

LCQ 8: Teaching of the Chinese history in schools

Following is a question by the Hon Cheung Kwok-kwan and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (May 27):

Question:

It has been reported that a teacher for the subject of General Studies (GS) for primary education turned the truth upside down when teaching the history of Opium War online earlier on, arousing concerns among various sectors in the community about whether wrong perspectives of history would be instilled into students. In respect of teaching of the Chinese history in schools will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the number of complaints about the contents of Chinese history taught by teachers which were received by the Education Bureau (EDB) in the past five years, and the details (such as the contents, relevant dates and outcome of handling) of such complaints;
- (2) of the current mechanism put in place to monitor the teaching in class in respect of the subject of Chinese History for secondary education and the Chinese history contents embedded in the GS subject for primary education;
- (3) whether the EDB has provided schools with a teaching guide, which is based on objective historical facts and historical perspectives that are generally accepted by the academia, for teachers to follow when teaching the significant events in different periods of Chinese history, so as to prevent students from being misled by biased views; if so, of the details; if not, whether the EDB will examine the provision of such a guide;
- (4) of the channels through which parents may lodge complaints when they uncover incidents of teachers deliberately distorting the facts when teaching Chinese history to students and, where the complaints have been found substantiated, the penalties to be imposed on the teachers concerned (and whether cancellation of teachers' registration is among such penalties); and
- (5) whether the EDB will, same as the practice adopted late last year for the subject of Liberal Studies for senior secondary education, deploy officers from the Curriculum Development Institute to conduct, in collaboration with inspectors from the Quality Assurance Sections, curriculum development visits cum focus inspections in respect of the teaching of Chinese history, so as to ensure the quality of the teaching of Chinese history in primary and secondary schools?

Reply:

President,

Under the current school curriculum, students learn Chinese history in General Studies (GS) at primary level and Chinese History at secondary level respectively. In response to "reinforcing the learning of Chinese history and Chinese culture", a major renewed emphasis in the Secondary Education Curriculum Guide (2017), the Education Bureau (EDB) implemented Chinese History as an independent compulsory subject at junior secondary level in the 2018/19 school year with a view to enabling students to learn Chinese history and culture in a holistic and systematic manner. The curriculum aims and learning objectives of both curricula of Chinese History at secondary level and GS at primary level are to nurture students' sense of belonging to their own nation, ethnicity and society through learning Chinese history, as well as to help students respect, appreciate and inherit the Chinese culture so as to develop in them positive values and proactive attitudes towards life.

Our reply to the five-part question raised by the Hon Cheung Kwok-kwan is as follows:

(1) In the school years from 2015/16 to 2018/19, the EDB did not receive any complaints involving the contents of Chinese history taught by teachers. In the 2019/20 school year (as at April 30, 2020), the EDB has received 3 related complaints, two of which involve biased reading materials and certain part(s) of the worksheet(s) not belonging to the discipline area of Chinese History. After investigation, both complaints are found unsubstantiated. The other case involves an online teaching video that has distorted historical facts, which is still under investigation.

(2) and (5) Under the principle of school-based management, it is the responsibility of the school management to understand and monitor the implementation of all subject curricula (including Chinese History at secondary level and GS at primary level) in the classroom, including the content and quality of school-based teaching materials, effectiveness of classroom learning and teaching, to ensure that teachers are implementing the curricula and conducting lessons in alignment with the curriculum aims and objectives. The EDB has been monitoring the quality of learning and teaching of schools through such means as inspections and curriculum development visits. In conducting Focus Inspections (FI) on Chinese History in secondary schools and those on GS in primary schools, in addition to scrutinising relevant documents, inspectors also conduct lesson observations to see if the teaching content and strategies are aligned with the curriculum aims and objectives, whether teachers could develop students' positive values and attitudes, as well as how students perform in their learning. After lesson observations, inspectors will conduct professional exchange with the teachers to help them enhance classroom learning and teaching effectiveness. Apart from evaluating the subject performance, inspectors also provide schools with specific professional advice for their continuous improvement in the implementation of the subject curriculum. Should the quality of learning and teaching of a school fall short of satisfaction, the EDB will take follow-up actions in accordance with the established mechanism, including urging the incorporated management committee/school management committee to make improvements based on the inspection report, encouraging the school to apply for school-based support services of the EDB, and if necessary, arranging a

follow-up inspection to ensure that the school is implementing the relevant recommendations. The EDB understands the public concern about the implementation of Chinese history education in schools and will consider stepping up monitoring as necessary by, for example, increasing the frequency of FI on Chinese History in secondary schools and GS in primary schools or conducting curriculum development visits-cum-focus inspections.

(3) With regard to the teaching of Chinese history at primary and secondary levels, schools should make reference to the Chinese History Curriculum Guides and General Studies Curriculum Guide for Primary Schools. The guides, which are the official curriculum documents provided for schools, were discussed, examined and finally endorsed by the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) and its committees composed of scholars, experts from the tertiary institutions, school principals and experienced teachers. Curriculum aims, learning objectives, curriculum framework, curriculum planning, learning and teaching, assessment, learning and teaching resources, exemplars of learning and teaching strategies and assessments are clearly illustrated in the curriculum guides for the reference of Chinese History teachers and GS teachers at the primary level. As such, the curriculum guides are important basis for the teaching of Chinese history in schools. Teachers should adopt effective teaching strategies with expertise and professional attitude to teach Chinese history with the aim of ensuring that the learning and teaching, as well as assessment tasks in school are in line with the relevant curriculum aims and objectives.

One of the curriculum aims of the primary level GS and Chinese History Curriculum guides is to nurture students' sense of national identity through understanding major historical events and deeds of significant historical figures in China. When teaching different Chinese history topics, teachers could provide a wide range of historical sources and views for students. The sources must be accurate and complete, and in alignment with the curriculum aims and learning objectives of the curriculum documents. Teachers should be objective, rational and impartial in teaching Chinese history. Teachers should also guide students to explore historical phenomena and issues, and formulate standpoints and arguments with sound evidence and unbiased attitudes. When learning Chinese history, students should also show empathy regarding the honour and shame, as well as pain and joy experienced by their own nation.

To enhance teachers' understanding on how to effectively achieve the curriculum aims and learning objectives set out in the curriculum guides, the EDB, together with scholars and experts, continue to provide professional support for the frontline GS teachers at primary level and Chinese History teachers at secondary level, including the development of diversified learning and teaching resources (e.g. including e-learning resources, teaching materials designed for the field studies of relevant topics) and the organisation of a range of professional development programmes, such as workshops on curriculum interpretation, learning, teaching and assessment strategies, knowledge enrichment series and Mainland visits, to enhance the learning and teaching of Chinese history.

(4) Teachers play a vital role in passing on knowledge and nurturing

students' character. Not only should they possess solid professional knowledge, but also high standards of morality. When selecting teaching materials and conducting lessons, teachers should thoroughly consider whether the teaching materials are suitable, and assist students in making analyses from multiple perspectives as well as expressing their opinions in an unbiased and rational manner. Teachers should definitely not allow their personal political stance to affect their teaching, or even mislead students and instill negative values into them.

If anyone suspects a teacher to have violated the professional conduct, he/she can file a complaint to the school, school sponsoring body and the EDB. Upon receiving such complaints, the EDB conducts investigation according to the established procedures, and thoroughly considers the facts, evidence and representations from the teacher concerned. If any allegation is found substantiated, the EDB will take appropriate follow-up actions having regard to the gravity of each case. These include issuing an advisory, warning or reprimand letter to remind the teacher concerned of the need to uphold professional conduct for meeting the expectations of parents and the general public for teachers. For serious misconduct cases, the EDB may consider cancelling the registration of the teacher concerned pursuant to the Education Ordinance.

Schools, as employers of teachers, are responsible for monitoring their teachers to ensure that their teaching and words and deeds are in line with the principles of education professionalism, and meeting the expectations of society (especially parents). Schools are also responsible for conducting investigation upon receiving complaints alleging teachers to have violated the professional conduct (e.g. teaching incorrect subject contents or concepts, misleading students, instilling negative values into students, etc.) and taking appropriate disciplinary actions against them pursuant to the Employment Ordinance, the Code of Aid, and the terms of their employment contracts with regard to the nature and gravity of the cases.