Implementing 15-year free education in Hong Kong: Dilemmas and practical solutions

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Abstract

15-year free education has been implemented in Macau and some parts of Mainland China in recent decade. In light of the implementations, local early childhood educators and experts have since been debating whether Hong Kong should follow suit to offer the 3 years of early childhood education (ECE) for free on top of the existing 12-year free education. With reference to the policy implementation and outcomes in Macau and Mainland China, as well as the ECE context in Hong Kong, this paper seeks to (1) delineate the dilemmas in the debate about 15-year free education in Hong Kong; and (2) suggest how free ECE could be offered in a context-appropriate manner. We will discuss the issues based on the "3A1S" theoretical framework, which looks into the affordability, accountability, and sustainability of ECE. Practical solutions for settling the ceaseless debate about 15-year free education in Hong Kong will also be proposed.

Keywords

15-year free education, Hong Kong early childhood education, dilemmas in education policy

The Hong Kong government launched the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme (PEVS) in 2007 with an aim to enhance and assure the accessibility, affordability, and accountability of early childhood education (ECE) in Hong Kong. The policy, however, has been criticized by both educators and the public for not responding to the appeal for providing 15-year free education (3-year free kindergarten education in addition to 12 years of free primary and secondary education), which the Macau government has started offering since 2007 (Fung & Lam, 2012). In this connection, the PEVS is argued to be an inadequate and backward move by the government. Aggravating the public's dissatisfaction and the tension of the debate is the implementation of other 15-year free education policies in some provinces of Mainland China. Against this background, the public call to expand the existing 12-year free education framework in Hong Kong to include ECE persists (Legislative Council, 2010). Although the current-term Chief Executive (CE) of Hong Kong, Mr. Leung Chun-ying, made the launch of this 15year free education policy one of his policy agendas when he ran for CE in 2012, the major arguments against this proposed policy center on the feasibility and credibility of offering free ECE when the structural and contextual factors of ECE in Hong Kong are taken into account. Li (2012, 2012.6.22), for instance, argued that offering authentic free kindergarten education in Hong Kong would in fact threaten the accountability and quality of kindergarten education on the whole. The Committee on Free Kindergarten Education was set up in 2013 in an attempt to resolve the debate and plan a sustainable policy that can reconcile different views in this issue, but discussions and debates regarding how the 15-year free education policy could be implemented in a contextually appropriate manner remain inconclusive thus far. Educational policymaking should be a rational evidencebased process that begins with an identified problem and ends with a contextualized policy for solving the problem. This paper is thus dedicated to providing a clearer picture of the ECE context in Hong Kong and delineating the dilemmas in this ceaseless debate, in an attempt to offer insights into solutions that could possibly reconcile the debate without forfeiting the quality of our ECE in the near future.

1. Debating on the ECE voucher in Hong Kong

The ECE system in Hong Kong has been regarded as being entirely private, publicly underfinanced and bureaucratically neglected (Li, Wang, & Fong, in press). Since the Colonial era, all the kindergartens in Hong Kong have been run by non-profit-making organizations and private bodies, which are registered with and supervised by the Education Bureau (EDB). Since there is no public kindergarten in Hong Kong, public funding for ECE was so minimal that the sector was once depicted as the Cinderella of our education system that was ill-treated and neglected by the government (Rao & Li, 2009). The meager attention and public resources have resulted in the widely disparate quality of ECE provision in Hong Kong over the years.

A breakthrough occurred in 2007 when the Hong Kong government launched the PEVS to alleviate the financial burden of parents and to enhance the quality of kindergarten education. Instead of directly funding kindergarten establishments, vouchers are given to parents of children who are permanent residents of Hong Kong. To date, the value of the voucher was \$16,800 per student per annum in the 2012/13 school year, and parents from low-income families are also eligible to apply for means-tested financial assistance from the Social Welfare Department to help cover the outstanding tuition fee and miscellaneous expenses incurred (Legislative Council, 2013). Nevertheless, the PEVS imposed five criteria on the eligibility of kindergartens to receive government subsidy: (1) the tuition fee per annum must not exceed \$24,000 (half-day) or \$48,000 (fullday) per student; (2) kindergartens must undergo Quality Reviews, both self-evaluation and external review conducted by the Education Bureau; (3) operational and financial transparency must be maintained; (4) teachers serving in the kindergartens must hold at least a Certificate in Early Childhood Education; and (5) kindergartens must offer local curriculum which is in line with the Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum (GPC) (Curriculum Development Council, 2006). Kindergartens that cannot fulfill the criteria could continue to operate as private independent kindergartens. As of 2011, about 80% of the kindergartens in Hong Kong had joined the PEVS and about 85% of kindergarten-aged children have benefited from the Scheme (Legislative Council, 2011). Taken together, the voucher system generated \$2 billion of benefits for a total of 120,000 young children in the 2010/11 school year (Legislative Council, 2013).

Striving to enhance the quality of kindergarten education service in Hong Kong, the PEVS aims to increase investment and enhance quality in ECE. The public, on the other hand, question whether offering a direct subsidy to kindergarten parents through the PEVS was an effective means to improve the quality of ECE. Fung and Lam (2008) analyzed the context of ECE in Hong Kong and agreed that PEVS could be a strategic means to improve the quality of early education by making use of market forces to strengthen parents' voice and choice. They, however, argued that enhancing parental influences on the pedagogical autonomy of kindergartens could have an adverse impact on the program quality and urged for a direct subsidy to fund the operation of kindergartens. Nevertheless, Li, Wong, and Wang (2010) found that most of the parents reported in the survey that the PEVS had eased their financial burden (75%) and helped enhance the quality of kindergartens (61%), and most of the principals reported that the PEVS had increased the competition (77%). In this connection, the PEVS could promote the accessibility, affordability, and accountability of kindergarten education in Hong Kong.

The market mechanism and private provision of ECE in Hong Kong have guaranteed unrestricted school choices for the parents of young children. The PEVS has further empowered parents to choose a school for their children by offering them direct fee

subsidies. In light of the market force, it was expected that the more credible PEVS-eligible kindergartens could attract more parents to enroll their children, and therefore more vouchers could be collected and cashed by the chosen kindergartens for teachers' professional development and enhancement of their services. This, in turn, could push kindergartens to monitor and improve their education quality in order to attract more vouchers, i.e. monetary resources, for sustaining the kindergartens. The question then might be the discrepancies between parents' desirable type of ECE and what the private kindergarten sector should provide according to the GPC (Fung & Lam, 2011). While the PEVS-eligible kindergartens are supposed to offer curricula that promote children's holistic development, they have to satisfy parents' demands for academic-oriented curricula in preparation for their children's primary school admission and education in the long run. The tension results in the provision of many developmentally inappropriate and academic-oriented ECE curricula by the PEVS-eligible kindergartens. That said, pressure cast by parental choices of kindergarten may not necessarily enhance the quality of ECE (Fung & Lam, 2012).

Still, we tend to believe that giving kindergartens the autonomy to develop their own curriculum and implement their own monitoring system under the PEVS is constructive in the long run. It helps retain the uniqueness of each kindergarten and the variety of kindergartens in the market for parents to choose from, and this could eventually help improve the overall quality of ECE in Hong Kong, indirectly.

It is noteworthy that the key focus of the party that urges for free ECE is affordability rather than quality. Although it has certainly relieved the financial pressure parents bear for their children to receive kindergarten education, the PEVS was criticized for not making ECE completely free to the young children from low-income families. Some needy families had to pay extra school fee that could not be covered by the voucher. The government is very responsive and has revised the ceiling of the voucher and increased the voucher value to \$20,010 for the 2014/15 school year. The financial burden on lowincome families will be further relieved. However, the PEVS is bound to affect the income allocation of the richer and poorer families differently due to the income gap and the divergent valuation of education between the two groups. Li, Wong, and Wang (2010) found that the richer parents tended to spend the savings from the voucher scheme on interest classes and other educational purposes for their children, whereas the poorer parents would rather use the savings for family expenses instead of education. Hence to ensure that all children, regardless of socioeconomic backgrounds, could receive quality ECE, a motion was raised in the Legislative Council (2011) to urge the government to provide 15-year free education.

2. Defining 15-year free education with empirical evidence

Since 2011, the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union (PTU), the Striving for 15year Free Education Union, and like-minded scholars have coalesced into allies to fight for 15-year free education. They appealed through language and symbols perpetrated by the media to build audience receptivity to the concept of "15-year free education", a political spectacle produced intentionally to sell their movement to the public. They repeatedly advocated that this free policy could solve all the development problems faced by kindergartens, enhance teachers' remuneration, and establish a professional training system so as to raise the overall quality of ECE in Hong Kong (Li et al., in press). In this way, they successfully primed the public to believe that the policy is not only the sound bite, but also the panacea to solving all the problems in our ECE arena. However, the empirical articles collected in a recent special issue have jointly proved that the problems they listed in the appeal for free education could not be resolved simply by the means of providing 15-year free education (Li et al., in press). Instead, we consider the political spectacle of 15-year free education a man-made illusion. The real landscape of our kindergarten education is way more complex than what has been portrayed by the supporters of 15year free education. That being said, this section will attempt to clarify the illusion by addressing two sets of questions with reference to empirical evidence: (1) what is the real meaning of free education? Does it mean that everything should be free and free to every child? (2) How can free education be offered in Hong Kong? Should the government pay the rent and teacher salaries for the kindergarten owners? If so, should the government pocket all the profit? In that case, why don't we transform private kindergartens into public ones? Unless all these questions are appropriately addressed, we will not be able to arrive at a credible and contextualized solution for implementing free ECE, and therefore, 15year free education in Hong Kong.

The definition of 15-year free education could be derived from the Chinese contexts that have implemented such a policy. To this end, we invited Chinese scholars to evaluate the implementation of 15-year free education in Greater China and edited a special issue for the *International Journal of Chinese Education* (Li et al., in press). In the special issue, Lau, Li, and Leung (in press) explored the perceived impacts of this policy on the affordability, accessibility, and accountability of ECE in Macau. They found that only the public kindergartens were free to the eligible young children, and the parents who were enjoying free education further demanded for more subsidies from the government to make extra-curricular activities complimentary. In addition, it is very interesting to find that some private kindergartens that did not join the free education school system and charged very high tuition fees were much more attractive to parents than the free public kindergartens did. The parents interviewed by Lau et al. (in press) preferred those expensive private kindergartens to the free public ones, as they were more concerned about the quality.

In a similar vein, Cai and Hai (in press) analyzed the case of Ningshan County in Shaanxi Province, and found that the 15-year free education policy was, in fact, not literally free and not applicable to all children. Only public kindergartens delivered free education to a limited number of young children, whereas most of the kindergartens were privately-run and the tuition fees they charged were very high for the local standard of living. Again, they questioned whether the policy was suitable for the local economic and social contexts, and suggested the local government to consider more feasible and sustainable solutions.

Li and Wang (in press) conducted an online research to analyze the affordability, accessibility, accountability and sustainability ("3A1S") of the 15-year free education policies in four counties of western China. They found that the "free" education policies, which were neither "all kids free" nor "all fees free", could only make ECE affordable, to a limited extent. Other problems in terms of accessibility, accountability and sustainability were primarily left unaddressed. They also pointed out that the policies were unlikely to be sustainable as the public funding entirely relied on the local coal economy and fiscal investment at the county level.

All the above studies unanimously concluded that the 15-year free education policies implemented in different parts of the Great China region were mainly delivered by public kindergartens and schools. Children enrolled in private kindergartens and schools still had to pay for tuition fees since these educational establishments only received partial subsidies from the governments. More importantly, it is noteworthy that in most of the cases in Mainland China, free education only means free of tuition fee for children enrolled in public kindergartens, but three other types of fees are still incurred, namely, the fees for registration, learning materials, and healthcare. In other words, the implemented 15-year free education policies do not guarantee authentic free education to all children. Is this what we want in Hong Kong?

Besides, the above studies found that the government funding strategies differed between public and private kindergartens in Mainland China and Macau. More commitment was made to financing public kindergartens, which were limited in quantity and/or quality. Private kindergartens were either neglected or were only partially subsidized by the governments. This enlarged the gap between what young children enrolled in public and private kindergartens would receive. The public-private divide in education policy risks perpetuating educational inequalities in many parts of Mainland China and deserves our attention. As for the Hong Kong context, in the absence of public kindergartens to deliver free ECE, government subsidies therefore will be supporting private kindergartens. Given the market-driven nature of our ECE services, offering full and direct funding support to private organizations will bring to the surface a host of dilemmas, which will be further analyzed in the following sections.

3. Understanding the dilemmas with the "3A1S" framework

Many practical but very critical dilemmas need to be resolved to deliver the kind of free ECE expected by the public in Hong Kong. The first critical one is whether kindergarten education should be made *free for all*, which is about the problem of affordability. As a consequence of implementing the PEVS, the affordability of ECE is no longer a problem in Hong Kong. All the needy families and their children can get ECE for free. So, the questions might be: Is free ECE for all desirable? In particular, should taxpayers pay for the early education of children whose families can afford the cost of high-quality private programs? Will free ECE help achieve the ultimate purposes of education - to nurture human capabilities for our future society? What are the purposes of kindergarten education? All these questions have not been thoroughly addressed and would demand future inquiries and debates.

The second dilemma is whether and how the government can completely pay the rent for every kindergarten - the problems of affordability and accountability. We believe that having the government pay rent for all the kindergartens is not a justifiable policy, as some establishments actually own the properties. They do not need and do not deserve this kind of governmental support (Li, 2012). So to speak, if the government pays for the rental, it will mean that the educational resources that should be shared by middle- to low-income families will then be transferred to the kindergarten owners, property developers and property owners. This will not help to solve parent's affordability problem, but will make kindergarten owners free-riders.

The third critical challenge is how to establish a feasible school place allocation system to achieve educational equality, which is per se, an accessibility problem of ECE. If children are enrolled simply based on neighborhood and personal interest in a free ECE system, there will likely be an inflation of the housing prices in affluent areas with elite kindergartens (e.g. Kowloon Tong), as parents attempt to move to these areas to be qualified for admission to the best possible kindergartens. Property developers and owners, rather than children, will benefit from this allocation, and the disparity between noble and ordinary kindergartens as well as that between the rich and the poor will continue to grow. Random assignment of kindergarten places is not a solution either, as it is infeasible to expect children to travel across districts for school (Li, 2012).

The fourth dilemma is how to avoid two trade-offs caused by the so-called free education, which will ultimately affect the affordability and accountability of this policy. The most remarkable trade-off is that between affordability and accountability (Li, 2012), as the government will provide full financial support regardless of school quality. We can then foresee that kindergartens can simply sit back and pocket the money whether they are

doing anything to improve their education services or not. Adding to the problem is the fact that the government can do little to eliminate any of the kindergartens when they are not running well since they are privately owned. Without the ability to hold kindergartens accountable, the efficiency of governmental input will become a major concern. Devising ways to tackle this accountability problem would be time-consuming, yet imperative (Fong, in press). Another trade-off is that between affordability and quality (Li, 2012). Quality comes with competition and providing full and direct subsidy to kindergartens is merely a backward move. As kindergartens and the teachers involved are guaranteed to receive sufficient financial resources for operation without undergoing any competition, there is then no longer any incentive to strive for improvement. With two of the major stakeholders' voices muffled (i.e., the parents will not have a say because they are not paying for their children's education, and the government will not have any means to monitor the private schools), there is neither motivation nor competition over student enrolment. Not to mention quality education for children, which will accordingly tend toward an increasingly uniform mediocrity. Whether the kindergarten is good or not will no longer matters and consequently, the education quality will deteriorate.

The fifth dilemma is also about the accountability - whether the governmental subsidy should go to parents or to kindergartens, which might be the tangible difference between 15-year free education and the PEVS. If the direct subsidy goes to kindergartens, the abovementioned four dilemmas will be valid and the quality and accountability of kindergarten education will be sacrificed. If the direct subsidy goes to parents, the four dilemmas will not be valid as parents can then make good use of their choices to promote competition among kindergartens, and accordingly, enhance the quality and accountability of ECE. The virtues of the PEVS are its flexibility, which allows kindergartens to enjoy the autonomy in curriculum development and mode of operation; and its ability to enable needy children to receive free kindergarten education.

The last dilemma is whether 15-year free education policy is financially sustainable in Hong Kong. Implementing such a policy requires strong financial support. All governments have to thoroughly calculate the sustainability of its new free education policy. Otherwise, the fiscal deficit will make the policy impossible to sustain. For instance, Li and Wang (in press) found that the 15-year "free" education policies in the four Chinese counties were heavily dependent on the local coal economy. The skyrocketing coal price in the last decade has brought these governments enormous revenue. To make full use of the financial surplus, these county governments made a politically right and professionally manageable decision - implementing 15-year "free" education. However, it has not sufficiently attended to the problem of sustainability. A prolonged plunge in China's coal prices has created risks for the economy of these counties. As one of these four counties is now suffering from fiscal deficit, the sustainability of their free ECE is thus doubtful in the long run.

4. Searching for the practical solutions

Fong (in press) took a closer look at the online community of Hong Kong to understand how the supporting and opposing parties have persisted in achieving 15year free education. She found that both parties proposed an increase of the existing voucher value and a voucher that could sufficiently cover the tuition fee of full-day kindergarten programs. Both have called for the establishment of subsidy schemes to support teachers' professional development and school development, as well as a teacher remuneration scale to enhance the quality of services and teachers' working conditions. The supporters demanded additional administrative support whereas the opposing party suggested a reduction of administrative procedures. Hence, Fong concluded that the two parties in the debate shared the same set of goals - equal accessibility to all children and enhanced supports for teachers and education services. The only difference between the solutions proposed by the two parties might be whether the subsidy should go to parents or to kindergartens. In this connection, compromise between the two parties is possible and feasible. As highlighted earlier, direct subsidy to kindergartens will lead to all the abovementioned dilemmas. That being said, the final solution should be and could only be subsidizing parents with a modified voucher. Accordingly, the Chief Executive claimed, in his Policy Address in 2014, to modify the voucher to move toward the aim of providing 15-year free education and better quality of kindergarten education. More specifically, he proposed to:

- (1) increase the value of PEVS by \$2,500 per year in the 2014/15 and 2015/16 school years. In other words, the voucher subsidy would be adjusted to \$20,010 per student per annum (pspa) in the 2014/15 school year and \$22,510 pspa in the 2015/16 school year, respectively. This will further alleviate the financial burden in respect of kindergarten education on parents and relieve the pressure on kindergartens in meeting the expenses, such as teachers' salary, staffing and operating expenditure (including rental).
- (2) adjust the fee thresholds for the kindergartens under the PEVS. In the 2013/14 school year, the fee thresholds are \$26,260 and \$52,520 for half-day (HD) and whole-day (WD) kindergarten places respectively. The thresholds for HD and WD kindergarten classes would be adjusted to \$30,020 and \$60,400 respectively in the 2014/15 school year, and \$33,700 and \$67,540 respectively in the 2015/16 school year. In accordance with the established mechanism, the fee threshold for HD kindergarten classes under the PEVS is set at 1.5 times of the voucher subsidy, while the fee threshold for WD kindergarten classes would be 2 times of that for HD kindergarten classes.

- (3) lift the fee remission ceiling to offer greater assistance to needy families to better facilitate their children's access to quality kindergarten education. The fee remission ceiling under the Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme (KCCCFRS) will be lifted from the weighted average fees of PEVS kindergartens to the 75th percentile of the school fees of the respective kindergartens to provide greater assistance to needy families in opening the doors to quality KG education for their children.
- (4) provide course fee reimbursement for principals and teachers serving in PEVS kindergartens to pursue relevant and approved courses in the 2012/13 and 2013/14 school years; and
- (5) study how to practicably implement free kindergarten education, and will make recommendations within 2015.

We believe that these short-term measures are workable and appropriate in the Hong Kong context. First, the PEVS could equally allocate public money among all the eligible young children in Hong Kong, allowing low-income families access to almost-free ECE, while affluent families can continue to pay for more prestigious ECE provisions. Although high-socioeconomic status families are eligible to receive ECE for free if they send their children to PEVS-eligible kindergartens, they prefer to pay more for better ECE in reality, which complies with the principle of cost sharing and compensation. Moreover, the cap (thresholds) on the level of school fees charged by the PEVS-eligible kindergartens has served to bar out the more expensive kindergartens from receiving public resources. It is also noteworthy that the fee thresholds have been raised in the Policy Address 2014 to give parents more choices, which guarantees that the public money will go to the middle-to low-income families rather than the high-socioeconomic status ones. All these measures advocate the principle of helping the poor. But these are short-term measures. What is the long-term solution?

Before proposing the long-term and ultimate solution, we need to reiterate the "3A1S" framework that Li et al. (in press) have used to evaluate all the ECE policies, namely, accessibility, affordability, accountability, and sustainability. Accessibility means every young child can easily attend a nearby kindergarten. Affordability means every family can easily afford the fees of the chosen kindergarten, and some fee exemptions could be offered to the needy families. In terms of accountability, every kindergarten, be it non-profit-making or for-profit, the extra fiscal input provided by the policy should be accountable to the government for improving education quality. As for sustainability, the policy should be financially sustainable and continuously affordable to the government. In our perspective, a modified voucher could best meet the goal of achieving accessibility,

affordability, accountability, and sustainability of our ECE. With the following modifications, the PEVS could achieve the target of implementing free ECE, as the scheme can then address all of the abovementioned dilemmas, and allow half of the young children population in Hong Kong to receive free ECE (Li, 2012). To these ends, we proposed the following modifications of the PEVS:

- (1) Increase the value of the PEVS, annually and gradually, to the level of 50th (2017-2018) or even 75th (2019-2020) percentile of the tuition fees of the non-profit-making kindergartens. Accordingly, 50% to 75% of the eligible young children will enjoy free kindergarten education through the modified voucher.
- (2) Launch the full-day voucher for families with both parents working and would therefore need whole day ECE. All the applications should be reviewed and approved by the educational authorities. Meanwhile, more full-day places should be launched gradually.
- (3) Simplify the procedures of voucher claiming. Eliminate the need for parents to apply for the voucher, and kindergarten can simply reimburse the money directly from EDB after collecting all the students' identification information.
- (4) Cancel the restrictions on the eligibility of the PEVS and allow for-profit kindergartens to receive it. As long as the school fee is acceptable, the quality is good (judged by Quality Review), and the finance is thoroughly transparent, they can also receive governmental subsidy through the voucher scheme. In this manner, more families can benefit from the voucher scheme.
- (5) Establish a suitable mechanism for regular review of the fee thresholds to take into account factors other than changes in the cost of living, to build in flexibility and to enhance the sector responsiveness to changes in circumstances. This will allow kindergartens more room to increase their tuition fees to cover teacher salaries, rental and other operating expenses, instead of passing the additional costs onto parents.
- (6) Establish a scientific rental reimbursement system to subsidize the rental expenses of non-profit-making kindergartens. This system should monitor the ongoing changes in school rentals annually and the reimbursement should reflect the changes. But support for the rental and teacher salaries of for-profit kindergartens is not needed.

- (7) Establish a school-based development fund to sponsor all the activities for school development and set up a teacher professional development fund for all the teachers. These funds could be operated as an earmarked Continuing Education Fund so that all the in-service teachers can apply for funding support to pursue degree or professional studies every 5 years. This initiative will definitely enhance the professionalism of kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong.
- (8) Develop and launch the teacher qualification allowance, which could be paid monthly to those teaching in voucher-eligible kindergartens, by the government according to each registered teacher's qualification and performance. This policy has been well implemented in Macau, and will improve the treatment and qualifications of kindergarten teachers without unduly burdening school owners or parents (for details, see Li, 2012.6.22).

We strongly believe that the above recommendations can help achieve an equilibrium among the affordability, accessibility, accountability, and sustainability of ECE, as well as satisfying all the stakeholders in our ECE context. Prolonged disputes construct nothing, but stagnation or even deterioration. Decades of research have told us that investing wisely in ECE is one of the keys that can equip our children for the multitudes of life challenges ahead. The question is, however, are we allocating our resources to children's future or simply to ECE establishments for their survival so none of them will have to step out of the market?

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如何在香港推行15年免費教育:困境與出路

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摘要

澳門及中國內地某些地區已經陸續推行了15年免費教育,香港幼兒教育工作者和專家近年來也在激烈辯論應否在港實施同樣政策。本文在參照澳門及中國內地有關政策的基礎上,對香港現行學前教育學券制的情況及其推行15年免費教育進行了文獻分析,並運用「3A1S」的理論框架(即「可支付性,可進入性,可問責性和可持續性」)對實施免費教育所需面對的困境進行了詳細分析。據此,本文提出了切合香港實際需要、切實可行推行15年免費教育的解決方案。

關鍵詞

15年免費教育,香港幼兒教育,教育政策的困境