

# THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR TEACHERS AND OTHER EDUCATION PERSONNEL IN SIERRA LEONE

## August 2009



We Teach, We Learn, We Build The Future



## **FOREWORD**

As I write this foreword, my mind flashes back to those wonderful and devoted teachers who taught you and me and made it possible for us to be what we are today through the Grace of God Almighty. In our school days, those teachers stood out as real role models in everything - in their commitment and devotion to duty; in their relationship with the community; and in the conduct of their overall social and professional life.

Sadly, the present is not quite like the past. Instances abound. My dream is for the profession to bring back those old and excellent standards which teachers used to assure me of a bright future; those qualities which made them role models; and which made some of my colleagues to willingly opt to serve as teachers or to go on and excel in other vocations.

The time is but appropriate that we now have a Code of Conduct for Teachers to bridge the gap between the past and the present, and bring back standards in the behavioural patterns of those charged with the responsibility to build the human base of our beloved country in accordance with the attitudinal change policy that is being preached by His Excellency the President, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma.

The Code of Conduct, I believe, will contribute in making the teaching profession once more attractive to people with the high moral standing, and who are ready to provide quality education for our children.

S.A.T. Tamu  
Permanent Secretary  
Ministry of Education, Youth & Sports

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To all those morally bound by this document, we want you to understand that there is “dignity in labour;” and this will only become a reality if we perform our roles as dignified professionals. We owe this sacrifice to our pupils, the parents and our nation.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Foreword  | 1  |
| Acknowledgements  | 2  |
| Preamble  | 4  |
| Guiding Principles and Responsibilities for Teachers<br>And Other Education Personnel | 6  |
| Reporting Channels  | 12 |
| Enforcement Procedures  | 13 |
| Definitions   | 14 |
| References  | 16 |

## **1. PREAMBLE**

This Code of Conduct is recognised and endorsed by the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports (MEYS) and complements MEYS's and other policies relating to the promotion of a safe, conducive and positive teaching and learning environment.

The mandate of the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports (MEYS) includes regulating, legislating, monitoring, coordinating and providing adequate resources with an enabling environment, to ensuring effective and quality performance, higher standards, transparency and accountability among teachers and members within the teaching profession, developing curricula and running schools. By virtue of these functions, MEYS becomes both a regulatory, monitoring, evaluating and coordinating body for standards in the teaching profession and the means whereby the merits and demerits of the conduct of teachers and members of the teaching profession are made known and addressed through dialogue and collaboration of all stakeholders in the governance of the school. It also defines the parameters of unethical conduct of teachers and education personnel and allows opportunities for change of attitudes through correction and consequence in accordance with the Collective Agreement and the existing laws of the land.

The Code of Conduct is not an isolated entity as it complements policies in education, the work of MEYS, terms and conditions of service for teachers, other education personnel and other official sources applicable to all members of the teaching profession. The conditions of service are directed towards the provision of appropriate punitive measures and sanctions for acts of official misdemeanour, and compensation/incentives for effective and efficient services as contained in the Collective Agreement between teachers, other education personnel and employing agencies including the government. The Code is a composite of rules and norms of behaviour to create a safe, constructive, positive learning and work environment. It is expected of every teacher and other education personnel to emulate the work culture envisioned in the Code.

The Code of Conduct sets out standards of professional behaviour for teachers and other education personnel in their relationships with learners, their colleagues, parents and the general public.

The Code of Conduct also provides principles to guide professionalism and promote a positive learning environment and the well-being of learners from pre-school to Technical/Vocational level in the following areas:

- a) monitoring and reporting mechanisms for unethical conduct in learning environments;
- b) implementation processes such as teacher training and sensitization programmes geared toward capacity building for teachers and other education personnel;
- c) the development of curriculum for the advancement of concepts of dignity, acceptable professional behaviour, best interest of the child, positive discipline, human rights principles.

## **2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR TEACHERS AND OTHER EDUCATION PERSONNEL**

### **PRINCIPLE 1. Efficient and Effective Service Delivery**

**1.1** Teachers and other education personnel shall exemplify efficiency and effectiveness in their professional service delivery, maintain and improve standards and develop new initiatives in their teaching and learning.

**1.2** Without prejudice to the generality of Principle 1.1, teachers and other education personnel shall:

- (a) report for work regularly, punctually and prepare to teach at all times;
- (b) demonstrate good management skills and abilities in the conduct of their professional work;
- (c) display competence in the subject matter and teaching methodology;
- (d) establish good relations and cooperate fully with education stakeholders responsible for the advancement of education and in the interest of the learners;
- (e) take advantage of professional development opportunities and use active and participatory or 'child friendly' teaching methods;
- (f) observe confidentiality in a manner consistent with lawful institutional requirements;
- (g) teach according to the approved syllabus; and
- (h) empower learners to develop self-esteem and academic excellence.

### **PRINCIPLE 2. Commitment and Attitude to the Profession**

#### **2.1 Commitment and attitude towards work**

**2.1.1** Teachers and other education personnel shall demonstrate commitment to work and display a positive attitude to the teaching profession, the school, children and the community and ensure a high standard of quality and excellence in their professional service delivery.

**2.1.2** Without prejudice to the generality of Principle 2.1 (1), teachers and other education personnel shall:

- (a) demonstrate an understanding in their teaching, of how children learn and develop;
- (b) not engage in activities that adversely affect the quality of their teaching and profession, such as learner or parent exploitation, cultism, drug abuse, etc.;
- (c) teach and practise principles of good citizenship, peace and social responsibility;
- (d) honestly present each student's performance and examination results;
- (e) not engage in any form of corrupt practices;
- (f) be appropriately attired and presentable;
- (g) be good role models in their demonstration of dedication and honesty.

## **2.2 Commitment and attitude towards learners**

**2.2.1** Teachers and other education personnel shall, at all times, maintain a professional relationship with all learners, recognizing that all learners are equal, and foster learners' intellectual, physical, emotional, social and spiritual potentials.

**2.2.2** Teachers and other education personnel shall adhere to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Child Rights Act (CRA) and other Human Rights instruments.

**2.2.3** Teachers and other education personnel shall:

- (a) promote safe and conducive learning environment;
- (b) ensure that learners are treated with dignity and respect and their rights fully protected;
- (c) establish and maintain zero tolerance for all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, exploitation and abuse, physical and humiliating forms of punishment, psychological abuse, and child labour;
- (d) eliminate all forms of discrimination at all times;
- (e) employ positive methods of corrective discipline;
- (f) actively promote the concept of 'the best interest of the child' in every event;
- (g) participate in co-curricular activities for the benefit of the learners;
- (h) encourage learners to develop as active, responsible and efficient individuals;

- (i) promote an atmosphere of trust;
- (j) exercise due care, diligence and confidentiality in all matters affecting the welfare of the learners; and
- (k) guide learners to know their responsibilities towards teachers and other education personnel.

## **2.3 Commitment and attitude towards parents**

**2.3.1** Teachers and other education personnel shall recognize and promote the right of parents to information on the welfare and progress of their children through agreed channels.

**2.3.2** Teachers and other education personnel shall acknowledge different family backgrounds of children and ensuring a balanced approach in the development of the child.

**2.3.3** Teachers and other education personnel shall make every effort to encourage parents to be actively involved in the education of children and support the learning process; encourage parents to visit schools, talk to them about their children's work and progress, and to actively participate in the School, Boards, and CTA/SMC activities;

**2.3.4** Teachers and other education personnel shall:

- (a) encourage parents to cooperate with other parents and community members to enhance the smooth running of the school;
- (b) refrain from soliciting and accepting personal gifts or monies from parents;
- (c) support parents to be aware of children with learning difficulties and other disabilities.

## **2.4 Commitment and attitude towards the community**

**2.4.1** Teachers and other education personnel shall recognize the importance of the community in the education process, and engage them in the formulation of policy and curriculum, capacity building activities and in the improvement of the quality of the institutions and the environment.

**2.4.2** Without prejudice to the generality of Principle 2.4 (1), teachers and other education personnel shall:

- (a) establish good relations with the community to enhance their active participation for the advancement of the school and the society;
- (b) encourage and work closely with the community to ensure that all children in the community access, stay in and complete school;
- (c) use their surrounding environment for much of their teaching;
- (d) endeavour to stimulate interest and active participation of the community in the achievement of the educational objectives and the ethos of the school;
- (e) sensitize the community to discourage social activities that may hinder the moral and ethical development of learners;
- (f) cultivate public trust and confidence.



A Class held under the trees

## **2.5 Commitment and attitude towards colleagues**

**2.5.1** Teachers and other education personnel actively co-operate with each other and work as a team in all respects to improve school standards and community development.

**2.5.2** Without prejudice to the generality of Principle 2.5 (1), teachers and other education personnel shall:

- (a) not negatively influence professional decisions of colleagues;
- (b) not criticize colleagues in the presence of learners, except as unavoidably related to an administrative or judicial proceeding;
- (c) use official channels to report complaints and not unduly speak publicly about colleagues or the school administration that may cause public resentment or outrage;
- (d) when making a report on the professional misconduct of a colleague, do so in good faith, following the reporting channels set out in this Code;

- (e) promote team work and collegiality among colleagues, respecting their professional standing and opinions, and be prepared to offer advice and assistance particularly to those beginning their career or in training;
- (f) maintain confidentiality of information about colleagues obtained in the course of professional service, unless disclosure serves a compelling professional purpose or is required by law;
- (g) be prepared to offer guidance and counselling services to colleagues and ensure that colleagues are treated with dignity and respect and their rights fully protected;
- (h) maintain high moral standards.

## **2.6 Commitment and Attitude towards employing authorities**

### **2.6.1 Teachers and other education personnel shall:**

- (a) be prepared to offer guidance and counselling services to colleagues and ensure that colleagues are treated with dignity and respect and their rights fully protected;
- (b) cooperate with education authorities in the interest of the learners, education service and the community;
- (c) be knowledgeable of their legal and administrative rights and responsibilities, and respect the provisions of “The Collective Bargaining Agreement for Teachers” and the provisions concerning learners’, employers’ and employees’ rights;
- (d) carry out reasonable instructions from management personnel and have the right to question instructions through clearly defined procedures;
- (e) not frustrate the policies, decisions and actions of the school administration and MEYS;
- (f) not engage in unauthorized collection of school funds, extra lessons or illegal charges.

## **PRINCIPLE 3. Effective, Efficient and Proper Uses of School Resources**

**3.1** Teachers and other education personnel shall, in recognition of the fact that school resources are central in the overall management of the school, ensure the proper, efficient and effective management of school resources.

**3.2** Without prejudice to the generality of Principle 3.1 (1), teachers and other education personnel shall:

- (a) exercise reasonable care in the use of school property, and for official purposes;
- (b) maintain appropriate and highest standards of honesty and integrity in the management of school resources;
- (c) maintain and keep proper books of account at all times for monies received or expended on behalf of the school;
- (d) keep and maintain proper record of property or funds received on behalf of the school. Such records include, but not limited to, store issue vouchers, log entry book, etc.;
- (e) maintain and keep proper record of distribution or utilization of school resources and equipment;
- (f) maintain accountability and transparency at all levels; and
- (g) refrain from collaboration with others to mismanage school funds and other resources.

**PRINCIPLE 4. School Environment and Work Ethics**

**4.1** Teachers and other education personnel shall:

- (a) not be under the influence of alcohol, tobacco or any harmful drug on school property and during school hours;
- (b) not give tobacco, alcohol, harmful drugs to any learner or colleague, or allow them to consume any harmful substances;
- (c) have the responsibility to maintain an alcohol, smoke and drug free school environment;
- (d) take decisions in collaboration with Boards of Governors, SMCs or CTAs, on the efficacy of the school environment and work ethics; and
- (e) not engage in any unprofessional practices such as examination malpractice, favouritism, selling in classroom, bribery, corruption and soliciting gifts.

### **3. REPORTING CHANNELS FOR UNETHICAL CONDUCT**

#### **3.1 Context**

Teachers and other education personnel may be found guilty of professional misconduct taking into account the relevant circumstances. In assessing whether there has been a breach in professional conduct, the appropriate body or authority dealing with the case should ensure that the alleged person is given due process of the law and take into account the extent to which the person has failed to maintain a good level of professional conduct and a high sense of their responsibilities. Confidentiality, safety and respect for the complainant, alleged person and witnesses must be ensured at all times.

#### **3.2 Immediate Action**

Learners, teachers, other education personnel, parents and other stakeholders are required to report verbally or in written form a breach of the principles and standards in the Code as soon as they become aware of an alleged act.

#### **3.3 Awareness of Reporting Channels**

Learners, teachers, other education personnel, parents and other stakeholders should be made aware of the relevant channels and procedures for reporting unethical conduct. Reporting a complaint in respect of breaches of this Code can be made to any of the following bodies for appropriate action.

##### **A. Pre/Primary School**

1. Guidance Counsellor/Class Teacher
2. SLTU school representative
3. Head of School/School Administration/Complaints' Committee
4. School Management Committees (SMCs), Community/Teacher Association (CTAs), Child Welfare Committees (CWCs)/Teachers' Union
5. District Education Office/Appropriate Local Council/Local Authority/ District MSWGCA office
6. Ministry of Education Youth and Sports/Complaints' Committee
7. Teaching Service Commission

**B. Junior Secondary School**

1. Guidance Counsellor/Form Teacher
2. SLTU school representative
3. Head of School/School Administration/Complaints' Committee
4. Board of Governors
5. Community/Teacher Association (CTAs), Child Welfare Committees (CWCs)/Teachers' Union
6. District Education Office/Appropriate Local Council/Local Authority/ District MSWGCA office
7. Ministry of Education Youth and Sports/Complaints' Committee
8. Teaching Service Commission

**C. Senior Secondary / Technical /Vocational Institute**

1. Guidance Counsellor/Form Teacher
2. SLTU school representative
3. Head of School/School Administration/Complaints' Committee
4. Board of Governors
5. Community/Teacher Association (CTAs), Child Welfare Committees (CWCs)/Teachers' Union
6. District Education Office/Local Authority/ District MSWGCA office
7. Ministry of Education Youth and Sports/Complaints' Committee
8. Teaching Service Commission

**4. ENFORCEMENT PROCEDURES**

Action will be taken in line with procedures applicable under the laws of the country, regulations under civil and criminal laws and other relevant institutional policies and procedures.

## **5. DEFINITIONS**

**“Breach”** means violation of this Code of Conduct.

**“Code”** means information, principles and guidelines put together to regulate behaviour or conduct.

**“Collective Bargaining Agreement for Teachers”** means the agreed terms and conditions of service between employers and employees relating to teachers.

**“Complaint”** means an authorized statement (verbal or written) from a person, authorized body or agency (Boards, Associations, PTA, SMC, group of individuals) for referral to the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports or appropriate body for assertion that an education personnel has breached any of the principles and standards of. It is considered a request for investigation.

**“Learner”** means to any pupil, student or any person enrolled in a public or private school and other educational institution from pre-school to “tertiary education”.

**“Monitoring”** means appraisal of the teacher or education personnel’s conduct and performance by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and other stakeholders, through visits and contacts with personnel and his or her employer. The monitoring activities will require the monitoring personnel to submit a report to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports or other appropriate authority.

**“School”** includes other educational institutions.

**“Teachers and other Education Personnel”** means a teacher and any other person in the teaching and education profession (school or school system administrators, proprietor and other education personnel such as paraprofessionals, aides and substitute teachers, school secretaries, watchman, etc.) who may or may not hold a certificate.

**“Tertiary Education”** means educational programmes offered in educational institutions above secondary level.

**“Unethical conduct”** means any behaviour that impairs the teacher or education personnel to function professionally in his employment position or a pattern of behaviour or act that is detrimental to the health, discipline and development or moral of learners.

**“MEYS”** anybody (Inspectors, Deputy Directors) or group of persons (Local Council, Board of Governors etc.) acting on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

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