

For discussion

on 12 January 2015

Legislative Council Panel on Education
Progress Report of
the Committee on Professional Development of Teachers and Principals

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the work of the Committee on Professional Development of Teachers and Principals (COTAP), a non-statutory high-level professional body under the purview of the Education Bureau (EDB). COTAP is tasked to give steer on strategies to enhance the competencies and capabilities of the teaching profession at various career stages.

Background

2. Before the setting up of COTAP, teachers' professional development was steered by the then Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications¹ (ACTEQ). In 2003, 2006 and 2009 respectively, the then ACTEQ published its First, Interim and Final Reports on continuing professional development (CPD), instituting the CPD framework for teachers. The recommendations have been adopted for implementation in the teaching profession.

3. In view of the challenges in the 21st century, our society's expectations of the teaching profession, comprising teachers and school leaders, have been higher than ever. Therefore, COTAP has been reconstituted from the then ACTEQ since 1 June 2013 to advise the Government on policies and measures relating to the professional development of teachers and principals across the continuum of the teaching profession, covering student, novice and experienced teachers, as well as aspiring, newly-appointed and accomplished

¹ The Chairpersons in the past few terms of office were Professor CHENG Kai-ming and Principal CHEUNG Pak-hong.

school leaders. Details of the composition of COTAP and its Sub-committees are at Appendix.

Undergoing a Positive Transformation from ACTEQ to COTAP

4. Our students have been performing well in international assessments in areas including reading, mathematics, science and creative problem solving. In recent years, other Asian education systems such as those of Singapore, Shanghai and South Korea have been making swift improvement and occupying the highest positions, and meanwhile the western ones are also catching up fast in various global rankings. We understand that the adoption of an evidence-based approach to quality enhancement including the use of feedback to inform pedagogical practice forms an important part of the reform efforts of the other Asian economies.

5. Further, since the last decade or so, the community has witnessed a sea-change in the values of Hong Kong (HK)'s younger generation. In the course of COTAP's deliberation, stakeholders have mostly reflected that a perceptible difference in outlook is discerned amongst student teachers, novice teachers and teachers with only a few years of service, and they have urged for a need to strengthen sharing and learning in areas such as professional conduct, attitudes and commitment according to teachers' stages of career development and experience in order to enhance professionalism of the teaching force.

6. Other than that, the implementation of school-based management (SBM) in the territory results in an urgency to focus more importantly on school leadership. Besides, from a global perspective, international studies (e.g. TALIS 2013 by OECD²) have generally supported the significance of effective school leadership in nurturing high-quality teachers.

7. Last but not least, stakeholders have largely supported the view of school leadership as the driver of teachers' professional development. As such, one of the prime purposes of setting up the COTAP, which also denotes the strategic transformation from the then ACTEQ to COTAP, is to build a platform where the stakeholders can be engaged to advise the Government on

² The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) provides a comprehensive cross-country analysis on teaching and learning that helps participating countries to identify others facing similar policy challenges.

effective ways to facilitate each and every school to develop a path to excellence, resulting in continuous improvement in teacher quality for boosting students' achievement and whole-person development.

8. In brief, the setting up of COTAP, indeed, signifies a new leaf with new impetus in:

- (a) taking forward a paradigm shift in the school sector to promote a reflective culture which supports evidence-based practice and accountability at system, school and classroom levels;
- (b) promoting the use of evidence and data drawn from educational research and evaluation studies to inform formulation and improvement of policies and measures; and
- (c) building a learning community and facilitating collaboration amongst different parties, including the EDB, teacher education institutions (TEIs), school sector and other stakeholder groups.

9. Tasked with enhanced functions and an extended scope of responsibilities, COTAP is accorded a particularly proactive role in uplifting our school effectiveness to bring forth improvement in teacher quality for the betterment of student learning and growth, ultimately enabling our students to soar to new heights.

Vision, Mission, Objectives and Strategies of COTAP

10. The positive transformation from the then ACTEQ to COTAP unequivocally denotes the Government's fortitude in nurturing a quality teaching profession comprising teachers and school leaders who are focused in student learning and growth in pursuit of continuous improvement and excellence.

11. In the past 18 months since its set-up, COTAP has adopted a global perspective through undergoing a methodical review of the policies and good practices of top-rated education systems worldwide, such as those of Australia, California, Finland, Ontario, Singapore and the United Kingdom. Concurrently, COTAP has conducted meetings with around 200 stakeholders from various groups, including the school councils, heads' and deputy heads' associations, school sponsoring bodies (SSB), educational bodies, teachers' association, parents, kindergarten (KG) sector and TEIs, to understand better

their views and issues of concern.

12. In most high-performing Asian education systems with brilliant student performance in international assessment (e.g. Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)), a rather centralised approach to the development of teachers and principals has been adopted. Unlike these Asian systems, Hong Kong has provided an admirable degree of autonomy for schools since the implementation of SBM in 1999, resulting in a genuine respect for school-based decision, sharing of vision and mission by stakeholders as well as diversity in pursuit of accountability and quality. With the development of SBM, schools are considered as the locus of change and school leaders are expected to bring forth improvement in teacher quality through fostering a reflective culture that supports evidence-based practice and accountability for the betterment of student learning and growth in the end. Against this background, the worldwide trend and the views of stakeholders, COTAP has laid down its vision, mission, objectives and strategies as follows:

- (a) Vision: A Learning Profession of Vibrancy
 A Teaching Profession of Excellence
- (b) Mission: To foster a vibrant teaching profession of excellence through formulating strategies to
 - enhance teacher preparation,
 - promote and support continuing professional development, and
 - strengthen school leadershipfor the benefit of student learning and growth
- (c) Objectives: To nurture a quality teaching profession comprising teachers and school leaders who are
 - focused in student learning and growth,
 - adroit in reflective and evidence-based practice, and
 - supportive of school accountability and effectivenessin pursuit of continuous improvement and excellence
- (d) Strategies:
 - catalysing a paradigm shift
 - promoting use of evidence and data
 - building a learning community

Areas of Focus

13. Towards the vision and mission, COTAP has formulated various areas of focus under T-excel@hk in Phase 1 of its work, where “T” stands for the teaching profession. T-excel@hk indeed symbolises a teaching profession of excellence in HK. The eight areas of focus under T-excel@hk and the purposes are summarised as follows:

	Areas of focus under T-excel@hk	Purposes
(a)	Unified set of standards for the teaching profession ³	Providing a clear reference for teacher preparation, teachers’ CPD and school leadership development
(b)	Dataset built on territory-wide system survey	Effecting a feedback loop to inform policies and strategies on the professional development of teachers and school leaders at different career stages
(c)	One-stop portal for sharing of information and resources and self-paced professional development	Facilitating professional learning and development of teachers and school leaders
(d)	New types and modes of training explored	Enhancing the quality and relevance of, and allowing for diversity in the professional development programmes
(e)	3-tier mentorship scheme targeting at student and novice teachers, middle leaders and newly-appointed principals	Providing high-quality on-site support for practitioners transitioning into new career stages

³ Upon the development of a unified set of standards, it is hoped that a coherent set of standards could be formulated for the teaching profession as a whole, including both teachers and school leaders, at different stages of maturity along the continuum of professional growth for the KG, primary and secondary sectors. This unified set of standards (which extend from student, novice and experienced teachers to aspiring, newly-appointed and accomplished school leaders and are applicable to KG, primary and secondary sectors) should be an innovative attempt worldwide.

(f)	Reinforced professional learning communities for sharing and networking	Building a vibrant learning profession to drive robust school leadership, innovations and improvements in pedagogy and student development
(g)	Promotional and contribution schemes	Highlighting the teaching profession's achievements and contributions, in recognition and for promotion of its professionalism and status, to help attract and retain talent
(h)	Feasibility studies on how best to improve the design and delivery of teacher preparation programmes	Bridging the theory-practice gap in teacher preparation to help novice teachers better meet challenges in schools

14. For on-going and long-term professional development of teachers and principals, and in line with the international good practices and pressing concerns expressed by various stakeholder groups, the following areas of focus would be accorded priority in Phase 1: -

- (a) Developing a unified set of standards stipulating the attributes, values and conduct expected of the teaching profession through in-depth study and review of the relevant competency frameworks or standards from a selection of developed countries;
- (b) Establishing a dataset built on territory-wide system survey to collect feedback from relevant stakeholders to strengthen the feedback loop at system level for informing policy making and the design and delivery of initial teacher education, CPD and leadership programmes; and
- (c) Setting up a one-stop portal for sharing of information and resources and self-paced professional development anytime anywhere (e.g. an e-tool for collating enrolment information of a wide range of professional development programmes and services offered by the EDB, TEIs, tertiary institutes, other educational bodies, etc. will be constructed so that teachers and school leaders could gain easy access to the CPD information).

15. The vision, mission, objectives, strategies and eight areas of focus were deliberated and well supported by Education Commission (EC) at its 343th meeting on 15 December 2014. The EC Members welcomed the strategic development of COTAP, which is believed to be pivotal to enhancing and sustaining a high-quality teaching profession in HK for the benefit of student learning and growth.

Way Forward

16. In early 2015, COTAP will be promulgating its first Progress Report. Upon dissemination, COTAP will schedule stakeholder group meetings and focus group sessions to solicit the views of the school sector, TEIs, parents and educational bodies etc. on how the areas of focus outlined in the first Progress Report could be taken forward to realise T-excel@hk. We shall keep Members posted of the development in due course.

17. It should also be noted that while COTAP's keen effort made in flagging up T-excel@hk is apparent, other issues in specific areas, including the developments in enabling our students to become biliterate and trilingual, assisting non-Chinese speaking students in adapting to the local education system and integrating into the community, boosting of moral, civic and national education, catering for students with special educational needs, and the KG sector, will be of sincere concern to COTAP in future as these issues will affect the development of the teaching profession in the long run.

18. COTAP recognises the importance to work hand in hand with stakeholders and put continuous and sustained efforts into reflecting on and reviewing the experience gained, reacting in time, and responding with flexibility through further engaging stakeholders when advising the Government on the strategies for meeting the immediate and long-term professional development needs of teachers and school leaders at various career stages.

19. It is only by ensuring that all our students possess the necessary knowledge, attributes and capabilities that hold the key to the global stage, could HK continue to thrive and prosper towards excellence in the international arena. Assiduously, in Phase 1 of its work, COTAP will head for T-excel@hk to realise the vision of "A Learning Profession of Vibrancy, A Teaching Profession of Excellence", which in turn helps to exploit and unleash the

potential of our future generations.

20. Members are recommended to take note and give advice on the above development.

Education Bureau

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Details of the composition of the COTAP and its Sub-committees

The Chairperson of the COTAP is Dr Carrie WILLIS. The other 17 members of COTAP are drawn from amongst front-line educators of the kindergarten, primary, secondary and special education sectors, SSB, and tertiary institutions. Amongst these 17 members, there are also three lay members, a parent representative and a representative from the University Grants Committee.

Besides, three Sub-committees are formed addressing the professional development needs of front-line practitioners at different junctures of their career. They are the Sub-committee on Initial Teacher Education, Sub-committee on Teachers' Professional Development and Sub-committee on School Leadership. The Convenors of the Sub-committees are appointed from members of COTAP. Each Sub-committee comprises around ten members covering various stakeholder groups, including representatives from the school sector and SSB, academics, parents, and lay members from various professions such as legal, medical, finance and human resources management. To help performing the proposed functions, the Sub-committees also co-opt members or form working/ focus groups when necessary.

(For details of the Terms of Reference and Membership of COTAP and its Sub-committees, please access the COTAP website: <http://www.cotap.hk>.)