

LCQ3: Basic Law Test for newly-appointed teachers

Following is a question by the Hon Cheung Kwok-kwan and a reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (May 25):

Question:

The Chief Executive announced in the 2021 Policy Address that starting from the 2022-2023 school year, newly-appointed regular teachers in public sector schools are required to pass the Basic Law Test (BLT) in order to be considered for appointment. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will make public the number of teachers who obtained a pass in the first round of BLT held in January this year; if so, of such number, together with a breakdown by type of newly-appointed regular teachers (i.e. newly-joined teachers, and in-service teachers who were changing schools or switching to a regular teaching post), as well as the respective percentages of that number of passed teachers in the number of teachers who sat for BLT and in the number of teachers in public sector schools across the territory;

(2) of the number, in the second round of BLT held this month, of those teachers who re-sat BLT as they had not obtained a pass in the first round of BLT, and when the Government will announce the results of this round of BLT; and

(3) as some members of the education sector have relayed that May to July each year is the peak season for schools to conduct teachers recruitment, whether it has assessed if the two rounds of BLT conducted so far by the Government for teachers could meet the demand of schools; if it has assessed and the outcome is in the negative, whether it will consider immediately arranging additional BLT sessions and allowing teachers to submit their BLT results later on, so as to help schools rationalise the procedure for teachers recruitment; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Basic Law is the constitutional document for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) which enshrines the basic policies of the People's Republic of China regarding Hong Kong, provides a solid constitutional basis for the implementation of the concept of "one country, two systems" and the various systems in the HKSAR. It is closely related to our daily lives. The Basic Law has been a key element of the school curriculum. Students learn the related concept and its importance through diverse learning experience within and beyond the classroom. Besides, the

words and deeds of teachers have a far-reaching impact on students' growth. Teachers should be committed to nurturing students into quality citizens with a sense of social responsibility and national identity, an affection for Hong Kong as well as an international perspective. In this regard, teachers should have a correct understanding of the Basic Law so that they could enlighten students and help them correctly understand the constitutional status of Hong Kong and develop positive attitudes towards the Basic Law and "one country, two systems". We require teachers to have a clear understanding of the Basic Law, and make it one of the entry requirements for teachers.

Starting from the 2022/23 school year, regular teachers in public sector schools are required to pass the designated Basic Law Tests (BLT) before they could be considered for appointment. This requirement is applicable to newly appointed regular teachers including newly-joined teachers, teachers changing schools, teachers switching to a regular teaching post from a teaching post outside the approved establishment and monthly-paid temporary teachers. Designated BLTs include the BLTs organised by the Education Bureau (EDB) and the Civil Service Bureau (CSB), as well as the Basic Law and National Security Law Test (BLNST) newly introduced by the CSB in June 2022.

Our reply to the Hon Cheung Kwok-kwan's question is as follows:

(1) & (2) To tie in with the above requirement, the EDB conducted two rounds of the BLT on a pilot basis. The first round was held on January 8, 2022 with around 5 400 applicants. Around 4 200 candidates sat for the test and the attendance rate was about 80 per cent. Over 70 per cent of the attendees obtained a pass result in the test, which was similar to the results of the BLTs conducted by the CSB. The second round of the BLT, originally scheduled to be held in late February, was postponed to May 21 in light of the severe epidemic situation. There were around 9 100 applicants and the attendance rate was about 80 per cent. We are now speeding up the marking and checking processes and it is expected that the test results will be issued to candidates starting from late May to early June.

The objective of organising the two rounds of the BLT is to help teachers who plan to join a school and those changing schools in the public school sector in the 2022/23 school year to fulfil the relevant requirement. The test results will be recognised regardless of which rounds of the BLT the candidates joined or whether they joined the second round after failing to obtain a pass result in the first round. Therefore, relevant data analyses on candidates of these two rounds of test are not conducted.

Persons who join the above BLTs are required to possess a bachelor's degree or are to-be graduates with equivalent qualifications. However, there is no requirement that they must be newly-joined teachers or teachers changing schools. In fact, we do not have data on whether they will apply for joining a school or changing schools, or whether they have successfully joined a school or changed schools. Firstly, most schools have not started their recruitment exercise for the 2022/23 school year. More importantly, it is not meaningful to provide such data as whether candidates of the BLT will apply for joining a school or changing schools and whether their applications are successful depend on a number of factors. Currently, the BLT requirement

is only applicable to newly-appointed teachers within the approved establishment in public sector schools. As candidates who obtain a pass result may not necessarily join a school or change schools, it is not appropriate to compare the number of candidates passing the test with the number of teachers in all public sector schools in Hong Kong.

The EDB will consolidate the experience gained from the pilot tests, review in detail the relevant arrangements, including the mode of the test and the content of the test, and draw up the arrangements for the 2023/24 school year and thereafter.

(3) The EDB issued a circular to schools and a press release to the public on November 11, 2021 announcing the above BLT requirement and relevant arrangements. The arrangements for the second round test were also announced through press releases on January 20, February 10 and April 11, 2022. The above documents are also uploaded onto the EDB webpage. When announcing the details of the second round test, we have clearly specified that it would be the last round of BLT organised by the EDB in this school year. As the test was postponed to May 21 due to the epidemic, application was reopened. For each round of application, while it was specified that the number of places was limited, we have arranged more test centres to provide more places to meet the needs of all the teachers. In the end, all applications were accepted. In other words, the EDB has announced clearly the test arrangements on many occasions and provided sufficient opportunities and places for interested applicants. Teachers who wish to change their working environment have been provided with ample opportunities to thoroughly consider if they would take the test. The two rounds of the test accepted a total of around 14 500 applications and the number of attendees is about 11 480. In addition, if persons who wish to join a public sector school or to change school have obtained a pass result in a BLT (Degree/Professional Grades) conducted by the CSB or the BLNST (Degree/Professional Grades) it organised from June 2022 will be considered to have met the relevant requirement. We expect that schools should not have recruitment difficulties due to the BLT requirement. If there are special situations of individual schools, we will consider on a case-by-case basis.

Thank you, President.