

CHAPTER 14

ELECTIONEERING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED IN SCHOOLS OR INVOLVING SCHOOL PUPILS

PART I : GENERAL

14.1 The involvement of school pupils in electioneering activities has always been a matter of public concern. School administrators, such as school supervisors, principals and teachers, **must not** use their authority to exert undue influence on pupils under their charge, including those in pre-primary, primary, or secondary schools, to recruit them for electioneering activities. If the EAC comes to know that a school administrator has abused his power to involve pupils in such activities, it may make a **reprimand** or **censure** against the person. For regulatory provisions on use of force or duress to influence a person's voting preference, see s 13 of the ECICO.

14.2 School administrators, whether as candidates themselves or supporters of candidate(s), should not instruct pupils to help distribute EAs to parents, let alone instruct pupils to ask their parents to vote for particular candidate(s), to avoid misleading the public that the school authority has exerted undue influence over pupils in school.

PART II : SCHOOL PUPILS PARTICIPATING IN ELECTIONEERING ACTIVITIES

14.3 To promote civic education, schools should encourage pupils to care about social affairs, including elections. However, electioneering activities often involve gatherings of people in a crowded environment, which may more likely to pose a danger to the pupils themselves or to others. Therefore, pre-primary or primary school pupils are not suggested to participate in electioneering activities.

14.4 By law, pupils aged 18 or above are responsible for their own acts and can make election-related decisions for themselves.

14.5 The EAC adopts the circular on electioneering activities issued by the Secretary for Education to all schools. If schools allow pupils participate in electioneering activities, they must comply with the following guidance:

- (a) pupils' participation in electioneering activities must be **entirely voluntary**;
- (b) the schools must obtain the prior **written consent** from parents or guardians;
- (c) under no circumstances should pre-primary or primary school pupils be recruited to participate in electioneering activities;

- (d) under no circumstances should normal lessons be interrupted so as to allow pupils to participate in electioneering activities, which affects pupils' learning progress; and
- (e) under no circumstances should pupils be instructed to participate in electioneering activities in danger-prone areas, including those with risks of traffic accidents.

14.6 Pupils who participate in electioneering activities should pay attention to their own school regulation on the wearing of school uniforms during electioneering activities.

PART III : ELECTIONEERING ACTIVITIES IN SCHOOLS

14.7 In line with the **fair and equal treatment** principle, the EAC appeals to all school administrators to provide all candidates in the same constituency with equal opportunities to conduct electioneering activities. If school administrators permit a candidate to conduct electioneering activities in the school, such as hosting talks for pupils or distributing campaign materials to parents through pupils, they should also give the same opportunity to other candidates of the same constituency.

PART IV : SANCTION

14.8 If the EAC comes to know that a candidate or school administrator has breached the guidelines in this chapter, it may make a public **reprimand** or **censure**, and publish the name of the candidate, school, or person concerned. The EAC may also refer the case to the Education Bureau for follow-up. Candidates should therefore inform the school administrator concerned who offers them assistance of the above guidelines.