

## LCQ6: Teacher qualifications for humanities subjects of primary and secondary schools

Following is a question by Professor the Hon Lau Chi-pang and a reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (December 13):

Question:

In the 2023 Policy Address, the Chief Executive has announced the introduction of Primary Humanities. According to the information from the Education Bureau, the Humanities curriculum covers contents such as community, citizenship and the country, and is based on the current General Studies curriculum with enrichment on elements of Chinese culture, history and national geography. Some members of the public are concerned about the teacher qualifications for and the teaching quality of humanities subjects of primary and secondary schools. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the criteria to be adopted and the arrangements to be made for selecting Primary Humanities teachers, so as to ensure that they have a thorough understanding of contents such as the development of the country, and to safeguard the teaching quality;
- (2) whether it will consider requiring that primary school teachers must complete Mainland study tours with a minimum number of study hours before they can teach Humanities, so as to ensure that they have personal experience and understanding of the latest development of the country, and to enhance their capability to impart knowledge in Humanities; and
- (3) as there are views that a large number of teachers are required for the subjects of Senior Secondary Citizenship and Social Development, Junior Secondary Chinese History and Primary Humanities, whether the Government has considered including relevant contents such as the completion of Mainland study tours as graduation requirements for degree programmes in education, with a view to deepening the relevant students' understanding of the development of the country and enabling them to make early preparation for taking up a career in education in the future?

Reply:

President,

Following the announcement of the introduction of Primary Humanities in "The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address", the Education Bureau (EDB) promulgated the Primary Humanities Curriculum Framework (Provisional Draft)

and related complementary arrangements on November 23, 2023. The newly introduced Primary Humanities rests on the foundation of the current curriculum of General Studies for Primary Schools, with most of the content derived from that of the existing General Studies. In order for the curriculum to keep pace with the times and cultivate in students' sense of belonging towards our country, an affection for the Chinese people as well as a sense of national identity more systematically for the implementation of patriotic education, elements of Chinese culture, national history and national geography are enriched through reorganisation and integration of themes.

Our reply to the question raised by Professor the Hon Lau Chi-pang is as follows:

(1) Regarding the criteria and selection of Primary Humanities teachers

As in other subjects at primary level, schools in general will deploy teachers to teach Primary Humanities according to various criteria, including competency, expertise, experiences, qualifications. Given the fact that Primary Humanities is not a brand new subject and most of the content of the curriculum is derived from the existing General Studies curriculum, teachers currently teaching General Studies should master the teaching content, pedagogy and assessment methods of the subject and take up the teaching of the new curriculum competently.

Nevertheless, to facilitate more effective implementation of the new curriculum in schools, the EDB will, as always, continue to provide diversified professional training courses, seminars and workshops for teachers, to enable them to fully understand the contents such as the latest development of our country and accurately grasp the curriculum and assessment requirements of Primary Humanities, as well as the related pedagogical approaches in order to ensure the quality of teaching and learning. Starting from the 2023/24 school year, the EDB provides professional training courses that offer approximately 4 000 places every year. The content of the courses covers national historical figures and stories, cultural heritage of our country, national geography, the latest development of our country, etc. Furthermore, we have also set up the Primary Humanities Learning Circle to facilitate professional exchange among teachers and broaden their horizons.

(2) Regarding the suggestion on the requirements of training hours of Mainland study tours for humanities education

The EDB clearly stipulated in the Guidelines on Teachers' Professional Conduct issued in December 2022 that teachers should set cultivating values and nurturing people as the goal, be committed to cultivating the younger generation with an affection for their country and their home. As such, all teachers are required to have a full understanding of the national affairs and the latest development of our country in order to help students accurately understand our country and cultivate their sense of belonging to our country. In fact, the EDB has all along been providing diversified study tours and exchange activities as well as Mainland study tours which are in

line with the school curriculum and the latest development of our country. Furthermore, newly-joined teachers in publicly-funded schools and promoted teachers in public sector schools are currently required to participate in the Mainland study tours to understand and experience the latest development of our country.

The EDB has organised a total of seven study tours for newly-joined teachers from April to July this year, providing training opportunities in the Mainland for 820 teachers. In the 2023/24 school year, the EDB will even largely increase the places for the Mainland study tours, co-operate with various Mainland institutions in different provinces and cities to organise around 45 Mainland study tours for approximately 5 000 newly-joined teachers in publicly-funded schools and promoted teachers in public sector schools, providing teachers with ample opportunities to engage in learning in the Mainland.

Moreover, the EDB and school sponsoring bodies will also provide professional exchange and training activities in the Mainland with different themes to teachers with reference to the actual needs through thematic talks, school visits, visits to enterprises, cultural sites and historical relics, etc, which allow them to gain first-hand experience of the latest development of our country so as to strengthen their abilities to nurture students' sense of national identity. Teachers can also participate in multifaceted exchanges with their counterparts in the Mainland through various channels and platforms, such as the Sister School Scheme and Mainland-Hong Kong Teachers Exchange and Collaboration Programme. At present, all teachers, including those who will teach Primary Humanities have rich opportunities to take part in Mainland study tours. They possess considerable knowledge and understanding of national affairs and the latest development of our country.

We consider that at this stage, it is not necessary to set training hour requirements of study tours for individual subjects. Nevertheless, we will continuously review the implementation of the curriculum and make adjustments to the strategies of teacher training and arrangements with reference to the professional views of the relevant Ad Hoc Committee and in response to the actual situation with the objective of ensuring the quality of teaching.

(3) Regarding the suggestion on Mainland study tours as the graduation requirements of education degree programmes

According to existing mechanism, the tertiary institutions of Hong Kong will keep abreast of social development and educational trends, keep pace with the times, review and update the graduation requirements and the programmes. As always, the Government fully supports the institutions to provide opportunities of Mainland study tours for tertiary students.

For the requirements of degree programmes related to education, the EDB has collaborated with teacher education universities to develop a guiding framework for primary and secondary teacher education programmes, which will be implemented progressively starting from the 2023/24 academic year. Given that the guiding framework covers "Other Learning Experiences", teacher

education universities are recommended to arrange for prospective teacher visits to the Mainland at least once for learning and exchanges during their study period so as to broaden their horizons and gain first-hand experience of the development of our country, thereby enhancing their sense of national identity. Currently, some teacher education universities have already provided prospective teachers with opportunities to participate in Mainland study tours and exchange activities, including various study tours, academic and cultural exchanges, and visits to schools in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Among those, the Education University of Hong Kong has incorporated Mainland study tour related contents into the compulsory modules of the Bachelor of Education programmes, with a view to deepening prospective teachers' understanding of the development of our country.

Furthermore, the EDB provides subsidies through the Mainland Experience Scheme for Post-Secondary Students to assist their participation in short-term study or internship in the Mainland, and encourage them to learn through first-hand experience of the country's latest development and have a deeper understanding of social, economic and cultural landscape of the Mainland. Moreover, as announced in the 2023 Policy Address, starting from the 2023/24 academic year, the University Grants Committee (UGC) will inject \$100 million into the Funding Scheme for Mainland and Global Engagement and Student Learning Experience for universities to provide more student exchange and learning opportunities to the Mainland and outside Hong Kong in the coming three academic years, at the same time achieving the target promulgated in the 2022 Policy Address of having about 50 per cent of local undergraduate students of UGC-funded universities gaining learning experiences in the Mainland and outside Hong Kong by the 2025/26 academic year. The EDB encourages the teacher education universities to make good use of the related subsidies in arranging Mainland exchange and study tour activities for students of education degree programmes.

In sum, to tie in with the implementation of patriotic education, the EDB will continue to fully support teachers to understand the national affairs and development of our country through diversified strategies, with a view to guiding students in inheriting the fine traditions of Chinese culture, and to nurture in them national pride and cultural confidence so that they will become self-conscious of safeguarding national unity and solidarity of all the country's ethnic groups, as well as making contributions to building an even better Hong Kong and advancing national rejuvenation.

Thank you, President.