



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, Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

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16 January 2019

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

Dear Ms WONG,

Panel on Education
Follow up to the meeting on 2 November 2018

I refer to your letter dated 5 November 2018. Our response in respect of the agenda item of “Briefing by the Secretary for Education on the Chief Executive’s 2018 Policy Address” is set out in the Annex 1-4 for Members’ reference.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe'.

(Ng Ka-shing, Joe)
for Secretary for Education

Encl.

Legislative Council Panel on Education
Response to the agenda item
“Briefing by the Secretary for Education on the Chief Executive’s 2018
Policy Address”
at the policy-cum-meeting on 2 November 2018

(a) Information requested

The numbers of public sector primary and secondary schools using Putonghua as the medium of instruction for teaching the Chinese Language subject in each of the past five school years.

Response from the Education Bureau

The existing policy to enhance the biliteracy and trilingualism in Hong Kong still stands. All along, schools may take into consideration of their own school contexts, such as the readiness of teachers, standards of students, language environment, curriculum planning, learning and teaching support as well as parents’ expectations when considering whether or not to use Putonghua as the medium of instruction (MOI) for teaching the subject of Chinese Language. Schools should also communicate with parents about their MOI policy. As using Putonghua as the MOI for teaching the Chinese Language is a decision based on school's own policy, the number of students and schools using Putonghua to teach the subject of Chinese Language may vary every year, and some schools may not adopt this approach at all levels and all classes, thus, the Education Bureau does not keep track of the related information.

(b) Information requested

The numbers of students benefited under the Administration's initiative to pay the examination fees for candidates sitting the 2019 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination.

Response from the Education Bureau

The Government has paid the examination fee for candidates who are studying in a registered school approved for participation in the 2019 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination ("HKDSE") in the 2018/19 school year and have been entered in the 2019 HKDSE through the school. According to the information provided by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, as at 9 November 2018, 48 377 school candidates had benefited from the initiative.

(c) Wording of the Motion

This Panel requests the Government to study whether there are examination and assessment systems which are conducive to the development and assessment of students' creativity and problem solving skills, and to study and compare the merits of examples around the world, such as the examination systems of Singapore and Northern Europe.

(Moved by Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun and seconded by Hon Starry LEE Wai-king)

Response from the Education Bureau

The Education Bureau (EDB) attaches great importance to the development of students' generic skills, including creativity and problem solving skills, which is one of the focuses of the curriculum reform. At present, schools in general are able to make good use of different modes of assessment tasks, for example, individual or group project learning, student learning portfolios, and "hands-on and minds-on" tasks related to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education, to develop students' creativity and problem solving skills as well as to implement assessment for learning through the provision of timely and useful feedback which helps students improve or enhance their performance. Besides, the assessment of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination requires candidates to apply their knowledge and concepts effectively, and conduct analysis and evaluation based on the information; while School-based Assessment, such as the Independent Enquiry Study in Liberal Studies, design projects in Design and Applied Technology and portfolios in Visual Arts, places more emphasis on students' innovativeness and integrated problem solving skills.

Based on our understanding, different modes of assessment of students' innovativeness and problem solving skills have also been adopted in other countries. For example, in Singapore, diversified assessment strategies including project work, open-ended questions and oral assessments are adopted to provide students with the opportunity to apply knowledge integratively to solve problems in real-life contexts as well as to place emphasis on promoting and evaluating students' critical thinking and creativity. In Finland, assessment activities include inquiry, making hypotheses and predictions with logical support, and proposing creative solutions to problems. The EDB and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority will review the school curricula and assessment systems in a timely manner by making reference to the development of school curriculum and assessment in different countries/regions.

Wording of the Motion

This Panel urges the Government to conduct studies on “homework policy” and “no homework day during long vacation” with a view to alleviating the pressure on students.

(Moved by Hon SHIU Ka-chun and Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan)

Response from the Education Bureau

There are diversified modes of homework. Apart from paper-and-pencil exercises, homework could be in the mode of reading, information search, pre-lesson preparation, model design or project learning, etc. Homework is by no means equivalent to drilling exercises and rote learning tasks. It is crystal clear that the Education Bureau (EDB) is against giving excessive, meaningless homework and mechanical copying/drilling exercises to students. In fact, meaningful homework could help students review and consolidate what they have learnt and acquire new knowledge. Interesting and meaningful homework can stimulate students’ interest in learning, encourage proactive exploration and extend their learning. Homework can also provide space for students to show their creativity. The EDB has all along emphasised that it is the quality rather than the quantity of homework that matters. Learning needs and abilities of students are diversified. The factors behind whether a student would find homework stressful are multifaceted and complicated.

Schools should cater for the needs of students with varying abilities and levels, and take into account the needs of balanced development in students’ learning as well as their physical and mental health. Schools should review the frequency, quantity, type and quality of homework regularly and formulate an appropriate school-based homework policy. For example, there should be coordination among subject teachers in respect of the amount of homework assigned daily, and flexible adjustments to the learning content. In primary schools, teachers should, as far as possible, allow time during lessons for students to complete part of their homework under guidance, so that students can participate in other beneficial social or extra-curricular activities after school, cultivate interests and have sufficient time for rest and sleep. Teachers may also

make good use of tutorial periods/class teacher periods to provide guidance to students who have difficulty in their homework. Under the principles of school-based management, transparency and effective communication, schools and parents should strengthen the communication on homework matters through regular channels to ensure that an appropriate school-based policy is formulated and implemented. To further enhance such a policy, parents may directly put forward their views and propose improvements in respect of their children's homework to schools.

It is schools' responsibilities to work out an appropriate school-based homework policy based on their professional knowledge, taking into consideration the school context, and the students' abilities, interests and needs. It is not desirable to set no homework day during long holiday on an "across-the-board basis". Instead, we should encourage schools to make professional decisions based on their school context and student learning needs. They can design different modes of quality homework for their students in their day-to-day classroom teaching as well as during long holidays. As for individual students with learning difficulties, their schools/teachers should communicate with the parents for adaption of homework tasks or making flexible arrangements. In fact, recently before the long holidays, the Government has also called on schools to provide more interesting holiday homework for their students. To facilitate the refinement process of school-based homework policy, the EDB will continue to provide support to schools such as organising professional development programmes for teachers to recapitulate the principles and policies of catering for learner diversity and how to design meaningful homework, disseminating good practices. Besides, we conduct school visits, external school reviews and focus inspections, etc. to gain an understanding of the implementation of schools' homework policies and give feedback to schools on how to further enhance their support in catering for learner diversity. We will also review and update relevant circulars and curriculum documents in a timely manner. The foregoing means are found effective. We will conclude the good experiences and promote them to the school sector in a timely manner.

The EDB will communicate with major school sponsoring bodies, primary and secondary school councils, regional school heads associations, etc. on homework matters. Besides, we will make use of current means to remind schools to enhance their timetables as well as school-based homework policy continuously so as to allow students more time to rest, pursue personal interests

and participate in physical and aesthetic activities, so as to develop their communication and collaboration skills, and build up good inter-personal relationship with others.