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# A better deal wanted for kindergartens

**KINDERGARTEN** teachers should receive more pay and more training for an improved pre-school education, an educationalist said yesterday.

Anthony Ha, chairman of the Education Action Group (EAG), was commenting on the recommendations by the panel of overseas experts on the local education system.

Several other concerned groups on pre-school education, meanwhile, will also meet in the next few days to discuss the report.

The four-man panel of experts said in their report that "kindergartens should become part of the aided sector" and that the government should "become more interventionist in policy determination" of these schools.

"The EAG is concerned about the low salaries of kindergarten teachers and

by  
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urges that a reasonable salary scale be adopted and that the teacher training programme be accelerated," he said.

Citing an EAG survey carried out in 1979, Mr Ha said kindergarten teachers' salaries ranged from \$430 to \$795 per month.

It was estimated that there were more than 4,500 untrained kindergarten teachers by 1982 - 80 per cent of all teachers for pre-school education - whereas the number of children receiving kindergarten education was 200,000, a 65 per cent increase compared with 10 years ago.

Mr Ha believes that the pay scale had improved marginally over the past three years.

The panel did not mention the salary scale of kindergarten teachers though they strongly emphasised the preparatory stage of education which had been overlooked by the government, Mr Ha said.

The panel said "very high priority should be given" to the training of these teachers.

"Child-care and the kindergarten should both develop a strong concern for the child's social and personal development, creative and motor skills, concept formation and linguistic competence," the report said.

"And more attention should be given to the construction of Chinese (rather than Western) curriculum materials," it added.

The report also said the college of education's in-service professional development programmes for kindergarten teachers, should be planned so that by 1990 about three-quarters of this sector of the teaching service

ought to be suitably qualified and prepared.

Mr Ha, a local educationalist urged the government to speed up this training programme.

These teachers, he said, should have the same qualifications as primary school teachers.

He said that in the US many teachers were university graduates while one-third of those in Britain have received a master's degree.

Without proper training, he said, it was difficult to expect Hongkong's kindergarten teachers to carry out their duties.

The panel also pointed out, however, that little could be achieved unless radical changes were made in primary school entry patterns so that the selecting and screening pressures on kindergartens could be diminished.

It said both teachers and parents were obsessed with the Primary One entrance examination.

Some of the examination papers contained more than 10 different tests, the report said, with general linguistic competence in Chinese and English, and numeracy, the core subjects.

Even in less competitive kindergartens traditional methods of rote learning continued to be the norm, the report pointed out.

It said strong measures should be taken to prevent primary schools from setting entrance examinations and that a district net system be set up whereby as many children as possible were allocated to schools near their homes, taking parental choice into account.

The EAG also criticised the government for excessive examination pressure and called for the abolition of Primary One entrance exams and the use of the random allocation system on a neighbourhood basis to ease the burden of kindergarten pupils.