

SED on principals' handling of complaints against teachers' misconduct

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, at a media session after attending a meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Education today (January 3):

Reporter: Secretary, under what circumstances would these school principals ... under sanction and is it really fair to them when they just helped their employees in a way? Second question, yesterday the Education Bureau had accused the largest teachers' union in Hong Kong of creating white terror. Is that really a fair remark and a fair criticism to them for just expressing some real concerns to their constituency or the people they are representing and they are just voicing out from teachers in general? Thank you.

Secretary for Education: According to the Education Ordinance, the Permanent Secretary for Education has the power to withdraw her approval for the appointment of principals. One of the considerations is whether the principal has satisfactorily carried out his or her duties. So, in principle, according to the law, the Government of course has that power. But, as I said, in the course, for example, of investigating some of the complaints concerning teachers, what we are asking is asking the principals who is the head of the school to carry out a thorough investigation on the complaint and let us have the report. This is of course one of the duties of the principal is to manage his or her team and that included ensuring that his or her team is professionally competent. So I think, that is one of the duties that he or she has to fulfil. And we will of course, when we consider whether a principal is fulfilling his or her duties satisfactorily, we need to consider the whole scenario, not just one particular case. As I replied to another reporter, at present, so far we found the response from the principals are very positive in terms of fulfilling their duties to do the investigations and at present we have not been carrying out any investigations against principals on this particular matter.

On the other issue that you raised about the PTU (Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union), I think the point that we have to make is in their statements or their sayings, some of them are not factually correct especially concerning what we have been talking in the past few days which I think actually what they say is causing disturbance to the teaching profession. That's why we made a strong statement last night against what they have said. What we have been doing, I think, is to protect the professionalism of teachers. Most of our teachers and principals are professional teachers. They are doing their parts diligently to help our students to understand and to learn. We appreciate what most of our teachers and principals have done over the past few months. They have spent great efforts in helping students. But at the same time, factually there are some

complaints against teachers. After investigations, we did find some teachers are not performing what they should be doing. So we made the cases known to the public because I think it's also the public's concerns, also your concerns about what's happening in the education sector. But interpreting things that as a white terror, I think, definitely it is not the fact. So that's why we have to state that clear.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)