

Report of the Special Committee on Civic Education

This is the second year of the operation of the Special Committee on Civic Education, which took on and expanded on the work previously undertaken by the “Secondary Schools Education Project”.

In recent years there has been a huge increase in the interest shown by schools and young people in the law and legal system of Hong Kong, as well as the concepts of Rule of Law, Civil Liberties and Human Rights. Many schools have included law-related topics in their General Studies, Liberal Studies or Civic Education curriculum and we can observe a growing need for contribution by the Bar by way of imparting the necessary information and knowledge to the students and teachers. This year we have been invited to deliver talks to students by a large number of schools in Hong Kong, both local and international. Topics that have been covered by our members have included:

1. The Hong Kong legal system: Courts and Lawyers.
2. How the law relates to our daily life.
3. The Basic Law, Civil Liberties and Human Rights.
4. Matters affecting teenagers and secondary school students.
5. Internet abuse.
6. Drug abuse (and we are particularly thankful for the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse, Chaired by the Secretary for Justice, for providing us with the necessary materials and guidance)

Talks have generally been given to higher form students, although from time to time we have been asked to speak to lower form students. For higher form students, very often the number of students involved would be quite small and our speakers were able to conduct the discussions with the students (who were often very well prepared since they have undertaken a study of the relevant topics in their school curriculum) in an animated and interactive way. Careers talks have also been delivered by our members to students who are interested in pursuing legal studies.

In this year we have also fully launched a court visit programme in collaborating with the Judiciary. Students taking part in such visits would be received by both members of our Special Committee as well as representatives of the Judiciary. Representatives of the Judiciary would first introduce the students to the operation of the Courts and the Judiciary in Hong Kong, and then take them to visit courtrooms so that they could gain firsthand experience of court proceedings by direct observation. Students would then meet with members of our Special Committee in the Bar’s premises for an informal question and answer session, where there could be discussions about factual aspects of what the students had just observed in court, as well as general matters concerning the law, the legal system and the legal profession. The response from schools for the first term of the 2008-2009 school year has been extremely encouraging, and we anticipate that the same would continue into the rest of the school year and in the years to come.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the members of the Special Committee, to other members of the Bar who have assisted in delivering talks to students in schools as well as receiving students during their court visits. Last but not least I would like to thank Miss Doreen Fan of the Bar Secretariat for her unfailing support and efficient handling of the administrative aspects of the scheme.

Membership

Paul Shieh, SC (Chairman)

Jennifer Tsang

Bernard Mak

Richard Khaw

Frederick Chan

Kent Yee

Herbert Au-Yeung

Catherine Wong

Teresa Wu

Elaine Liu

Angel Mak

Paul Shieh, SC
Chairman
Special Committee on Civic Education

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