



# Council on Professional Conduct in Education

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*(Translated from Chinese version)*

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## Glimpses of the “Seminar on Promoting the Professional Autonomy of Teachers in Hong Kong”

Date: 20 November 2007 (Tuesday)  
Venue: The Hong Kong Institute of Education

Mr TSOI Heung-sang, Herbert  
guest speaker of the afternoon session

Professor TSANG Wing-kwong,  
guest speaker of the morning session



Hundreds of participants attending the seminar



**Seminar on Promoting the Professional Autonomy of Teachers in Hong Kong**  
**Morning Session: Review of the Education System**  
**Summary Report on the Keynote Speech and Forum**

WU Siu-wai

To promote the professional autonomy of teachers in Hong Kong, the Council on Professional Conduct in Education (CPC) and the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) co-organised the Seminar on Promoting the Professional Autonomy of Teachers in Hong Kong on 20 November 2007. Local academics and educators were invited to share their ideas and opinions on ways and practices of promoting the professional autonomy of teachers. Two seminars titled “Review of the Education System” and “Sharing on Classroom Practices” were held and attended by nearly one thousand participants. Professor TSANG Wing-kwong from Department of Educational Administration and Policy, the Chinese University of Hong Kong was the guest speaker of the morning session. The seminar was followed by a forum featuring Dr PANG King-chee, former Vice-chairperson of CPC; Mr TSO Kai-lok, Principal of the Elegantia College; Mr WAI Pui-wah, Principal Education Officer (Professional Development and Training) of the Education Bureau and Dr YU Wai-bing, Vice-chairperson of CPC.

In an attempt to analyse the framework of professional autonomy of teachers from a historical-institutionalist perspective, Professor TSANG pointed out that in sociology, the state and the capitalist market were the two mainstream institutions of modern society, and various professional fields were founded upon them. The teaching profession was somehow in between the two, therefore it was more difficult to establish a professional system for it. For instance, the General Teaching Council for England was established as late as in 2000, almost 150 years after the foundation of the General Medical Council. In Hong Kong, despite the fact that an international panel of experts proposed to set up a professional body for local teachers in 1982, such a body had not yet come to exist even after a quarter of a century. One of the reasons was that the Government did not want to forgo the power to regulate teachers. On the other hand, the teaching profession was undergoing a process of deprofessionalisation. Under the global influence of New Public Managerialism, the professionalism and autonomy of teachers were encroached by both commercialisation of education and consumer demand.

At the forum, Dr PANG King-chee commented that teachers in Hong Kong were professionals without professional autonomy. To promote their own autonomy, local teachers should contemplate on their training requirements, professional expertise, entry requirements, as well as the needs for continuing education and professional regulation. In his sharing, Mr TSO Kai-lok remarked that a professional sector was largely defined by the practitioners’ power of discretion. Therefore he urged teachers not only to care about professional autonomy from the policy perspective, but also to fully utilise the independence they enjoyed in schools and exercise professional discretion regarding school development and enhancement of students’ performance.

Mr WAI Pui-wah of the Education Bureau said professional autonomy was chiefly evidenced in the independence of teaching. To support the professional development of teachers, the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications had already proposed a Teacher Competencies Framework for teachers’ reference. He also said that the biggest challenge to the teaching profession was the impact of the larger social environment on the professional status of teachers. The last speaker at the forum was Dr YU Wai-bing, who reviewed the long and winding path of local teachers’ demand for professionalism within the education system of Hong Kong. Although a survey conducted in 2001 revealed that most of the local teachers supported the establishment of a general teaching council (GTC), the Government and the relevant policy-making bodies only gave a lukewarm response to it. During subsequent discussion, some floor speakers remarked that the GTC should not be considered as a cure-all. In response to their comments, Dr YU said notwithstanding the guarantee of professional autonomy by the establishment of a GTC, teachers should also demonstrate it through the exercise of discretion in their daily work.

**Seminar on Promoting the Professional Autonomy of Teachers in Hong Kong**  
**Afternoon Session: Sharing on Classroom Practices**  
**Summary Report on the Keynote Speech**

LEUNG Tak-yin

Mr TSOI Heung-sang, Herbert was invited to be the guest speaker of the afternoon session of the Seminar on Promoting the Professional Autonomy of Teachers in Hong Kong. The seminar topic was “Sharing on Classroom Practices”. He first defined the word “promoting”. With regard to the promotion of professional autonomy of educators, “promoting” might mean changing “from nothing to something”, “from scarcity to abundance” and “from acceptance to popularity”; whereas “autonomy” referred to teachers’ freedom to identify, decide on and conduct the teaching activities on their own. He pointed out that teachers were enjoying a high degree of autonomy in their daily teaching activities – they had the freedom to design school-based curricula, choose textbooks, adjust the progress of teaching and learning, etc.

Mr TSOI believed that the development of the teaching profession should be in the direction of making teachers more professional and more autonomous. Therefore, he would talk about the teachers’ degree of autonomy from four different perspectives: capacity and ability to decide on the curricula, accountability for students’ academic achievement and behaviour, collaboration with other educators to enhance mutual professional development, and participation in the construction and dissemination of professional knowledge.

Mr TSOI has taken part in the development of the Teacher Competencies Framework (TCF) put forward by the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications (ACTEQ), which sets out the six core values to be held by teachers:

1. Belief that all students can learn
2. Love and care for students
3. Respect for diversity
4. Commitment and dedication to the profession
5. Collaboration, sharing and team spirit; and
6. Passion for continuous learning and excellence

As proposed by the TCF, teachers have the responsibilities of assisting other educators in their professional development, facilitating peer collaboration and establishing professional networks conducive to teaching. Teachers are engaged in four professional domains: teaching and learning, student development, school development, and professional relationship and services. Teachers might demonstrate professionalism and autonomy in these four domains through classroom practices.

Mr TSOI also shared his views about “professional autonomy – autonomous profession”, viz. how educators could collaborate with each other to provide mutual support in professional development. First of all, he opined that a high degree of autonomy was a must for any professional, including teachers. However, such autonomy was not a natural right of the profession, but a reward given by the community in recognition of the professional performance of educators. Therefore, a teacher must observe the code of conduct both inside and outside the classroom. Secondly, the need for professional training was equally important: while most new teachers were duly trained, they should also undergo continuing professional development to address the inadequacy of their initial training. To this end, the document *Towards a Learning Profession* published by ACTEQ proposed that all local teachers should engage in continuing professional development activities of not less than 150 hours in a three-year cycle.

Lastly, Mr TSOI highlighted that collegial collaboration, sharing and support were also essential to the professional autonomy of teachers. He encouraged continuous self-reflection and urged teachers to co-operate with their colleagues for the sake of mutual support and learning. In a nutshell, collaboration not only referred to completing one’s teaching tasks satisfactorily, but also meant helping peers to do their job well. Mr TSOI then quoted a few examples to show how teachers’ morale and professional development could be impaired by undesirable staff room culture, such as the use of vulgar language, duplicity, rumouring, suspicion and the formation of a charmed circle.

Mr TSOI suggested that teachers use a common professional language to establish a professional “staff room culture”. For instance, they could use their common professional language to share their experiences, and make their decisions basing on facts only. He opined that the professional autonomy of local teachers could be realised only if educators cooperate with each other and pursue professionalism in a sincere and trustful manner.

## Invitation for Nominations for the Election of the Eighth Council on Professional Conduct in Education

The Secretariat

The Council on Professional Conduct in Education (CPC) was set up in April 1994 following the recommendation of the Education Commission in its Report No. 5. The terms of reference of the Council are: to advise the Government on measures to promote professional conduct in education; to draft operational criteria defining the conduct expected of an educator and to gain widespread acceptance of these criteria among all sectors of the education community through consultation; and to advise the Permanent Secretary for Education on cases of disputes or alleged professional misconduct involving educators.

The procedures and arrangements for the eighth election are the same as last time. The CPC has 28 seats in three categories, namely, the organisation-nominated category (11 seats), the teacher-nominated category (14 seats) and members nominated by the Permanent Secretary for Education (3 seats). Members of the new term will serve from May 2008 to April 2010. Each school may nominate a serving regular registered teacher (including the school head) as a candidate. Teachers may also run for election as independent candidates if they have the support of 60 serving registered or permitted teachers teaching in the same type of schools.

Educational organisations registered with the Hong Kong Teachers' Centre as an organisation-member are invited to make nominations for the organisation-nominated category. All nominations should reach the following officers by registered post or by hand:

- (a) *Nominations from School Nominees* should reach their respective Chief School Development Officer, or the Chief Pre-primary Services Officer (Joint Office for Pre-primary Services):

Office	Address	Tel. No.
Hong Kong Regional Education Office	53/F, Hopewell Centre, 83 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, Hong Kong	2863 4646
Kowloon Regional Education Office	Podium, East Block, Education Bureau Kowloon Tong Education Services Centre 19 Suffolk Road, Kowloon Tong, Kowloon	3698 4108
New Territories East Regional Education Office	22/F, Landmark North, 39 Lung Sum Avenue Sheung Shui, New Territories	2639 4876
New Territories West Regional Education Office	19/F, Chinachem Tsuen Wan Plaza, 457 Castle Peak Road, Tsuen Wan, New Territories	2437 7272
Joint Office for Pre-primary Services	Room 2507, 25/F, Hopewell Centre, 183 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, Hong Kong	3107 2197

- (b) *Nominations from Independent Candidates* should reach the Senior Professional Development Officer (Council on Professional Conduct in Education) at Room 702, Kowloon Government Offices, 405 Nathan Road, Kowloon.

**All Nominations should reach the above officers before noon on 5 March 2008 (Wednesday).** Voting for the teacher-nominated category will be held on 22 April 2008 and the counting of votes of the organisation-nominated category will be carried out on 24 April 2008.

For details about the election, please refer to EDB Circular Memorandum No. 1/2008 and the website of the Council. Enquiries can be made by telephone at 2780 8432 and 2780 8427, or by mail to Room 702, 7/F, Kowloon Government Offices, 405 Nathan Road, Kowloon.

**Council on Professional Conduct in Education  
Election 2008 — Time Schedule**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Events</b>
4 January 2008 (Friday)	Call circulars to be issued to schools and educational organisations inviting nominations for the election of the Eighth Council, and the election to be publicised by means of press release and the Council Newsletter.
5 March 2008 12:00 noon (Wednesday)	Deadline for nominations. Nominations to be announced by means of press release. Deadline for candidates to provide campaign literature for printing.
12 March 2008 (Wednesday)	Deadline for candidates to deliver sufficient copies of additional campaign literature for distribution to voters.
Early April 2008	Circulars on arrangements of the voting procedures to be issued to schools and educational organisations; and ballot papers to be distributed to organisations.
5 April 2008 (Saturday)	Briefing session and election forum for organisation-nominated candidates.
10 April 2008 (Thursday)	Deadline for schools to provide the names of two Returning Officers to their respective Chief School Development Officers (CSDOs) or Chief Pre-Primary Services Officer (Joint Office of Pre-primary Services) [CPSO (JOPS)].
12 April 2008 (Saturday)	Briefing session and election forum for candidates nominated by teachers of secondary schools, primary schools, kindergartens and special schools.
15-18 April 2008 (Tuesday to Friday)	Schools to collect ballot papers from their respective CSDOs or CPSO (JOPS).
<b>22 April 2008</b> (Tuesday)	<b>Voting day of Schools.</b>
23 April 2008 (Wednesday)	Schools to return voting results and unused ballot papers to their respective CSDOs or CPSO(JOPS) <b>before 12:00 noon.</b>
24 April 2008 (Thursday)	Educational organisations to return ballot papers <b>before 10:00 a.m.</b> , followed by unsealing and counting of votes. Voting results of teacher-nominated and organisation-nominated members to be announced by means of press release.
15 May 2008 (Thursday)	First meeting of the eighth Council to elect the Chairman and Vice-chairman.

## Case for Sharing : Secret Appraisal of Teachers by School Principals

Extracted from *the Summary of the Findings on Opinion Survey on Teaching Profession* published by the Council on Professional Conduct in Education

### Facts of the Case

At the beginning of the school year, Teacher A was appointed by the Discipline and Counselling Unit of his school to take charge of the Form 6 prefects. After a month or so, he was abruptly removed from this duty\* by the school principal. At the repeated requests of Teacher A, the school principal revealed that the reason for his removal was procedural impropriety, i.e. the principal had not been consulted in the process of appointment.

However, the CPC discovered during its case study that the principal had concealed an important reason, i.e. he considered Teacher A not suitable for the post because he thought Teacher A might criticise the school in front of the prefects, inciting their dissatisfaction about the school. But the principal only revealed this reason to the school administrators, the Education Department and CPC. Besides, there had been incidents of verbal misunderstanding and dispute between Teacher A and the principal before.

### Findings of the Case Study Conducted by the Council

As an employee, Teacher A has a right to be informed of the contents of his appraisal report and should not be deprived of the right.

### Breach of the Code by the Principal

A member of the profession:

- 2.3.3 Shall be supportive of colleagues in performing professional duties and responsibilities and encourage them to develop their potential.
- 2.3.8 Shall provide ample opportunities for colleagues to participate in discussions when making decisions on matters that affect them.
- 2.3.10 Shall, upon request, inform a colleague of the contents of a report when submitting a report on him/her.

### A professional educator should respect the rights of his/her staff stated below when conducting staff appraisals:

As an employee, a member of the profession has the right:

- 3.3.5 To be informed of evaluation procedures affecting himself/herself and to express his/her views.
- 3.3.6 To request to be truthfully informed of his/her strengths and weaknesses as expressed in his/her appraisal report and to make an appeal as he/she deems necessary.

### Findings of the “Survey of the Professional Conduct of Teachers”\*\*\*:

1. **Frequency of occurrence of secret appraisal:** The survey results from Q1 of Questionnaire 3 and Q1 of Questionnaire 20 show that the average number of known cases of secret appraisal of teachers by school heads is 3.2 for all respondents since their joining the teaching profession or in the past ten years. The average number of such cases known to school heads is 1.2, while the numbers for deputy heads, senior teachers and teachers are 3.8, 3.6 and 2.3 respectively. Normally, the school heads should be aware of most cases. Why is it that the number of cases known to deputy heads is nearly three times that of school heads? Some school heads might have asked their deputy heads to draft staff appraisal reports which were kept for use depending on the circumstances. Some of these draft reports have never been used. The deputy heads might have counted these cases while the

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\* Removal from a duty is different from dismissal.

\*\*\* The Survey of the Professional Conduct of Teachers was conducted by CPC in late December 2001. The questionnaires were distributed to teachers of all ranks in primary/secondary/special schools as well as kindergartens.

school heads have not. On average, only 63% of the school heads would inform a teacher of the contents of a report on him/her after making the report.

2. **Truthful appraisal:** Also, Questionnaire 20 reveals that, on average, only 54% of the school heads would truthfully inform a teacher of his/her strengths and weaknesses as expressed in his/her appraisal report. And after the teachers have been truthfully informed of their strengths and weaknesses, only 63% on average have an opportunity of appeal.
3. **School heads being supportive of teacher's work:** Besides, Questionnaire 15 reveals that, on average, 62% of the school heads are supportive of colleagues in performing professional duties and responsibilities. The figure shows that most school heads would encourage their teachers to develop their potential. The survey results by school type are similar: 61% for both secondary and primary schools, 65% for kindergartens and 63% for special schools. On the contrary, the survey results by rank are more divergent: 60% for teachers, 64% for senior teachers and 78% for deputy heads and school heads.
4. **Removal of an on-going duty:** The average number of known cases of removal from a duty in the same school year after a teacher had been appointed for the duty was less than 1 for all respondents since their joining the profession or in the past ten years. It can be seen that such cases are not common. However, only 51% of the school heads had provided ample opportunities for the teachers concerned to participate in discussions when making decisions of removal of the teachers from their duties.

### **Questions for self-reflection:**

*The Code for the Education Profession of Hong Kong* advocates democracy in making education policies, so that all educators shall have ample opportunities to participate in discussions concerning school administration. In recent years, legislation on the protection of privacy has been passed to provide for a person's right to know the contents of any file concerning himself/herself. Why is secret appraisal still so common in the teaching profession? Is it a personal or cultural problem? If it is a cultural problem, should it be allowed to continue or should it be rectified?

### **Notes for Members of the Education Profession**

Evaluation between members of the profession should not be conducted secretly. It should not be affected by personal feelings and should involve a forthright dialogue between the two parties to achieve the desirable outcome.

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## Council on Professional Conduct in Education (Seventh Term) Brainstorming Session 2008

- Date : 12 January 2008 (Saturday)
- Venue : Kerry Lake Egret Nature Park, 2 Hung Lam Drive, Tai Po Kau, New Territories, Hong Kong
- Objectives : ➤ To share experiences of case handling, and prepare the *Memorandum of the Case-Filing Panel*, *Memorandum on the Inquiry Report* and *Guidelines for Final Inquiry* through discussion and experience sharing
- To discuss the strategies for the establishment of a General Teaching Council

### Glimpses of the Brainstorming Session and views of the participants:

**The objectives of experience sharing  
and reflection on the work procedures  
and targets have been achieved.**

*A most fruitful meeting.  
Many issues have been clarified and many new ideas created.*

Members wrote down their feelings  
about the Brainstorming Session



Group discussion during the Brainstorming Session



**What a meaningful and practical workshop!**

**Experience sharing among a  
professional team helps sustain  
its professional power.**

### **Group photo of the participating Members**

(Back row from left to right: Mr LEUNG Tak-yin Billy, Dr WU Siu-wai, Mr CHENG Sau-leung Don, Mr YEUNG Cheong-chun, Ms LEE Lai-ming, Ms TSE Wai-lok, Mr LAM Shu-wing, Mr TONG Chung-fan and Mr YEUNG Kin-chung Clifton.

Front row from left to right: Ms CHAN Shun-lai Cinda, Dr LEUNG Ping-wa, Vice-chairperson Dr YU Wai-bing, Chairperson Mr PUN Tin-chi, Mr FUNG Suk-kai and Ms KWONG Ka-yin Phyllis.)



