

**For discussion
on 2 February 2024**

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

Purpose

This paper reports on the latest progress of the work of the Education Bureau (EDB) on enhancing the professional conduct and promoting the professional development of teachers.

Background

2. Teachers are the foundation and key of education. Apart from imparting knowledge and skills as well as enlightening students, teachers are also tasked with the mission of nurturing students' character, passing on cultural traditions and grooming talents for the country and society. As Hong Kong has entered into the stage of advancing from stability to prosperity, we need to align with the country's goal of building a strong education nation and effectively implementing the strategic initiatives of invigorating the country through science and education. The key to accomplish this goal lies in the establishment of a quality and professional teaching force. Attaching great importance to the professional conduct of teachers, the EDB has been performing its gate-keeping role firmly on teacher registration, entry requirements and management, while continuously providing a wide variety of professional development activities, with a view to building a teaching force with virtues and talents for enhancing the quality of education. The ensuing paragraphs elaborate on the latest progress of relevant work carried out by the EDB in relation to three aspects, namely the professional conduct of teachers, the registration and appointment of teachers, and the professional development of teachers.

Teachers' Professional Conduct

Continuously Promoting the Guidelines on Teachers' Professional Conduct

3. The EDB promulgated the Guidelines on Teachers' Professional Conduct (the Guidelines) at the end of 2022, and has since been helping the sector understand the objectives of the Guidelines and the eight codes of professional conduct through different channels. The eight codes include "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". Examples have also been set out in the Guidelines for detailed illustration to draw the attention of teachers to have self-awareness and self-discipline in upholding professionalism, and remind each other to abide by the Guidelines together. At present, relevant contents have been incorporated into the core training programmes for newly-joined teachers and teachers aspiring for promotion, with a view to encouraging them to reflect on their professional role, as well as reminding them to uphold professionalism and demonstrate professional conduct in their daily teaching and in their personal behavior so as to serve as a role model for students.

Providing Schools with Training Resources

4. The EDB introduced a training package on Teachers' Professional Values and Conduct for schools in June 2023, which contains resources such as teaching plans, case studies and questions for discussion, video clips and PowerPoint slides, to support schools in organising school-based teachers' professional development activities. In the course of producing the training package, the EDB invited some schools to try-out the package and kept optimising its contents by making reference to their practical experience and comments. The EDB also organised experience sharing session in July 2023 to deepen schools' understanding of how to implement school-based training programmes on professional conduct.

Strengthening the Cultivation of Teachers' Morality and Ethics

5. The EDB actively supports activities which promote teachers' morality and ethics and foster a culture of respect for teachers. In addition to sponsoring the annual Teacher Commendation Scheme and Teachers' Day ceremony organised by the Committee on Respect Our Teachers Campaign, the EDB also supported the Fifth Greater Bay Area (GBA) Forum on Teachers' Professional Ethics organised in October 2023 in Hong Kong for the first time. The Forum is a signature event administered by the Centre for Teacher Ethics Development under the Ministry of Education. The keynote seminars of the Fifth Forum focused on carrying forward the spirit of great educators and promoting the cultivation of teachers' morality and ethics. About 500 scholars, experts, principals and teachers across the country participated in the forum, while the live-broadcast online attracted more than 190 000 attendance. Besides, in this school year, the EDB supports the first "Award for Teachers of Outstanding Morality and Ethics" organised by *Ta Kung Pao* and co-organised by the Education University of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Island School Heads Association, the Kowloon Region School Heads Association and the New Territories School Heads Association. The Award aims to recognise teachers of exemplary moral virtues and ethical principles and encourage the school sector to stress the importance of ethic education.

Teacher Registration and Appointment

Handling Teacher Registration Rigorously

6. To safeguard the well-being of students, the EDB has all along been striving to ensure that only those meeting the required qualifications and standards can become registered teachers or permitted teachers through a teacher registration system. While handling teacher registration applications, we will seriously check the information declared by the teachers, and if the person concerned was involved in committing an offence, we will decide whether or not to refuse his/her teacher registration application, taking into account the nature and severity of the case. The EDB has also been reminding schools through circulars that they must ensure the teachers to be appointed have undergone the registration formalities in compliance with the law before assumption of duties.

7. The EDB has all along seriously followed up suspected cases of professional misconduct in accordance with established procedures and in a professional manner to prevent improper persons from becoming teachers, so as to safeguard the quality of education and students' well-being. If a teacher is found to have committed serious offence, an act of immorality or professional misconduct, the EDB will issue reprimand letters, warning letters or advisory letters to the teachers, depending on the nature and severity of the case. For serious cases, the EDB will cancel the teachers' registration pursuant to the Education Ordinance.

8. The EDB requests applicants for registered teachers and permitted teachers to declare whether or not they have been previously convicted of a criminal offence in Hong Kong or elsewhere, and will check with the Hong Kong Police Force (the Police) any criminal conviction records against the applicants. Meanwhile, to identify cases of teachers involved in criminal offences as soon as possible, if a teacher is found to be involved in criminal offences and arrested, the EDB will check the relevant information with the Police immediately and take appropriate and timely follow-up actions. Besides, to further strengthen the gate-keeping of teacher registration, starting from the 2021/22 school year, the EDB conducts criminal record check on all registered teachers (including serving and non-serving registered teachers) every three years to prevent unintentional and intentional omissions in reporting by registered teachers with criminal convictions.

9. Actions taken by the EDB against teachers' professional misconduct in the past three years (2021 to 2023) are tabulated as follows:

	2021	2022	2023
Cancellation of teacher registration	7	21	47
Reprimand letter	36	12	13
Written warning	70	43	69
Written advice	22	11	13
Verbal reminder / Record for future reference	16	17	29

10. It is important to note that there was significant increase in the number of cases against which the EDB has taken actions in 2023, which was mainly due to the revelation of cases arising from the implementation of strengthening measures in the 2021/22 school year as mentioned in paragraph 8 about performing criminal record check on all registered teachers every three years. The EDB has taken follow-up actions on the cases revealed in accordance with the established mechanism. Though the teachers concerned of a majority of the cases have already left the teaching profession, if the cases involved serious unlawful acts or professional misconduct, we will still follow up seriously to prevent such persons from teaching in schools again in order to safeguard the well-being of students. For other cases involving serious professional misconduct and leading to cancellation of teacher registration in 2023, they mainly involve committing sex-related, child abuse and theft-related crimes, as well as going beyond teacher-student relations.

11. Besides, the EDB has commenced to update the Teacher Register in the 2022/23 school year and launched the e-Platform for Registered Teacher Information at the end of September 2023 to facilitate relevant teachers' provision of updated personal particulars. The EDB will, based on the information collected from the e-Platform, schools and EDB e-Services Portal, compile the Electronic Register for Registered Teachers in order to maintain the most updated information of registered teachers comprehensively and accurately, and provide useful statistical reference for the formulation of policies concerning teacher manpower planning and training, etc.

Imposing Basic Law and National Security Law Test as one of the Entry Requirements

12. Starting from the 2023/24 school year, all the newly-appointed teachers (including newly-joined teachers and teachers changing schools) in public sector schools, Direct Subsidy Scheme schools and kindergartens joining the Kindergarten Education Scheme are required to obtain a pass result in the Basic Law and National Security Law Test (BLNST) in order to be considered for appointment. The aim of this entry requirement is to ensure that teachers will have a correct and basic understanding of the Basic Law and the National Security Law. The EDB conducted a total of

six rounds of BLNST for degree holders and non-degree holders respectively in the 2022/23 school year. Five rounds of BLNST will be organised in the current school year and the first two rounds have already been held in October and December 2023 respectively.

Strengthening the Gate-keeping Role of Schools in the Appointment of Teachers

13. To further strengthen the protection for students, the EDB issued EDB Circular No. 14/2023 on “Measures for Strengthening the Protection of Students: Appointment of Teaching and Non-teaching Staff in Schools” in August 2023, reminding schools on matters relating to the appointment of teaching staff, and that they should make every reasonable effort to be well informed of the applicants’ personal backgrounds, give informed and due consideration, strengthen their roles as gate-keepers and adopt relevant measures including:

- (i) Upon seeking the consent of the applicant, schools should apply to EDB for releasing information regarding his/her teacher’s registration status. The information provided by the EDB includes whether the teacher’s registration has been cancelled; whether the teacher’s registration application has been refused; and whether reprimand/warning/advisory letter has been issued.
- (ii) Schools should require the applicants to provide more comprehensive information in the application forms for the posts and other related documents, including whether the EDB has issued reprimand/warning/advisory letter due to their professional misconduct; and whether they were/are being investigated by schools or the EDB over professional misconduct allegations.
- (iii) In addition to the applicants’ academic qualifications, expertise, work experience, passion for education and attainment of a pass result in BLNST, schools should also take into account applicants’ capability to cultivate students with virtues and talents, an affection for their country and their home as well as a global perspective.
- (iv) Schools should require prospective teachers to study the Guidelines on Teachers’ Professional Conduct to make themselves aware of the expectations of the EDB, schools and the community on teachers’ professional conduct.

14. Starting from the 2023/24 school year, for appointment of teachers who have already left their prior service in a local primary or secondary school as well as kindergarten for one year or more, schools should require them to declare whether they have previously been convicted of any criminal offence in Hong Kong or elsewhere, and submit the details to the EDB prior to the effective date of the new appointment. The EDB will verify such information with relevant Government bureaux/departments for verification, and review the registration status of teacher concerned as necessary. In order to facilitate schools' application to the EDB for releasing applicants' teacher registration information, the EDB has launched an online system for submissions of checking forms. We further upgraded the functions of the system in June 2023 with a view to expediting the processing of applications submitted by schools.

Teachers' Professional Development

Developing a Training Framework and Related Requirements

15. Teachers' professional growth requires not only accumulation of experience but also life-long learning, actualising self-reflection and self-advancement. The EDB formulated the Continuing Professional Development policy for teachers in 2003 to encourage teachers to participate in different modes of continuing professional development activities, 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, the EDB has developed a training framework and related requirements for newly-joined teachers, in-service teachers and teachers aspiring for promotion. Under the framework, newly-joined teachers 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, while teachers aspiring for promotion must complete 30 hours of core training and 60 hours (for promotion to Primary School Master/Mistress or Senior Graduate Master/Mistress) of elective training or 100 hours (for promotion to Senior Primary School Master/Mistress or Principal Graduate Master/Mistress) within five years before promotion. As for serving teachers, they 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. The aforementioned core training includes a 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 core training also covers Local Education Policies and Initiatives, National and International Education Development, as well as contents related to the Constitution, the Basic Law and the National Security Law.

16. The training programmes have already rolled out since November 2020. As at the end of January 2024, the EDB organised 44 workshops on Teachers' Professional Identity for about 6 200 newly-joined teachers, as well as 25 workshops on Professional Conduct and Values for about 6 330 teachers aspiring for promotion. From November 2020 to the end of January 2024, the EDB organised 61 training sessions relating to the Constitution, the Basic Law and the National Security Law for about 16 500 school principals and teachers. The EDB has also proactively collaborated with expert organisations to organise more in-depth thematic training programmes. For example, the EDB has run 12 rounds of a two to three-day training programme entitled Reinforcing the Rule of Law from the 2020/21 school year to January 2024 to help teachers learn about the constitutional status and the rule of law of Hong Kong in a systematic manner. A total of about 1 200 school principals and teachers attended the programme. The participants considered that the programmes helped them guide students to respect and obey the law through teaching and daily interaction, thereby reinforcing the rule of law. We will continue to organise similar programmes in future.

Assisting Teachers in Safeguarding National Security

17. The EDB issued circulars in July 2020 and February 2021 respectively to inform all primary and secondary schools as well as kindergartens that they should timely enable all levels of school personnel and students to acquire an understanding of, and remind all such personnel and students to abide by the National Security Law. The EDB has

provided detailed school administration and education guidelines, requiring schools to review current situations, formulate plans and implement various administrative and educational measures related to safeguarding national security and national security education as soon as possible. The EDB issued a circular again in June 2023 to provide schools with updated guidelines on school administration and education, requiring them to fully implement the administrative and educational measures related to safeguarding national security and national security education, with a view to maintaining a safe and orderly learning environment in schools and nurturing students to become good and law-abiding citizens. The EDB has organised sharing sessions to promote professional sharing and experience exchange among schools so as to enhance the effectiveness in schools' planning and implementation of measures on safeguarding national security and national security education. As for schools, they have made use of different channels such as staff meetings, staff development days and seminars on legal issues to enhance staff's understanding of national security and promote professional development; conveyed to staff the school's requirements and expectations regarding their responsibilities and conduct; and formulated school-based staff management and appraisal mechanisms to follow up on the performance and conduct of staff. Schools have also devised 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 and the important concepts covered by national security.

18. The EDB continues to organise different modes of training for serving teachers to enhance their professional competence for teaching national security in various subjects in order to increase the effectiveness of learning and teaching. The Onsite Teacher Workshop on National Security Education has been held for all primary and secondary schools implementing the local curriculum in Hong Kong, and all publicly-funded primary and secondary schools have completed the workshop by January 2023. To deepen schools' understanding of how the major fields covered in national security education can be connected naturally with and integrated organically into the relevant contents of different subjects, the EDB has organised on-site enrichment seminars on national security

education for teachers in secondary schools implementing the local curriculum in the 2023/24 school year. In these seminars, explanations will be given with examples to illustrate some of the security fields so that schools can understand how to integrate the learning elements of national security education into the curriculum content of different key learning areas. In addition, the EDB will continue to enhance the professional competence of teachers by organising the Constitution and the Basic Law Knowledge Enrichment/Advanced Online Courses for Teachers, Online Knowledge Enrichment Programmes for Teachers on Understanding Our Country and National Security Education, and teacher workshops on national flag raising ceremony, as well as professional development programmes for teachers on Chinese history and culture on a regular basis. For instance, new professional development programmes on General Studies have been introduced in the current school year to enhance the professional competence of subject teachers in teaching topics relating to national geography, national history and Chinese culture; while series of knowledge enrichment programmes on national geography are launched for Geography on an ongoing basis to increase teachers' knowledge of national geography.

Organising Mainland Study Tours for Teachers

19. 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 while serving teachers would be offered more Mainland study opportunities to gain first-hand experience of the development of the country so as to strengthen their abilities to nurture students' sense of national identity. The EDB has included the Mainland study tours of three to four days in the Core Training Programme for Newly-joined Teachers. From April 2023 to January 2024, a total of 19 study tours were organised in the GBA, Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan, Hangzhou, Nanjing and Changsha respectively. A total of 2 181 teachers participated, including 56 non-Chinese speaking teachers.

20. Starting from the 2023/24 school year, all public sector school teachers substantively promoted to a higher rank on or after 1 September 2023 are required to complete the Mainland Study Tours for Promoted

Teachers organised by the EDB within two years from the date of substantive promotion in order to meet the training requirements for promotion. The EDB plans to organise 15 Mainland Study Tours for Promoted Teachers in the 2023/24 school year with about 100 to 120 participants in each tour, providing a total of about 1 700 places. The first seven study tours were held in Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Guangzhou and Zhuhai respectively from October 2023 to January 2024, with a total of 779 promoted teachers participated.

21. Contents of the aforementioned study tours include talks on the country's development in education by expert scholars; sharing of good practices and teaching experiences by experienced Mainland principals and teachers; school visits, lesson observations and exchanges with school leaders and teachers; as well as visits to enterprises, cultural sites, historical relics, etc. Teachers are required to collect related information and prepare learning points before the study tours, and consolidate their learning experience for peer sharing at the end of the tours. Participating teachers gave very positive feedback on the Mainland study tours and considered that the tours enabled them to have a deeper understanding of the Mainland's development in different aspects. They also highly appreciated the Mainland teachers' educational aspirations, solid foundation of knowledge, as well as dedication and commitment to education, which had inspired them to reflect on how to better perform their professional roles as teachers.

22. The EDB organises Mainland study tours for serving teachers on different themes or relating to subject curricula. A study tour themed National Energy Development and Historical Culture was held in Beijing, Inner Mongolia and Xi'an in August 2023, while another one themed National Energy Development and Cultural Conservation was held in Sichuan in November 2023. Participating teachers were required to design lesson plans or activities on related themes for implementation in schools incorporating the learning contents of the study tours. The EDB will continue to organise more study tours of different themes so as to enable serving teachers to understand the latest development of the country in various aspects and widen their horizons. Besides, in the 2023/24 school year, the EDB will resume the organisation of Mainland study tours related to subject curricula, and the places planned to visit include the GBA,

Jiangsu, Sichuan, Hainan, Shaanxi and Liaoning. The aims of these study tours are to enable primary and secondary school teachers to further understand the latest development of the country, enrich their professional knowledge, as well as improve the learning and teaching effectiveness by enhancing their skills in classroom teaching, designing teaching materials and guiding students in the Mainland study tours.

Establishing the First Teacher Training and Exchange Base

23. As mentioned in the Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address, the EDB will establish the first teacher training and exchange base (the Base) in collaboration with Mainland authorities and institutions in the 2023/24 school year, with a view to organising regular professional training, exchanges and collaboration projects in the Mainland. The first Base was officially established at the South China Normal University in the Guangdong Province on 10 January 2024. The EDB will utilise the expertise, teacher training experience, networks and resources of the institution to launch more diversified and high quality teacher training programmes (e.g. Mainland study tours and programmes with highlights or features) for teachers in Hong Kong, in order to foster in-depth exchanges between Mainland and local teachers. In addition, the EDB will make use of the Base to promote collaborations among teacher education institutions in Hong Kong and the Mainland so that they can learn from each other and work together to achieve a multi-win situation.

Providing Subject-related Professional Training

24. The EDB encourages teachers to strive for improvement constantly and pursue excellence, as well as actively participate in continuing professional development activities including training programmes, peer sharing, exchange, etc. to enhance the effectiveness of teaching. In parallel, to dovetail with the development of the country, society and curricula, the EDB has been continuously providing teachers with diversified professional training in relation to curriculum, teaching and assessment. Teachers are encouraged to participate in different levels and modes of professional development activities, such as teacher training programmes on STEAM education, integrated education, patriotic education and national security education, so as to enhance the quality of

teaching. Besides, to prepare for the introduction of Primary Science and Primary Humanities starting from the 2025/26 school year, the EDB will provide a 15-hour intensive training for Primary Science panel heads or STEAM co-ordinators covering curriculum interpretation, curriculum planning and assessment mode, and a 30-hour programme for all Primary Science teachers covering elective courses such as inquiry activities on light, sound and electricity as well as science practical assessment. Furthermore, professional training courses for Primary Humanities teachers have been organised and Primary Humanities Learning Circle has been set up to enhance teachers' professional capacity in teaching Primary Humanities.

Enhancing Pre-service Teacher Training

25. The EDB collaborated with teacher education universities in 2023 to develop a guiding framework for teacher education programmes which covers elements such as enhancement of teachers' professional conduct, understanding of education-related laws (including a correct understanding of the Constitution, the Basic Law and the National Security Law) and understanding of national affairs. The framework has been implemented gradually starting from the 2023/24 academic year. The teacher education universities have consolidated, revised and adjusted the contents of their undergraduate teacher education programmes to align with the key points set out in the framework accordingly. The EDB will liaise closely with the teacher education universities and follow up on the implementation of the framework. In addition, the teacher education universities have also strengthened the contents of their teacher education programmes relating to special education in order to equip pre-service teachers with the knowledge and skills in catering for students with special educational needs. The related programmes will be vetted by the EDB and graduates who have completed the programmes and fulfilled respective courses requirements will have obtained Basic Course qualification equivalency of the Basic, Advanced and Thematic levels under the Framework for Teachers' Professional Development on Integrated Education developed by the EDB.

Way Forward

26. A high-quality teaching force is pivotal in fostering high-quality education development. The EDB will continue to facilitate teachers' integration of their pursuit of professionalism and personal virtues so that students can be nurtured with correct moral values. We will update the Guidelines on Teachers' Professional Conduct as necessary in a timely manner to keep in pace with the development of society and education. We will also continue to promote the Guidelines in the sector, facilitate schools' planning of school-based teachers' professional development activities and encourage sharing of successful experience. The EDB will also continue to support the sector in organising various activities to promote teachers' professional ethics and build a teaching force with virtues and talents. On the other hand, the EDB will continue to strengthen its gate-keeping role on teachers' entry into the profession, appointment and management to ensure that all teachers allowed to teach in schools are fit and proper persons, and in tandem handle cases of teachers' professional misconduct in a serious manner, thereby safeguarding students' well-being. On teachers' professional development, we will continue to strengthen teachers' professional knowledge and competencies in subject-related and other areas such as national education through different themes and modes of training, and offer more Mainland study opportunities for them so that they can gain first-hand experience and deepen their understanding of national affairs, history and culture as well as strengthen their affection for and sense of belonging to the country. The EDB will fully support teachers' professional growth as well as strengthen the cultivation of teachers' morality and ethics with a view to establishing a professional and excellent teaching force for Hong Kong.

Advice Sought

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

Education Bureau
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