

SED on reform of Liberal Studies subject

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, at a media session after attending a radio programme today (November 27):

Reporter: Could you clarify whether it would be mandatory for students to take a field trip to the Mainland under the new curriculum? And also, if they do not go to the Mainland, will that affect their results in the subject either in schools or in the open examination?

Secretary for Education: What we are suggesting is to make the study tour to the Mainland as part of the new Liberal Studies course. I have to leave the details to the Curriculum Development Council to decide on what other requirements there are and what the arrangements are. But in our plan, the part on the study tour to the Mainland would not form part of the DSE (Diploma of Secondary Education) Examination, so it would not be reflected in the results.

Reporter: There are quite a lot of differences between the conclusions of the review panel about the revamp of the curriculum and the final decisions of the Education Bureau. For example, they proposed to keep the current grading system instead of just using a "pass or fail" system. Why did the Education Bureau reject their ideas? Is that putting politics above their professionalism?

Secretary for Education: I think our current proposal is generally in line with the recommendation of the Task Force (on Review of School Curriculum), especially on the general direction, such as reducing the workload of students in this subject, and defining clearly the subject contents and framework. So, as I said before, it appears that the only major difference may be in how we present the result of the DSE Examination of this particular subject. The Task Force recommended that it would keep the 1 to 5 grading with the 5* and 5**, altogether seven grades. What we recommend now is just whether the students achieve the standard or not, which everyone easily calls "pass-or-fail". But, as I explained, we think that it will further ease students' pressure when facing the examination if we use a "pass or fail" system. For this particular subject, if they do not have very strong pressure from the examination, it may further provide them with opportunities to further develop their analytical skills and also the skills of assessing problems, problem solving skills, and all these types of things which may be more important than an examination.

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