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including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Beijing Changier Education Foundation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Strengthening Family Cultural Capital to Advance Educational Equity: A Human Rights-Based Approach

Introduction:

Educational equality is a fundamental pillar of global progress and individual development. The family, as the primary environment for a child's growth and learning, plays a decisive role in shaping educational outcomes. Family capital—comprising economic, social, and cultural dimensions—collectively influences the opportunities available to children. While significant efforts have been made to address economic and social disparities through financial aid, material donations, and regional collaborations, the crucial role of cultural capital in facilitating access to education, especially higher education, remains frequently underestimated and under-addressed.

Human Rights-based Solutions:

To achieve true educational equity, it is essential that solutions focus on strengthening family cultural capital through a comprehensive human rights-based approach. This involves designing and implementing policies that empower parents, particularly those from marginalized or lower-income backgrounds, to effectively support their children's education and ensure their right to equal educational opportunities.

1. Creating Equitable Access to Educational Information:

The United Nations should take a leading role in advocating for the creation of official national platforms that provide authoritative, reliable, and accessible educational information to all parents, regardless of their background. These platforms would serve as a crucial tool in bridging the information gap for families with lower cultural capital, ensuring they have timely access to essential educational resources and knowledge. By democratizing access to educational information, these platforms would help to reduce the disparities in educational opportunities that often arise from unequal access to knowledge, thereby supporting all children in reaching their full potential.

These platforms should be tailored to meet the diverse needs of different populations, with content available in multiple languages and formats to ensure inclusivity. Additionally, the information provided should cover a wide range of topics, including early childhood education, primary and secondary education, college admissions processes, scholarship opportunities, and guidance on navigating the complexities of the educational system. By providing parents with the tools and knowledge they need to actively participate in their children's education, these platforms would play a vital role in fostering educational equity.

2. Implementing Comprehensive Parent Education Programs:

Middle and high schools should be encouraged and supported to offer specialized courses for parents who lack higher education or who may not be familiar with the educational system in their country. These courses should be designed to provide parents with comprehensive knowledge about the educational landscape, including critical areas such as college admissions processes, financial aid opportunities, student life, and the broader higher education system. By bridging gaps in educational information, these programs would enhance parents' ability to support their children's educational planning and decision-making, thus helping to level the playing field for all students, regardless of their family's cultural capital.

To maximize the effectiveness of these programs, it is crucial to conduct thorough preliminary needs assessments. This can be achieved by collecting detailed data from parents upon enrollment, including their educational backgrounds, levels of understanding of educational issues, and specific areas where they require support.

Additionally, gathering feedback through anonymous online surveys can help in tailoring the course content to address the specific needs and challenges faced by different parent groups. This targeted approach would ensure that the curricula developed are relevant, effective, and capable of reducing informational barriers, thereby mitigating educational inequalities that stem from cultural capital disparities.

3. Employing a Variety of Instructional Formats to Meet Diverse Needs:

Recognizing the diverse needs of parents and the varying contexts across different regions, parent education programs should employ a variety of instructional formats to enhance parental engagement and cultural literacy. These formats should be designed to accommodate different learning styles, schedules, and levels of access to technology, ensuring that all parents can benefit from the programs offered.

1. **Lectures:** Regularly scheduled lectures, featuring experts, educators, or parents of distinguished former students, can serve as an effective means of disseminating family education principles, case studies, and practical strategies. These lectures should be offered both online and offline to maximize accessibility. Offline sessions can be hosted at schools, community centers, or other public venues, providing opportunities for face-to-face interactions, Q&A sessions, and personalized guidance. Online lectures should be recorded and made available for later access, allowing parents to engage with the content at their convenience.
2. **Discussion Forums:** These forums provide a more interactive and intimate environment where educators, experienced parents, and other participants can engage in meaningful dialogue about family education practices, challenges, and information acquisition. The interactive nature of discussion forums allows for the identification of diverse parental concerns and the provision of tailored guidance. These forums are particularly well-suited for smaller, in-person groups and can be conducted in schools, meeting rooms, or similar settings, fostering a sense of community and shared learning among participants.
3. **Online Courses:** Serving as a valuable supplement to in-person instruction, online courses can further advance parental cultural literacy through a flexible and extensive range of resources. Online platforms such as Khan Academy, Coursera, and other educational technology providers offer high-quality online courses and personalized learning pathways that can be adapted to create specialized online parent education platforms. This approach complements in-person instruction and broadens the range of available educational resources, making it easier for parents to access information across different times and locations.

By integrating these diverse instructional methods, parent education programs can establish a comprehensive, inclusive, and accessible system for parent education, which is essential for reducing educational inequalities rooted in cultural capital disparities.

4. Enhancing School-Family Collaboration:

For these educational initiatives to be truly effective, it is essential to strengthen collaboration between schools and families. Schools must actively cultivate strong partnerships with parents, recognizing them as key stakeholders in their children's education. Establishing parent committees and offering regular educational courses designed to improve parents' cultural literacy are vital steps in fostering this collaboration. These committees should work closely with schools to collect and analyze feedback on the practical utility, satisfaction levels, and effectiveness of the educational programs offered, using surveys and individual interviews to gather insights.

Furthermore, schools should facilitate the creation of communication platforms, such as online forums or social media groups, where parents can connect, share experiences, and support one another. By inviting experienced parents of past successful students to participate in these platforms, schools can create a valuable resource for addressing parental concerns, encouraging information exchange, and building a supportive network among parents. Such initiatives are crucial for addressing the informational disparities faced by parents with limited cultural capital and for enhancing their confidence and ability to support their children's educational aspirations.

Conclusion:

Family cultural capital plays a crucial role in shaping children's development and academic success. To advance educational equity, it is imperative to prioritize the enhancement of family cultural capital through a human rights-based approach. We strongly urge the United Nations Human Rights Council to intensify its research and engagement with the issue of disparities in family cultural capital, recognizing that these disparities are not only educational challenges but also human rights concerns.

Integrating the establishment of official information platforms, the implementation of comprehensive parent education programs, and the enhancement of school-family collaboration into national policies is essential for advancing true educational equity. Addressing these disparities requires the active involvement and investment of all key stakeholders, including government agencies, policymakers, civil society organizations, and the private sector.

By committing to these strategies and fostering a collective effort, we can work towards a more just and equitable society by 2030—one where every student has the opportunity to thrive within a supportive family environment and to benefit from equitable educational opportunities. Together, we can dismantle the barriers to educational equality and ensure that all children, regardless of their background, have the chance to reach their full potential.

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