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Replies to supplementary questions raised by Finance Committee Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2020-21

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Education

Session No. : 18

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-EDB001

(Question Serial No. S103)

Head: (156) Government Secretariat: Education Bureau
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified
Programme: (6) Other Educational Services and Subsidies
Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Education (Mrs Ingrid YEUNG)
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Education

Question:

1. Please advise this Committee of the estimated expenditure of the Hong Kong Teachers' Centre in the coming year, including the expenditures on vetting activity applications and granting allowances (if any) to members of the Advisory Management Committee, Standing Committee and Activities Sub-committee.

Asked by: Hon HUI Chi-fung

Reply:

The Hong Kong Teachers' Centre (HKTC) is managed by the Advisory Management Committee (AMC), membership of which is elected from among the members, and its Standing Committee (SC). The Education Bureau (EDB) is responsible for providing secretariat support to the HKTC. Members of the AMC and SC serve on a voluntary basis and receive only meeting allowance. The estimated meeting allowance is \$30,000 for 2020-21. The salaries of the two EDB representatives in the AMC and SC and administrative expenses involved in the provision of secretariat support are subsumed under the EDB's overall staff and operating costs, hence a breakdown is not available.

The EDB provides grants for the HKTC to support its organisation of professional development activities through scrutinising applications submitted by the educational bodies registered with the HKTC. Decisions on grant approval are made on a need basis and according to the appropriateness of each project. The amount of expenditure depends on the number of applications received and the quality of the activities. As reference, the total amount of Activities Grant provided by the EDB to the HKTC in the past 3 years ranged from \$170,000 to \$500,000.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-EDB002

(Question Serial No. S104)

Head: (156) Government Secretariat: Education Bureau

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: (3) Primary Education, (4) Secondary Education, (5) Special Education

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Education (Mrs Ingrid YEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Education

Question:

1. Please advise of the estimated expenditure for organising exchange activities for sister schools in the coming year.

Asked by: Hon HUI Chi-fung

Reply:

Under the Sister School Scheme, the Education Bureau (EDB) provides a recurrent grant (which is set at \$154,950 for the 2019/20 school year and the amount of grant will be adjusted in accordance with the movement of the Composite Consumer Price Index each year) and professional support for each local public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme school (including special school) that has formed sister schools with its counterpart(s) in the Mainland. Schools may arrange their own exchange activities (such as school visits, student activities, seminars, teaching demonstrations, lesson evaluation, video conferencing and experience sharing) with their sister schools at the student, teacher and school management levels based on their development needs. Apart from that, every year, the EDB commissions service contractor(s) to facilitate the organisation of exchange activities aimed at networking sister schools. The estimated expenditure that includes the cost of commissioned services is around \$680,000 for the 2020/21 school year. Besides, the EDB draws on its existing resources to assist local schools in forming sister schools with their counterparts in the Mainland and promote more in-depth professional exchange and multi-faceted collaboration. As the manpower and expenditure involved are subsumed under the departmental expenditure of the EDB, a breakdown is not available.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-EDB003

(Question Serial No. S105)

Head: (156) Government Secretariat: Education Bureau

Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational expenses

Programme: (-) Not specified

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Education (Mrs Ingrid YEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Education

Question:

1. Please advise of the details of expenditure for supporting the work/operation of textbook review panels in the coming year.

Asked by: Hon HUI Chi-fung

Reply:

Textbook review is a professional task. Under the current textbook review mechanism of the Education Bureau (EDB), textbook review panels comprise internal and external reviewers. External reviewers include serving principals, teachers, academics and other professionals well versed in the subjects concerned. These external reviewers engage in textbook review on a voluntary basis without receiving any honoraria. Internal reviewers are members of the relevant subject sections and officers of the Bureau are also responsible for supporting the work of textbook review panels. The relevant manpower resources and expenses are subsumed under the overall expenditure of the EDB, and thus a breakdown of expenditure by item is not available.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-EDB004

(Question Serial No. S117)

Head: (156) Government Secretariat: Education Bureau

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: (3) Primary Education, (4) Secondary Education, (8) Policy and Support

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Education (Mrs Ingrid YEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Education

Question:

- (1) Among the complaint cases mentioned by the Education Bureau (EDB) in its reply, how many of them involved criminal and non-criminal offences respectively? Please provide the relevant statistics.
- (2) Under the school-based policy, parents, students or members of the public may lodge complaints concerning the daily operation or internal affairs of schools to the EDB. In this connection, please illustrate with examples the scope of so-called "internal affairs".

Asked by: Hon KWOK Wing-hang, Dennis

Reply:

- (1) In the school years from 2016/17 to 2018/19, the Education Bureau (EDB) received a total of 597 complaints against public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools. All of these complaints related to school and student development. As an established practice, the EDB does not purposely classify such complaints into the categories of criminal offences or non-criminal offences, and thus the figures requested are not available.
- (2) Under the Project on Enhancement of Complaint Management in Schools, upon receipt of complaints from parents, students or members of the public against the daily operation or internal affairs of schools, the EDB will refer the complaint to the school for direct handling upon seeking the complainant's consent. The school concerned should handle the complaint and reply to the complainant in accordance with its school-based mechanism and procedures, and send a copy of the reply to the EDB for information. The EDB will scrutinise the school's reply and, depending on the circumstances, take follow-up actions as appropriate. Generally speaking, the daily

operation and internal affairs of schools cover 4 domains, i.e. management and organisation (e.g. staff management and school facilities), learning and teaching (e.g. internal examinations and homework load), school ethos and student support (e.g. support for students with special educational needs), and student performance (e.g. attainments and conduct of students).

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-EDB005

(Question Serial No. S118)

Head: (156) Government Secretariat: Education Bureau

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: (3) Primary Education, (4) Secondary Education, (8) Policy and Support

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Education (Mrs Ingrid YEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Education

Question:

The Bureau mentioned that it received a total of 171 complaints and completed the investigation of 125 of these cases (with 39 cases followed up, 39 cases likely to be substantiated, and 47 cases unsubstantiated) between June 2019 and end of January 2020. Are the remaining 46 cases not yet processed? What is the progress of these cases? Please explain with examples.

Asked by: Hon KWOK Wing-hang, Dennis

Reply:

From mid-June 2019 to end of January 2020, the Education Bureau (EDB) received a total of 171 complaints about professional misconduct of teachers during recent social incidents. We have substantially completed the investigation of 125 cases, and the remaining 46 cases are being followed up. As for the cases being followed up, some are under investigation by the schools concerned, some are with schools' investigation reports and relevant information being scrutinised by the EDB, and some cannot be further processed as legal proceedings are underway.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-EDB006

(Question Serial No. S119)

Head: (156) Government Secretariat: Education Bureau

Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational expenses

Programme: (6) Other Educational Services and Subsidies, (8) Policy and Support

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Education (Mrs Ingrid YEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Education

Question:

The Education Bureau (EDB) stated in its reply that complaints were not categorised by type due to their extensive coverage and other reasons. Meanwhile, it also pointed out that complaints were not handled by a particular section with a separate budget since complaint handling was part of day-to-day work of various sections under the EDB. Given that all divisions and sections have a hand in processing complaints, the EDB must be able to tell which division/section is responsible for what kind of complaint, hence the categories of complaints.

Please provide for the Legislative Council's information the name and job nature of each relevant division/section, and the numbers of complaints they received and processed in each of the past 5 years.

Asked by: Hon KWOK Wing-hang, Dennis

Reply:

Given the extensive coverage of complaints and the unique nature of various cases, with quite a number of them involving more than one allegation, we do not categorise these complaints by type. Complaint handling is part of day-to-day work of the sections under the Education Bureau (EDB). Some complaints might involve various sections, and the sections concerned will collaborate with one another. Therefore, we are not able to categorise the complaints by type despite the fact that all sections would process complaints. The staff dealing with complaints is deployed flexibly and subsumed under the overall manpower resources of the EDB, and thus a breakdown is not available.

The EDB is organised into various sections according to the nature of work, such as tasks pertinent to post-secondary education, school development and curriculum. Every staff member in different sections may be entrusted to handle complaints. The names of sections and staff members under the EDB are available in the Government Telephone Directory.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-EDB007

(Question Serial No. S120)

Head: (156) Government Secretariat: Education Bureau

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: (3) Primary Education, (4) Secondary Education, (8) Policy and Support

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Education (Mrs Ingrid YEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Education

Question:

The Education Bureau (EDB) indicated that there was no mechanism to cross-check or double-check the complaint cases received by the EDB and the Council on Professional Conduct in Education (CPC) and the identity of the persons involved. Does it mean that there is no mechanism for EDB to refer complaints involving professional misconduct of teachers to the CPC?

The CPC handles complaints involving professional misconduct of teachers and advises the EDB on follow-up actions. Nevertheless, the EDB will also handle complaints involving professional misconduct of teachers on its own. The CPC received and handled 20 to 30 complaint cases on average in each of the past 5 years, compared to over 100 cases on average each year received and handled by the EDB. This year, the EDB received and handled nearly 200 cases, which is 3 to 5 times that of the CPC. Judging by the differences in these numbers, it may appear to the public and the education sector that the EDB has overstepped its bounds by limiting how many cases can the CPC handle or restricting the CPC to handling only cases screened by the EDB.

If that is the case, by what criteria does the EDB decide to handle complaints involving professional misconduct of teachers on its own instead of referring them to the CPC? Or does the EDB base its decision on the nature of complaints (e.g. complaints concerning the political stance of teachers)? Even if the decisions are not politically motivated, isn't it superfluous and a waste of resources for the EDB to handle complaints this way?

Asked by: Hon KWOK Wing-hang, Dennis

Reply:

The Council on Professional Conduct in Education (CPC) is not a statutory regulatory authority. It is an advisory body that offers advice to the Permanent Secretary for Education. Currently, if an individual educator is suspected of having breached the professional conduct, a complaint may be lodged to the Education Bureau (EDB), the school concerned or the CPC. In handling complaints, these three parties each have their own role, authority and mechanism.

As the authority for teacher registration, the EDB makes judgement as to whether a teacher has misconducted himself/herself and whether a teacher's registration should be cancelled. Since the EDB is entrusted with this responsibility, upon receiving a direct complaint, it must initiate the procedures for the launch of investigation and make a judgement based on the findings. The investigation need not involve the CPC.

As far as handling of complaints is concerned, the EDB and CPC operate independently. The EDB does not refer the cases it has received to the CPC for handling. As for the CPC, a complaint received from an educator or a member of the public will be handled in accordance with its established mechanism as well as the Code for the Education Profession of Hong Kong, and recommendations will be made to the Permanent Secretary for Education accordingly. The EDB will make a decision as to whether follow-up actions are required after reviewing and considering thoroughly the CPC's recommendations and justifications. Hence, the allegation that the EDB has restrained the CPC from handling complaint cases properly is both false and unfounded.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-EDB008

(Question Serial No. S097)

Head: (156) Government Secretariat: Education Bureau
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified
Programme: (7) Post-secondary, Vocational and Professional Education
Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Education (Mrs Ingrid YEUNG)
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Education

Question:

In recent years, the actual intakes of several Architecture and Engineering programmes provided by the Chu Hai College of Higher Education and the Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong under the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors have been outnumbered by provision of subsidised places, and the downward trend is expected to continue. Have the Administration and the relevant institutions analysed the reasons for that and put forward improvement proposals?

Asked by: Hon TSE Wai-chuen, Tony

Reply:

The Education Bureau (EDB), in consultation with policy bureaux on Hong Kong's social and economic development needs as well as the needs of various industries, makes adjustments as appropriate to the designated programmes and the number of subsidised places under the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors (SSSDP) every year. As for architecture and engineering programmes, the number of subsidised places increased from 170 in the 2015/16 academic year to 445 in the 2018/19 academic year, while the number of intake also rose from 150 to 189.

The supply of places for sub-degree and undergraduate programmes in the post-secondary education sector currently exceeds the number of secondary school graduates meeting the entry requirements of these programmes. Diversified choices of post-secondary programmes are also available. Subsequent to the increase in the number of subsidised places for undergraduate programmes under the SSSDP in the 2018/19 academic year, the Government expanded the SSSDP to cover sub-degree programmes in the 2019/20 academic year with about 2 000 subsidised places for sub-degree programmes per cohort. With the increased provision of subsidised places and competition with other undergraduate programmes, the intake of individual post-secondary programmes may be somewhat affected (e.g. the number of students admitted to architecture and engineering programmes under the SSSDP is 118 in the 2019/20 academic year). In addition, the intake of the

programmes under the SSSDP also depends on the decisions that students make according to their interests, aspirations and capabilities.

The EDB, in consultation with policy bureaux on Hong Kong's social and economic development needs as well as the needs of various industries, makes adjustments as appropriate to the selected disciplines, the relevant subsidised programmes and the number of subsidised places under the SSSDP every year, with a view to nurturing talent in support of specific industries with keen demand for human resources. Apart from the number of places and intake of self-financing programmes, policy bureaux will take into account factors such as the programmes and number of places offered by institutions, manpower demand indicators of the industries concerned, views of the industries and stakeholders, and availability of similar publicly-funded programmes in making an overall assessment and introducing adjustments as appropriate. In the 2020/21 academic year, the programmes in some disciplines and the number of subsidised places will be adjusted in the hope that more students will be attracted to pursue relevant programmes under the SSSDP to support the industries concerned.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-EDB009

(Question Serial No. S098)

Head: (156) Government Secretariat: Education Bureau

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: (3) Primary Education, (4) Secondary Education, (6) Other Educational Services and Subsidies

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Education (Mrs Ingrid YEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Education

Question:

- (1) The reply from the Education Bureau (EDB) indicated that around 80 teachers/teaching assistants and around 1 000 secondary school students were arrested for involvement in the social incidents between June and December 2019. Please provide further breakdown of the figures, including the respective numbers of arrested primary and secondary school teachers, the grade levels of arrested secondary school students, the number of secondary schools with more than 5 students arrested, and the number of arrested students in each of the top 5 secondary schools with the most students arrested (names of schools are not required); and
- (2) The EDB replied that it would suggest schools to work out an individualised long-term discipline and counselling plan for each arrested or prosecuted student early. Are the schools concerned required to report to the EDB the content of their discipline and counselling plans, as well as the implementation progress and effectiveness of the plans? Given that secondary schools across the territory have been suspended due to the epidemic in recent months, does the EDB know whether the discipline and counselling plans have been implemented and how are they implemented?

Asked by: Hon TSE Wai-chuen, Tony

Reply:

The Education Bureau (EDB) has repeatedly advised students to refrain from any dangerous or allegedly unlawful acts. We also stress that teachers should set a good example for students, and through their words and deeds, guide students in distinguishing right from wrong and obeying the law and regulation. The EDB has gathered relevant information via different channels to grasp the overall situation of teachers/students getting involved in dangerous or allegedly unlawful incidents and being arrested, thereby determining the follow-up actions at the policy and school support levels. For example, we issued a letter

to all secondary schools on 20 December 2019, reiterating that schools should take the personal safety and healthy development of students into consideration and arrange the duties of the teaching staff concerned prudently. In respect of students, schools were reminded to inform parents that schools would not tolerate students' unruly behaviour and any such behaviour would be handled according to the established discipline and counselling mechanism. Instead of giving up on these students, schools should strive to help them get back on track by adopting an appropriate discipline and counselling approach. Schools are also advised to work out an individualised long-term discipline and counselling plan for each of these students so as to enhance their positive values and thinking, and help them develop the proper attitudes for interacting with others. In addition, close liaison should be maintained with parents. As each case is different and the needs vary among students, we have asked schools to draw up plans and follow up the progress having regard to their school-based mechanism and the actual circumstances of individual students. The EDB will approach schools to understand the overall needs of students so as to render support to schools when necessary. As classes have been suspended since early February due to the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019, schools have faced some limitations on their discipline and counselling work.

Since statistics are collected from various sources and the personal particulars involved are incomplete, we are unable to provide the required information according to the categories mentioned in the question.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-EDB010

(Question Serial No. S096)

Head: (190) University Grants Committee

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: University Grants Committee

Controlling Officer: Secretary-General, University Grants Committee (Prof James TANG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Education

Question:

The damage done to the campuses and facilities of universities during the protests relating to the opposition to the proposed legislative amendments has aroused public attention. According to the reply provided by the Education Bureau (EDB), universities will carry out the relevant repair and maintenance works with their existing resources and as such, the Government does not maintain any information on the expenditure involved. However, the existing resources and reserves of universities come more or less from the funding provided by the University Grants Committee (UGC) over the years. Moreover, some of the university premises were built with direct funding or subvention from the Government. All these involve public interest and taxpayers should be given an explanation. Will the EDB or UGC require the universities to provide the relevant information and disclose it to members of the public through the Legislative Council?

Asked by: Hon TSE Wai-chuen, Tony

Reply:

All of the eight University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded universities are autonomous statutory bodies. Under the existing mechanism, the recurrent funding to the universities are in the form of block grants which provides for a one-line allocation of resources. The universities may utilise fundings from different sources flexibly to meet their routine operational needs, including repair and maintenance works on campus.

The UGC was very concerned about the safety of university staff and students in the events which happened last year, and noted that the universities have completed the majority of their restoration works early this year for normal teaching and research activities. The universities have not been provided with additional resources from the UGC for carrying out their restoration works, while the allocation of internal resources has all along been within the remits of their autonomy. To respect institutional autonomy, the UGC has no plan to require the universities to disclose information on the expenditure incurred.

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