

LCQ20: Implementation of national security education in schools

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Lo Wai-kwok and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (September 1):

Question:

The Curriculum Framework of National Security Education in Hong Kong published by the Education Bureau (EDB) in February this year displays in a tabular form the learning content of national security education. The relevant content is embedded in different learning areas/subjects, as well as in the learning progression at different stages of primary and secondary schools. In addition, schools may implement national security education through learning activities outside the classroom. Schools are required to gradually implement measures related to national security education in the 2021-2022 school year and then fully implement national security education from the 2022-2023 school year onwards. Nevertheless, according to the outcome of a questionnaire survey conducted from April to May this year, nearly half of the surveyed schools indicated that they were not ready to implement national security education, that they had encountered difficulties in designing the curriculum content and teaching materials, and that the training for teachers was inadequate. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the EDB has gained an understanding from schools about the difficulties they have encountered in preparing for the implementation of national security education, and provided them with the necessary support to assist them in commencing national security education smoothly; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) given that in reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council in March this year, the EDB did not undertake to disburse to schools a national security education support grant and merely indicated that schools might use other grants or apply to the Quality Education Fund for funding, whether the EDB will consider afresh disbursing to all schools such a grant as a dedicated fund for dedicated use, so as to ensure that schools have sufficient resources to implement national security education; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether the EDB will consider providing funding to primary and secondary schools for creating posts dedicated to co-ordinating the implementation of national security education within and outside the classroom; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Education Bureau (EDB) shall, in accordance with Article 10 of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (National Security Law), proactively implement national security education (NSE) in schools to enhance students' awareness of national security and law-abidingness. NSE is part of, and inseparable from, national education. The fundamentals of NSE are to develop in students a sense of belonging to the country, an affection for the Chinese people, a sense of national identity, as well as an awareness of and a sense of responsibility for safeguarding national security, and to develop students into law-abiding citizens who have a sense of national identity and respect for the rule of law. To this end, the EDB issued circulars between February and May 2021 to announce the newly compiled "Curriculum Framework of National Security Education in Hong Kong" and frameworks on NSE for 15 subjects at the primary and secondary levels. These frameworks illustrate the related topics, teaching foci and learning elements in the existing primary and secondary curricula of different subjects that are conducive to and can be enhanced for promoting national security, and also explain the learning and teaching foci of NSE in different subjects. Schools may make reference to the two levels of curriculum frameworks as mentioned to enhance the co-ordination and planning of different subjects and the whole-school curriculum while the concepts related to NSE can be connected naturally and integrated organically with subject learning and teaching as well as diversified learning activities. A whole-school approach should be adopted to enhance students' sense of national identity and law-abiding awareness.

Our reply to Dr the Hon Lo Wai-kwok's questions is as follows:

(1) As stated in the EDB Circular No. 3/2021, schools should form a relevant working group or assign a dedicated person to take charge of the liaison and co-ordination work for the promotion of NSE and adopt a whole-school approach in formulating and implementing measures related to safeguarding national security and promoting NSE. In addition, schools should review the current situation and submit a review report and a work plan for the 2021/22 school year to the EDB by the end of August 2021. To assist schools in putting in place administrative and educational measures on safeguarding national security and promoting NSE as early as possible, over the past months, the EDB has explained the related measures to schools in detail and gained an understanding of schools' work progress through briefing sessions, meetings, school visits and teleconferences. Also, relevant support has been provided for schools to prepare the review report and work plan for the 2021/22 school year.

To facilitate the smooth implementation of NSE in schools, the EDB has been adopting a "multi-pronged and co-ordinated" approach to enhance the support for schools through a variety of measures. Besides updating the curriculum guides, we have also launched other concrete measures including the development of learning and teaching resources, provision of teachers' training and organisation of student activities. We will continuously follow up on the implementation of NSE in individual schools and related matters through different channels such as school visits and regular contact with schools.

As for learning and teaching resources, through the circulars to schools issued between February and May 2021, the EDB introduced the learning and teaching resources on NSE, including the "Supplement: National Security" added to the standalone module on "the Constitution and the Basic Law" at the junior secondary level, as well as the newly produced audio picture books entitled "Let's Learn about National Security" and "National Security Begins at Home" for primary and secondary students respectively. Such learning and teaching resources will help students understand the basic concepts of national security through animated stories. To support teachers in correctly understanding the National Security Law and implementing the NSE, the Ministry of Education has specially selected a text written by legal scholars for distribution to kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools offering the local curriculum by the end of August as reference for teachers.

Furthermore, in support of "Take a Spark, Pass it on: The First Territory-wide Primary Schools Quiz Competition on Chinese History and Culture" held from April to July 2021, the EDB recommended to schools a list of reading materials, including online reading resources, suitable for primary students and distributed to schools the book series entitled "My Home is in China". In addition, the EDB has produced the "Little National Affairs Experts" Interactive Quiz Game Resource Pack in stages for primary and secondary students to learn about the Constitution, the Basic Law, national security, the development of our country and related matters in a relaxing and fun way. The EDB will continue to produce teaching materials on NSE and national education for adoption by primary and secondary schools.

As for teacher training, we have, in line with the curriculum, rolled out comprehensive and systematic training programmes on NSE for all school principals and teachers. The related training activities include knowledge enrichment seminars, updated online self-learning courses, and a series of professional training programmes on the planning of the whole-school curriculum and related subjects, aiming at enabling schools to be professionally prepared to make enhanced efforts to promote the Constitution, Basic Law and national security education. A number of seminars given by expert scholars have been held and the response was overwhelming. We will continue to enhance teachers' professional capacity through organising teacher networks and learning circles, in which experienced front-line teachers will try out the learning and teaching resources and share their teaching experience.

To enable schools to better understand the importance of holistic planning of NSE at the curriculum level, starting from the 2021/22 school year, the EDB organises on-site workshops for teachers of primary and secondary schools offering the local curriculum in Hong Kong. Since the announcement of the launch of the workshops in mid-August 2021, we have received applications from over 90 per cent of the schools in just two weeks. We are glad to see the enthusiastic response and strong support for NSE from the school sector.

Regarding student activities, the EDB continuously organises multifarious territory-wide student activities (such as the Territory-wide

Inter-school Basic Law Competition and Constitution Day Online Quiz Competition) and has provided schools with the "National Education – Event Planning Calendar" covering important days (such as the National Day, the Constitution Day, the National Security Education Day), with a view to encouraging schools to organise relevant learning activities, such as raising the national flag and the regional flag as well as playing and singing the national anthem. This will help develop students into good citizens who have a sense of national identity, show respect for the rule of law and abide by the law, hence safeguarding national security. In tandem with the "National Security Education Day" this year, the EDB arranged an array of activities for students which included the School Bulletin Board Design Competition on National Security and the "National Security Education Day Online Quiz Competition 2021" to support schools in promoting NSE. Furthermore, the EDB has launched the "Basic Law Student Ambassadors Training Scheme" to provide students with diversified life-wide learning and training activities, with a view to deepening their understanding of the Constitution, the Basic Law and the development of our country. 1 200 students from more than 160 primary and secondary schools have participated in the Scheme.

The EDB has been organising different kinds of Mainland exchange programmes and subsidising those organised by schools (the exchange quota is about 100 000 per year), allowing students to gain first-hand experience of our country's development in various aspects (including culture, economy, education, science and technology), have a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the nation and Hong Kong, and develop a sense of belonging to the country.

The EDB will continue to maintain close communication with schools to provide the necessary support for the smooth implementation of NSE in schools.

(2) Apart from the regular funding for schools, the EDB has, starting from the 2019/20 school year, provided public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools with the recurrent Life-wide Learning Grant (LWL Grant), with an annual provision of about \$900 million, to support schools in taking forward, on the present foundation, life-wide learning with enhanced efforts, hence allowing students to participate in more diversified experiential learning activities outside the classroom. The amount of the LWL Grant provided to a primary school and a secondary school operating 24 classes will be about \$0.76 million and \$1.17 million per year respectively. Schools may utilise the LWL Grant and other subsidies as well as apply to the Quality Education Fund for funding to plan life-wide learning activities related to NSE (including Mainland exchange programmes). Given that schools generally have surplus funding, the Government should instead be prudent in its allocation of resources with due regard to the epidemic situation. Therefore, setting up another fund for dedicated use is not considered at the moment.

(3) The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has a constitutional responsibility to safeguard national security. Safeguarding national sovereignty and unity as well as territorial integrity is the obligation of all the Chinese people, including residents in Hong Kong. Therefore, it is the responsibility of schools and all teachers to implement NSE in the school

curriculum. Setting up working groups or assigning dedicated staff to take charge of the liaison and co-ordination work on NSE is considered a matter of work allocation and does not involve the creation of new posts.

NSE is integral to national education and is closely linked to other components including Chinese history education as well as Constitution and Basic Law education. With the adoption of a whole-school approach and cross-subject collaboration, schools can implement NSE through related subjects and life-wide learning activities. The holistic learning experiences provided can help nurture in students a sense of national identity. The EDB will maintain communication with schools and provide relevant support as appropriate. For the time being, we have no plan to create dedicated posts in schools for the co-ordination work.