



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部教育局
Education Bureau
Government Secretariat, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

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20 November 2017

Clerk to Panel
(Attn: Ms Angel WONG)
Legislative Council Panel on Education
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Ms WONG,

Panel on Education
Discussion on Controversial Topics in Schools

I refer to your letter dated 3 November 2017. As requested, our reply to the concerns of Hon Michael TIEN and Hon CHAN Chi-chuen in respect of the policy and guidelines on discussion on controversial topics in schools is as follow:

When discussing any topic in school, teachers should uphold their professional conduct and attitude, and plan their lessons according to the curriculum aims and objectives with learning and teaching as the goal. Teachers should be more objective and unbiased when handling controversial topics, and refrain from influencing their students by their personal stance¹. During the enquiry process, teachers should make students aware of the comments on and news reports of the events, and help them probe into the events in question from different perspectives. When using materials from different sources, teachers have to pay due attention to whether these materials are

¹ According to the Code for the Education Profession of Hong Kong, a member of the profession shall as far as possible adopt an objective viewpoint in discussing controversial matters with students; and encourage them to think independently and to form their own rational judgements based upon knowledge (Section 2.2). A member of the profession shall teach students to respect different positions and opinions in matters over which public opinion is divided (Section 2.6).

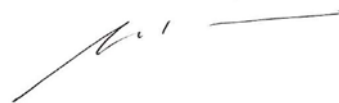
based on objective facts. If the views of the materials used by students are unduly subjective, one-sided or extreme, teachers should guide them to make an unbiased and rational analysis basing on facts and evidence in an objective and open manner so as to develop their critical thinking skills and instill in them positive values such as respect and tolerance.

If teachers or schools need to handle issues that have solid legal basis and where right or wrong is indisputable, they should explicitly state various facts like historical evidence, moral standards, legal basis and point out that these issues have no room for compromise or an alternate conclusion . One of such issues is whether Hong Kong can become independent. From a historical point of view, Hong Kong has been an inalienable part of China since ancient times, which is undeniable. From the legal point of view, Article 31 of our country's Constitution provides that "the State may establish special administrative regions when necessary. The systems to be instituted in special administrative regions shall be prescribed by law enacted by the National People's Congress (NPC) in the light of specific conditions". Article 62 prescribes that the NPC can "decide on the establishment of special administrative regions and the systems to be instituted there". Pursuant to the said constitutional provisions, the NPC decided in 1990 to establish the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (the HKSAR) and enact the Basic Law of the HKSAR. It was also decided that systems and policies different from those of the Mainland would be implemented in the HKSAR. Article 1 of the Basic Law also stipulates that "the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is an inalienable part of the People's Republic of China." These points have made it clear that Hong Kong is a local administrative region of the People's Republic of China, enjoying a high degree of autonomy. It shall not and could not be an independent or semi-autonomous political entity. If students have any erroneous and extreme ideas on such issues, teachers should provide guidance and point out the facts explicitly for their students.

We believe that teachers, under the premise of education and with their professional attitude, will exercise their professional knowledge and judgment in nurturing students' abilities of thinking analytically and drawing conclusions based on facts when leading discussions on any issues. We also believe that both schools and teachers will help students grasp the right concept on the cardinal issues of right and wrong.

Please contact Mrs. KWONG KWAN Sau-ching, Iris at 3509 8479 if you have further questions.

Yours sincerely,



(Ms Cynthia CHAN)
for Secretary for Education