

LCQ13: Moral education

Following is a question by the Hon Mrs Regina Ip and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (May 26):

Question:

It has been reported that recently there have been incidents of some secondary school students being alleged of jointly robbing a goldsmith shop and sneaking into school premises to commit burglary, arousing concerns among members of the community about the moral standards of students and the effectiveness of moral education in schools nowadays. Some members of the community consider that teachers shoulder heavy responsibilities for nurturing an able and virtuous next generation. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the details of the moral education curriculum in schools, including policy objectives, curriculum content and activities, staff establishment and expenditure, since Hong Kong's return to China;

(2) whether it has formulated key performance indicators for the moral education curriculum mentioned in (1); if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as there are views that in recent years, the prevalence of hatred-inciting remarks and misleading messages on the Internet have had a negative impact on students, whether the Government has strengthened teacher training on moral education, including the technique on handling such remarks and messages, so that teachers can effectively instil positive values in students and help them nurture good character and conduct; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

There are social expectations that school education has an obligation to develop virtues in young people, teach them to appreciate positive values and attitudes, and promote their holistic growth so that they can become law-abiding, responsible, and good citizens who can contribute to society. It is indeed heartbreaking to see students engage in unlawful activities and bear criminal liability as a result. The reasons for students' involvement in unlawful activities are complicated and it is impossible to make generalisations. Students' behaviour is subject to the influence of schools, their families, peers, social atmosphere and media/online information. In the face of students' deviant behaviour or even involvement in unlawful and improper activities, schools, as a place for nurturing students and developing their moral values, should endeavour to help them rectify their

misdemeanor regardless of the reasons behind and re-develop positive values and attitudes through a concerted effort by strengthening communication and co-operation with their parents and actively arranging for school social workers and external organisations to provide relevant guidance and support.

Our reply to the different parts of the question is as follows:

(1) The Education Bureau (EDB) attaches great importance to moral and civic education, and developing students' positive values. Through developing curriculum guides, providing teacher professional development programmes, producing learning and teaching resources and organising student activities, the EDB supports schools in holistically promoting values education both within and outside the classroom through the learning and teaching of various Key Learning Areas/subjects as well as Other Learning Experiences. All these efforts aim at creating a positive atmosphere in schools through a whole-school approach.

The curriculum guides for different learning stages set out clear recommendations on moral education for schools to follow. The Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide (2017) specifies that fostering children's moral development and teaching the concept of right and wrong should be one of the objectives of moral education and recommends that kindergartens should help children learn these concepts by practising through daily learning activities with the help of parents' participation. In the Basic Education Curriculum Guide (P1-P6) (2014) (the Guide), fostering students' ability in distinguishing right from wrong is one of the learning goals of the primary curriculum and the Guide also provides recommendations on implementation strategies and illustrative examples to help teachers plan their school-based curricula of values education. The Secondary Education Curriculum Guide (2017) for secondary schools further lists "strengthening values education" as one of the major renewed emphases in the secondary curriculum and provides schools with recommendations on the promotion of values education through whole-school curriculum planning. The Moral and Civic Education Curriculum Framework (2008) presents the "Proposed Major Learning Expectations" for different learning stages with recommendations on the expected attitudes and behaviours of students.

To meet social changes and the development needs of students, the EDB has announced a set of priority values and attitudes including "Perseverance", "Respect for Others", "Responsibility", "National Identity", "Commitment", "Integrity", "Care for Others", "Law-abidingness" and "Empathy", which serve as the directions for schools to promote values education at various learning stages.

Moral and civic education is not an independent subject and could be implemented in different modes by schools. For example, schools can deliver their school-based life education lessons, guidance lessons and class teacher lessons whilst schools with religious backgrounds can foster students' values through Religious Studies, morning assemblies or religious activities. Schools should make reference to the relevant curriculum guides to plan appropriately and enhance school-based moral and civic education on an on-

going basis, having regard to the schools' mission and characteristics as well as the development needs of their students. In addition, schools should organise life-wide learning activities such as seminars and service learning with the aim of developing future generations into citizens who are socially responsible and equipped with a sense of national identity, an affection for Hong Kong and international perspectives.

Besides, the EDB continues to produce learning and teaching materials covering "life event" teaching resources of different themes to enable teachers to conduct interactive learning with students in class. These include "stop school bullying (primary school)", "say 'no' to undesirable peers (primary school)", "upholding justice at the expense of friendship (reporting misconduct of good friends) (secondary school)" and "resisting undesirable trend in society (secondary school)". Schools should follow the directions of nurturing students' positive values and attitudes and make use of authentic topics to better co-ordinate subject teaching and cross-curricular learning activities, with a view to providing students with holistic learning experiences inside and outside the classroom and enhancing the connection among different domains to facilitate their whole-person development.

The EDB also attaches great importance to parents' participation. To support schools in promoting parent education and developing children's positive values and attitudes in collaboration with parents, the EDB has organised parents' talks, and produced animations, posters and parent booklets. Furthermore, we encourage schools to foster an atmosphere conducive to values education through the annual activity "My Pledge to Act". The theme "Be grateful and treasure what we have, stay positive and optimistic" has been adopted since the 2019/20 school year and this will continue into the 2021/22 school year. 610 and 521 schools commenced the related learning activities in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 school years respectively. Schools may also flexibly deploy the Life-wide Learning Grant provided annually by the EDB or apply to the Quality Education Fund for the "My Pledge to Act – Be grateful and treasure what we have, stay positive and optimistic" Funding Programme for additional resources to promote values education-related learning activities. Relevant information has been uploaded to the EDB's webpage on moral and civic education:

www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/4-key-tasks/moral-civic/index.html.

Meanwhile, we continue to organise award schemes and a wide range of student guidance programmes/activities (e.g. the Understanding Adolescent Project for primary schools and the Enhanced Smart Teen Project for secondary schools) to enhance students' resilience and promote the spirit of caring, respect and self-discipline through adventure-based, team-building and problem-solving training as well as parent-child activities.

To optimise the curriculum, the Task Force on Review of School Curriculum (Task Force), which was set up by the EDB in November 2017, submitted its review report to the EDB in September 2020. The Task Force recommended the Government to update the Moral and Civic Education Curriculum Framework (2008); provide multifarious values education-related learning

experiences in the curriculum to broaden students' perspective; provide different modes of professional development activities to enhance teachers' grasp of the goals and objectives of different facets of values education and deepen their understanding of the professional role of teachers; and prepare more resource materials to support teachers in developing the universal core values underpinning Chinese morals and culture. The related recommendations are in line with the on-going support measures for moral education undertaken by the EDB. The EDB accepted the directional recommendations set out in the report in December 2020. In the same month, the Curriculum Development Council set up the Standing Committee on Values Education to oversee the development of values education at the primary and secondary levels. We will continue to strengthen the work on the professional development of teachers as well as the development of teaching resources. Moreover, we have commenced the work of updating the Moral and Civic Education Curriculum Framework (2008) and the "Proposed Major Expected Learning Outcomes" in various key stages of learning to provide guidance for schools.

The on-going efforts to cultivate students' moral character mentioned above have become regular and on-going tasks of the EDB. The staffing expenditure involved has been subsumed under the EDB's overall expenditure and a breakdown is not available.

(2) Moral and civic education should be implemented through the integration of cognition, affection and action. The enrichment of cognition can help students identify the values and attitudes from life events and issues for making rational analyses and judgements. The nurturing of affection can develop students' empathy, which empowers them to uphold their values against challenges with perseverance and courage. Through action, students can build up and reinforce positive values and attitudes in real life situations. Noting that the level of reflection and improvement in attitudes and behaviours may vary among different students, it is difficult to formulate any key performance indicators.

To assist schools in gaining a clearer picture of students' performance in the affective and social areas so that proper planning and follow-up actions can be implemented, the EDB provides schools with evaluation tools and data (e.g. the Assessment Program for Affective and Social Outcomes) to review the needs of students in whole-person development. Schools can also collect relevant information and data through daily observations and tools like school-based questionnaires, and the feedback collected will be reflected in the planning of values education which will benefit the sustainable development of related schools.

We have always been seeking to understand the quality of learning and teaching of schools (including the effectiveness of implementing values education) through different channels such as inspections and curriculum development visits, and will give concrete professional advice to schools according to schools' performance in learning and teaching.

(3) Among the five domains of moral, intellectual, physical, social and aesthetic developments, moral development is regarded as the most important

one. Nurturing students' moral character and proper conduct is an important mission of schools as well as the collective responsibility of all teaching staff. A whole-school approach is essential for creating a conducive atmosphere in schools to promote values education. The EDB attaches great importance to teacher training on moral education and organises a great variety of professional development activities for teachers including structured training such as short-term courses, seminars, conferences and workshops. Teachers of different posts and ranks (including newly-joined teachers, teachers of moral and civic education, teachers aspiring for promotion, principals and curriculum leaders) are provided with relevant professional development programmes on an on-going basis according to their needs and requirements of related work with a view to enhancing their knowledge and skills in implementing values education. Apart from enhancing teachers' understanding and skills in values education, the contents of these programmes also convey an important message that teachers' words and deeds have an impact on students' moral character, and reiterate that teaching by words and examples are equally important in values education.

With the advancement in information technology (IT) in today's society, the Internet has profound impact on students' minds, words and deeds. Therefore, the professional development programmes on values education organised by the EDB for teachers also cover topics on enhancing teachers' capability to equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills as well as the positive values and attitudes to operate in the cyber world. Experts and organisations of relevant fields will be invited to provide talks and workshops on topics such as knowledge on cyber risks, personal privacy protection, handling cyber bullying and discerning the authenticity of information. This can help teachers design suitable values education curriculum and learning activities catering for students' developmental needs and needs in life. In this school year, the EDB and the Journalism Education Foundation are co-organising a series of seminars and workshops on media and information literacy to increase teachers' knowledge on the operation of the media, and also to enable teachers to handle information with critical thinking and guide students to use information and social media ethically (e.g. do not forward unverified information at will, say "no" to cyber bullying). The related contents will also be used in developing appropriate learning and teaching materials to further support schools in implementing information/media literacy education. Furthermore, we have organised school networks to share good practices and visited schools to give advice and discuss with teachers on curriculum planning and teaching of values education, including the effective way to nurture students' moral character and positive values in an era of rapid IT development and promote the professional development of teachers.

Nurturing young people to distinguish right from wrong, be polite and abide by the rules and stay away from crime is a shared responsibility of every sector of society. Teachers' role modelling is of utmost importance to students' learning and growth. We appeal to different stakeholders in the community to work together to create a positive learning atmosphere and environment for the cultivation of positive values, attitudes and behaviours in students so that they can become persons of good character and conduct.