

Draft as at 7.12.2015

Ongoing Renewal
of the School Curriculum –
Focusing, Deepening and Sustaining
An Overview



Curriculum Development Council

December 2015

Preamble

i. The development of the Hong Kong school curriculum has advanced into a new phase of ongoing curriculum renewal and updating to encourage schools to place emphasis on new focuses to be developed for future needs, and identify areas or accomplishments that should be deepened and sustained according to school contexts. This ongoing curriculum renewal (also known as “*Learning to Learn 2.0*”) is a curriculum development cycle to keep in step with the macro and dynamic local and global changes in various aspects, the latest education trends, the policy initiatives as well as the updates in the curricula of the s (KLAs). It is a continual journey to further enhance the promotion of Learning to Learn for the next five to ten years.

ii. This Overview presents the background, rationales, guiding principles and key emphases for the ongoing curriculum renewal, and should be read in conjunction with the other briefs of the curriculum updates including the Overview on “*Promotion of STEM Education – Unleashing Potential in Innovation*” and consultation briefs of the Key Learning Areas under the same series, namely “*Ongoing Renewal of the School Curriculum – Focusing, Deepening and Sustaining*”. How the whole-school curriculum and KLA curricula updates can be implemented will be further elaborated in the *Primary Education Curriculum Guide*, *Secondary Education Curriculum Guide*, and the respective *Key Learning Area Curriculum Guides* in 2016.

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Ongoing Renewal of the School Curriculum – Focusing, Deepening and Sustaining

Background

1. The Learning to Learn curriculum reform that started in 2001 has been promoting curriculum and pedagogical change that fosters learners' whole-person development and learning to learn capabilities to achieve lifelong learning. Over the past decade or so, much has been achieved in schools through the implementation of the reform.

2. While past achievements are causes for celebration, to maintain Hong Kong's competitive edge and to prepare our students well for the local and global changes taking place in various fields, it is necessary to enhance the Learning to Learn curriculum reform, to sustain and deepen the accomplishments achieved and to identify new focuses in the curriculum as we move to a new phase of *ongoing renewal of the school curriculum – focusing, deepening and sustaining*, in response to the changing contexts.

Why is ongoing renewal of the school curriculum needed?

3. In deciding on the direction for the ongoing renewal of the school curriculum, the following were considered.

3.1 The need to respond to changes

Following on from 2001 in which the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) set out the general directions for curriculum development in Hong Kong in its report, “*Learning to Learn: The Way Forward in Curriculum Development*”, the education landscape in Hong Kong has undergone massive changes. To closely respond to these contextual changes, there is a need to continue with the major direction of preparing students to succeed in a knowledge-based, technologically advanced, and increasingly globalised world, building on strengths that schools have achieved in the past decade.

3.2 Achievements attained

Through the adoption of a **learner-centred approach**, the Learning to Learn curriculum reform that started in 2001 has brought about achievements that have been acknowledged both locally and abroad:

- the curriculum reform has nurtured a new breed of students who are more proactive and in possession of greater learning agility and stronger transferable skills;
- the review of the New Academic Structure (NAS)¹ indicates that our students have acquired a concrete knowledge base;
- the strength of our students’ performance in reading, mathematics and science is internationally recognised;
- teachers have achieved a paradigm shift from teacher-centred classroom practices to learner-centred learning;

¹ Review of the New Academic Structure: http://334.edb.hkedcity.net/EN/334_review.php

- the assessment culture in schools has gradually changed with greater emphasis placed on assessment for/as learning; and
- there is increasing collaboration among teachers within and across schools resulting in enhanced learning and teaching effectiveness.

3.3 The changing contexts since 2001

On the other hand, the challenges brought about by the changes in our society and around the world since 2001 also have significant implications for the Hong Kong school curriculum.

a. The economic aspect

As a result of **globalisation**, the world that we are living in is becoming increasingly interconnected and interdependent bringing about competition and changes in business, work organisation and the environment. Contrary to the past, the economic growth of society is more and more driven by digital transformation with emphasis placed on innovativeness and scientific knowledge. At the regional level, the economic opportunities heralded by initiatives (including the “**Belt and Road**” initiative) offer exciting prospects. Locally, there is a rapid expansion of e-tail and the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs)² or even micro enterprises. All these changes call for the need for school education to produce students with an entrepreneurial³ mindset capable of reaping the maximum benefits from the changes ahead.

b. The socio-cultural aspect

Greater diversity in the demographic make-up of Hong Kong is observed with increasing numbers of students from the Mainland

² As at March 2015, there were about 320 000 SMEs in Hong Kong, constituting over 98 per cent of the territory’s business units and accounted for about 47 per cent of private sector employment. More relevant figures can be obtained at the website of the “Support and Consultation Centre for SMEs”, Trade and Industry Department.

<http://www.gov.hk/en/about/abouthk/factsheets/docs/trade%26industry.pdf>

https://www.success.tid.gov.hk/english/aboutus/sme/service_detail_6863.html

³ The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (2011). *Youth Study Series No. 46: Difficulties in Starting a Business: A Study on Youth Entrepreneurship*.

<http://yrc.hkfyg.org.hk/news.aspx?id=2661d8c1-4046-40df-a7c1-4ad221eb9953&corpname=yrc&i=2527>

and other areas bringing in different cultures and varied living styles (including various expectations different stakeholders have for education). Some research has mentioned that youth have less opportunity to climb up the society ladder⁴. These changes call for the need to strengthen values education in the school curriculum such as self-esteem, mutual respect and tolerance to enhance their understanding of what it takes to live and work with one another in harmony.

c. The socio-political aspect

There is also an enhanced level of socio-political awareness and a need to deepen the development of Basic Law education to strengthen understanding of the position and status of Hong Kong under “One Country, Two Systems” and her relationship with the Mainland among students.

d. The school environment and impact of technology

Advances in technology have brought about the changing face of learning and teaching necessitating the need for further improving the IT infrastructure in schools, further enhancement of interaction among peers and with teachers in the learning process as well as school life, the development in teachers an e-learning repertoire and enhancement of learning and teaching strategies to cater to the diverse needs of students in this fast-moving digital and knowledge era.

e. Recent local and global trends

In formulating the blueprint for the ongoing renewal of the school curriculum, reference has also been drawn from the following recent local and global trends:

Equity

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the two dimensions, namely **fairness and inclusion**, define how a society fares in equity in

⁴ Secretariat for the Steering Committee on Population Policy, Chief Secretary for Administration’s Office (2014). *Thoughts for Hong Kong: Public engagement exercise on population policy*. p.22.

education⁵. While Hong Kong scores high in both the fairness and inclusion indicators with **12 years of free education** for all, more can be done to cater to the diverse needs and interests of students, including those of non-Chinese speaking students, gifted students and students with special educational needs. The ongoing renewal of the school curriculum places continual and renewed emphasis on helping all students of different ability levels and backgrounds reach their full potential through providing meaningful learning experiences and ensuring that classroom learning strategies are effective.

e-Learning

In alignment with the objectives of the **Fourth Strategy on Information Technology in Education (ITE4)**⁶, the ongoing renewal of the school curriculum gives due emphasis to enhancing teachers' repertoire and understanding on the use of e-learning pedagogy across KLAs, including strategies for building self-directed reading habits, developing students' information literacy and promoting assessment for/as learning.

- 3.4 The above-mentioned contextual and systemic changes have confirmed that the Learning to Learn curriculum reform of 2001 is in the right general direction. There is, however, a need to take further steps towards a new phase of *ongoing renewal of the school curriculum – focusing, deepening and sustaining*, in response to the changing contexts to enable our students to meet the dynamic challenges in the 21st century world.

⁵ Field, S., Kuczera, M., & Pont, B. (2007). *No More Failures : Ten steps to equity in education*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Retrieved from http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oeed/education/no-more-failures_9789264032606-en#page1

⁶ The Fourth Strategy on Information Technology in Education: <http://ite4.fwg.hk:8080/ite4/Eng/content/index.html>

What are the guiding principles for the ongoing renewal of the school curriculum?

4. The ongoing renewal of the school curriculum continues to adopt and support a student-centred curriculum to meet the needs of students based on the following **guiding principles** adapted from the Learning to Learn curriculum reform since 2001 and aiming at promoting whole-person development and lifelong learning -

- i. The overarching principle is to support students to learn how to learn and adopt a learner-focused approach to make decisions in the best interests of the students and in response to the macro changing contexts. Diversified learning, teaching and assessment strategies should be used to suit the different needs and interests of students and to help them towards achieving the curriculum goals.
- ii. All students have the ability to learn and in order to do so, they should be provided with essential learning experiences both inside and beyond the classrooms.
- iii. Development strategies should be built on the strengths of students, teachers, schools and the wider community of Hong Kong, reference to evidence, past reform experiences, and contemporary trends in Hong Kong, the Mainland, and overseas systems.
- iv. Practices should be adopted to achieve a balance across different purposes and conflicting interests and views, e.g. across the academic, social and economic goals of the curriculum and across the various learning and teaching strategies. The purpose and modes of learning, teaching and assessment should be consistent with one another.
- v. While following the central curriculum, schools have flexibility in setting their school-based curriculum and relevant policies (e.g. assessment and homework policies) to cater for the diverse needs of students and school

contexts.

- vi. Curriculum development should be viewed as a continuous and dynamic improvement process with positive thinking, patience, tolerance of ambiguity and celebration of small successes to enhance student learning.
- vii. Ongoing review and reflection should be conducted with continuous research, evaluation and collection of feedback from stakeholders to inform further practices and policies.

Updated seven learning goals

5. In line with the aims of education and the overall aims of the school curriculum, the CDC has set out seven learning goals that our students should be able to achieve for whole-person development and lifelong learning. As informed by feedback from various channels, there has been a positive consensus on the seven learning goals in the school community regarding their appropriateness in continuing to serve the needs of student learning for the 21st century.

6. Under the guiding principles for the ongoing renewal of the school curriculum, it is proposed that the seven learning goals should continue to focus on promoting the **whole-person development** and **lifelong learning** capabilities of students, and updates are made with better clarity to take into account the changes in society and the experience gained in the curriculum reform at the school and KLA levels.

Updated Seven Learning Goals of Secondary School Education (2016)	
i.	To be proficient in biliterate and trilingual communication for better study and life
ii.	To acquire and construct a broad and solid knowledge base, and to be able to understand contemporary issues that may impact on learners' daily lives at personal, community, national and global levels
iii.	To develop and apply generic skills in an integrative manner, and to become an independent and self-directed learner for future study and work
iv.	To be an informed and responsible citizen with a sense of national and global identity, appreciation of positive values and attitudes as well as Chinese culture, and respect for pluralism in society
v.	To use information and information technology ethically, flexibly, and effectively
vi.	To understand one's own interests, aptitudes and abilities, and to develop and reflect upon personal goals with aspirations for further studies and future career
vii.	To lead a healthy lifestyle with active participation in physical and aesthetic activities, and be able to appreciate sports and the arts

Refined generic skills

7. Generic skills, as one of the interconnected components of the curriculum framework, are the fundamental skills that help students learn to acquire, construct and apply knowledge to solve new problems. Nine generic skills have been identified as essential for student learning in the school curriculum in the 21st century in the Learning to Learn curriculum reform of 2001. Based on past experience of implementing the reform and dynamic changes in society and recent research, it is proposed that the nine

generic skills be grouped into three clusters of related skills for **better integrative understanding and application**, namely **Basic Skills**, **Thinking Skills**, and **Personal and Social Skills**. When planning the whole-school curriculum and KLA curricula, schools are advised to provide meaningful contexts for the development of these skills in a holistic manner whereby the grouping/cluster of skills would be suitably and effectively applied and developed through classroom activities and learning experiences. (Please refer to “Glossary on the Refined Generic Skills” on p.18 for the definition of the refined generic skills.)

Basic Skills	Thinking Skills	Personal and Social Skills
Communication Skills	Critical Thinking Skills	Self-management Skills
Mathematical Skills*	Creativity	Self-learning Skills*
IT Skills	Problem Solving Skills	Collaboration Skills

Remarks: * Numeracy Skills and Study Skills were used in “*Learning to Learn: The Way Forward in Curriculum Development – Lifelong Learning and Whole-person Development*” (2001).

What are the key emphases of the ongoing renewal of the school curriculum?

8. In light of the changes that are taking place both globally and locally and capitalising on the positive impacts and experience gained in the Learning to Learn curriculum reform of 2001, the following **key emphases** are introduced in this ongoing curriculum renewal to foster students' learning to learn capabilities to achieve lifelong learning. Schools are encouraged to include them in their whole-school curriculum planning to set the direction for their implementation at KLA/subject level through appropriate learning, teaching and assessment activities and in life-wide learning contexts.

Promoting STEM education

9. STEM is an acronym that refers to the academic disciplines of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics collectively. In the local curriculum context, STEM education is promoted through Science, Technology and Mathematics Education KLAs. We aim to further develop among students a strong knowledge base in step with the latest changes in these disciplines, and strengthen their **ability to integrate and apply knowledge and skills**, so as to nurture their creativity and innovation, collaboration and problem solving skills, which are essential skills and qualities required in the 21st century. The learning activities of STEM education also help students develop the essential qualities associated with an **entrepreneurial spirit**. This will also help to nurture versatile talents in the science and technology fields and hence enhance the international competitiveness of Hong Kong, and enable Hong Kong to contribute to major initiatives for national developments, e.g. the “Belt and Road” initiative, should opportunities arise.

Strengthening information literacy

10. Information literacy (IL) refers to the ability and attitude that would lead to **an effective and ethical use of information**. It aims to develop students' abilities to i) identify the need for information; ii) locate, evaluate, extract, organise and present information; iii) create new ideas; iv)

cope with the dynamics in our information world; and v) refrain from unethical use of information such as cyber bullying and infringing intellectual property rights. Students are expected to use information and information technology ethically, flexibly and effectively as responsible citizens and lifelong learners. The planning and implementation of the Four Key Tasks, i.e. Moral and Civic Education, Reading to Learn, Project Learning, and IT for Interactive Learning, will provide opportunities for students to develop and apply IL in meaningful contexts.

Strengthening Reading/Language across the Curriculum

11. Literacy refers to the ability to **read and write effectively** to achieve the desired goals and/or outcomes and develop one's knowledge and potential. Helping students master the literacy skills, i.e. reading and writing skills, is central to language learning at school level. Where appropriate, different KLAs can lend themselves to meaningful purposes and contexts for the promotion of **Reading across the Curriculum (RaC)** to provide opportunities for students to broaden their knowledge base, and apply and consolidate the reading skills and strategies developed in language lessons. Similarly, they can also promote **Language across the Curriculum (LaC)** to provide authentic contexts for students to apply their literacy skills to construct knowledge and to facilitate their development into lifelong learners.

Promoting values education

12. Values education is an integral part of the school curriculum and is implemented through different components in KLAs, moral, civic and national education, cross-curricular learning opportunities and life-wide learning experiences. According to the framework for moral and civic education provided by the CDC in 2008, seven priority values and attitudes, which reflect the uniqueness of Hong Kong as an international city frequently described as a place where **“East meets West”**, in which both Chinese and Western cultures/values co-exist and interact. These are of vital importance for students' whole-person development that would meet their own needs as well as those of society. These seven priority values and attitudes are perseverance, respect for others, responsibility, national identity, commitment, integrity, and care for others. Schools would be

guided to adopt a **whole-school approach** in implementing values education and cultivating positive values and attitudes, which cover the personal, family, community, national and global domains, as well as in introducing other values in accordance with the education philosophy of school sponsoring bodies, schools' vision and mission, as well as their unique contexts.

13. As a constitutional document for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), the Basic Law enshrines within a legal document the important concepts of “One Country, Two Systems”, and that Hong Kong is an inseparable part of the People’s Republic of China and, as a special administrative region, Hong Kong has a high degree of autonomy. It also prescribes the various systems to be practised in the HKSAR. The EDB will adopt a holistic approach to provide multi-pronged support to strengthen **Basic Law education** and ensure that all primary and secondary students’ understanding of the Basic Law and the concept of “One Country, Two Systems”, as well as the close connection between the Basic Law and their daily lives would be enhanced. These measures will nurture students’ positive values and attitudes, including the recognition of national identity and making contributions to the country and society.

14. Encouraging students to understand the Basic Law not only enriches their knowledge of the local, national and global community, but also reinforces the cultivation of values, including **the rule of law, justice, national identity, democracy, freedom, human rights, equality and rationality**. An understanding of the Basic Law will also help students develop into positive and responsible citizens who would contribute to the betterment of the society, the country and the world. Teachers will continue to teach the Basic Law and provide learning opportunities for understanding and applying the Basic Law as well as reflecting on the Basic Law according to the existing curricula (e.g. General Studies for primary schools, Personal, Social and Humanities Education, Liberal Studies, Moral, Civic and National Education), students’ prior knowledge, learning age and students’ needs.

e-Learning

15. e-Learning refers to an open and flexible learning mode involving

the use of the electronic media including the use of digital resources and communication tools to achieve the target learning objectives. The essence of e-learning is to enhance learning and teaching effectiveness in schools and help develop students' necessary qualities (e.g. self-directed learning) for the 21st century. Teachers may develop a repertoire whereby e-learning may help enhance, modify and complement some existing learning and teaching strategies or break new ground in pedagogy. Schools are encouraged to continue to promote e-learning appropriately with reference to their existing strengths and contexts and harness it to unleash the learning potential of students.

Latest development: Updating Key Learning Area curriculum guides and related documents

16. In response to the ongoing curriculum renewal, the *Basic Education Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6)* was already updated in mid-2014. The corresponding *Secondary Education Curriculum Guide* and the curriculum guides for the various KLAs are also being updated and will be available for schools' reference in 2016 upon the completion of consultation. Schools are encouraged to sustain, deepen and focus on areas deemed essential for further improving students' independent learning capabilities. Schools may formulate their plans to incorporate these curriculum updates, taking into consideration the school contexts, teachers' readiness and students' needs.

17. Updated curriculum guides and related documents to be disseminated for schools' reference from 2016 onwards are as follows:

- Primary Education Curriculum Guide
- Secondary Education Curriculum Guide
- Key Learning Area Curriculum Guides
 - Chinese Language Education
 - English Language Education
 - Mathematics Education
 - Science Education
 - Technology Education
 - Personal, Social and Humanities Education
 - Arts Education
 - Physical Education
- Subject Guides / Supplements

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is Learning to Learn 2.0?

Learning to Learn 2.0 is referred as the ongoing curriculum renewal of the Learning to Learn curriculum reform implemented since 2001 in response to the local and global contextual changes in economic, scientific, technological, social and political aspects. With a view to keeping our school education abreast of the times and maintaining the global competitiveness of our students, it is necessary for the Hong Kong school curriculum to embark on the next cycle of updating and renewal, which aims to deepen and sustain the accomplishments and to focus on the possible areas for curriculum planning under Learning to Learn 2.0. Ongoing engagement of stakeholders through multiple channels has been conducted in setting the direction for the ongoing curriculum renewal.

2. How can the ongoing renewal of the school curriculum be implemented effectively at school and system levels?

Schools are encouraged to take into account their school contexts and the following strategies for effective implementation of the curriculum renewal:

- i. enhancing the **six-year holistic and whole-school curriculum planning**, implementation and evaluation at the primary and secondary levels respectively to achieve the updated seven learning goals;
- ii. providing better and flexible **cross-curricular and interdisciplinary linkage**, knowledge base building, development of refined generic skills and interface between key stages with incorporation of the above-suggested key emphases in school curriculum;
- iii. fostering the **connection of the Four Key Tasks** in relation to the updated seven learning goals and development of refined generic skills to sustain students' learning to learn capabilities in preparation for their studies at the next key

- stage;
- iv. improving **teachers' repertoire of pedagogy** to promote student-centred learning and teaching, e-learning and self-directed learning culture;
 - v. promoting **assessment literacy** to inform and improve the effectiveness of learning and teaching of the updated curricula of different KLAs;
 - vi. catering for and **embracing learner diversity** both at the school and KLA levels, especially in the areas of special educational needs, gifted education and education for non-Chinese speaking students; and
 - vii. enhancing **professional capacity of teachers**, promoting learning communities and networks, partnerships with professional subject associations and distributed curriculum leadership in schools.

Follow-up support measures will continue to be provided to schools by the EDB to build up the **professional capacity** of school leaders, middle managers and teachers in understanding the ongoing renewal and updated curricula of different KLAs and facilitating the effective implementation. These support measures will include professional development programmes, professional sharing opportunities, school-based professional support, learning and teaching resources, funding from the Quality Education Fund, etc.

3. How will the ongoing renewal of the school curriculum be reviewed?

Every stakeholder plays a part in the ongoing renewal of the school curriculum for achieving Learning to Learn among our younger generations. Under the existing structure and mechanisms, **regular committee meetings, school visits and focus group interviews** will continue to be conducted for reviewing the implementation of the ongoing renewal of the school curriculum and collecting feedback from a wide range of stakeholders in order to improve the support strategies and monitor the smooth implementation and effectiveness.

Ongoing **research and development** including surveys, seed projects and evaluation of the sustainable impact on both students and schools will continue to be conducted for feedback on further curriculum development.

Glossary of the Refined Generic Skills

Basic Skills

Communication Skills	Communication Skills refer to the abilities to achieve the desired outcomes or goals in a process where two or more people interact (be it in a face-to-face or virtual context) through expressing or receiving messages using verbal and non-verbal means. To communicate effectively, learners should learn to listen, speak, read and write competently. Not only should they express themselves in an accurate, organised and proper manner, but they should also understand and respect others' views and expectations, and use appropriate information and means to convey a message in accordance with the purpose, context and audience.
Mathematical Skills⁷	Mathematical Skills include the ability to perform computations and estimations of numbers in various forms, to describe spatial relationships between objects, to perform measurements, to manage data, to employ logical reasoning for drawing valid conclusions, and to apply mathematical concepts in different contexts.
Information Technology Skills	Information Technology Skills are the ability to use IT critically to search, select, analyze, manage and share information ⁵ . In addition, mastery of IT Skills facilitates collaborative learning, problem-solving and self-directed learning.

Thinking Skills

Critical Thinking Skills	Critical thinking is drawing out meaning from available data or statements, examining and questioning their accuracy and credibility, in order to establish one's views and evaluate the arguments put forward by oneself and others.
Creativity	Creativity is manifested in new ideas, acts, or products. It emerges spontaneously or through deliberate processes of divergent and convergent thinking. It involves the

⁷ In the context of generic skills, Mathematical Skills refer to the ability to apply mathematics in different Key Learning Areas and subjects. The concepts and skills of the Mathematics subject to be applied are only those generally applicable to various disciplines.

	integration of general or domain-specific knowledge for a meaningful purpose. Creativity brings in changes or transformations.
Problem Solving Skills	Problem solving involves using various skills to resolve a difficulty. The process includes investigating the problem, synthesizing information and generating ideas to determine the best course of action. Learners need to adjust and evaluate strategies, as well as consolidate experience for knowledge construction.

Personal and Social Skills

Self-management Skills	Self-management Skills comprise essential life skills and desirable personal qualities such as maintaining emotional stability, making decisions and exercising self-discipline. Self-management Skills enable learners to embrace challenges encountered on a personal or team basis.
Self-learning Skills	Self-learning Skills refer to the ability to initiate, plan, carry out, evaluate and adjust learning activities autonomously. Learners with advanced Self-learning Skills can select or design effective strategies for in-depth learning. These skills help learners enhance academic performance and self-efficacy. Self-learning Skills form the core part of lifelong learning and help learners acquire new knowledge to adapt to the fast changing world.
Collaboration Skills	Problem solving, planning and making decisions in a small group require Collaboration Skills, namely, the skills of communication, appreciation, negotiation, making compromises and asserting leadership and sustaining fellowship. Learners with these skills will be able to effectively engage and contribute in teamwork tasks.

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<http://www.ascd.org/>

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<https://www.acer.edu.au/>

Department of Education and Training, Australian Government
<https://www.studentsfirst.gov.au/>

Department of Education, UK
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>

International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)
<http://www.iste.org/>

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan
<http://www.mext.go.jp/english/>

Ministry of Education, New Zealand
<http://www.education.govt.nz/>

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Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCED)

<http://www.oecd.org/>

U.S. Department of Education

<http://www.ed.gov/>

What teachers should know about learning theories (Hong Kong)

<http://kb.edu.hku.hk/>