality education and care programmes. With OMEP's vision at its core, OMEP-Hong Kong will continue to remain at the forefront in the fight for increased professional development, accessibility and quality in early childhood education and development in Hong Kong while advocating for the rights and best interests of our children in preparing them to become the global citizens and leaders of tomorrow.

As an international interdisciplinary organization, OMEP-Hong Kong will seek to become increasingly more relevant as a strong advocate for high-quality developmentally appropriate early childhood practices and for the protection of young children's rights.

8. Upcoming Events

OMEP – Hong Kong will proudly host the 2011 OMEP World Conference, which is the 63rd of its kind and is scheduled to take place on July 8-9, 2011. The World Assembly will take place before the Conference and we are looking forward to extending our hospitality to 65 national committees.

The theme of the Conference is entitled "*Meeting the Learning and Developmental Needs of Our Young Citizens*". The World Conference is co-organized with the Department of Early Childhood Education and the Centre for Childhood Research and Innovation (CCRI) of the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd), and is supported by the Education Bureau, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, and by the Hong Kong Committee of Unicef.

A highlight of the event will be the presidential forum, chaired by our World President, which will be a platform for sharing prominent pedagogical approaches. We are also aiming at having a forum on education for sustainable development, where OMEP will launch the Education for Sustainable development (ESD) international project.

In order to guarantee both the high quality of the presentations and the diversity of themes and approaches, the programme will consist of a combination of keynote speeches, international fora, paper presentations, workshops, symposiums, round-table presentations and independent poster sessions, which are open to all participants. Since this is the first time OMEP – Hong Kong hosts this event, we have established many working groups to ensure that every aspect of the Conference is covered, under the able leadership of Dr. Hazel Lam and Ms. Cinda Chan as the chairperson and vice-chairperson of Organizing Committee. Various working committees such as secretariat (co-chaired by Dr. Ben Choi and Ms. Lillian Kam), hospitality (co-chaired by Ms Amy Lee and Dr. Eva Lai), registration(chaired by Dr. Chan Wai Ling), programme (chaired by Dr. Li Hui), publication (chaired by Dr. Pansy Tam), publicity (chaired by Ms. Mary Tong and Ms. Edith Leung), venue (chaired by Ms. Peggy Mou), opening/closing ceremony (chaired by Ms. Ho Lan San) have been set up to ensure the success of the upcoming conference.

Outstanding researchers including Dr Cliff MEYERS (UNICEFF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office), Professor PANG Lijuan (Beijing Normal University), Professor Nirmala RAO (The University of Hong Kong), and Professor Collette TAYLER (The University of Melbourne) will give keynote speeches. The conference will cover a range of topics, which include (but are not limited to) the following: Early Childhood Development in varying contexts, curricula and pedagogies for the changing childhood, teacher quality and professionalism in a challenging world, collaborating with parents and other adults for young citizen's wellbeing, the use of multi-media and ICTs in early childhood teaching and learning, changing policies and changing schools and early childhood special and inclusive education.

Researchers, practitioners, policy makers and students who wish to present their work in relation to the afore-mentioned topics are now invited to submit abstracts for poster presentations online at

http://home.ied.edu.hk/~omep2011 by January 16, 2011. For more information, please visit the conference website at http://home.ied.edu.hk/~omep2011.

9. Conclusion

The future is promising for OMEP – Hong Kong. As we welcome more members and strengthen our ranks, we will be able to achieve increasingly more ambitious goals in promoting Early Childhood Education and Development and in supporting a growing number of initiatives designed to meet short- and long-term objectives.

Dr. Maggie Koong
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