

**For discussion  
On 12 January 2021**

**Legislative Council Panel on Education  
Subcommittee to Study the Development of Textbooks and Teaching  
Materials for Kindergartens, Primary and Secondary Schools**

**Management, Quality Monitoring and Complaints Mechanism for  
School-based Teaching Materials**

**Purpose**

This paper aims to brief Members on the existing management, quality monitoring and complaints mechanism for school-based teaching materials in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools.

**Background**

2. In order to equip students with a better grasp of knowledge and concepts of the Key Learning Areas, nurture their generic skills and values, as well as implement the education aims and goals effectively, the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) recommends that schools adopt the curriculum framework of the central curriculum to develop school-based curriculum that can cater for the ability and learning needs of their students and fulfil the mission of the school, in order to enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching.

3. As time goes by and the society evolves, the development of school-based teaching materials is faced with different challenges. Parents and the public are increasingly concerned about school-based teaching materials. There are even suggestions that the Education Bureau (EDB) should vet the school-based teaching materials of every subject in every single school, and all teaching resources should be submitted to the EDB for record purpose, etc., such that the quality could be assured through extensive monitoring.

4. However, school-based teaching materials can create room for schools and teachers to cater for different learning needs of students. To implement the central curriculum more effectively and enhance the effectiveness of learning, the design of teaching materials must be modulated and optimised to suit the needs of students in individual schools in a timely fashion.

### **The aims and implementation of school-based curriculum, as well as support measures by the EDB**

5. Building on the vision and the overall aims of education set out in the report, *Learning for Life, Learning through Life – Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong*, published by the Education Commission in September 2000, the CDC recommends in the report, *Learning to Learn – The Way Forward in Curriculum Development* (published in 2001), that schools adopt the open curriculum framework of the central curriculum developed by the CDC to develop school-based curriculum<sup>1</sup> that can best cater for the ability and learning needs of their students and fulfil the mission of the school. Through this, schools could have more space, flexibility and opportunities to use time flexibly and to optimise the use of the space and environment available to enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching.

6. Hence, schools should adhere to the aims and contents of the central curriculum when adapting learning targets, employing different approaches to organising learning contents, and using diversified learning, teaching and assessment strategies to develop their school-based curriculum, so that they can meet their contextual needs, as well as their students' learning needs. This implies that there is room for schools to decide the use of teaching strategies, resources and timetabling arrangements to help their students grasp the knowledge and concepts in

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Glossary of the report, *Learning to Learn – The Way Forward in Curriculum Development*, published in 2001, the definition of school-based curriculum is given in the description: "Schools and teachers are encouraged to adapt the central curriculum to develop their school-based curriculum to help their students achieve the learning targets and aims of education. Measures may include readjusting the learning targets, varying the organisation of contents, optional studies, learning, teaching and assessment strategies. A school-based curriculum, hence, is the outcome of a balance between guidance from the CDC and the autonomy of the schools and teachers."

the Key Learning Areas, and to nurture their generic skills and positive values. However, schools should note that their school-based curriculum must be in line with the overall goals and aims of education in Hong Kong, as well as the relevant curriculum frameworks and guidelines. In the process of developing the school-based curriculum and related learning and teaching resources, teachers' professionalism and the support and monitoring by the school management are of paramount importance for ensuring that the teaching contents are in line with the aims and contents of the central curriculum.

7. To help schools develop their school-based curriculum, the EDB has been providing a range of support measures, including organising school leaders' workshop and professional development programmes for teachers, and inviting schools to participate in different curriculum development projects, all of which serve to enhance students' learning experiences and help students achieve learning targets more effectively. We offer diversified school-based support services for schools to apply every year. Taking into consideration the latest curriculum development and the needs of schools, such as enhancing values education, promoting Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education and self-directed learning, and through professional exchanges and collaboration with teachers, professional support officers strengthen the professional knowledge and ability of the teachers in curriculum leadership, curriculum planning, learning and teaching strategies and assessment, etc., for improving the quality of learning and teaching and facilitating schools' continuous development.

### **Management and quality monitoring of school-based teaching materials**

8. It is considered part of the professional duties of teachers, as teaching professionals, to exercise their expertise in selecting suitable teaching materials, making adaptation to the content of the materials, or even developing school-based materials on their own in accordance with the curriculum aims and objectives, and the standards and learning needs of their students.

9. Owing to the wide range of learning and teaching resources from diversified sources, the EDB has provided guidelines to remind schools of the necessity for setting out well-defined school-based criteria for the selection of learning and teaching materials and devising a review mechanism for evaluating and updating the learning and teaching resources adopted by schools. We have also been elucidating to schools, through various channels such as curriculum guides, circular memorandum (e.g. EDB Circular Memorandum No. 26/2020 – Selection of Quality Textbooks and Learning and Teaching Resources for Use in Schools), different professional development programmes for teachers and school visits, the **requirements** and **criteria** for the selection of learning and teaching resources, emphasising that teachers should be prudent in the selection of teaching materials and ensure that the learning and teaching materials of various subjects are in line with the aims and objectives of the central curriculum. The contents of and information provided in the materials should be correct, complete, objective and impartial. Through effective teaching strategies, teachers should enable students to acquire relevant knowledge and skills, and nurture in students positive values and attitudes.

10. From the school operational perspective, in view of the considerable amount of school-based resource materials, it is not practical to propose the EDB to review the resources of every subject from every single school. As for the suggestion for all teaching resources to be submitted to the EDB for record purpose, it must be carefully considered as many practical operational problems are involved at both school and system levels. There are both empowerment and accountability in school management. For the benefits of students, members of the school management (including the subject chairpersons) have the responsibility to understand and monitor the resource materials selected and developed by teachers and ensure that the contents and quality of the resources are aligned with the curriculum aims and objectives set by the CDC as well as the standards and learning needs of students to safeguard their well-being and enable them to construct knowledge, make analysis from different perspectives and express their views in an impartial and rational manner.

11. The EDB also reminds teachers of the importance of values education and the need to adopt an objective, rational and impartial manner and guide students to respect different views. Under no circumstances

should teachers bias their teaching with their political stance or mislead their students and impart negative values. Teachers demonstrate their professionalism through teaching in line with the curriculum, selection and adaptation of teaching resources and application of appropriate teaching methodologies to cater for learner diversity, in addition to the accountability for the provision of quality teaching.

12. The EDB officers have always been seeking to understand and monitor the quality of learning and teaching of schools through the channels of inspections, curriculum development visits, etc. During inspections, through scrutinising the teaching materials and samples of students' assignments provided by schools, observing lessons and relevant learning and teaching activities as well as discussing with school personnel, etc., inspectors get to understand and evaluate the implementation of the school curriculum, including whether the teaching content aligns with the curriculum aims and objectives as well as whether teachers prudently select and design suitable school-based teaching materials and use an objective, rational and impartial attitude to teach, so as to enhance learning and teaching effectiveness. Inspectors will, according to schools' performance in learning and teaching, provide specific professional advice to help schools refine the work on curriculum implementation. After receiving the inspection report, the incorporated management committee/school management committee should lead the school to take appropriate follow-up actions based on the inspection findings and recommendations to enhance the continuous improvement and development of the school. If necessary, the EDB will arrange a follow-up inspection to ensure that the school is able to implement follow-up actions to address the recommendations for improving the quality of learning and teaching.

### **Management and quality monitoring of teaching materials in kindergartens**

13. The EDB has clear guidelines and requirements on teaching materials in kindergartens (KG). The Government has implemented the KG education policy starting from the 2017/18 school year, which has remarkably enhanced the quality of KG education. On curriculum

development, the refined Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide was launched in 2017, providing directions in curriculum aims and framework, learning and teaching and assessment, catering for learner diversity, etc. The learning content and materials should be in line with children's developmental progress and learning pace, with an aim to developing their interest in learning, encouraging exploration and instilling in them the positive values and attitudes. In addition, learning materials selected should be able to meet the developmental stages of respective children, whereas over-teaching should be avoided.

14. The aim of the Kindergarten Education curriculum is to help children develop good living habits and a strong and healthy body, an interest in learning, eagerness to explore and an inquisitive mind, as well as positive values and attitudes, so that children can attain a balanced moral, intellectual, physical, social and aesthetic development. To cater for children's developmental characteristics and needs, teachers should set learning themes related to children's everyday life, select different modes and types of learning and teaching resources and community resources, and design appropriate school-based learning materials. Teachers should also adopt "learning through play" as a learning and teaching strategy and engage children in fun activities that enable them to learn more about themselves, others and the environment and develop their creativity, problem-solving and adaptation skills through play. Besides, to address the education aim and the context of the school, teachers should also flexibly adopt learning and teaching resources and adapt teaching materials to cater for children's learning needs. We do not encourage or recommend the use of text-based material for learning or teaching. Learning content should not be made inflexible lest children's learning interest be undermined.

15. Books are effective materials for learning and teaching. Books selected must meet the curriculum aims, children's needs, developmental stages and abilities. Yet, there are many different kinds of books in the market with varied qualities, KGs must exercise prudence in the selection of reading materials to ensure that the contents are healthy and positive, related to children's life experience, as well as meeting their mental development. KG children are still at a tender age, teachers should not expose them to the reading materials with complicated, negative or

political messages. KGs should make reference to the EDBCM No. 26/2020 “Selection of Quality Textbooks and Learning and Teaching Resources for Use in Schools” when selecting materials for learning and teaching. KGs should also remind parents to choose suitable reading materials carefully when they read with their children at home.

16. All Scheme-KGs are subject to the QA Framework comprising School Self-evaluation (SSE) and Quality Review (QR), both of which are conducted on the basis of the Performance Indicators (PIs). The refinement of PIs was completed in 2017. The refined PIs are clearer, more precise and user-friendly. This helps KGs conduct SSE in a more holistic and focused manner.

17. The EDB makes use of QR to validate the findings of SSE, and ascertain whether KGs have met the prescribed standards. The review team will make professional judgement on the overall performance of KGs based on the PIs. If it is found that the curriculum, teaching resources or homework of the school cannot cater for the abilities and developmental needs of children, the EDB will request the KG concerned to stop the arrangements immediately and implement improvement measures. Such inappropriate arrangements will also be reflected in the school’s QR report which will then be uploaded to the EDB website for public information. The EDB will follow up with the situation through school visits. Besides, the EDB will conduct focus inspection for all KGs in Hong Kong by random selection to understand the implementation of the curriculum and the major concerns, with a view to facilitating the continuous development of the aspect of learning and teaching of KGs. Upon completion of the focus inspection, the review team will provide oral feedback to the school immediately and explain clearly the impropriety, followed by a letter to the KG stating suggestions for improvement for the KG's follow-up actions.

18. KGs joining the Kindergarten Education Scheme (Scheme) have to meet the prescribed quality standards. In assessing the applications for joining the Scheme annually, the operating standard of the applicant KGs is one of our major considerations.

## **Principles and mechanism for handling school complaints**

19. Schools, as organisations providing formal education and as employers of teachers, have to be responsible for the quality of education and to monitor the working performance of the teachers, so as to protect the well-being of students and ensure the quality of teaching. In fact, the Education Ordinance has empowered Incorporated Management Committees / School Management Committees with the power and responsibility in managing schools. The school management has the responsibility to understand and monitor the contents and quality of school-based teaching materials to ensure that the teaching materials are in line with the aims and objectives of the curriculum, such that students would acquire accurate knowledge and concepts as well as develop positive values and attitudes. Moreover, schools should formulate their own school-based mechanisms and procedures for administering school affairs, including the handling of school-related complaints.

20. Currently all public sector schools and schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme have implemented school-based mechanisms and procedures based on the Enhanced School Complaint Management Arrangements. As a result, these schools could respond to views and complaints more properly and effectively, including general complaints against teachers. If the public have concerns over the suitability of the teaching materials of individual schools or issues related to teachers in developing teaching materials, they can report to the schools concerned directly or via the Education Bureau.

21. To facilitate the responsible school personnel and frontline staff of schools in handling complaints (i.e. following up and responding to complaints relating to school operation and internal affairs of schools raised by parents, students, or members of the public in a timely and direct manner), the Education Bureau has all along been providing various support measures to schools, including the provision of a template concerning the Guidelines for Handling School Complaints to facilitate schools to formulate and enhance their school-based mechanism and procedures on complaint handling, introduction about the Enhanced School Complaint Management Arrangements to stakeholders (such as newly appointed school principals and members of parent-teacher



associations), and arrangement of training courses on compliant handling, communication, and mediation skills, etc. After years of practice, schools can generally act in accordance with their school-based mechanisms and procedures to follow up and respond to complaints made by parents, students, or members of the public in a timely manner.

22. Upon receipt of a complaint, the EDB would assess the nature of the case, and decide whether to conduct a direct investigation or refer the complaint to the school concerned for follow-up action. For general referral cases, the EDB would request the school concerned to submit a copy of the reply to the Education Bureau for information after conducting an investigation. The EDB would see whether the school has acted in accordance with the school-based procedures to handle the complaint, and take follow up actions if considered necessary.

23. On the other hand, for a complaint involving suspected professional misconduct of teachers, when referring to the school, the EDB would request the school to submit an investigation report to the Bureau after conducting the investigation. The EDB has been adopting a prudent approach in following up every complaint involving professional misconduct of teachers. Teachers play a vital role in passing on knowledge and nurturing students' character and their every word and deed have a far-reaching impact on students' growth. Parents and the community at large thus have great expectations on teachers regarding their solid professional knowledge and high standards of morality. For the substantiated teacher misconduct cases, in deciding the necessary follow-up actions, we would scrutinise the available information and evidence as well as the school's investigation report and representation from the teacher concerned. Full consideration will be given to the nature and seriousness of every case in accordance with the Education Ordinance and from the perspective of education professionalism before concluding the actions to be taken, including the issuance of a reprimand, warning or advisory letter. For serious misconduct cases, we may consider cancelling the registration of the teacher concerned pursuant to the Education Ordinance. In addition, if it is found that the school management has not effectively supervised the content of its school-based curriculum, the EDB will seriously follow up with the school.

## **Summary**

24. To sum up, the school-based management policy allows schools to enjoy greater autonomy. Based on their professional judgement, teachers may develop school-based teaching materials to suit students' learning needs. On the other hand, under the School Development and Accountability Framework, schools must conduct self-evaluation and engage in self-improvement continuously, and be accountable to stakeholders and the society for education quality. Besides, the EDB will issue guidelines from time to time, and offer professional training, support and monitoring to schools and teachers. In gist, schools must practically and dutifully manage school-based teaching materials, monitor quality, and make good use of existing school complaints mechanism to handle the malpractices of individual teachers, so as to ensure they could provide quality education services to their students.

## **Advice sought**

25. Members are kindly reminded to note the existing management, quality monitoring and complaints mechanism for school-based teaching materials in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools.

**Education Bureau**

**January 2021**