Introduction

The establishment of a General Teaching Council (GTC) is not only a dream but also a goal for the Council on Professional Conduct in Education (CPC). Since the majority of our co-workers have been sharing the same faith: general recognition and respect for the teaching profession, the key hinges on our effort to strive for the best to demonstrate teachers’ professionalism and conduct both inside and outside school.

Ten years have passed but still no date for the GTC. Therefore, this Council has decided to award priority to promoting the establishment of the GTC. To this end, a standing committee (the General Teaching Council Promotion Sub-committee) has been set up to follow up, report regularly on the progress and development and strive for the consensus amongst and canvass the view of co-workers so that timely and appropriate alterations can be introduced accordingly.

Proposed Functions of the GTC

Five meetings have been held and some proposals finalized since the Sub-committee was formed. It is now drafting a consultation paper, which proposes that the functions of the GTC should comprise two parts, one being the core functions, which allow no room for compromise or else we can never achieve the objectives of the GTC. They include:

1. to serve as the teacher registration authority;
2. to formulate and enforce the Code for the Education Profession; and
3. to participate in the development of teacher training programmes and ensure the continuing development of the teaching profession.
As regards the other part of functions, we shall consult co-workers and discuss their significance one by one before formal adoption to ensure an effective operation of the proposed Council.

**Specific Actions**

The Sub-committee has initially put forward an action plan as follow:

1. to consult the Council members on the draft consultation paper and make necessary amendments;

2. to invite the chairpersons or representatives of the associations of heads of schools /School Liaison Committees in the 18 districts to meetings for in-depth discussion (1 or 2 representatives from each district);

3. to organize 5 to 6 district sharing sessions for teachers;

4. to invite teachers from about 40 schools to attend sharing sessions (each Council member will invite teachers from 2 schools);

5. to arrange meetings with major school sponsoring bodies;

6. to arrange meetings with government officials;

7. to consult educational bodies or staff unions; and

8. to exchange views with teacher education institutions on the establishment of the GTC following the government’s formal announcement on the preparation for the GTC.

The above-mentioned are merely tentative views of the Sub-committee, subject to the Council’s approval. Co-workers are welcome to come forth with opinions and suggestions.

We believe that the GTC is a requisite for the enhancement of the status of the teaching profession. In this connection, we must take prompt action to promote our professional image and service quality to strive for the recognition and respect of others.

**Before giving advice on the establishment of GTC or attending the relevant consultation/sharing sessions, you are advised to consider the following issues:**


I. Establishment of the General Teaching Council

i. In line with the decision of the Education Commission, a group, comprising members returned by election from the education sector, was set up to draft a Code for the Education Profession of Hong Kong (revised). Drafting took place between 1987 and 1990. The group was of the view that the Code could not be implemented unless a professional association for teachers was set up. It also proposed in detail the tentative plans and methods of establishing the General Teaching Council (GTC).

The GTC is a professional association for teachers. As are members of other professional bodies including doctors, lawyers and accountants, members of the GTC are equal in status irrespective of their belief and the nature, position and rank of their job. Its main duties are to upgrade the quality of service of the teaching profession.

According to the consensus reached by the educational bodies, the functions of the GTC should at least cover the following areas:

(a) professional qualifications;
(b) policies and methodology of pre-service teacher training;
(c) policies and methodology of in-service teacher training;
(d) maintaining and upgrading the professional standard;
(e) professional conduct;
(f) links with overseas educational professionals;
(g) links with local educational professionals.

It can be seen from its functions that the GTC is basically not a regulatory body. Rather, it is an organisation for promoting professional development. Its primary purpose is to provide quality education.

ii. In 1997, the Government suggested to set up the GTC by 1999.

iii. In ECR Report No.7 of 1997, Education Commission suggested to set up the

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† extracted from the Hong Kong Teachers’ Centre Bulletin Issue No.21 for the period from Sep. to Nov. 1996
‡ extracted from Chief Executive’s Policy Address 1997
GTC to enhance the standards of teaching and professional development of teachers, to maintain the integrity of the profession and to raise the professional esteem of teachers. Education Commission also recommended that the GTC should have:

(a) a key role in the policy formulation about teacher registration (including registration criteria and teacher’s qualification);

(b) substantial influence in ensuring the quality and professional relevance of teacher education programmes;

(c) a duty to encourage teachers to undertake continuous professional education and to promote their professional development; and

(d) power of internal discipline and power to consider complaints, settle disputes, make investigations and conduct disciplinary hearings where necessary.

iv. There has been a long standing call from the education sector for the establishment of a GTC, a self-regulatory professional body for teachers, which aims to recognise teachers’ professional status, and to enhance the quality of education. The proposed powers and functions of the GTC are in line with overseas professional bodies for teachers and other professional bodies in Hong Kong. To maintain its independence, like other professional bodies, the GTC should be self-financing.

v. The GTC is an organisation for the teaching profession to exercise professional autonomy and self-discipline. It is independent of the Government and the interest and position of the employees and employers. It broadly represents the educational sector, and is responsible for devising a code of conduct and exercising discipline for the profession. It establishes a framework of qualifications to maintain professional standards and upgrades the quality of the profession. It also guarantees continuing development of the profession.

\[\text{\copyright extracted from Education Commission Report No.7}\]
\[\text{\xi extracted from a promotion material of Dec. 1998 by the Secretariat of Preparatory Committee on the Establishment of General Teaching Council}\]
\[\text{~ extracted from the public letter of 22 Jan. 2000 to Chief Executive from Council on Professional Conduct in Education}\]
vi. 90.4% interviewees (approx. 32,000 teachers) agreed that the purpose of establishing the GTC is to realize the autonomy of the education profession.
87% interviewees (approx. 30,000 teachers) agreed to the immediate establishment of the GTC.
89.3% interviewees (approx. 31,000 teachers) agreed that even there is no action taken by the Government, the education sector should organize the GTC on its own.
93.5% interviewees (approx. 33,000 teachers) agreed that the ultimate goal of establishing the GTC is to improve the quality of education in Hong Kong, rather than to advance the interests of the education profession.

Q.1 Is there a need to establish the GTC? Why?

Q.2 What are the other part of functions of the GTC besides its core functions (including to serve as the teacher registration authority; to formulate and enforce the Code for the Education Profession; and to participate in the development of teacher training programmes and ensure the continuing development of the teaching profession)?

Q.3 Is there a need for a champion to promote discussion among colleagues and their understanding of the GTC?

Q.4 Is there a need to consider the timeframe for the establishment of the GTC (see Annex 1)?

II. Teacher registration

i. The unitary purpose of the GTC could be undermined if a particular group of...
teachers teaching in mainstream schools are exempted from registration. The Preparatory Committee on the Establishment of GTC understands that the majority of teachers and parents support this view.  

ii. The Preparatory Committee on the Establishment of GTC understands that it is the Government’s long-term objective that all teachers should be trained. The Preparatory Committee’s preliminary view is that untrained teachers should be given ‘limited’ registration status and be required to complete professional training within a specified period, subject to availability of training places.  

iii. 74% interviewees (approx. 26,000 teachers) agreed that the GTC should take over the function of the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications to determine the practising qualifications of members of the education profession.  

Q. 1 Should registration with the GTC be mandatory?  
Q. 2 To what extent and how should the GTC be involved in registration/de-registration of teachers?  
Q. 3 What should the role of the GTC be vis-à-vis the current registration authority for teachers (i.e. the Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower)?  
Q. 4 Should teacher registration be taken over by the GTC in the future?  
Q. 5 If yes, should relevant transitional arrangements be drawn up?  
Q. 6 What is the relationship of the GTC with the Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower after it takes over the work of teacher registration/deregistration?  
Q. 7 What categories of teachers should come under the remit of the GTC?

† extracted from the consultation document of Nov. 1998 by Preparatory Committee on the Establishment of General Teaching Council
Q. 8 Should the GTC continue to cover all teachers who are currently required to register under the Education Ordinance? †

Q. 9 Should government school teachers be required to register with the GTC in the same way as their counterparts in aided schools? †

Q. 10 Should the GTC extend its membership to teacher trainers, teacher trainees, professional education personnel working in the Education and Manpower Bureau, and teaching staff of the VTC? †

Q. 11 Should teachers who are currently given ‘permitted’ and ‘registered’ teacher status under the Education Ordinance be allowed to have their status preserved when the GTC is set up? †

Q. 12 In particular, should untrained ‘registered’ teachers be given ‘full’ registration status under the GTC, bearing in mind the Government’s long-term objective to require/encourage all serving teachers to be professionally trained? †

Q. 13 Should the GTC be given the power in due course to oversee the suitability of teachers for formal entry into the profession after a compulsory period of probation? †

Q. 14 If so, how should it be done? †

Q. 15 Should teachers of tutorial schools be required to register with the GTC? ⁵

Q. 16 Should ‘R3s’ and ‘R10s’ maintain their permanent registration status upon the GTC’s establishment? ⁵

Q. 17 Should there be different categories of registration? *

Q. 18 Given that most of the self-governing professional bodies have a registration officer responsible for maintaining a register of their members, should the GTC follow this practice? *
III. Powers to enforce disciplinary actions

i. As a professional body for teachers, the GTC would have jurisdiction to deal with the professional conduct of teachers, including principals. As the GTC should only have power over the teaching profession, the performance of school sponsors and members of school management committees should be monitored by the Education and Manpower Bureau through the Education Ordinance and Codes of Aid.  

ii. 74.8% interviewees (approx. 26,000 teachers) agreed that the GTC should take over the function of monitoring the professional conduct of educators from the Education and Manpower Bureau.  

Q.1 Should the powers to decide and enforce disciplinary actions be given to the GTC?  

Q.2 What is the extent of GTC’s powers to enforce disciplinary actions?  

Q.3 One of the aims of the establishment of a GTC is to enhance the quality of education by ensuring teachers’ professional standards. Besides teachers, the school management also has a significant role to play in affecting the quality of education. Should there be any mechanism within the GTC to ensure the performance of the school management, including principals and members of school management committees?  

IV. GTC’s influence on training and professional development of teachers

i. 94.6% interviewees (approx. 33,000 teachers) agreed that the GTC should be entitled to appoint representatives to sit on various advisory committees on education as permanent members.  

91.4% interviewees (approx. 32,000 teachers) agreed that teacher training providers should seek advice from the GTC on the education professional
courses they offered. @

Q.1 How should the GTC exert its influence to ensure that courses offered by the teacher training providers meet the needs of our schools and society? *

Q.2 What should the GTC do in encouraging teachers to engage in professional development? *

Q.3 How should the GTC be given the power to influence local teacher education programmes? †

Q.4 To what extent should that influence be? †

V. GTC governing council

i. Education is a matter of huge public interest. Besides teachers, there are other ‘stakeholders’, including parents, teacher education providers, school sponsors, employers, other professionals and government officials. They should be given seats in the governing council to represent the wider public interest. The appointment of “lay” members, a common practice in other professional bodies, should provide a wider perspective to, and add to the credibility of, the decisions of the Council. At the same time, the appointment of teacher members would enable the Council to tap a wider range of expertise. ⁵

ii. 93.4% interviewees (approx. 33,000 teachers) agreed that in the policy-making level of the GTC, the majority of seats should be elected through direct election by members of the education profession. 96.3% interviewees (approx. 34,000 teachers) agreed that in the policy-making level of the GTC, more than half of the seats should be assigned for practising teachers in service. @

Q.1 What would the appropriate size of the GTC’s governing council be? †
Q.2 Should the governing council include the following categories of members: elected teacher members; members representing organisations closely associated with education; and members appointed by Government? †

Q.3 Should the GTC have a certain degree of representation of other stakeholders, such as school managers, government officials and members of the public, at the decision-making level as suggested in the Education Commission Report No.7? ※

Q.4 What should the relative proportion of the various categories of members be? †

Q.5 Should teachers take the majority of the membership? ※

Q.6 In what ways should the representatives of different categories of members in the governing council be chosen? †

Q.7 How will the members of the governing council be appointed? ※

Q.8 Should the appointment/ election system of the Council on Professional Conduct in Education be modeled on or adopted by the GTC governing council? ※

Q.9 Should the role and functions of the Council on Professional Conduct in Education, Hong Kong Teachers’ Centre and Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications be subsumed under the GTC eventually? †

Q.10 If so, how should this be phased? †

Q.11 Is it necessary to have appointed members in the governing council? 〆

VI. Administrative and financial arrangements

i. The Government has reserved a one-off grant of $20 million to tie in with the establishment of the GTC. ^

※ extracted from Chief Executive’s Policy Address 1998

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Q.1 Should there be an independent secretariat for the GTC, just like other professional bodies? *

Q.2 Should the GTC be given the power to determine the level of registration fees? *

VII. Registration fees

i. The GTC’s self-regulatory status could be undermined if it is not financially independent. Moreover, it is not a standard arrangement for the Government to provide funding support to professional bodies.  

Q.1 How will the criteria for determining the registration and annual membership fees of different categories of members be set? *

Q.2 Will you join the council if you have to pay registration and annual membership fees? θ

Q.3 How much do you think the annual membership fee should be? (annual membership fees for the Medical Council of Hong Kong, the Social Workers Registration Board, the Ontario College of Teachers and the General Teaching Council for Scotland are $420, $500, $450 and $260 respectively.) θ

Q.4 Should the Government raise the amount of the one-off setting up grant or consider to provide regular subsidies to the Council, in order to reduce the registration/membership fees of teachers? ξ

Compiled by GTC Promotion Sub-committee
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θ extracted from the questionnaire on Council on Professional Conduct in Education’s Visit to the General Teaching Council for Scotland, Relevant Education Organisations and Schools