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Panel on Education

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the special meeting on 27 June 2011**

Moral and national education

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the development of an independent subject on moral and national education ("the Subject") by the Administration. It also summarizes the concerns of the Panel on Education ("the Panel") about the development of the Subject.

Background

2. According to the Administration, it is its established policy to promote national education. The Chief Executive has announced in the 2010-2011 Policy Address that the Administration will collaborate further with the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education, District Councils, community organizations, national education organizations and youth organizations on the promotion of national education. Apart from organizing more Mainland exchange programmes, study tours and volunteer activities, the Administration will also introduce initiatives to enhance the effectiveness of Basic Law education and moral and national education. The Education Bureau ("EDB") will strengthen the support for the learning and teaching of the Basic Law in primary and secondary schools by developing a learning package in the 2010-2011 school year. The EDB will also invite the Curriculum Development Council to review the curriculum framework for moral and civic education at primary and secondary levels and to develop an independent subject on moral and national education.

Deliberations of the Panel

3. The Panel had not discussed the subject of national education per se. Members had expressed views on national education and the development of the Subject in the context of policy briefings by the Administration on education initiatives. The views and concerns of members are summarized in the following paragraphs.

Civic and national education

4. Some members expressed concern about the Administration's plan to develop the Subject in place of the existing curriculum framework for moral and civic education and sought an explanation from the Administration for its decision. They considered that the Administration had taken a retrogressive step to develop the Subject when even the Mainland taught only civic education and not national education. Some members were of the view that civic education and civic rights were very different from national education, and national education did not cover civic education. There was also a view that civic education covered national identity, rights and responsibilities, relationship between an individual and his/her residing place, global view and universal values.

5. The Administration explained that the existing curriculum framework of moral and civic education included many major elements, such as personal development; school life; life at work; life in the community; and life in the country. In other words, the existing curriculum framework had already included national education. In order to strengthen the sense of national identity among students, an independent subject on moral and national education would be developed. Civic education would remain as an important component in the curriculum of the Subject as it helped students cultivate the values of civic rights and responsibilities as well as national qualities. In addition to civic education, new contents on national education would be added to the curriculum, and study hours would be increased to enhance students' understanding of the country.

Teaching of national education

6. Some members expressed grave concern that national education might be used a tool for brainwashing and dissemination of political ideology. Worries had been expressed that only the positive sides of the Mainland such as the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing and the World Expo in Shanghai would be covered in the new subject whereas sensitive

and controversial issues such as the imprisonment of LIU Xiaobo and the June Fourth Incident would not be touched upon. There was concern about the possible narrow scope of the Subject for the purpose of cultivation of only patriotism and nationalism.

7. According to the Administration, the objective of national education was to enable students to gain a better knowledge of the developments of the country. Many stakeholders and parents had expressed support for the Administration to strengthen its efforts in national education. While Mainland exchange programmes focused on the landmark events of the country, classroom discussion on current issues encouraged students to make analyzes from different angles. National education would aim to foster students' moral integrity and enhance their critical thinking instead of one-way dissemination of ideology.

8. Some members expressed disagreement with the Administration's view that the teaching of the Subject would enhance students' critical thinking skills because, in their view, its teaching approach would not encourage the development of such values as self-determination, self-reflection and honesty. Students would tend to give politically correct answers as there was a practical need to get at least passing marks on the Subject for further study. Instead of developing independent and critical thinking skills at school age, students would be taught to give up their own principles for survival in study.

9. Some members considered that a liberal approach should be adopted for teaching national education to help students develop independent thinking skills. They considered it important that students would not be tested on their relevant knowledge, and teachers should be given freehand to teach the subject.

Teaching of Chinese history

10. Members were concerned that the subject of Chinese History was no longer a core subject in secondary education. They criticized the Administration for subsuming Chinese history in social studies or Liberal Studies on the pretext of adopting an integrated approach. They considered such piecemeal approach in teaching Chinese history inadequate to help promote students' understanding of the motherland. There was a view that the best form of national education was to teach students Chinese history and traditional classics to enable them to understand the Chinese culture.

11. The Administration explained that the subject of Chinese History was a core subject in both primary and junior secondary education and an elective subject in senior secondary education. A large number of schools offered the subject of Chinese History under the New Senior Secondary curriculum.

Consultation

12. Some members expressed dissatisfaction that the Administration had not consulted stakeholders before making the decision to develop the Subject and sought information from the Administration on the decision-making process in relation to the development of the Subject.

13. The Administration advised that it was an established practice for the Administration to consult stakeholders before developing a new subject. A special committee would be set up under the Curriculum Development Council to draft the relevant consultation papers. The Administration would collaborate with the Curriculum Development Council to conduct consultation with stakeholders with a view to implementing the Subject in the 2013-2014 school year. Some members held the view that it was inappropriate on the part of the Administration to consult stakeholders only on the content of but not its plan to develop the new subject.

Latest developments

14. The Administration has set up a Moral and National Education Ad Hoc Committee under the Curriculum Development Council in November 2010 to review the current curriculum framework for moral and civic education and develop moral and national education as a subject. On 5 May 2011, the Curriculum Development Council and EDB jointly launched a four-month consultation on the proposed moral and national education curriculum.

Relevant Council motion

15. Hon Albert HO moved a motion without legislative effect on "Moral and national education curriculum" at the Council meeting of 15 June 2011. The motion was negatived.

Relevant papers

16. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
23 June 2011

**Relevant papers on
Moral and national education**

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Education	20.1.2005	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Education	23.10.2008	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Education	21.10.2010	Agenda Minutes

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