

**For discussion
on 24 March 2023**

**Legislative Council Panel on Education
Teachers' Professional Roles and Development**

Purpose

This paper aims to brief Members on the initiatives implemented by the Education Bureau (EDB) to enhance the professional roles and conduct of teachers, strengthen teacher registration and schools' gate-keeping work, and promote the professional development of teachers.

Background

2. The core mission of education is cultivating values and nurturing people. Teachers are role models for students. They shoulder the major responsibility of fostering correct values and a sense of national identity in students, and should therefore possess professional capabilities and uphold professional conduct, so that they can nurture students to be lifelong learners who are virtuous, talented, knowledgeable and responsible with global perspectives, positive values and attitudes, as well as an affection for their country and their home. EDB attaches great importance to the professional conduct of teachers. It has been performing its gate-keeping role firmly through teacher registration and school management, and handling cases of suspected professional misconduct of teachers in a serious and prudent manner, so as to safeguard students' well-being and uphold the dignity of the teaching profession. The Government has implemented a number of initiatives in recent years to enhance the quality of teachers and strengthen their professional conduct in order to build a teaching force with virtues and talents. Relevant initiatives include:

Enhancing professionalism and conduct of teachers

- (i) Continuing to promote the "T-standard⁺" to the sector;
- (ii) Formulating and promoting the Guidelines on Teachers' Professional Conduct;

- (iii) Requiring newly-appointed teachers to pass the Basic Law and National Security Law Test;

Strengthening the gate-keeping work of teacher registration

- (iv) Continuing to handle cases of suspected professional misconduct of teachers prudently in accordance with the established mechanism and procedures;
- (v) Strengthening the checking of criminal records;
- (vi) Strengthening the checking of teachers' registration information;

Strengthening the gate-keeping role of schools

- (vii) Guarding against improper persons to be appointed as teachers, enhancing staff management and professional development;

Promoting teachers' professional development

- (viii) Setting training requirements for newly-joined teachers, in-service teachers and teachers aspiring for promotion, offering structured core training as well as training relevant to the Constitution, the Basic Law and the National Security Law, and providing designated professional development programmes for newly-appointed principals;
- (ix) Organising Mainland study tours for newly-joined teachers in publicly-funded schools and promoted teachers in public sector schools;
- (x) Developing a guiding framework for teacher education programmes for pre-service teacher training to enhance prospective teachers' understanding of professional conduct, related laws and national developments; and
- (xi) Continuing to provide teachers with professional training in relation to curriculum, teaching and assessment, learning and teaching resources as well as various school-based support services.

Details of the above initiatives are set out in paragraphs 3 to 24 below.

Enhancing professionalism and conduct of teachers

“T-standard⁺”

3. To promote teachers’ professional growth and enhance teachers’ professional status, EDB established the Professional Ladder for Teachers in Hong Kong in 2020. The Professional Ladder adopts the professional roles¹ of teachers and principals as portrayed in the “T-standard⁺” as the goals for teachers’ professional development, and three core elements of teachers’ professional growth (including professional competencies; professional conduct and values; and aspiration for self-advancement through self-reflection) as its foundation. EDB continues to promote the “T-standard⁺” to the sector by spelling out the professional roles and professionalism of teachers and principals through seminars, workshops, leaflets and video clips, and encourages them to demonstrate the values and missions of the education profession through professional practice and reflection. To this end, we launched a training resource kit on “T-standard⁺” in February this year to help schools arrange school-based professional development activities based on their needs, so as to deepen teachers’ understanding of the “T-standard⁺” and promote professional reflection.

Guidelines on Teachers’ Professional Conduct

4. In December 2022, EDB promulgated the Guidelines on Teachers’ Professional Conduct² (the Guidelines) to clearly stipulate the professional conduct and norms of behaviour required of teachers so that they could have self-awareness and self-discipline in upholding professionalism, and remind each other to abide by the Guidelines together, so as to protect students’ well-being, ensure the quality of education, safeguard the education profession and build public trust. By so doing, the social status

¹ “T-standard⁺” comprises Professional Standards for Teachers of Hong Kong and Professional Standards for Principals of Hong Kong. It portrays the professionalism that teachers and principals are expected to demonstrate at different stages of professional growth, so as to facilitate their understanding of their individual professional development needs. The professional roles of teachers portrayed in the “T-Standard⁺” are “Caring Cultivators”, “Inspirational Co-constructors” and “Committed Role Model”. The professional roles of principals are “Ethical Enablers”, “Versatile Architects” and “Visionary Edupreneurs. Details are available on the website of the Committee on Professional Development of Teachers and Principals: <https://www.cotap.hk/index.php/en/t-standard>.

² For details of the Guidelines on Teachers’ Professional Conduct, please refer to: https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/teacher/guidelines_tpc/index.html

of the education profession and teachers could be enhanced.

5. When formulating the Guidelines, EDB has not only carefully taken into account the actual situation of the Hong Kong education system and the existing legislation, but also made reference to documents related to teachers' professional development and the standards of teachers' professionalism in different countries and regions. Eight codes of professional conduct required of teachers are compiled, namely "Uphold professional belief", "Honour the rule of law", "Be a role model", "Uphold probity and integrity", "Be committed and responsible", "Care for students", "Respect privacy" and "Safeguard professionalism", with examples of the "dos" and "don'ts" of behaviour for each code set out respectively for teachers' observance and compliance. The Guidelines also set out the mechanism for handling suspected professional misconduct of teachers, with some case examples illustrating the underpinning considerations and the follow-up actions taken by EDB in the past.

6. Teachers can study the Guidelines to familiarise themselves with the requirements for their professional and personal behaviour. School sponsoring bodies may make reference to the Guidelines and give directives to the school governance authorities under their sponsorship. School governance authorities may make use of the Guidelines to enhance their measures on staff appointment, management and professional development. EDB will also make reference to the Guidelines when handling cases of suspected professional misconduct of teachers. Given that the examples of the "dos" and "don'ts" of behaviour provided in the Guidelines are by no means exhaustive, we will update the relevant contents on a need basis as appropriate and in a timely manner.

7. To enable the sector and stakeholders to better understand the visions, contents and application of the Guidelines, we have organised a number of briefing and training sessions for teachers (including newly-joined teachers), school heads and deputy heads, school supervisors and managers, school sponsoring bodies, pre-service teachers studying at teacher education universities and parent representatives, etc. Positive feedback on the Guidelines has been received from the education sector and stakeholders since its promulgation. They agree that the Guidelines clearly defines the norms of behaviour required of teachers and enables the general public to have a better understanding of the professional requirements of teachers.

8. EDB will continue to promote the Guidelines through different channels, such as incorporating relevant contents into the core training programmes for newly-joined teachers and teachers aspiring for promotion, so as to enhance teachers' sensitivity to serve as a role model for students, and remind them to uphold professionalism and the image of the profession at all times. Apart from these, we will shortly introduce a training package on the professional conduct of teachers for schools to conduct school-based training. The training package will contain training guidelines, story scenarios, lesson plans, reference materials, etc. Through case discussions, schools can help teachers understand the importance of upholding professional values and conduct.

Basic Law and National Security Law Test

9. To nurture students to be lifelong learners with an affection for the country and the city, and to guide them to develop a correct sense of belonging to the country and national identity, teachers must first correctly understand the relationship between Hong Kong and the country. In order to promote a correct understanding of the Basic Law among teachers, starting from the 2022/23 school year, newly-appointed regular teachers in public sector schools are required to pass the Basic Law Test (BLT).

10. As announced in the Chief Executive's 2022 Policy Address, starting from the 2023/24 school year, the requirement for teachers to pass the BLT will be extended to all Direct Subsidy Scheme schools and kindergartens joining the kindergarten education scheme. Contract teachers remunerated with cash grant are also required to obtain a pass in the test. The test covers both the Basic Law and the National Security Law. Having regard to the different entry requirements for teaching posts in primary and secondary schools as well as kindergartens, EDB conducts a total of five rounds of the Basic Law and National Security Law Test separately for degree holders and non-degree holders in the current school year.

Strengthening the gate-keeping work of teacher registration

Handling cases of suspected professional misconduct of teachers

11. Under the Education Ordinance (Cap. 279), any person who teaches in a school has to be a registered teacher. EDB has been administering teacher registration according to the established mechanism to ensure that all teachers meet the registration requirements and that improper persons are prevented from becoming teachers, so as to safeguard the quality of education and well-being of students. If teachers are suspected of professional misconduct, EDB would handle the cases prudently in a fair, just, impartial and objective manner and in accordance with the established mechanism and procedures. For serious cases, EDB will consider cancelling the registration of the teachers concerned. A teacher who has his/her registration cancelled is not allowed to teach in any schools (including tutorial schools). For relatively minor cases, EDB will issue reprimand, warning or advisory letters to the teachers concerned in light of the nature and gravity of the matters.

12. Actions taken in the past three years (2020 to 2022) are consolidated and tabulated as follows:

	2020	2021	2022
Cancellation of teacher registration	7	7	21
Reprimand letter	24	36	12
Written warning	29	70	43
Written advice	20	22	11
Verbal reminder	28	16	17

In 2022, serious professional misconduct cases leading to cancellation of teacher registration mainly included sex, child abuse and theft-related crime as well as going beyond teacher-student relations.

Criminal Record Check

13. Starting from the 2021/22 school year, EDB conducts criminal record check on all registered teachers every three years to prevent unintentional and intentional omissions in reporting by registered teachers with criminal convictions. If unreported cases are discovered, EDB will take immediate follow-up actions. We wish to stress that for teachers committed serious professional misconduct and unlawful acts, even if they

have already left the teaching profession, EDB will still follow up the cases seriously to prevent such persons from teaching in schools again to safeguard the well-being of students.

14. Besides, to identify cases of teachers involved in criminal offences as soon as possible, EDB is exploring with the Hong Kong Police Force to strengthen the notification mechanism. When a teacher is arrested by the Police, EDB will be notified immediately so that appropriate and timely follow-up actions could be taken.

Checking of teachers' registration information

15. EDB has been reminding schools to guard against improper persons to be appointed as teachers by strengthening the management measures in staff employment and related matters. EDB explicitly requires schools to strictly observe the employment procedures stipulated in EDB Circular No. 7/2021 "Measures for Strengthening the Protection of Students: Appointment of Teaching and Non-teaching Staff in Schools", which sets out, among others, the requirement to apply to EDB for releasing information regarding the applicants' registration status after seeking the consent of the applicants concerned. Schools may obtain information from EDB on whether the applicant is a registered teacher or is/was a permitted teacher, whether his/her registered teacher or permitted teacher status has been cancelled/refused, whether he/she has received advisory/warning/reprimand letter in respect of professional conduct from EDB, and whether EDB is reviewing his/her registration status. We will remind schools of the related requirements and monitor the implementation from time to time to ensure their compliance. In order to provide more convenient and efficient service for schools, EDB launched an online system for schools' submission of application forms for releasing teachers' registration information in October 2022 to save time in completing and mailing paper forms. We will further upgrade the functions of the system to expedite the processing of applications submitted by schools.

Strengthening the gate-keeping role of schools

16. Schools as employers should play a monitoring and supporting role in staff management and professional development. The Guidelines on Teachers' Professional Conduct issued by EDB clearly illustrates that schools may make reference to the Guidelines when devising measures on

staff conduct management and professional development plans, which include circulating the Guidelines to teachers regularly or reminding them in staff meetings of the importance of upholding professional conduct and the dire consequences of violating professional conduct. When appointing teachers, schools should require prospective candidates to study the Guidelines to make themselves aware of the expectations of EDB, schools and the community on teachers' professional conduct, and to perform well their duties of teaching and nurturing students. Schools may make reference to the Guidelines to plan school-based teachers' professional development activities to enhance teachers' professional sensitivity and awareness so that they could play their part as a role model for students at all times. Besides, schools may also recognise teachers with distinguished virtues and excellent performance in the teaching profession so as to promote teachers' professional ethics and encourage teachers to pursue excellence. On the contrary, if there are teachers involved in professional misconduct or unlawful acts and the cases are substantiated after investigation, appropriate disciplinary actions should be taken with reference to the codes set out in the Guidelines and in accordance with the Employment Ordinance, Codes of Aid and the terms set out in the employment contract signed with the teachers concerned.

17. To enable schools to handle complaints (including those related to professional misconduct of teachers) more effectively, EDB provided supplementary information including an investigation checklist, a template of school investigation report and sample reports for use by schools in 2021. Schools could generally conduct investigation and take follow-up actions according to their school-based complaint handling mechanisms and procedures, including responding promptly to the views expressed or complaints lodged by parents, students or members of the public, and taking disciplinary actions against misconducted teachers in substantiated cases. Besides, schools would generally strengthened the monitoring and supervision of the teachers concerned, formulate and implement relevant improvement measures (e.g. lesson observation and review of teaching materials designed by the teachers) to ensure that the learning and growth of students will not be affected. We will continue to render support to schools in this regard.

18. Besides, EDB provided schools with detailed administration and education guidelines regarding the implementation of the National Security Law in Hong Kong in February 2021, requiring schools to put in place appropriate measures in various areas, including school administration,

personnel management and staff training, learning and teaching, student guidance and discipline as well as home-school cooperation, to ensure that all school staff understand the National Security Law in Hong Kong and uphold professional ethics, so as to maintain a safe and orderly learning environment in schools and nurture students as good law-abiding citizens. In this regard, schools would organise staff meetings, staff development days and seminars on legal issues arranged by school sponsoring bodies to enhance staff's understanding of national security. Schools would also convey to staff the school's requirements and expectations regarding their responsibilities and conduct; and formulate school-based staff management and appraisal mechanisms to follow up on the performance and conduct of staff. Schools would devise school-based mechanisms for stepping up the prevention and suppression of teaching and activities that are in breach of law, preventing and dealing with political or other illegal activities from permeating the schools, and helping students gain a correct understanding of the National Security Law in Hong Kong and the important concepts covered by national security. EDB will understand and monitor the implementation of relevant works and their effectiveness in schools through different channels, including review of reports and work plans submitted by schools, school visits and daily communication with schools, and provide suggestions for improvement.

Promoting teachers' professional development

Training requirements

19. EDB attaches great importance to the professional quality of the teaching profession and is committed to enhancing the professional competence of principals and teachers through diversified professional development programmes and activities. Under the Continuing Professional Development policy for teachers, EDB has been encouraging teachers to participate in different modes of continuing professional development activities in accordance with their professional needs and aspirations, so that they can meet the soft target of completing 150 hours of training in every three-year cycle. Starting from the 2020/21 school year, EDB has developed a training framework for newly-joined teachers, in-service teachers and teachers aspiring for promotion, and provided

structured core training for newly-joined teachers and teachers aspiring for promotion. Newly-joined teachers are required to complete the training within three years, while teachers aspiring for promotion must complete the training within five years before promotion in order to meet the requirements. Details are as follows:

- (a) Training programme for newly-joined teachers: Teachers appointed to teach in public sector schools or schools under Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) for the first time are required to complete 30 hours of core training and not less than 60 hours of elective training within the first three years of service. The core training covers “Teachers’ Professional Role”, “Local Education Policies and Initiatives” and “National and International Education Development”.
- (b) Training for in-service teachers: Serving teachers are required to spare a minimum of 30 hours, in each three-year cycle, to take part in two categories of professional development programmes/activities, namely “Teachers’ Professional Roles, Values and Conduct” and “Local, National and International Education Issues”, with not less than six hours spent on each category.
- (c) Enhanced arrangements of training for promotion: The training includes the Core and Elective Parts. The Core Part comprises 30 hours of designated programmes focusing on the necessary competencies required of school leaders, including professional conduct and values, national and international development, education issues, as well as leadership and reflective skills, while the Elective Part comprises 60 hours (for promotion to Primary School Master/Mistress/ Senior Graduate Master) or 100 hours (for promotion to Senior Primary School Master/Mistress/ Principal Graduate Master/Mistress) of suitable training programmes according to the professional expertise required for respective promotion posts. Teachers must complete the designated training programmes in the Core Part and the required number of hours of training programmes in the Elective Part within five years prior to their individual date of substantive promotion.

20. Regarding the training for principals, newly appointed principals in public sector or DSS schools should complete the designated professional development programmes including “Professional Development Programmes for Newly-appointed Principals” and “Leadership Enhancement Programme for Primary and Secondary School

Principals” (“Enhancement Programme”) offered by EDB. In addition to knowledge and skills of school management, the two-year “Professional Development Programmes for Newly-appointed Principals” offers thematic talks, leaders forums, visits to organisations, leadership workshops, etc., enabling principals to learn from the management experience of various organisations, and enhance their foresight and insight as well as flexibility and creativity in their leadership. EDB has commissioned the National Academy of Governance to organise the Enhancement Programme since the 2017/18 school year. Through a variety of activities such as study tours, seminars, interviews for management strategies with advanced units and job shadowing with outstanding school leaders, principals can develop a deeper understanding of the education, social culture, economic, innovation and technology, etc. of the Mainland, so as to further inspire them with appropriate strategies and abilities in leading their schools. Upon the full resumption of normal travel between Hong Kong and the Mainland, the Enhancement Programme will be held in May this year.

21. The afore-mentioned core training includes a 6-hour workshop on teachers’ professional conduct and values. Apart from explaining the professional roles of teachers, there will be case studies to remind teachers of their responsibilities to uphold professionalism, protect students’ well-being and safeguard the education profession. The training programmes have already rolled out since November 2020. As at the end of February 2023, EDB has organised 29 workshops on teachers’ professional roles for about 3 600 newly-joined teachers, and 16 workshops on professional conduct and values for about 3 770 teachers aspiring for promotion. Feedback on the workshops was positive and participants opined that the workshops could remind them to uphold professional conduct and encourage them to reflect on their professional roles and strive for self-advancement. Besides, the core training programmes have been enriched to cover topics on the Constitution, the Basic Law and national security education to deepen teachers’ understanding of the rule of law in Hong Kong, “one country, two systems”, national security, etc. From the rolling out of the programmes in November 2020 to the end of February 2023, EDB has organised 43 training sessions relevant to the Constitution, the Basic Law and the National Security Law for school principals and teachers, and about 11 200 teachers attended the training. EDB has also

proactively liaised and collaborated with expert organisations to organise more in-depth thematic training programmes. For example, EDB has run eight rounds of a two to three-day training programme entitled “Reinforcing the Rule of Law” from the 2020/21 to 2022/23 school years to help teachers learn about the constitutional status of Hong Kong and the rule of law in a systematic manner. A total of about 840 principals and teachers attended the programme. Participants considered that the programmes helped them guide students to respect and obey the law through teaching and daily contact, thus reinforcing the rule of law. We will continue to organise similar programmes in future.

Mainland Study Tours

22. As mentioned in the Chief Executive’s 2022 Policy Address, newly-joined teachers in publicly-funded schools and promoted teachers in public sector schools would be required to participate in the Mainland study tours. Serving teachers will also be offered more opportunities of Mainland study to experience the development of our country and strengthen their abilities to nurture students’ sense of national identity. With the full resumption of normal travel between Hong Kong and the Mainland, starting from April 2023, EDB will organise Mainland study tours for newly-joined teachers to places including the Greater Bay Area, Beijing, Shanghai and Wuhan. The Mainland study tours, which last for three to four days, include thematic talks and visits to schools, enterprises, cultural facilities, historical sites, etc. By the end of this school year, seven study tours, each with about 120 participants, will be organised, offering a total of about 850 places to eligible teachers. The requirement for promoted teachers to participate in Mainland study tours will be implemented from September 2023 and the details will be announced in due course. EDB has been actively liaising with relevant Mainland authorities on the co-ordination and preparation of the Mainland study tours for teachers and will increase the number of tour places for teachers’ participation in the next school year. EDB encourages teachers to grasp the opportunity to actively enrol for participation in the Mainland study tours.

Pre-Service Teacher Training

23. Regarding pre-service teacher training, EDB has collaborated with four teacher education universities to develop a guiding framework for teacher education programmes which covers elements such as enhancement of teachers' professional conduct, as well as understanding of education-related laws and national developments. With the completion of the framework, the teacher education universities are consolidating, revising and adjusting the contents of their undergraduate teacher education programmes to align with the key points set out in the framework. It is expected that the framework will be implemented starting from the 2023/24 school year. EDB will liaise closely with these teacher education universities and follow up on the implementation of the framework.

Subject-related trainings

24. To tie in with the social and national development, school curricula are continuously updated, and teachers must keep abreast of the latest development and enhance their professional knowledge and teaching competencies. EDB has been providing teachers with professional training in relation to curriculum, teaching and assessment, as well as learning and teaching resources and various school-based support services, to facilitate their collaboration and peer learning through different modes of professional development such as subject-based, cross-curriculum, joint-school, cross-professional or regional network. Having regard to the key focuses and future trends of curriculum such as STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics) education, national education and Chinese culture, EDB will continue to strengthen teacher professional training so as to enhance professional capacity of teachers and build a teaching force keeping abreast of the latest development of innovation and technology and the society.

Way Forward

25. The society's trust and respect for teachers comes from their high moral standards and noble virtues, solid knowledge and professional teaching competencies, as well as their commitment to protecting students'

well-being and dedication towards their profession. With the promulgation of the Guidelines on Teachers' Professional Conduct, EDB expects the education practitioners can endeavour to nurture students with correct moral values based on the Guidelines. We will continue to tell good stories of teachers in Hong Kong through various channels and recognise teachers with virtues and talents, strengthen the professional knowledge and competencies of teachers in teaching their academic subjects and other areas such as national education through training of different themes and modes, and enhance teachers' professional conduct. In tandem, we will continue to handle cases of professional misconduct of teachers in a serious and prudent manner to ensure that all teachers allowed to teach in schools are fit and proper persons, thereby safeguarding students' well-being.

Advice sought

26. Members are invited to note and comment on the contents of this paper.

Education Bureau

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