

# **立法會**

## ***Legislative Council***

LC Paper No. CB(4)210/14-15(05)

Ref : CB4/PL/ED

### **Panel on Education**

**Meeting on 8 December 2014**

#### **Background brief on issues related to certain elective subjects under the New Senior Secondary curriculum**

#### **Purpose**

This paper summarizes major views expressed by Members on issues related to the take-up of certain elective subjects<sup>1</sup> under the New Senior Secondary ("NSS") curriculum and in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education ("HKDSE") Examination.

#### **Background**

2. The NSS curriculum under the New Academic Structure ("NAS") implemented in the 2009-2010 school year comprised three years of junior secondary education and three years of senior secondary education. The NSS curriculum is made up of three components, namely, four core and compulsory subjects of Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics and Liberal Studies ("LS"); elective subjects<sup>2</sup> and Other Learning Experiences<sup>3</sup>.

3. Since 2012, the HKDSE Examination administered by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority ("HKEAA") has replaced the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination ("HKCEE") and the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination ("HKALE"). Students now receive 12 years' school education and will take only one public examination upon completion of Secondary 6 ("S6"). The minimum general entrance requirements for admission to local four-year undergraduate programmes are Level 3 or above in

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<sup>1</sup> This paper only deals with certain elective subjects and does not include compulsory subjects under the NSS curriculum such as Liberal Studies.

<sup>2</sup> Students may choose two or three subjects from 20 elective subjects, a range of Applied Learning ("ApL") subjects and Other Language subjects.

<sup>3</sup> These include moral and civic education, community service, aesthetic development etc.

Chinese Language and English Language, and Level 2 or above in Mathematics and LS in the HKDSE Examination (i.e. "3322"). For sub-degree programmes, the minimum general entrance requirements are five subjects at Level 2 or above (including Chinese Language and English Language) in the HKDSE Examination or equivalent.

## **Members' deliberations**

### General concern

4. In general, some members of the Panel on Education ("the Panel") observed that after the implementation of the NSS curriculum, there had been a drop in the number of students taking certain elective subjects such as Chinese History, Visual Arts, and Information and Communication Technology ("ICT").

5. In this regard, the Administration explained that changes in the number of students taking NSS elective subjects could be mainly attributed to a drop in the overall student population. Moreover, under the NSS curriculum, students were given a much more diversified choice of subjects than under the past secondary curriculum. According to the Administration, the combinations of subjects under the NSS curriculum exceeded 1 000, which was far higher than that in the past. Very often, students were encouraged to explore their interests and broaden their choices by taking more than two elective subjects at S4, and then make a decision, having regard to their interests and aptitude, to take two elective subjects in the HKDSE Examination. Hence, student enrolment for certain elective subjects might drop at S5 and S6 levels. Under the NSS curriculum, students could take elective subjects according to their preference rather than being streamed into arts, science and commerce classes as under the past curricular system.

### Visual Arts

6. At the Panel meeting held on 12 November 2012, a member expressed grave concern about the number of candidates taking the Visual Arts subject which had dropped significantly by 30% to 40% compared to the number of candidates taking the same subject prior to the implementation of NAS. To nurture talents for Hong Kong's creative industry, there was a suggestion that students should be encouraged to take arts-related subjects.

7. Members were informed that according to the statistics of HKEAA, in 2012, over 4 400 candidates sat for the HKDSE Examination on Visual Arts,

while some 300 candidates took the subject in HKALE<sup>4</sup>. The Administration explained that under the NSS curriculum, elements of visual arts were also found in Creative Studies under the ApL subjects. Although the number of students taking Visual Arts was lower than that taking other academic subjects such as Economics, Chinese History and Geography, the number of students taking Visual Arts was higher than or comparable to that taking subjects such as Tourism and Hospitality Studies, Design and Applied Technology and Health Management and Social Care. The Administration assured members that it would continue its effort to encourage students to study arts-related subjects.

8. In his question raised at the Council meeting of 17 April 2013, Hon MA Fung-kwok sought explanation, amongst others, on the take-up and drop-out rates of the Visual Arts subject. In its written reply, the Education Bureau ("EDB") informed members that in the three years from 2008 to 2010, the number of candidates taking Visual Arts in HKCEE were 6 525, 6 783 and 6 804 respectively<sup>5</sup>. The number of candidates taking the subject in the 2012 HKDSE Examination was 4 425<sup>6</sup>. In the 2011-2012 school year, the drop-out rates of various elective subjects among students when they proceeded from S5 to S6 ranged from 11.8% to 28.8%, while the drop-out rate for Visual Arts was 18.6%.

9. On the reasons why fewer candidates were able to obtain Level 3 or above in Visual Arts in the HKDSE Examination than those obtaining Grade E or above in the subject in the previous HKALE, EDB advised that direct comparison was not appropriate as there were differences in the duration of study, subject contents and examination requirements. Besides, it should be noted that the assessment of NSS subjects was standards-referenced instead of norm-referenced. Therefore, HKEAA did not have any pre-set ratio for the performance of candidates in the HKDSE Examination.

### Chinese History

10. At the Panel meetings held on 30 May 2013 and 9 June 2014, some members were gravely concerned about reduced interest in history subjects among secondary students, in particular the drop in the number of students taking the NSS elective subject of Chinese History. It was pointed out that the number of students taking Chinese History had dropped from over 10 000 in S4 to about 7 000 in S6. There was a suggestion that it was necessary to stimulate

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<sup>4</sup> 2012 was a double cohort year in which the first cohort of students sitting the HKDSE Examination and the last cohort of day school students sitting the HKALE completed their secondary education at the same time.

<sup>5</sup> The figures accounted for 6%, 5.7% and 5.4% respectively of the total number of candidates taking HKCEE.

<sup>6</sup> The figure accounted for 6.1% of the total number of candidates taking the HKDSE Examination.

the interest of secondary students in the subject. Question had also been raised on whether Chinese History should be made a compulsory subject.

11. As advised by the Administration, a survey indicated that in the 2012-2013 school year, about 90% of secondary schools offered Chinese History at S4 to S6 levels. Out of over 20 elective subjects at S4 to S6 levels, in terms of student enrolment, Chinese History ranked as the eighth most popular elective subject. Since 2000, the Administration had recommended schools to make Chinese History a mandatory subject in the junior secondary curriculum. Meanwhile, about 85% of secondary schools offered Chinese History as an independent and compulsory subject at junior secondary levels. According to the Administration, the percentage of students taking the Chinese History subject had remained stable. However, the actual number of students taking individual NSS subjects had dropped due to the decline in the overall secondary student population.

12. Hon Starry LEE, Hon Mrs Regina IP and Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai had raised questions regarding the teaching of Chinese History in secondary schools at various Council meetings<sup>7</sup>. They reiterated concerns about the teaching of Chinese History as an independent subject, the declining trend of candidates taking the subject in the HKDSE Examination, and whether Chinese History should be made a compulsory subject.

13. In its reply, EDB confirmed that it had requested all secondary schools offering the mainstream curriculum to teach Chinese History at junior secondary levels. The subject was compulsory in junior secondary levels while it remained an elective subject at senior secondary levels. The gradual drop in the number of students taking Chinese History at S4, S5 and S6 was consistent with the general trend of students finalizing the choice of their elective subjects as they proceeded to S6. For example, for the second cohort of S4 students in the 2010-2011 school year, 11 872 (15.2% of all S4 students) took Chinese History. The number stood at 9 329 (12.7%) when the cohort progressed to S5. Among S6 students, 7 434 took Chinese History in the HKDSE Examination, representing 10.8% of the total number of candidates.

14. On the teaching of Chinese History as an independent subject, EDB considered that this might mean the dynastic chronological approach in teaching the subject and dissociating it from world history and other humanities subjects. EDB further advised that some schools might choose to teach Chinese History and World History as an integrated subject; while some

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<sup>7</sup> See Question No. 1 for the Council meeting of 3 July 2013; Question No. 13 for the Council meeting of 29 October 2014; and Question No. 8 for the Council meeting of 12 November 2014.

adopted a thematic approach and teach Chinese history under the subject of Integrated Humanities.

15. The Administration informed members that to encourage more students to choose Chinese History as their elective subject, the Curriculum Development Council had set up an ad hoc committee in May 2014 to review the junior secondary curricula of Chinese History and History. Meanwhile, EDB was collaborating with different stakeholders to organize more teacher training programmes to enliven the learning and teaching strategies for the Chinese History subject.

#### Other elective subjects

16. Some Panel members noted with concern that the rate of withdrawal from the new subject of Business, Accounting and Financial Studies ("BAFS") under the NSS curriculum exceeded 25%. There were concerns that the breadth and depth of the curriculum content of BAFS, which had combined and replaced several different subjects in the past curriculum, was overloaded to the extent that it resembled a miniature undergraduate course in Business Administration. There was a suggestion that the constituent subjects of BAFS should be developed as separate subjects. As informed by EDB, it had started the groundwork in this regard. The ultimate way forward on BAFS would be subject to thorough discussion and consultation by the end of 2016.

17. On the ICT subject, question was raised on whether the Administration would enhance the subject curriculum at secondary levels so as to encourage more students to take the subject. According to the Administration, a review of the ICT components of the enriched Technical Education Key Learning Area curriculum had taken place. It was expected that starting from the 2016-2017 school year, all secondary schools would adopt a revised curriculum at junior secondary levels.

#### **Relevant papers**

18. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is at the **Appendix**.

**List of relevant papers**

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Paper</b>
Panel on Education	12.11.2012 (Item VI)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">CB(4)111/12-13(01)</a> <a href="#">CB(4)111/12-13(02)</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Legislative Council	17.4.2013	<a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings</a> <a href="#">Pages 38-44 (Question 10)</a>
Panel on Education	30.5.2013 (Item IV)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">CB(4)685/12-13(01)</a> <a href="#">CB(4)685/12-13(02)</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Legislative Council	3.7.2013	<a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings</a> <a href="#">Pages 7-20 (Question 1)</a>
Panel on Education	9.6.2014 (Item V)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">CB(4)765/13-14(03)</a> <a href="#">CB(4)765/13-14(04)</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Legislative Council	29.10.2014	<a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings</a> <a href="#">Pages 83-86 (Question 13)</a>
Legislative Council	12.11.2014	<a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings</a> <a href="#">Pages 65-92 (Question 8)</a>