



Council on Professional Conduct in Education

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(Translated from Chinese Version)

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A Letter to Dr Rosanna Wong, Chairman of the Education Commission, From the Council on Professional Conduct in Education*

12 December 2006

Dear Dr Wong,

In the Education Commission Report No.7 issued in September 1997, the Education Commission (EC) announced the decision “to set up a General Teaching Council to enhance the standard of teaching and professional development of teachers, to maintain the integrity of the profession and to raise the professional esteem of teachers.” This is a long-awaited news for teachers.

* This letter was issued on 12 December 2006.

Mr. TUNG Chee-hwa, the first Chief Executive, also made the commitment to “set up a General Teaching Council, a professional body for teachers, within two years” in his first Policy Address in 1997. In 1998, Mr. TUNG even promised to “allocate \$20 million to set up a General Teaching Council” in his second Policy Address. In November 1998, the EC issued the *Consultation Document on Establishment of a General Teaching Council* to collect opinions from teachers and the public. During a meeting on 26 July 1999, the EC discussed a report of the Preparatory Committee on Establishment of General Teaching Council. The report revealed that the establishment of a General Teaching Council (GTC) was generally agreed, but there were different opinions on the role, duties and composition of the council. Therefore, the EC decided that “the Preparatory Committee, in collaboration with other relevant advisory bodies, should study further into the matters related to the functions of the GTC, and encourage active discussion by the education sector. Upon completion of the study, the Preparatory Committee should submit a report on the establishment of GTC to the EC again and then conduct public consultation.” Yet, the Preparatory Committee seemed to have disappeared since then and has failed to hold any meetings to take follow-up actions according to the suggestions of the Commission.

From 1998 to 2001, the establishment of GTC was stated as one of the policy initiatives in the respective *Progress Reports on Policy Objectives*. Its target and the “present position” at that time were reported. Yet, in the *Progress Report on Policy Objectives (2001)*, the Government announced that “the establishment of the proposed GTC may have to be delayed due to manpower and time constraints as many other aspects of work relating to the Education Reform are in active progress”, and the item has since been omitted from subsequent *Progress Reports on Policy Objectives*. The government’s performance in implementing EC’s recommendations is really disappointing.

The problem is that the Government considered “education reform” and “establishment of GTC” mutually exclusive; apparently, the reform would not be fruitful without delaying the establishment of GTC. In fact, during the EC meeting on 28 September 1998, it was confirmed that “the aim of the establishment of the GTC was to improve the professionalism of teachers and provide quality education to students”. That means the establishment of the GTC was complementary to the education reform. This would be the case unless the government’s idea of education reform was contrary to the teachers’ professional opinions. Without a professional body to maintain professional conduct in education and promote the professional development of teachers, how quality education could be achieved!

A comprehensive teacher survey conducted by us in 2002 revealed that among more than 35,000 respondents teaching in primary schools, secondary schools, kindergartens and special schools, over 90% considered the aim of establishing the GTC to be realization of the autonomy of the teaching profession. The goal was to improve the quality of education instead of protecting the self-interest of the profession. Besides, over 85% of the teachers opined that the GTC should be set up immediately, and they agreed that the education sector should form a GTC on its own if the Government took no action on this issue.

The success of the education reform hinges on whether teachers can be mobilized to apply their expertise and implement the reform at the classroom level. To this end, it is necessary to recognize the teachers' professional status and support their professional development at the institutional level and by legislation. Without a professional organization for teachers, they will not be able to exert their professionalism and the objectives of education reform cannot be achieved.

Being the chairman of the EC, we believe you would be concerned about the effectiveness of education reform and the professional development of teachers just as we do. We hope you would spare some time to talk with us about the early establishment of the GTC. Looking forward to meeting you soon and best wishes to you for every success.

(PUN Tin-chi)

Chairman, Council on Professional Conduct
in Education on behalf of all members

Seminars on Professional Conduct of Teachers

Hosted by Council on Professional Conduct in Education

(4/9/2006-30/4/2007)

	Date	Organized by
1.	04.09.2006	Heep Hong Society Healthy Kids Nursery School
2.	09.09.2006	Pegasus Sau Wah Christian Kindergarten
3.	16.09.2006	SKH St. Barnabas' Church Kindergarten
4.	18.09.2006	Dr. Catherine F. Woo Memorial School [P.M.]
5.	28.09.2006	Confucian Ho Kwok Pui Chun College
6.	30.09.2006	St James' Settlement
7.	30.09.2006	SKH Kindly Light CH Holy Carpenter Kindergarten and OR Pui Cheung Kindergarten
8.	06.10.2006	Sham Shui Po Baptist Church Kindergarten
9.	13.10.2006	Holy Family School
10.	14.10.2006	SKHKH Tung Chung Day Nursery School
11.	18.10.2006	Christian Alliance SY Y Memorial Primary School
12.	26.10.2006	The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups LEE Shau Kee Primary School
13.	27.10.2006	Parkview International Pre-School
14.	28.10.2006	Man Kiu Association Primary School No. 2
15.	28.10.2006	Chi Yun School
16.	04.11.2006	Hong Kong Student Aid Society Po Tat Nursery
17.	18.11.2006	Tung Wah Group Child Care Service
18.	20.11.2006	Hong Kong Institute of Education
19.	24.11.2006	Caritas Jockey Club Lok Yan School
20.	09.12.2006	Yan Chai Hospital Wing Lung Kindergarten / Child Care Centre
21.	19.01.2007	Hong Kong Institute of Education
22.	27.01.2007	Tung Chung Baptist Kindergarten
23.	09.03.2007	Pui Shing Catholic Secondary School
24.	13.03.2007	Hong Kong Institute of Education
25.	30.04.2007	Ling To Catholic Primary School

The Council hopes to enhance the understanding and awareness of the Code for the education profession among school personnel through staff development activities of schools. If you are interested in organizing a talk or seminar on the Code for professional conduct for your staff, representatives of the council are glad to act as the speakers in talks or as the facilitators in discussions. Or if you are a group of 20 or more teachers, you are also welcome to invite our representatives to be the guest speaker for promotion talk or seminar.

Application forms and detailed information are available on our website (<http://cpc.edb.org.hk>)

Enquiries: 2780 8423 / 2780 8146



Photo of Council Member Mr. CHENG Sau-leung and teachers taken after a promotion talk on professional conduct.

Teachers' Views on the Establishment of GTC

Extracted from the *Findings on Opinion Survey on Teaching Profession*,
the report of a survey conducted under the Promotion Campaign
on Professional Conduct in Education

YU Wai-bing

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In late 2001, the Council on Professional Conduct in Education (CPC) conducted an Opinion Survey on Teaching Profession to collect teachers' views on the Code for the Education Profession of Hong Kong (the Code), CPC and the establishment of a General Teaching Council (GTC). The opinions collected may serve as a reference for the implementation of policies concerning the teaching profession in future. In order to let more education professionals know the result of the survey, we have extracted part of the report for sharing.

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The questionnaires were distributed to all local teachers serving in secondary schools, primary schools, kindergartens and special schools on 15 November 2001. These included principals, panel teachers, registered teachers, permitted teachers, student guidance teachers and teacher-librarians, totalling 55,898 (hereafter referred to as "teachers"). The questionnaires were distributed according to the number of teachers in a school. The Chairman of CPC issued a letter to the schools to seek their assistance in distributing the questionnaire to each teacher. The schools were requested to return the completed questionnaires to CPC via the Regional Education Offices using the self-addressed envelopes provided. A total of 55,898 questionnaires were distributed and 37,583 were received. The response rate was 67%. Among the questionnaires received, 35,733 were valid, covering 64% of the serving teachers in Hong Kong at that time.

The following table sets out the ten statements about the GTC, the numbers of respondents choosing different answers and the corresponding percentages, the total numbers of valid answers, and the mean and standard deviation for each question. The ten statements are divided into three groups: the objectives and possible actions concerning the establishment of GTC (questions 1-4), the composition of GTC's decision-making body (questions 5 and 6), and the functions of GTC (questions 7-10).

1. As shown in the following table, for more than 34,000-35,000 valid questionnaires received, the mean values of questions 1-4 are 2.99, 2.97, 2.99 and 3.13 respectively. In other words, the respondents affirmed the statements in the four questions, i.e. most of them have chosen “agree” or “highly agree”. Among the four statements, the one most supported by teachers was “the ultimate goal of forming a GTC is to improve the quality of education instead of protecting the self-interest of the profession”, followed by “the objective of establishing a GTC is to achieve autonomy of the education profession”. More than 90% of the teachers agreed to these statements. Besides, over 85% supported the immediate establishment of the GTC, and almost 90% opined that the education sector should establish the GTC on its own if the Government took no action on this issue.

2. Regarding the second group of questions on the composition of the GTC, the mean values of questions 5 and 6 are 3.12 and 3.22 respectively, indicating that the respondents strongly affirmed the statements. As shown in the answers, more than 90% of the teachers agreed that the GTC’s decision-making body should largely be formed by direct election from among its professional members, and that more than half of the seats should be filled by serving teachers.

3. Regarding the third group of four questions about the function of the GTC, the mean values of questions 7-10 are more or less the same, viz. 2.86, 2.82, 3.09 and 3.03 respectively. Among the four statements, the one most supported by the teachers was “the GTC should be entitled to having its representatives sitting on various consultative bodies on education as standing members”, followed by “various teacher training bodies should consult the GTC on the professional courses of education they offer.” Both statements were supported by more than 90% of the teachers. On the other hand, around 75% of the teachers agreed that the GTC should take over from the Education Department the function of monitoring the professional conduct of teachers, and from the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications (ACTEQ) the function of setting the qualification requirements for practitioners. As shown in the answers, the teachers have already reached a consensus on the functions of the GTC.

4. From the answers to the ten questions, it can be seen that the percentage of teachers who have chosen “agree” or “highly agree” is over 70% for each question. It shows that the teaching profession has reached significant consensus on various aspects regarding the establishment of the GTC, including its objectives, direction of actions, composition of the decision-making body and functions, etc.

Teachers' Views on the Establishment of GTC

	1 Highly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Highly agree	Total number of respondents	Mean (Standard deviation)
1. The objective of establishing a GTC is to achieve autonomy of the education profession.	203 (0.6%)	3193 (9.1%)	28356 (80.7%)	3396 (9.7%)	35148	2.99 (0.46)
2. I support the immediate establishment of the GTC.	293 (0.8%)	4252 (12.2%)	26769 (76.5%)	3669 (10.5%)	34983	2.97 (0.51)
3. The education sector should establish the GTC on its own even the Government takes no action on this issue.	206 (0.6%)	3547 (10.1%)	27446 (78.5%)	3763 (10.8%)	34962	2.99 (0.48)
4. The ultimate goal of forming a GTC is to improve the quality of education, instead of protecting the self-interest of the profession.	204 (0.6%)	2091 (5.9%)	25862 (73.4%)	7064 (20.1%)	35221	3.13 (0.52)
5. The decision-making body of the GTC should largely be formed by direct election involving all professional members.	121 (0.3%)	2184 (6.2%)	26320 (74.9%)	6505 (18.5%)	35130	3.12 (0.50)
6. More than half of the seats of GTC's decision-making body should be filled by serving teachers.	87 (0.2%)	1213 (3.4%)	24684 (70.1%)	9248 (26.2%)	35232	3.22 (0.51)
7. The GTC should take over from the Education Department the function of monitoring the professional conduct of educators.	318 (0.9%)	8478 (24.3%)	21890 (62.8%)	4181 (12.0%)	34867	2.86 (0.62)
8. The GTC should take over from ACTEQ the function of setting the qualification requirements for practitioners.	399 (1.1%)	8638 (24.8%)	22410 (64.4%)	3341 (9.6%)	34788	2.82 (0.6)
9. The GTC should be entitled to have its representatives sit on various consultative bodies on education as standing members.	125 (0.4%)	1791 (5.1%)	27869 (79.5%)	5287 (15.1%)	35072	3.09 (0.46)
10. Various teacher training bodies should consult the GTC on the professional courses of education they offer.	171 (0.5%)	2855 (8.2%)	27768 (79.3%)	4228 (12.1%)	35022	3.03 (0.47)

Case for Sharing – Students Pointing Out Their Teachers’ Mistakes

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

Teacher A of a school was complained by several students for his teaching standard and approach. The students quoted the example of a mistake in a mathematics test paper set by Teacher A. When the students spotted the mistake and pointed it out during the test, Teacher A refused to make the necessary amendment. It was not until two days later that he admitted his fault and corrected the marks. Besides, Teacher A often made mistakes during lessons, but he usually ignored the students’ responses.

In response to our enquiry, Teacher A said he had already advised the students to correct the mistake in the test paper and then write out the answers during the test. However, basing on the information provided by the six students, CPC believes that he did not do so during the test.

Findings of the Case Study Conducted by the Council

It was the first time that Teacher A taught Secondary 7 classes, and therefore he lacked experience and sufficient preparation. His overly strong self-esteem had also prevented him from listening to his students’ opinions.

Breach of the Code by Teacher A

A member of the profession:

- 2.2.3 Shall be personally responsible for the quality of his/her teaching.
- 2.4.3 Shall render professional service to the best of his/her ability.

When teaching students, a member of the profession:

- 2.1.6 Shall exert every effort to provide a professional service, to raise professional standards and to promote a climate that encourages the exercise of professional judgement.
- 3.2.5 To maintain and improve his/her professional competence through further study, in-service programmes and visits.

Findings on the “Survey of the Professional Conduct of Teachers”*:

1. **Making mistakes in setting questions:** Question 1 of questionnaire 27: Have you encountered any cases of teachers making mistakes in setting questions ever since you became a teacher? Most (57.8%) of the respondents answered that they encountered such cases occasionally since they became teachers, or during the past ten years, revealing that such cases were not common. Most of the mistakes were discovered by panel teachers. It was probably because panel teachers were more familiar with the subjects and thus played the role of a gatekeeper. The details of the responses of different teachers are as follows:

- (i) Most (57.8%) of the respondents chose “occasionally” (only a few cases since they became teachers), and 25.8% chose “seldom” (only one or two cases since they became teachers).
- (ii) There was not significant difference between the answers of primary and secondary school teachers. The percentages of primary and secondary school teachers who had chosen the following answers were as follows: “often” (several times a year) – 13.1% (secondary) and 9.0% (primary); “occasionally” (several times since they became teachers) – 60.4% (secondary) and 62.8% (primary); “seldom” (only one or two cases since they became teacher) – 23.8% (secondary) and 24.1% (primary); “never” – 2.4% (secondary) and 3.4% (primary).
- (iii) Such cases were less common in special schools: “often” – 10%, “occasionally” – 46.7%, “seldom” – 30.0% and “never” – 13.3%.
- (iv) It was even rarer to find such cases in kindergartens: “often” – 0.8%, “occasionally” – 42.3%, “seldom” – 33.1% and “never” – 23.8%.
- (v) Most of the mistakes were discovered by panel teachers: “never” – 1.1% only; “seldom” – 13.2%, adding up to 14.3%. In this relation, the total percentages of respondents who had chosen these two answers were 25.0% for vice-principals, 36.7% for teachers and 43.4% for school principals.
- (vi) The reason why most mistakes were identified by panel teachers was probably that they were more familiar with the subjects concerned and they played the role of a gatekeeper.

* 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.

2. **Discovery of mistakes** – question 2 of questionnaire 27: As far as you know, ever since you became a teacher, what is the percentage of cases in which the students discovered and pointed out the mistakes in the paper during the examination? On average, 21% of the respondents answered that they had encountered such cases since they became a teacher, or during the past ten years; among them 22% were primary teachers, 26% were secondary teachers, and about 10% to 20% belonged to other categories. 24% of the cases were known to panel teachers and vice-principals whereas the percentages for teachers and principals were 21% and 16% respectively, indicating that some of the cases were resolved at the panel teacher/vice-principal level.

3. **Correcting mistakes** — question 3 of questionnaire 27: Ever since you became a teacher, how often have you corrected on the spot the mistakes in the examination papers discovered by students? 42% of the respondents answered that they had corrected all the mistakes pointed out by the students on the spot, 23% answered that they had corrected 90% of the mistakes in this manner, and less than 2% of them answered they had never done so, resulting in an average of 84%. By school types, the percentages were: secondary school – 87%, primary school – 86%, special school – 73% and kindergarten – 61%. By rank, the percentages were: teacher – 83%, principal – 88%, vice-principal – 90% and panel teacher – 86%. On the whole, there were still some teachers who did not correct their mistakes on the spot because of their inability to make professional judgement or their fear of losing face.

Questions for self-reflection:

1. As a professional educator, should a teacher accept views from non-professionals such as students and parents easily? If he/she does so, will it undermine his/her professionalism?
2. What standard should be adopted in deciding whether to accept or reject the views of non-professionals?

Notes for Educators:

In this case, the teacher concerned often made mistakes during the lessons, but he ignored his students' feedback time and again. Apart from inadequacies in his

standard of teaching, the traditional concept of “authority” and the fear of losing face might also be the reason for his reaction. However, modern education aims, inter alia, to promote democracy and thus allows students to express their opinions. Therefore, a professional educator should not refuse to answer questions from candidates concerning any mistakes in the examination paper. Instead, he/she should discuss with other teachers as soon as possible with a view to rectifying the mistakes on the spot.

Teachers should keep on improving their professional standard in order to enhance their quality of teaching. Professional standard refers to both subject knowledge and professional ethics. For instance, the teacher in this case not only had insufficient subject knowledge in mathematics which was a matter of standard, but also refused to admit his fault, which was then a matter of professional ethics.

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Exchange Tour to Guangzhou

Wu Siu-wai

To enhance exchange between the CPC members and educators in the Mainland, and to learn more about the ethics of teachers in the Mainland, CPC members of the sixth and seventh terms organized an exchange tour to Guangzhou to visit Mr. HUANG Xian of the Teaching Research Office, Guangzhou Municipal Education Commission. In 2005, Mr. HUANG Xian came to Hong Kong to speak in the Conference on Enhancing Teachers' Professionalism. From the perspective of teachers, he pointed out that teachers' conduct should not be restricted by rules. His view was shared by the hundreds of Hong Kong educators attending the Conference. To gain an in-depth understanding of Mr. HUANG's views, the Executive Committee of the sixth term decided to go to Guangzhou to exchange opinions with him. But due to the avian flu, the tour was postponed to December 2006.

Eight of us joined the exchange tour, including the Chairman PUN Tin-chi, members FUNG Suk-kai, LAM Shu-wing, LEUNG Ping-wa, CHENG Sau-leung and I, and two members of the sixth term, Chiu Pei-tao and HO Ki-to. During the meeting, Mr. HUANG first introduced the work of the Teaching Research Office of Guangzhou Municipal Education Commission. To answer the questions raised by us, he further explained the progress of education reform in Guangzhou. Talking about the ethics of teachers in the Mainland, he said he appreciated the professional code for educational workers in Hong Kong which promoted ethics in a positive way. He thought it showed respect for teachers. In some provinces and cities in the Mainland, too much emphasis was put on external control of teachers' behaviours, i.e. by listing out the do's and don'ts of the teachers. Thus the maintenance of professional conduct was effected by way of administrative orders, which was only effective in regulating the conduct of those teachers with a sense of ethics and responsibility. Teachers with lower ethical standard might look for the loopholes in the rules, and had no regard for professional ethics or conduct. Therefore, Mr. HUANG opined that teachers' professional performance should not be regulated by external means.

According to Mr. HUANG, administrative regulation should not be the only means to uphold professional conduct because it was not effective, and it failed to encourage teachers with good conduct. Therefore, he proposed emphasizing the importance of professional conduct during teacher training. Besides, teachers with a high sense of professional dignity at work should be commended, and teachers with a higher standard of ethics should be given more chances to share their experience, so

that a culture of integrity and diligence could be established. All these would help to maintain and enhance professional ethics. After hearing what Mr. HUANG said, we found that the education authority, sponsoring bodies and schools in Hong Kong had not made enough effort to commend teachers with outstanding performance and a high standard of conduct. It seems that in-depth studies and discussions on this issue by Hong Kong educators are required.



An introduction was being made by Mr. HUANG Xian of Teaching Research Office, Guangzhou Municipal Education Commission

(From left to right: Mr. CHENG Sau-leung, Mr. HUANG Xian, Mr. PUN Tin-chi)



Members of the Guangzhou Education Exchange Tour

(Back row from left to right: Mr. LEUNG Ping-wa, Mr. HO Ki-to, Mr. Chiu Pei-tao, Mr. LAM Shu-wing, Mr. WU Siu-wai, Mr. FUNG Suk-kai, Mr. CHENG Sau-leung)

(Front row from left to right: Mr. PUN Tin-chi, Mr. HUANG Xian)