

For discussion on
10 November 2014

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Guidelines on Teacher Professionalism and School Activities

Purpose

This paper provides a brief overview of the Education Bureau (EDB)'s guidelines on teacher professionalism and school activities.

Background

2. On the whole, any person aspiring to join the teaching profession may apply to the EDB for registration as a registered teacher after being awarded relevant qualifications upon successful completion of a training programme at a recognised teacher training institution. Teachers with registration can be categorised as “registered teachers” (RT) and “permitted teachers” (PT). In general, a person who holds recognised teacher qualifications (e.g. a Teacher's Certificate, Bachelor Degree in Education and Post-graduate Diploma in Education) may apply to the EDB for registration as an RT. A person who holds academic qualifications but without teacher training may only apply to be a PT. The person must first get employed by a school, which will then seek the EDB's approval to employ him/her as a PT.

3. Under the policy framework of school-based management, the School Management Committees (SMCs)/Incorporated Management Committees (IMCs) are vested with the power and responsibility in managing schools. They should work in collaboration with their school sponsoring bodies to formulate school-based mechanisms and procedures for handling school affairs. SMCs or IMCs, as the employer of teachers, shall ensure that they perform their teaching duties properly for the smooth running of all learning and teaching activities, including the handling of matters related to views and enquiries on teachers.

4. In gist, teacher education institutions, the EDB and schools each has a role to play to oversee and enhance teachers' professional standards and

conduct, while also providing them with relevant guidelines. The following paragraphs highlight the respective guidelines on teacher professionalism, learning and teaching, and school activities.

Education Ordinance, Education Regulations and Code for the Education Profession of Hong Kong

5. The EDB specifies and prescribes, among others, the teachers in school, school activities and school management in accordance with the law, such as the Education Ordinance and the Education Regulations. For instance, school programmes or related learning activities should be conducted in designated parameters and manners; and no instruction or activity that is prejudicial to the function of education or the welfare of the students will be permitted upon any school premises or classrooms.

6. The Education Ordinance also stipulates that SMCs or IMCs shall ensure that their schools are managed satisfactorily and that the education of the students is promoted in a proper manner. SMCs or IMCs are required to run their schools in accordance with the Education Ordinance, the Education Regulations, other related ordinances¹, Codes of Aid as well as the instructions and stipulations issued by the EDB from time to time, etc. They should establish a sound management system covering curriculum development, learning and teaching matters, teacher professional development, support for students, personnel and financial management, and school daily operations, etc. in order to provide quality education to students.

7. The EDB has attached great importance to the professional standards and conduct of teachers, who are reminded to follow the advice as per the Code for the Education Profession of Hong Kong (the Code) by performing their duties dutifully and providing students with appropriate education. Developed after extensive consultations, the Code is a set of self-disciplinary guidelines formulating the standards on ethics and conduct of education professionals.

8. The Code sets out the standards and principles governing the professional conduct of teachers, and teachers' obligation to the profession, students, parents and the community. For example, teachers shall be

¹ For example, the Sex Discrimination Ordinance, the Disability Discrimination Ordinance, the Race Discrimination Ordinance and the Copyright Ordinance, etc.

concerned about students' safety; they shall as far as possible adopt an objective viewpoint in discussing controversial matters with students; they shall respect the uniqueness and characteristics of the parents' background of each student and treat in confidence any information regarding private family matters. Moreover, teachers shall show respect for the law and the behavioural norms acceptable to society as a whole; they shall teach students to respect different positions and opinions in matters over which public opinion is divided. The EDB has all along advised teachers to teach in a professional, fair and open manner, according to the needs, age and learning progress of students with different abilities. Teachers shall create valuable learning experience for students to promote their whole-person development. Abided by the above principles and in the spirit of professionalism, teachers shall make use of their professional knowledge and judgment to conduct learning and teaching activities properly, in order to win public trust and support.

9. The EDB has been promoting the Code through different channels. For example, we remind applicants for teacher registration to read the Code when assessing their applications; we have built the Code into the Induction Courses for New Teachers which are held annually to keep new teachers abreast of public expectations on them and to raise their awareness of the need to perform their duties properly. In order to enhance teachers' professional conduct, the EDB also arranges regular school visits and organises talks and seminars for teachers as a means to facilitate wide promotion of the Code.

10. The School Administration Guide (SAG) compiled by the EDB also advises schools that they should convey to all teachers and staff their expectations regarding teacher conduct and performance on a regular basis through a variety of channels, such as staff meetings and the teachers' handbook. Under the policy framework of school-based management, upon receipt of a complaint against a teacher, the EDB will approach the school to look into the matter. If necessary, the EDB will ask the school to investigate and report to it the findings, including any follow-up action on substantiated complaint case.

Curriculum Guides and Teaching Guidelines

11. Curriculum provides the basis of learning and teaching. The EDB has articulated explicit requirements on the quality of the curricula and the requirements of teachers. The Curriculum Development Council develops

curriculum guides for different key learning areas and subjects for students at various learning stages, i.e. kindergarten, primary and secondary. Each curriculum guide sets out the curriculum aims, learning targets, relevant knowledge, skills, values and attitudes as well as expected learning outcomes of a particular learning stage. Apart from defining the learning and teaching content, the guides provide teachers with a variety of teaching strategies for meeting the curriculum requirements and students' needs for the ultimate purpose of facilitating the achievement of the expected learning outcomes, enhancing students' learning effectiveness and instilling in them positive values.

12. Based on the learning aims and subject contents, curriculum guides spell out the guiding principles for teachers to observe and adopt flexibly in their daily teaching activities to cater to students' abilities, interests and progress. Key principles include:

- (a) Teachers should implement a curriculum by adopting the learning and teaching approaches and strategies recommended by curriculum guides for different learning stages. For example, at kindergarten stage, students' interest, ability, cognition and developmental needs should be taken care of. For primary and secondary students, on top of their interests and abilities, their ages, levels of study and needs as well as school context should also be given due consideration;
- (b) Teachers should create a safe and conducive learning environment for students and take care of their psychological and emotional health for effective learning;
- (c) Teachers should foster students with positive values and robust attitudes instead of imposing theirs on their students. Hence, when putting forth their own views on certain issues, teachers should make it clear that they are presenting their personal views for students' reference only;
- (d) Where controversial issues are involved, teachers should design class activities by selecting appropriate teaching materials from various sources instead of a sole source to enable students to have a full appraisal of the issues, ideas and facts in question from

different perspectives and at different levels. This is to nurture students with a rational, objective and independent mind with a multi-perspective outlook.

13. When discussing current affairs touching on socio-political participation, schools should also adhere to the above broad principles and provide students with multifarious learning materials to ensure their access to different data and points of view. The EDB believes that schools and their teaching force will continue to display professionalism and make use of their professional knowledge as well as learning and teaching resources selected in the light of the curriculum aims and learning goals to lead the discussion of such issues. We hope that with the aid of these guidelines, teachers are able to grasp how to help students develop into rational, informed, responsible and all-round citizens by equipping them with necessary knowledge, skills and positive values.

Guidelines on Administration of School Activities

14. Under school-based management, schools are given more room and flexibility to develop quality education with their own characteristics and, in parallel, they should run their own affairs in accordance with the power and responsibilities vested in them. In this connection, the EDB has compiled the SAG, setting out the basic principles and implementation guidelines on education policies in various aspects of school management, on the basis of which schools will formulate their school-based measures in their own context.

15. Schools are places for students to learn. Thus, schools should ensure that students can learn effectively in a disruption-free and orderly environment. In this regard, the SAG specifically points out that schools have the fundamental role to uphold students' right to education. Schools should develop school attendance and related policies that promote student's regular attendance. Any student who has been absent must produce satisfactory evidence from the parent or guardian stating the reason(s) for absence. Students who wish to be absent for any reason of which they are aware in advance should obtain the prior permission of their class teacher. Schools should remind students not to be absent frequently for trivial reasons so that a sense of responsibility, punctuality and a good habit can be cultivated among students.

16. The SAG also includes guidelines issued by the EDB in respect of different situations, as well as nature and needs of student activities. In the light of the guidelines and students' development, schools should organise activities, on the basis of their professional judgement, that are in the best interest of and appropriate to the learning needs of students, and adopt measures to safeguard students' safety. SMCs and IMCs should be responsible for the activities organised by their schools. They should establish school-based mechanisms on vetting school activities and make the related procedures known to all teachers and staff. School activities organised should be well documented. Schools should handle sensitive activities with vigilance. For a student who wishes to join any non-school-related activity during school hours, the school should approach and remind his/her parents to observe relevant school rules by informing the school of their child's absence or seeking approval for the absence from the school. Parents should take responsibility for the safety of their child during the period of absence.

17. The school should be a place where care, concern, support and mutual respect are practised. The SAG sets out the basic principles on guidance and discipline that schools may refer to when formulating and enforcing their school rules. School rules should aim at developing self-discipline in students, thus teaching, guiding and protecting students. Schools should enforce their rules in a lawful, sensible and reasonable manner while ensuring fairness and consistency in application. To cater for the developmental needs of students, schools will identify, counsel and refer students with, among others, behavioural, family, psychological, mental health problems to relevant professional support services. We firmly believe that through home-school cooperation and an effective home-school-community partnership, schools will fully utilize the resources of other stakeholders in the community in order to promote students' development in their life-long learning and enrich the quality of education offered.

18. In reviewing relevant school-based policies, systems and measures, schools should be open and receptive to different views, and identify if there is room for further improvement. Schools should take appropriate follow-up measures and address complaints as early as practicable for the continuous improvement and betterment of school administration.

19. Regarding social issues of interest to students, such as the Occupy Central movement in the past month, schools and the teaching force have upheld their professional principles and remained committed to their duties, which helps minimise disruption to normal school operation, ensure students' access to a balanced education in the school and help maintain an orderly learning environment for them.

20. Members are invited to note the briefing on the relevant guidelines.

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