

立法會 *Legislative Council*

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Panel on Education

Meeting on 9 February 2015

Background brief on issues related to Chinese History Education

Purpose

This paper highlights salient issues raised by members regarding the subject of Chinese History under the New Academic Structure ("NAS").

Introduction

2. The New Senior Secondary ("NSS") curriculum under NAS implemented since 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 subjects¹ and Other Learning Experiences². Chinese History is one of the elective subjects under the NSS curriculum.

Deliberation on issues of concern

3. Since the Fifth Legislative Council, the Panel on Education ("the Panel") had discussed issues related to certain NSS elective subjects at a number of meetings, including meetings on 30 May 2013, 9 June and 8 December 2014 and 16 January 2015. Considerable concerns were raised about the subject of Chinese History, in particular its uptake and the teaching of the subject under NAS. Questions on the teaching of Chinese History in secondary schools were

¹ Students may choose two or three subjects from 20 elective subjects, a range of Applied Learning subjects and Other Language subjects.

² These include moral and civic education, community service, aesthetic development etc.

also raised by Members at various Council meetings³.

Uptake of the subject

4. One of the main concerns expressed by members at meetings of the Panel and the Council was the reduced interest in history subjects among secondary students, in particular the drop in the number of students taking the elective subject of Chinese History under the NSS curriculum and sitting for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education ("HKDSE") Examination on the subject. Members sought comparison between the uptake rates of Chinese History under the past academic system and NAS, as well as the reasons for the drop in student enrolment for the subject.

5. In this connection, the Education Bureau ("EDB") explained that as the academic structure and participation rate for the HKDSE Examination, the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination and the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination were quite different, direct comparison of the actual number of students taking Chinese History might not be appropriate. Under the NSS curriculum, it was common for students to take more than two elective subjects at S4, tapering off to two electives in S6 and in the HKDSE Examination. For instance, for the second cohort of S4 students in the 2010-2011 school year, 11 872 students (15.2% of all S4 students) took Chinese History; the number stood at 9 329 (12.7%) when the cohort progressed to S5. At S6, 7 434 students took Chinese History in the HKDSE Examination, accounting for 10.8% of the total number of candidates⁴.

6. According to EDB, the steady decline in the number of secondary students over the past few years was another major reason leading to the proportional reduction in the number of students enrolled in all NSS elective subjects, including those enrolled in Chinese History. Nevertheless, EDB highlighted that Chinese History was the eighth most popular subject among all the elective subjects in the first three sittings of the HKDSE Examination, and rising to share the rank of the seventh most popular subject with Information & Communication Technology in the enrolment rate for the 2015 HKDSE Examination.

Teaching of Chinese History

7. Panel members were gravely concerned about the teaching of Chinese History in secondary schools under NAS. They sought information on Chinese History education in junior and senior secondary levels and whether it was a

³ Council meetings of 3 July 2013, 29 October 2014 and 12 November 2014.

⁴ See Question No. 1 for the Council meeting of 3 July 2013.

prevailing practice or requirement for schools to offer this elective NSS subject.

8. In this regard, EDB confirmed that secondary schools must provide Chinese history education at the junior secondary level, and should devote not less than an average of about two lessons per week on it. Meanwhile, schools could adopt different curriculum modes. According to EDB, in 2014-2015, more than 88% of secondary schools taught Chinese History as an independent subject at the junior secondary level (the dynastic chronological approach). Less than 12% of schools used Integrated Humanities (the thematic approach) or the combined curriculum of Chinese history and world history to teach Chinese history. Chinese history and culture being the essential learning content in primary and secondary basic education was clearly stated in the relevant curriculum guide promulgated by the Curriculum Development Council ("CDC") in 2001⁵. As for the senior secondary level, Chinese History had always been taught as an independent elective subject before and after the implementation of the NSS curriculum.

9. In the course of deliberation, some members sought the Administration's views on making Chinese History a compulsory subject at the senior secondary level. As explained by EDB, the current arrangement for NAS was the result of years of public consultation. As there were already four core subjects under the NSS curriculum, there was very little room to add a fifth. To do so might reduce the flexibility of students' choice and increase study pressure on them.

10. While expressing various concerns about the core subject of LS under the NSS curriculum, some members suggested that the Administration might look into the feasibility of using Chinese History to replace or share the core subject position of LS. The Administration's response was that LS was an interdisciplinary subject which allowed students to study an extensive curriculum through six modules⁶. The LS subject also enabled students to utilize their interdisciplinary knowledge with an issue-enquiry approach, so as to broaden their horizons and develop critical thinking and multiple perspectives. In the view of the Administration, no single disciplinary subject, including Chinese History, could replace the role of LS in the NSS curriculum.

11. On account of members' concern about the need to enhance students' interest in taking Chinese History as their elective subject, EDB informed members that CDC had set up an ad hoc committee in May 2014 to review the junior secondary curricula of Chinese History and History. Moreover, EDB was

⁵ See "Learning to learn : The Way Forward in Curriculum Development" promulgated in 2001.

⁶ The curriculum structure of LS subject comprises six modules, namely (1) Personal Development and Interpersonal Relationships, (2) Hong Kong Today, (3) Modern China, (4) Globalization, (5) Public Health and (6) Energy Technology and the Environment.

collaborating with different stakeholders to organize more teacher training programmes to enliven the learning and teaching strategies for the Chinese History subject.

Latest position

12. As stated in the 2015 Policy Address, EDB will renew the curriculum content of Chinese History and World History and enrich the learning experience of students. The training of teachers will also be enhanced. The objectives are to reinforce students' interest in and understanding of Chinese history and culture and broaden their global outlook.

13. The Panel will discuss "Chinese History Education" at the meeting to be held on 9 February 2015.

Relevant papers

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

Appendix

List of relevant papers

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Education	30.5.2013 (Item IV)	Agenda CB(4)20/13-14(01) Minutes
Legislative Council	3.7.2013	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 7-20 (Question 1)
Panel on Education	9.6.2014 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes
Legislative Council	29.10.2014	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 83-86 (Question 13)
Legislative Council	12.11.2014	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 65-92 (Question 8)
Panel on Education	8.12.2014 (Item V)	Agenda CB(4)210/14-15(04)
Panel on Education	16.1.2015	Agenda CB(4)358/14-15(01)

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