

LCQ16: Support for non-Chinese speaking students in learning Chinese History

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 (November 21):

Question:

Since 2014, the Education Bureau (EDB) has implemented the Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework to step up the support for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students in learning Chinese. In addition, the Chief Executive has announced in this year's Policy Address that from the 2019-2020 school year onwards, additional resources will be provided for public sector secondary schools to support NCS students in using the Chinese language to learn Chinese History. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that Chinese History has become a compulsory subject at junior secondary level since September this year, of the number of cases, received by the EDB since the commencement of the current school year, in which teachers sought assistance as they had encountered difficulties in teaching NCS students Chinese History; the immediate measures put in place to assist those teachers in overcoming the difficulties;

(2) of the outcome of the discussions and the support measures formulated by the Ad Hoc Committee on Supporting Non-Chinese Speaking Students Learning Chinese History and Chinese Culture since its establishment in May this year;

(3) as some teachers have pointed out that since all of the teaching materials for Chinese History available on the market are compiled for Chinese-speaking students, such materials are not suitable for NCS students whose cultural backgrounds and proficiency in the Chinese language are different from those of Chinese-speaking students, and hence the schools have to compile teaching materials by themselves for NCS students and provide explanations in English when teaching the subject, whether the EDB currently provides assistance to the schools concerned in compiling such teaching materials;

(4) whether the EDB has formulated a Chinese History curriculum framework and learning/examination assessment guides especially for NCS students; if not, of the reasons for that; and

(5) whether the EDB has issued guidelines to the schools concerned on how they may utilise the aforesaid additional resources to provide support for NCS students?

Reply:

President,

The 2017 Policy Address announced the inclusion of Chinese History as an independent compulsory subject for the junior secondary level, with a view to enabling all secondary students to learn Chinese history in a holistic and systematic manner. As a part of the Hong Kong community, non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students should understand Chinese history and culture, learn about the development and cultural characteristics of the society in which they live, appreciate and respect different historical and cultural legacies, and integrate into mainstream Chinese society, which will be conducive to their further studies and employment in Hong Kong, or even their career development on the Mainland in future.

The Education Bureau (EDB) understands that NCS students may encounter difficulties when studying Chinese History due to language barriers and cultural differences. Therefore, the EDB provides flexibility for the schools admitting these students to make adaptations to teaching contents, pedagogy and assessment, flexibly design school-based curricula and adopt diversified teaching strategies. Examples include adopting a story-telling approach to teach history, using teaching materials of a non-text nature such as audio-visual materials, supplementing teaching with English, and deploying the one-off grant for the promotion of Chinese history and culture provided by the EDB to develop suitable learning kits or organise diversified learning activities, with a view to enhancing NCS students' interest in and effectiveness of learning Chinese History. The EDB has informed schools of the arrangement through briefing sessions and other channels.

Regarding the Hon Cheung Kwok-kwan's question, our reply is as follows:

(1) Since commencement of the current school year, we have occasionally received phone calls or emails from teachers concerning arrangements about NCS students' learning of Chinese History. Through telephone conversations, emails, interviews and school visits, we immediately ascertained their needs and provided suggestions. We have also seconded teachers with experience in teaching NCS students to support these schools by sharing their experience and teaching materials, thereby allaying teachers' concerns. According to our records, there have only been eight relevant enquiries.

(2) to (5) The Ad Hoc Committee on Supporting Non-Chinese Speaking Students Learning Chinese History and Chinese Culture (the Ad Hoc Committee) was established in the 2017-18 school year to advise schools on learning and teaching strategies and curriculum adaptation. Based on the Revised Curriculum Framework of Chinese History (Secondary 1-3) published in May 2018, the Ad Hoc Committee is deliberating on an adapted curriculum framework which will be available for schools' reference as soon as it is endorsed by the Committee on Personal, Social and Humanities Education. A working group will also be set up under the Ad Hoc Committee to advise on support strategies and measures, such as tryout teaching, developing sample teaching materials and devising related learning activities, compiling a glossary of history terms in both Chinese and English and producing teachers' handbooks.

The working group would also contact relevant organisations/bodies, such as the Hong Kong Museum of History, to provide bilingual learning resources in history.

In collaboration with experts and academics, the EDB will provide schools admitting NCS students and their teachers with enhanced professional support, including (1) allowing teachers in need of support to observe how teachers experienced in teaching NCS students teach in class; (2) organising workshops for devising and developing suitable teaching materials for NCS students; and (3) designing diversified learning and teaching activities, such as e-learning, field studies, visits, competitions and drama performances, for raising NCS students' interests in studying Chinese History. Our school-based support services will continue to support teachers in adapting the curriculum and designing teaching strategies according to their school contexts.

The EDB will inform schools of the support measures available through circular memoranda and other means. Concurrently, with a view to supporting NCS students' learning of Chinese History using the Chinese language, the EDB plans to disburse additional funding to local public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme secondary schools which have admitted NCS students. Each school will receive a total amount of \$100,000 in the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years. Subject to the approval of the Legislative Council, the EDB will issue a circular memorandum to schools to provide details in relation to the grant.