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## The “Paradox of Empowerment” in Parent Education: A Reflexive Examination of Parents’ Pedagogical Expectations

*In an action research project designed to develop a new paradigm for parent education in alignment with the “strengths perspective,” a social constructionist epistemology, and the empowerment discourse, it was found that parents joining two parent groups actually valued and sought expert knowledge. Seeking to empower these parents by adopting a collaborative learning approach—facilitating a reflective discussion of their parenting experience while refraining from meeting their expectation to be taught—we were actually exercising professional power in imposing our ideology of empowerment on the parents. To resolve this “paradox of empowerment,” we came to see that parent educators cannot avoid meeting parents’ pedagogical expectation. They should, however, provide expert knowledge and advice with epistemic reflexivity. Moreover, they need to navigate the micropolitics in the interaction between themselves as “educators” and parents as “learners,” so as to negotiate*

*a power relation that is characterized by collaboration and partnership.*

Parent education became a government-financed professional intervention in Hong Kong in 1979 when the Social Welfare Department began funding a new family life education service. A government-commissioned study (*The Social Causes of Juvenile Delinquency*; Ng, 1975) had earlier concluded that young offenders had less favorable relationships with their family members and had more negative attitudes toward parental control than did nonoffenders. One recommendation was to provide parents with the knowledge and skills needed for supervising children. Even though in traditional Chinese culture, parenting is considered an adult life task that people learn naturally, parents in Hong Kong have since become generally receptive toward the idea of “learning to become better parents.” The lay public regards helping professionals as childrearing experts. Parent education is provided in diverse community settings by social workers, counselors, health care workers, child-care workers, and school teachers.

We were among the first generation of social workers involved in implementing the new service. Over time, we began to question many of the received ideas: What legitimizes parent educators to teach parents and to set standards for parenting? Will people become

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better parents by attending parenting courses and following expert advice? This paper critiques parent education as a modernist project for regulating parenthood. A Foucaultian analysis of professional knowledge and power (Foucault, 1980) points to a new paradigm for parent education that (a) adopts a social constructionist epistemology and (b) translates the empowerment discourse into practice. Finally, the paper draws on the findings of an action research project to examine the “paradox of empowerment” in parent education.

#### THE “NURTURE ASSUMPTION” AND REGULATING PARENTHOOD

The “nurture assumption” posits that “what influences children’s development, apart from their genes, is the way their parents bring them up” (Harris, 2009, p. 2). Accepting this assumption, parents are motivated to find correct ways of parenting. The good-bad parent conjecture asserts that “some unusual parents have greater success . . . in socializing the really difficult cases, while other parents are so bad . . . that any child in their custody will become a victim of social pathology” (Lykken, 2000, p. 588). Advocates argue that “licensing parents” (Irvine, 2003; Westman, 1994) is the best way to ensure that children are raised by competent parents in healthy families (McFall, 2009). To Chinese parents, the nurture assumption is culturally ingrained. They accept the responsibility for what their children will become. Thus, helping professionals in Hong Kong have been successful in popularizing parent education by asserting that parenting is powerful and a misstep will result in grave consequences to children.

The view that a society’s methods of raising children make all the difference in a regime dates back to Plato’s time (*The Republic*, cited in McFall, 2009). Modern states have a vested interest in regulating parenthood, as children are being regarded as children of the state. Parents are temporary guardians entrusted to prepare children for future participation as responsible, productive members of society. Since G. Stanley Hall’s Child Study Movement in the 1880s, the scientism-backed ideology of “educated parenthood” has turned parenting into an object of professional surveillance and intervention. When “parental failure has been so thoroughly investigated that almost everyone is ready to

plead guilty” (Tomalin, 1981, p. vii), people turn to parent education as a mode of social intervention. Parent education has become popular “since education (in all forms) is an old and trusted way of implementing reforms and new thoughts or ideologies” (Moqvist, 2003, p. 130).

The knowledge claim of helping professionals gives them the mandate to regulate parenthood and legitimize them to popularize the ideology that childrearing is not a self-sufficient and self-sustaining act (Gerris, Van As, & Janssens, 1998) but requires parents to act in ways that promote children’s well-being and functional behavioral development. The foremost goal of parent education, thus, is to teach parents a more functional childrearing style and appropriate parenting skills (Fine & Lee, 2001). Modernist parent education therefore assumes that parents are inept (Sealander, 1997). Adopting P. Freire’s (1970) “banking” concept of education, the goal is to transmit knowledge, skills, and normative standards to parents (Robinson, Rosenberg, & Beckman, 1988).

#### A POSTMODERN CRITIQUE OF PARENT EDUCATION

Modernist parent education privileges expert knowledge and, hence, unwittingly subjugates people’s lived knowledge. On their part, parents do accept the professional-lay divide. They willingly absorb the lessons given by experts (Sealander, 1997) and become depositories of expert knowledge (A. M. A. Freire & Macedo, 1998). Research has shown, however, that parent training can damage parents’ confidence or alienate those who feel patronized (Todd & Higgins, 1998). There has been a growing realization of the need to foster collaboration with parents in the care and instruction of children. Nonetheless, the presumed superiority of professional knowledge still perpetuates a power imbalance in the relationship between professionals and parents (Safford & Safford, 1996).

Foucault argues that knowledge is always inextricably enmeshed in relations of power because knowledge is always being applied to the regulation of social conduct in practice (Foucault, 1980; Hall, 2001). Professionals’ knowledge claim not only justifies their domination but also expands their “professional market project” (Freidson, 1994). Professionals regulate parenthood through individualizing and psychologizing problems, first placing parents

"outside of the qualities of normalcy" (Popkewitz & Bloch, 2001, p. 54), then giving help in the form of pedagogicalizing them as surrogate teachers, such that childrearing practice has to follow the didactic principles of teaching (Popkewitz, 2003). Parent education is "inundated with information and advice . . . all carrying a message of scientific expertise, and a knowledge of good, normal childhood/family/parenthood" (Popkewitz & Bloch, 2001, p. 93).

The rise of postmodern thought has called for a rethinking of parent education (Gerris et al., 1998; Lam, 2003; Mahoney, Kaiser, & Girolametto, 1999; McCollum, 1999). One pressing question is, "Do we know enough about what is desirable human behavior to instruct parents?" (Sealander, 1997). Dickinson (1993) contends that the experts' attempt to scientize parenthood and childrearing practices constituted a major change in cultural beliefs and practice. The take-for-granted notion that helping professionals know more and better than parents, coupled with the expanded role of expert, made "previous knowledge about child rearing and family relations . . . irrelevant at best and dangerously damaging to the mental health of children at worst" (Dickinson, 1993, p. 399). The term "parent education" connotes a deficit view of parents (Dinnebeil, 1999; Winton, Sloop, & Rodriguez, 1999). Moreover, the proliferation of often conflicting expert opinions not only turns parenthood into a highly contested domain but also undermines the credibility of so-called expert knowledge (Hulbert, 2003; LeMaster & DeFrain, 1989; Rankin, 2005; Sealander, 1997).

Postmodern critique of the failure to account for diversities in context and multiple possibilities of meaning construction further erodes the credibility of experts' truth claims. Indeed, postmodern epistemology regards people's lived knowledge as no less valid than social science theories for guiding human action, as most human relationships cannot be subject to "scientific evaluation in any quantified or probabilistic sense," because they involve "artistic and situated judgment" (Parton, 1998, p. 23). Parenting is situated in culture and society. Parents derive lived knowledge from their experience, which is highly individualized and is characterized by indeterminacy and nonlinearity. Variations in family ecology also preclude any fixed ways of parenting.

#### PARENT EDUCATION FOR PARENT EMPOWERMENT

Helping professionals in Hong Kong have been successful in colonizing the private domain of parenting in a culture that highly respects the authority of teachers and experts. They recycle and market parent education packages from the West, such as the P.E.T. (Gordon & Sands, 1976), the S.T.E.P. (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1989), and the Triple P (Sanders, Markie-Dadds, & Turner, 2001). By adopting a "transmission model" of education, they reinforce the implicit assumption that the scientific knowledge taught is superior to folkways of parenting. For parents to receive help, they give up cultural learning to accept culturally different ideas of parenting and surrender their sense of agency to expert authority. Therefore, parent education may unwittingly disempower parents even though it means to enhance their competence.

Empowerment refers to the subjective state of mind that gives a person a sense of competence, mastery, and strength and, hence, a sense of control and agency. In parent education, empowerment is the *outcome* as well as the *process* of learning to perform one's parental role with a sense of increased control (Parsons, 1991; Rappaport, 1981), a positive identity, and life satisfaction (Lam, 2003). Empowerment practice (Gerris et al., 1998; Turnbull, Blue-Banning, Turbiville, & Park, 1999) resonates with the "strengths perspective" (Saleebey, 2009; Weick, Rapp, Sullivan, & Kisthardt, 1989) in that people possess the strengths and capabilities to develop competence (Rappaport, 1984). Parent education is empowering if it activates parents' strengths and capabilities such that they begin to appreciate the possibilities of changes. They feel they are being treated as active learners and competent parents striving to provide their children with quality care and family experience for positive child development. The question, then, is "How do helping professionals empower parents while educating them?"

We think the answer lies in grounding parent education on a social constructionist epistemology—knowledge being socially constructed and mediated by language (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Parent education is essentially a culturally embedded, meaning-making process. What parents learn from their experience constitutes their lived knowledge of parenting. This knowledge is socially distributed and institutionalized

within a cultural group and is internalized to constitute a person's world (Clarke & Cochrane, 1998). Parent education on a social constructionist epistemological grounding is culturally sensitive, as it regards the epistemic status of people's lived knowledge as equal to that of expert knowledge. It reckons "different ways of being and acting" and refrains from "judging a group by a particular standard" (Gorman & Balter, 1997, p. 342) or adding "another 'should' to the women's [parents'] lives, by defining . . . a model for 'good' motherhood [parenthood]" (Vincent & Warren, 1998, p. 191).

Such a broadened view of knowledge points to a reinterpretation of what it means to "educate" parents. The goal of parent education is not to engineer expert-prescribed changes. Rather, the goal is to engender transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991, 2000) and facilitate changes in the conceptual schemes that guide parental action (Thomas, 1996). This is accomplished by having parents actively engaged in a collaborative inquiry of their parenting experience and critically examining the conceptual schemes that govern how they perceive, think, and act in a constructed reality of parenthood. In this process, they become aware of how dominant social and professional discourses operate to define what is (not) proper parenting, shape what they believe and do, and constrain how they talk about their experience in parenting. The professional role is to create a conversational space and create a scaffold for a conversational process for learners to collaboratively explore and reflect on how they give meaning to their experience, to examine the implicit premise that gives rise to a person's meaning perspective but also constrains meaning making, and to explore multiple interpretations of experience and new possibilities for seeing and acting in the world.

Helping professionals adopt a "nonexpert position" and acknowledge that expert knowledge is only one among many forms of knowledge. Educating parents is not a unilateral transmission of superior knowledge but an empowering process of collaborative inquiry among adult learners in their quest for "practical intelligence"—the ability they use to find the best fit between themselves and the demands of parenting (Sternberg, 2000; Sternberg & Wagner, 1986). As there is "no convincing blueprint for perfect parenthood" (Hardyment, 1995, p. 352), expert knowledge is given as an

interpretive resource for parents (Rankin, 2005). Professionals encourage parents to determine what is fit for their children (Hardyment, 1995). When premised on these ideas, parent education can give parents a liberating experience and engender in them self-confidence and personal agency (Pugh, De'Ath, & Smith, 1994).

#### AN ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

We tested the aforementioned ideas in an action research project. Action research is a recursive process of inquiry in action—interrelating social action and learning—to produce practical knowledge and generate personal theories of practice that address practical issues. The process involves researchers working with practitioners and other stakeholders in a participative, cooperative inquiry that proceeds in a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a cycle of planning, action, and fact finding (observation, reflection, and data collection). Tentative generalizations are drawn from the newly emerged data, which may then lead to a reformulation of the research questions and the collection of new data (Huang, 2010; McNiff & Whitehead, 2009; Pine, 2009; Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Action researchers subscribe to the social constructionist epistemological standpoint that knowledge is uncertain, being the product of a "coming-to-know" process, and that knowledge creation is a collaborative process (Chandler & Torbert, 2003; Gergen & Gergen, 2008; Pålshaugen, 2007; Wicks, Reason, & Bradbury, 2008). As a proactive research process (Craig, 2009), action research suits the present attempt to develop a new, empowering mode of parent education.

The project began with a series of three research seminars (cooperative inquiry sessions) attended by a group of professionals (mostly social workers and some teachers). Some of them were invited to join, whereas others responded to electronic publicity messages. There were about 10 to 12 professionals taking part in each seminar; some of them joined all three seminars. A group of parents (about the same number as the group of professionals) joined the second and third seminars. They were recruited through two church-sponsored community service projects located in working class communities.

The first seminar examined the question, "Is parent education disempowering?" Participants acceded that parent education is disempowering

if the goal is to impart expert knowledge and guidance to parents. They reached a consensual view that (expert) knowledge becomes useful only after ideas are contextualized within a person’s experience. Parent education for parent empowerment remains an ideological claim until and unless it is given expression in real-world action.

The second seminar examined the question, “What does ‘parenting intelligently’ mean?” We argued that good parenting is intelligent action appropriate to the context and examined whether and how expert knowledge can help parents handle parenting problems intelligently. The parent participants were receptive to expert help but would not indiscriminately accept expert knowledge and their normative judgment, arguing that personal values, expectations, experience, and cultural membership collectively determine one’s view of good parenting. In interviews after this seminar, three parents reiterated the view that “what works for one child may not work for another child; . . . [thus] parents need to be flexible . . . to analyze and judge differing views and opinions.”

The third seminar was on transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000). Group discussion among parents on their experiences and views in using physical punishment to discipline children was arranged. In the debriefing part, professionals and parents were invited to examine how the group leader navigated the conversational process to foster a collaborative inquiry through questioning. In one episode, a parent revised her standpoint, beginning with a concern on “keeping myself emotionally in control to avoid using physical punishment” and ending with the realization that “there is no point of physically punishing my son to make him afraid of me.” Recognizing that the use of physical punishment is a contested issue, the parents could make more informed choices.

#### A GROUP PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM: “SELF-LEARNING IN PARENTHOOD”

In the second phase of the project—the action stage of the cycle—we ran two four-session parent groups in a low-income public housing community located near the boundary with mainland China. The participants were mothers in their late 20s and 30s. From the second session onward, each group had a steady attendance of about 10 mothers. They were recruited by

social workers of a local community service project serving “new-arrival women”—women who had migrated from mainland China to join their husbands and children in Hong Kong. We named the program “Self-learning in Parenthood.” The stated goal was for the participants to collaboratively examine and reflect on their parenting experience in a group-based conversation facilitated by the second author. Process facilitation is guided by the following practice principles:

- Acknowledge members’ expectation of being taught but refrain from privileging expert knowledge or giving advice and guidance
- Give support in the form of reflective listening and probe members to collaboratively inquire into the storied experience shared among them
- Navigate the conversational process to move from being leader centered to group based
- Probe hidden assumptions underlying their parenting experience
- Activate members’ strength and competence by noting “exceptions” (Miller, 1997; de Shazer, 1988), “unique accounts” (M. White & Epston, 1990), and possibilities for change (Friedman & Fanger, 1991).

Four themes were examined in the parent groups, one for each session: (a) how childhood family experience influences parenting beliefs and practice; (b) how parenting difficulties may be rooted in sociocultural contexts, particularly the prevalent discourses on childhood and parenthood; (c) how parents learn from experience to become better problem solvers; and (d) how parents become better problem solvers by learning to empathize with their children. The first two sessions examined how social constructions of parenthood implicate parents as the locus of both problems and solutions and how people’s biographical past may shape their meaning perspectives in parenting. The last two sessions examined “practical intelligence” (Sternberg, 2000) in parenting—how parents construct lived knowledge from their experience and make use of that knowledge to act intelligently in parenting.

All group sessions were videotaped. A review of the recordings of the first group revealed that members were eager to articulate their concerns and problems right from the beginning; we reversed the session themes in the second group to provide greater practical relevance. We also responded to the members’ pedagogical

expectations by giving intermittent summaries to capture significant learning arising from the conversational process. After reading the transcripts and the field notes taken by three postgraduate students who acted as participant observers, we identified the following practical issues: (a) Most of the members looked upon the leader as an expert from whom they sought advice and guidance and (b) apart from relying on our leadership to create a scaffold for the conversational process and foster collaborative learning, the members also looked for “take-home assignments” designed to help them connect ideas with action.

After completing the two groups, we conducted interviews with four participants (two from each group) to solicit their feedback. They advised us that the leader should be more active in teaching and giving advice. Although we named the program “Self-learning in Parenthood,” the participants still adopted the subject position of “learners” even as they acknowledged that “expert knowledge may not be applicable.” Although they valued “learning from each other’s experience,” that was not what motivated them to join the program. “There are many occasions for sharing experience with other parents,” they explained. “We joined the program to learn from you.”

Anna (pseudonym) expressed her unmet expectation as a learner: “I have this goal—to learn something and apply it at home. I wish he [the second author] could give me impartial opinions, . . . his teaching on parenting, but he did not adopt this format. . . . I would prefer getting his advice . . . [but] he wanted us to learn by sharing opinions among ourselves.” Jane (pseudonym) espoused a view more in line with collaborative learning. Nonetheless, she also advised us to teach more actively. “Yes, it stimulated me to reflect, but reflection doesn’t work for people who feel helpless. Learning through sharing experience is of lesser value than learning from experts since their methods are more comprehensive . . . [and] help us to see things from different perspectives [and] analyze problems.”

Data gathered in this project pointed to a number of conclusion: (a) Most if not all participants wanted to learn expert knowledge and prized it more than learning from examining each other’s experience, even though they acknowledged that expert knowledge might not be usefully applied at home; (b) they approached parent education

with the culturally conditioned view that learning entails a unilateral transmission of knowledge from a teacher to a learner; (c) they looked for expert advice to address their problems and concerns in parenting; and (d) they expected experts to provide them concrete solution to solve their difficulties. Reasons for this result might be that in Chinese culture, people revere teachers. Another reason is the participants’ low self-image. Most of these new-arrival women were not well educated. They spoke Putonghua and an accented Cantonese (the local dialect). They felt inferior to “local parents” and lacked local knowledge for raising their children properly. They espoused a strong problem-solving orientation consistent with what is documented in the literature on adult learning (Knowles, 1984; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005).

#### THE “PARADOX OF EMPOWERMENT” IN PARENT EDUCATION

What we learned in this action research project confronts us with a new version of the paradox of empowerment. It is not simply about a basic contradiction “in the idea of people empowering others because of the very institutional structure that puts one group in a position to empower” (Gruber & Trickett, 1987, cited in Simon, 1990, p. 32); it is also about the imposition of the professional ideology of empowerment on parents who do not regard being taught by professionals as a loss of agency and control. Given this new version of the paradox of empowerment, how can parent education be empowering to parents in Hong Kong? How can we resocialize parents to believe that they are their own experts amid increasing professional control over the private domain of parenting? How do professionals help if not by transmitting their expert knowledge to parents?

Professionals hold knowledge and power (Foucault, 1980) that gives them the mandate to regulate parenthood. Professional power is accepted by the lay public as “a generative or productive, rather than repressive force” (Guilfoyle, 2005, p. 103). The “elevated status of ‘truth-telling’ professionals” (Guilfoyle, 2005, p. 104) reinforces people’s expectation that professionals know best. Such an institutionalized power imbalance hardens the divide between the subject position of the “educator” and that of the “learner.” Thus, there is always a stable and unidirectional power pathway for professionals

to teach parents. It will be an uphill battle to convince the lay public that learning to become better parents can take the novel path of inquiring into one’s own parenting experience and constructing knowledge collaboratively with other parents.

There is also the macrosphere to consider if parent education is to be empowering. Individuals feel empowered when they have a sense of control over their lives and when change or outcomes can be attributed to their own effort. They feel enabled when they have opportunities to develop and display competence (Rappaport, 1985). As today’s Hong Kong parents face difficulties arising from external forces impinging on the ecology of parenting, however, they are being reminded of the significance of parenting on the one hand and their ignorance of how to be good parents on the other. This results in a growing sense of powerlessness. It resembles the state of affairs in the United States in the 1980s, which bred “an attitude of self-blame” and “an experience of disenfranchisement and vulnerability” (Kieffer, 1984, p. 16). Therefore, for parent education to be empowering, it must go beyond the personal to address the “embedding of an act in a context that itself guides or moulds the act” (Bleakley, 1999, p. 323), such that people see in parenting “not just a ‘doing’ but a ‘being’” (Bleakley, 1999, p. 324).

#### RESOLVING THE PARADOX OF EMPOWERMENT

Given the inherent power imbalance between professionals and parents, empowerment in parent education necessarily begins with helping professionals acknowledging parents’ expectation to be taught and negotiating with them the content and method(s) of learning. In the two parent groups, we did not really negotiate but instead imposed our ideology of empowerment on the parents. We refrained from sharing our expert knowledge and resisted meeting their explicit requests for advice. As helping professionals are also social control agents, such a stance is untenable in some situations, such as when parental performance borders on child abuse and neglect. In retrospect, we realize that by withholding our expert knowledge and advice, we were also exercising professional power. Although we tried to redress the institutionalized power imbalance in parent education, implicitly we also privileged our expert knowledge, as we took it for granted that the parents

would accept uncritically any expert knowledge provided.

A social constructionist epistemology does not privilege any particular knowledge claim. Following this epistemological standpoint, we should critically examine how our professional accounts of parenting “are constructed to warrant particular claims and to undermine others” (Taylor & White, 2000, p. 34). When we think about what we are doing, we begin a process of epistemic reflexivity and become “aware of the dominant professional constructions influencing [our] practice” (S. White, 1997, p. 749). This process of collaborative inquiry with parents becomes a “covert political re-education” (Kitzinger & Perkins, 1993) by acknowledging the limits of professional knowledge and the contested nature of knowledge claims.

When parent educators become reflexive of how our expert knowledge is privileged not only by people looking for professional help but also by the epistemological assumptions we hold, we are in a position to navigate the micropolitics of the interaction between us as the educator and parents as the learner. Rather than validating the conventional conception of teaching and learning by relating to parents as “truth-telling professionals,” we negotiate with them a new power relation in terms of collaboration and partnership. In this project, we found that parents wanted to be taught, but they were not indiscriminate in receiving expert knowledge. The concern that divulging our professional knowledge results in disempowering parents is not necessarily the case. We now come to the view that parents “have a right to our best professional information and judgment so that they can make informed choices” (McCollum, 1999, p. 149). We also learn from parents and “discover the many different, even contradictory, solutions that they use to gain control, find meaning, and empower their own lives” (Rappaport, 1981, p. 21). Such an ideological standpoint resonates with the “strengths perspective” (Saleebey, 2009) that people proceed in the best way they can (Weick et al., 1989). In this new mode of parent education, parents and professionals educate each other on behalf of children. Parents *feel* empowered when they feel competent and with sense of agency and control, rather than “*being* empowered by professionals.”

The competence-based model of parenting is not compatible with the reflexive,

collaborative stance between parents and professionals espoused above. As parenting is a highly contextualized and individualized practice, professionals are no longer standard-bearers wielding the authority to judge and evaluate parental competence. At the core of parent empowerment is the awareness that lived experience is the source of learning in parenthood. The professional role is to help parents engage in critical self-reflection and to facilitate a collaborative inquiry of their parenting experience (Mezirow, 1990). Sheppard, Newstead, Caccavo, and Ryan (2000) examined the cognitive processes of knowledge that can also be applied to parent education. The reflexive process of critical appraisal, hypothesis generation, and forward speculation, followed by hypothesis testing and critical analysis, helps parents transform their experience into lived knowledge and takes into account the values, beliefs, and meanings of parenthood. For parent education to be empowering, it must facilitate parents' attempts to reconceive their experience and analyze how they think and act in recurring difficulties with their children. They are reengaged with the reality of parenthood not as given but as a product of social constructions, with the realization that what they know and how they act are historically situated and conditioned by dominant discourses. When helping professionals create a scaffold for a process of collaborative inquiry to look for insight into parenting, parent education will open a pathway for people to reengage with their parental roles and become aware of the possibilities available for them.

What we learned in this project is not generalizable, as action research is highly contextualized. The new-arrival women taking part in the two parent groups perceived themselves as being at the fringe of the mainstream society in Hong Kong. For this reason, they might have held a strong expectation about learning from experts. Nonetheless, they would not follow expert guidance blindly. To extend the work of this project, the "Self-learning in Parenthood" program will be replicated, with modifications made in the light of the foregoing discussion about parent empowerment. The second cycle of this action research includes parent groups in two kindergartens, one serving mostly middle-class families and the other serving working-class families, both located in the old urban center. With further deliberations, we then will be able to respond better to parents' expectation of

learning from experts while engaging them in a reflective examination of their parenting experience in a collaborative learning process with other parents.

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