CHAPTER 12

ELECTIONEERING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED IN SCHOOLS OR INVOLVING SCHOOL PUPILS

PART I : GENERAL

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

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

PART II : SCHOOL PUPILS PARTICIPATING IN ELECTIONEERING ACTIVITIES

12.3 To promote civic education, schools should encourage pupils to care about social affairs (including elections). However, electioneering activities often involve gathering of people in a crowded environment, which may be more likely to pose a danger to the pupils themselves or others. Therefore, the EAC does not suggest pre-primary or primary school pupils participate in electioneering activities.

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

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

(a) pupils' participation in electioneering activities must be **entirely voluntary**;

(b) the schools must obtain prior **written consent** from parents or guardians;

(c) under no circumstances should schools recruit pre-primary or primary school pupils to participate in electioneering activities;

(d) under no circumstances should schools interrupt normal lessons to allow pupils to participate in electioneering activities, as it affects pupils' learning progress; and

(e) under no circumstances should schools instruct pupils to participate in electioneering activities in danger-prone areas, including areas where traffic accidents are likely to occur.

12.6 Pupils who participate in electioneering activities should pay attention to their own school regulation regarding the wearing of school uniforms when participating in electioneering activities.

PART III : ELECTIONEERING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED IN SCHOOLS

12.7 To be in line with the principles of **fair and equal treatment** of candidates, the EAC appeals to all school administrators to provide all candidates of the same Rural Area with equal opportunities to conduct electioneering activities. If school administrators decide to allow particular candidate(s) to conduct electioneering activities in the schools (e.g. hosting talks for pupils, distributing campaign materials to pupils with a view to giving the campaign materials to their parents), they should also give the same opportunity to other candidates of the same Rural Area.

PART IV : SANCTION

12.8 If the EAC comes to know that a candidate or school administrator has breached the Guidelines, it may issue a public **reprimand** or **censure** against the relevant person, 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.