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An Analysis of Continuous Teacher Development in Hong Kong

by

Dr. Ng Ho Ming

The University of Hong Kong

Email: hmng@hkucc.hku.hk

Tel: 852-28592788

Fax: 852-28585649

Abstract

Education in Hong Kong has developed rapidly since the seventies in parallel with the economy boom. To support such development, the government has invested heavily in initial teacher education and will soon impose professional training and graduate qualification as prerequisites for entering the profession. Continuous Teacher Education (CTE), generally regarded as equally important to initial teacher education if not more, is not given comparable emphasis. This paper is set to study CTE in Hong Kong, including its policy, practice and provision at the system level. Some special features of the system are identified and scrutinised, including ad hoc, policy-led, and competence-based. The centrally provided CTE is also closely examined in terms of its relevance to the profession, impact on schools, and cost-effectiveness. The paper ends with a close look at its latest development, obstacles encountered and prospect.

I. Introduction

Educational quality is heavily dependent on the performance and quality of teachers. In addition to subject knowledge, it is desirable that teachers be equipped with relevant pedagogical and other skills before they enter the profession. However, as pointed out by the James Report (DES 1972), pre-service education and training alone, even together with the induction in the probationary year, is no more than a foundation. In light of the rapid expansion of knowledge and the ever-changing environment, continuous teacher education (CTE) is essential to quality school education (Wideen 1987). CTE is also vital for maintaining the morale and enthusiasm of professionally trained teachers. Without continuously engaging in CTE as revitalization or reflection, teachers may stagnate or even become demoralized.

In Hong Kong, efforts have been made since the eighties to improve teachers' qualifications and expertise. Such efforts include launching B.Ed. programmes for primary teachers, establishing the Hong Kong Institute of Education, providing teachers with in-service training, and setting a target of having an all-graduate, all-trained teaching profession. The main focus of this article is placed on the government policy and the practices of CTE at the system level in Hong Kong. School-based teacher development and professional development of individual teachers will not be given the same emphasis. In the following, the provision of CTE by the government is examined, followed by an analysis of its characteristics and effectiveness. At the end, the development of CTE in Hong Kong as well as the obstacles ahead are identified and discussed.

In this article, continuous teacher education (CTE) is defined as all the professional training or education received by the serving teacher excluding education leading to initial teacher certification, e.g. pre-service or in-service sub-degree teacher certificate, or the post-graduate certificate of education. The definition is selected because the Hong Kong government also distinguishes between initial training and professional development received thereafter in terms of funding, policy and priority.

II. The teaching profession and present provision of CTE in Hong Kong

The teaching profession in Hong Kong has made significant progress in last decades. In 2001, 89.5% and 84.2% of teachers in primary and secondary schools respectively have obtained formal initial teacher training, namely, a postgraduate certificate of education, B.Ed. or sub-degree teacher certificate (refer to Table 1). In fact, the professionally untrained teachers are concentrated mainly in the private sector; teachers without formal training are rare in the public sector (Education Department, 2001). As far as the academic qualifications are concerned, 72% of teachers in secondary schools are graduates. By comparison, the number of graduate primary teachers has increased more rapidly from 2% in 1991 to 18% in 2001 since the first B.Ed (Primary) programme was launched in 1988.

		1991	1996	2001
Primary Schools	Graduate to Non-graduate Teacher Ratio	2:98	15:85	18:82
	% of Trained Teachers ¹	85.8	84.1	89.5
Secondary Schools	Graduate to Non-graduate Teacher Ratio	62:38	69:31	72:28
	% of Trained Teachers	73.3	76.2	84.2

Table 1: The qualifications and professional training of teachers in Hong Kong in the past decade (Education Department 1992, 1997, 2001)

Unlike the demographic information concerning the teaching profession in Hong Kong which could be easily obtained from the annual Teacher Survey, the data concerning teachers' professional development is very hard to obtain. This makes the construct of an overall picture of CTE in Hong Kong very difficult. In 1998, the Education Department (ED), in supporting the review of teacher education for in-service teachers by The Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications (ACTEQ - an advisory body set up by the government in 1994 to look after teacher development), prepared a summary of centrally provided CTE activities in 1996-97. According to the document, the ED and University Grant Council (UGC) organized a total of approximately 31,000 hours² (refer to Table 2) of CTE activities for the 42,000 plus primary and secondary teachers in Hong Kong in 1996-97 (ACTEQ 1998). Ranging from a few hours to one-year full-time in terms of duration, these activities were also of great variety including workshops, seminars, short and

¹ Trained teachers in Hong Kong refer to those who have received a sub-degree teacher certificate, or a post-graduate certificate of education or equivalent.

² Estimated based on the figures of the ED submitted to the ACTEQ.

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long courses. Assuming that these programmes were organized on the basis of 30 participants³ in each course, the average number of hours of external training for Hong Kong teachers works out at approximately 22 hours per year.

The ACTEQ categorised the current central provision of CTE as follows (ACTEQ 1998:45-47):

1. Induction courses - for new teachers attended on a voluntary basis.
2. General upgrading and refresher courses - for teachers to update their knowledge and skills in pedagogy and curriculum development, and to acquire the knowledge needed to implement educational reforms initiated by the government.
3. Courses to meet extension needs – for teachers to play roles other than teaching including leading a subject panel or ECA department.
4. Courses to meet conversion needs - for teachers promoted to headship or deputy headship in order to equip them with skills and knowledge to cope with the drastic role conversion.

In general, the participation in CTE is voluntary. No requirements were imposed on teachers to engage in CTE until 1992 (Education Department 1991). Since then teachers who are to be promoted to senior posts are required to attend refresher or special training. But in the case that no promotion is involved, certified teachers may choose not to attend any further training. The government has not yet formulated any central policy or prescribed any development plans on how and in what areas teachers should be trained in an ongoing basis throughout their professional lives.

As shown in Table 2, about half of the 1996/97 training (estimated 16,000 hours) was directly provided by the five divisions/sections of the ED, namely, Advisory Inspectorate, Curriculum Development Institution, Information Systems Section, SMI/School Division, and Services Division. The remaining 15,000 plus hours of training were either commissioned by the ED to institutions including tertiary education institutions, non-profitmaking institutions and profitmaking companies, or conducted by the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) with the UGC's funding. Among non-ED providers, the HKIEd is the biggest contributing about 50% of the non-ED's programmes in terms of training hours. Following the HKIEd in volume were the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong. The programmes conducted by the various divisions and sections of the ED were

³ This is the typical class-size of CTE programmes sponsored by the ED in Hong Kong.

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predominantly short courses or workshops with an average course length of 9.3 hours, while longer courses were commissioned out to tertiary education institutions with a corresponding average of 46.6 hours. Independent professional bodies such as the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union also take initiative in providing training programmes for teachers, but their contribution is insignificant as compared to the ED and tertiary education institutions.

Sources of funding	Provider	total course hour (hr)	average course length (hr)	funding (HK\$)	average cost/hour (HK\$)
ED	ED sections	15,670	9.3	45,082,590 ⁴	2,877 ⁵
	Tertiary education institutions	5,318	46.6	15,300,228	2,877
	Other Non-profit-making	302	15.1	435,140	1,440
	Private	2,553	10.4	1,623,784	653
	Course fee refunded to teachers ⁶	-	-	2,100,000	-
	subtotal	23,843	-	64,541,742	-
UGC funded	HKIED	7,157 ⁷	-	133,010,256 ⁸	18585
	total	31,000	-	197,551,998	-

Table 2: Central provision of continuous teacher education in 1996-97⁹

Financially, only a very small portion of CTE costs are covered by teachers' fees. Neither teachers nor schools have to pay anything for most programmes. In 1996-97, the CTE programmes sponsored by the ED and funded by the UGC cost 17 million

⁴ cost estimated using the same unit cost of the programmes commissioned to tertiary education institutions

⁵ ditto

⁶ teachers who participate in courses endorsed by the ED could have the course fees completely or partially refunded

⁷ assuming that one-year full time programme or equivalent consists of 220 course hours and the class size is 30

⁸ calculated on the basis of the unit cost of HKIED in 1995-96 (UGC, 1996);

⁹ using the figures principally from the details of CTE submitted by Education Department to ACTEQ (ACTEQ 1998)

and 133 million dollars respectively. The costs of in-house courses, which were absorbed by the ED, were not available. If estimated on the basis that they were run at the same cost of the programmes commissioned to tertiary education institutions, this expense absorbed by the ED would be around 47 million. This made a total of 198 million being spent on CTE in 1996-97. This translates to an average of approximately \$4,600 spent on each teacher – about 1.5%¹⁰ of their typical annual incomes.

External CTE is generally provided by the ED together with tertiary education institutions while school-based teacher development is mainly the responsibility of schools. In aided schools, a tiny fund equivalent to no more than \$7 multiplied by the maximum student enrolment in the school could be used for staff training (Education Department 1994). This is equivalent approximately to \$147 per teacher per year in secondary schools and \$166 per teacher per year in primary schools. Occasionally, the government also earmarks some money for schools to train teachers to implement central policies. Perhaps due to the limited amount of resources allocated to this purpose, the ED exerts little control over and adopts a laissez faire approach to the school-based CTE programme. Generally speaking, there are no central requirements or directions on how the school organizes school-based teacher development. As a result, the variation among schools is significant, ranging from almost no provision at all to highly systematic and innovative programmes. The majority of schools see school-based CTE as a peripheral issue and thus are satisfied with their marginal role in teacher development. They rely heavily on sending teachers to attend external INSET (Ng and Chow 1999).

¹⁰ Calculated based on the typical salaries of teachers in 1995-96 (UGC 1996:131) with 7.7% pay adjustment of 1996-97.

III. The Characteristics of CTE in Hong Kong

1. Peripheral approach

The success of CTE depends heavily on the level of commitment from the government. Is the government of Hong Kong committed to CTE? Does she give CTE a high priority or only regard it as peripheral. Teacher education needs the support of resources (Bradley 1987, Calderhead 1995). Funding is required to cover the trainers' or consultants' fees, supply teachers, as well as costs related to travelling, venues, etc.. In addition to financial resources, time is also important for teachers who are faced with heavy teaching loads and inundated with waves of educational reforms. Teachers must be provided with "space" to secure their involvement in CTE, for example, in terms of sabbatical leaves, "Baker's days", etc.. Human resources are also essential; personnel specifically responsible for the formulation, coordination and implementation of teacher development policies and procedures are needed. The provision of such financial and human resources and of time is costly, and requires a high level of commitment.

In 1996-97, the expenditure on the centrally provided CTE for over 42,000 schoolteachers was about 198 million dollars, constituting only about 0.89 per cent of the total recurrent expenditure in basic education (22,181 million). In comparison to initial teacher training, the funding for CTE is lower in both absolute and relative terms. In 1996-97, an estimate of 414 million dollars was spent on initial teacher training involving 2708 FTEs¹¹ (head count = 3651), which was more than double the amount for CTE. In terms of the unit cost, the funding for initial teaching training from the UGC is far more generous than that from the ED. These figures reflect that the government of Hong Kong, like its counterparts in England and Wales (Law and Glover 1995), places less emphasis on the CTE in terms of resources as compared to the initial teacher training.

CTE is not merely individual business; there should be coordination and planning. In the ED, there had not been any section or personnel specifically responsible for

¹¹Initial teacher training programmes in Hong Kong vary from one-year Post-graduate Certificate of Education (PCEd) to four-year Bachelor of Education. The longer duration of some programmes is due to the fact that they cover also subject matters in addition to professional knowledge and skills, which are the major components of PCEd. In this article, it is assumed that the length of professional training is equivalent to one year regardless of the duration of the programme.

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managing or coordinating CTE until the beginning of this millennium, when a unit of Teacher and Principal Training with only three officers was established in the ED. A similar situation is also found at the school level. In schools, teachers could be promoted to senior positions if they take charge of subject departments, pastoral care or ECAs, to name but a few, but teachers cannot be promoted on the basis of their duties for staff development. In this regard, the commitment from the government is inadequate, reflecting that CTE is considered peripheral rather than of great significance on its own.

2. Ad hoc

In the provision of CTE, a long term, visionary policy and strategic planning which guides or directs its advancement are also imperative. Relevant regulations or guidelines stipulated in the policy may help to ensure that teachers will not be deprived of the opportunities for CTE. This requires determination and commitment from the government which may have to face resistance or pressures in the course of the formulation or implementation of such policies, from school sponsoring bodies, teachers' unions and professional bodies, and alike.

Despite the fact that the demands for a comprehensive system of CTE have repeatedly been raised in several reports submitted by advisory bodies since 1982 (Hong Kong Government 1982, Education Commission 1992, 1997, ACTEQ 1998), the government has not yet formulated any coherent policy or established any mechanisms to ensure CTE to be provided in a systematic manner. Traditionally, the government adopted a laissez faire approach to CTE. Until very recently, the only government requirement linked to CTE still was that teachers promoted to posts of responsibility must attend training courses either before or immediately after the promotion. Generally speaking, teachers are still free to participate in central CTE programmes that are mainly conducted on an ad hoc basis to support the implementation of new educational initiatives. The establishment of professional ladders for teachers and the formulation of CTE policy are still only an agenda item rather than in the implementation stage.

3. Policy-led and provider-led

The current provision of CTE in Hong Kong apparently mainly addresses issues at the system level. Many of the programmes conducted by the ED or commissioned out are principally policy-related and not directly related to the needs of individual teachers

or schools. In 1996-97, training related to government initiated reforms such as SMI, TOC, Whole School Approach to Guidance, SAMS, IT in Education, to name but a few, made up to 43% in terms of course hours. Generally speaking, the provision of external CTE in Hong Kong adopts a general approach without catering for the needs of individual teachers and schools. It is not uncommon to find that greenhorns and veterans attend the same programme, and that teachers from 'Band 5' schools (with students who are the least academically able and perhaps the worst discipline problems) and 'Band 1' schools (with top students) receive the same pastoral care training. Furthermore, the courses are provider-led, i.e. the providers design the curriculum and mode of delivery based on their expertise, experience or interests (Klich 1990, cited in O'Donoghue 1993:14). Participating teachers and schools generally have no say in what to be included in such training.

4. Competence-based and deficit approach

Traditionally, pedagogical skills and subject knowledge dominated the curriculum in teacher education. To date, this competence-based approach which focusing on the acquisition of skills and knowledge still prevails in teacher education (Smyth 1995). Such an approach is often welcomed by teachers and administrators because practical skills and knowledge are 'understandable to and usable by teachers in their own classroom' as well as 'they are clearly focused, easily organized and packaged, and relatively self-contained' (Hargreaves and Fullan 1992:3). However, as Day (1991) observes, 'the possession of competencies is a necessary but not sufficient condition in quality teaching'. Attitudes, commitment, educational philosophy, morality and values are also necessary qualities which teachers need to develop (DES 1972).

A teacher who is proficient in modern pedagogical skills and has solid subject knowledge is not necessarily a good teacher. Other qualities such as caring for his or her students (Calderhead 1995), committing himself or herself wholeheartedly to their betterment, being positive and patient, working collaboratively with colleagues, and practicing what they believe and preach, are of equally importance (Ng 2001).

In Hong Kong, ACTEQ (1998) notes that nearly all of the programmes conducted or commissioned by the ED are heavily skills and knowledge-based. An analysis of the programmes in 1996-97 by the author shows that, 43% of the activities (in terms of course hours) are related to skills and knowledge for policy implementation; 19% prepare teachers who are newly promoted or to be promoted for their new roles; 24% concern subject teaching and curriculum. An examination of the 600 plus programme

titles reveals that courses directly related to the non-technical aspect of CTE, for example, professional conduct or ethics of teachers, are virtually non-existent. In this regard, CTE in Hong Kong is not balanced, being biased towards competence with very little emphasis on areas such as values, attitudes, educational philosophy, and collegiality.

Closely related to the competence-based approach is the deficit model. In this model, it is assumed that 'problems in the school have to do with inadequate information, inadequate skills, and so on; if these skills and information could only be imparted to teachers, they would be more effective in the classroom' (McLaughlin and Berman 1977, cited in Gough 1985). According to Symth (1995:4), such a model 'works on the presumption that there are deficiencies in teaching, and that these can be 'fixed' by requiring that individual teachers adhere to a particularly narrow view of what comprises teaching'. Under its influence, he (Symth 1995:2) observes that teachers are required 'to be demonstrably more accountable, efficient and effective in producing quality learning,' and the implicit rationale underlying this model is that 'if standards of teaching can be determined and set (usually arbitrarily by people at a distance from schools), then surveillance and quality control procedures can be put in place to ensure adherence to what are claimed to be community expectations' (Symth 1995:2).

IV. An evaluation of CTE in Hong Kong

In the 60s and 70s, teacher development was equated with attending courses outside the school (Bradley 1987, Jones et al. 1989). There has been a general belief, even to date, that teachers who attend courses from teacher training institutes or alike will acquire skills and knowledge, and hence improve their competence. Subsequently the enhancement of student learning will be achieved. In reality, there is a big gap between teachers attending courses and student improvement. On the one hand, the content of the course is not necessarily useful or related to the needs of teachers, schools and students. This is an issue of relevance. On the other hand, even though the course is relevant, teachers still may not apply what they have acquired and bring about changes to their schools in their return for various reasons. This is about whether the training has a real impact on the school. In addition to the examination of the effectiveness in terms of relevance and impact on schools, it is also necessary to examine the cost involved in a world where resources are scarce. In the following, the provision of CTE in Hong Kong will be scrutinized from these three perspectives, namely, relevance, impact on schools, and cost effectiveness.

1. Relevance

It has been observed that externally devised teacher training seldom brings about genuine changes in schools and seldom effectively improves teaching and learning (Bolan 1982, Wideen 1987, Levine 1994). One of the main factors affecting the effectiveness of a teacher development activity is its relevance to the needs of teachers, schools and the society as a whole (Law and Glover 1995). In Hong Kong, the issue of relevance has been included in the agenda of related advisory bodies such as Education Commission (EC), UGC and ACTEQ. A special report on professional relevance of teacher education was published by an ACTEQ Working Group (WG) in 1996 (ACTEQ 1996). While the WG did not explicitly criticize the relevance of teacher training programmes in the report, one of its conclusions did implicitly reveal the problem of irrelevance in the provision of teacher development in Hong Kong, stating that 'there is room for improvement in strengthening the communication between the two parties as well as in ensuring that providers would seriously take into account feedback given by school heads/teachers when designing and reviewing their programmes' (ACTEQ 1996:4).

CTE should be relevant to the needs of teachers as professionals. But the issue of professional relevance for teachers is contentious in Hong Kong. The Working Group notes that different parties conceive relevance in different ways (ACTEQ 1996:3-4). For example, it is observed that the providers generally tend to place emphasis on imparting to teachers technical knowledge and skills while school heads regard teachers' caring attitudes to students and commitment to the school as essential. It is no doubt that effective teachers should have appropriate technical skills and knowledge (Billing 1982). However, schools as social and cultural agencies play an imperative role of preparing students to integrate into society as responsible citizens; as well as cultivating in them a set of shared values and norms. Teachers should also have non-technical qualities such as integrity, belief, morality, as well as 'a high level of passion and commitment towards teaching and the profession' (ACTEQ 1996:5). Both technical and non-technical domains are relevant to teachers as professionals. A balanced approach is more appropriate (Ng 2001). Adopting the competence-based approach, the CTE providers in Hong Kong overemphasise the technical domain and neglect the non-technical domain as mentioned previously.

The relevance of CTE in Hong Kong is also affected by its provider-led approach in which the needs of teachers and schools are not given adequate consideration. This is

reflected in the WG's report in which the disparity between the provider's stress on theories and the end user's preference for practical application was identified. Concerns were also expressed by members of the WG that some teacher educators 'lack experience to teach in a school setting or have no local teaching experience' and thus have 'problems on the delivery of their programmes as well as on enabling student-teachers to put theories into practice' (ACTEQ 1996:16). Moreover, further problems also arise from the provider-led approach. Adopting an one-size-fits-all presentation, the provider seldom considers the diverse needs and backgrounds of participating teachers and schools (Robb 2000). Teachers are not a homogenous group of professionals; they have different needs at different stages of their career (Bolam 1990, Pascal and Ribbins 1998). Treating teachers with profound experience in teaching as novices by giving them survival skills in classroom management is equally as ineffective and irrelevant as regarding new teachers as veterans by asking them to experiment with advanced or innovative teaching strategies.

In short, the existing CTE in Hong Kong does not give enough emphasis on the diverse needs of teachers and schools. This poses a problem of professional relevance. The UGC's recommendations that there should be stronger link between providers and schools in the design and conduct of programmes through consultation with practitioners, incorporation of experienced school teachers and attachment of teacher trainers to schools, and that providers should periodically review their programmes with a view to maintaining their currency and relevance to the profession, reflect the seriousness of irrelevance in the provision of CTE in Hong Kong (UGC 1998).

2. Impact on schools

The ultimate goal of CTE is not merely to satisfy the professional needs of teachers but to improve educational quality in schools. There is a gap to fill between the provision of the right kind of training needed by teachers and a real impact on the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Even if the problem of relevance is satisfactorily solved, teachers may not practice what they have learnt and what they believe after they return to their schools for various reasons. Firstly, the acquisition of knowledge is different from its application of that knowledge in practice. Teachers need support in trying out new ideas or initiatives. Externally, experts from tertiary education institutions may provide teachers with professional guidance. In comparison with the external support, internal support is perhaps even more important and critical. In addition to the financial resource, teachers also require space including some workload reduction or special arrangements in the timetable so as to facilitate

their involvement in experimenting with new ideas. More importantly, they need the endorsement of the principal as well as his or her moral support. Secondly, schools are complex social organizations where teachers do not work independently. When teachers want to try out some new ideas they bring back from outside, they may encounter hostility or resistance from their less enthusiastic colleagues who prefer the status quo, since the latter have neither the skills and knowledge nor the belief or trust in the change. Such scepticism about changes is natural and understandable but detrimental to the success of CTE in bringing about real change to schools. Finally, teaching is not an individual business. It requires collaboration among colleagues. At least, it is necessary to develop a 'critical mass' of teachers before any significant organizational change may take place.

At present, the central provision of CTE in Hong Kong is still mainly restricted to the provision of courses for voluntary participation of teachers as individuals, assuming that teachers after attending the training will acquire new knowledge and skills, and will put them into practice upon their return to their schools and even play the role of trainer to disseminate them among their colleagues. In most case, no additional resources are given, nor are follow-up actions taken to support endeavours by participants in schools. There are also no mechanisms through which schools are neither informed of the involvement of their teachers in CTE programmes nor are they solicited to provide the necessary assistance to support new initiatives taken by their teachers. Furthermore, the central CTE programmes are independently conducted without any link to school-based programmes. In this regard, the current mode of CTE in Hong Kong, like other traditional approaches which focus on providing teachers with external training but without any guidance or follow-up afterwards (Moon 2000), is nowhere near reaching the goal of having any real impact on schools.

3. Cost-effectiveness

In the evaluation of CTE in Hong Kong, it is also necessary to examine the cost of the provision in addition to its effectiveness. Is the CTE in Hong Kong efficient or cost-effective? The first issue in this cost-effectiveness analysis concerns the unit cost of similar training offered by various organizations. For example, similar refresher programmes are provided by the HKIEd and other tertiary education institutions in two different modes of financing. The HKIEd programmes, primarily for historical reasons, are treated as full-time tertiary education programmes and funded by the

UGC, whereas the programmes provided by other tertiary education institutions are commissioned by the ED. The estimated unit cost of the former is about six times higher than that of the latter (refer to Table 2). This great disparity is not difficult to understand. As far as the latter are concerned, the cost is much lower because they are mainly run by part-time tutors or the full-time staff as outside practice. On the contrary, the cost of the former covers fringe benefits, research resources, full-time staff salaries, etc.. However, such an enormous difference may not easily be justified especially when the exit qualifications and the quality of tutors are more or less the same. The issue of cost-effectiveness in this respect is serious, especially given that the UGC funded CTE programmes are not insignificant in terms of volume. In 1996-97, the HKIED conducted approximately 7200 hours of CTE training funded by the UGC (refer to Table 2).

The programmes directly conducted by the ED staff would also be more expensive than those commissioned to tertiary education institutions. The reason is two-fold. Firstly, the salaries and benefits of civil servants in Hong Kong are higher than those of teacher educators at similar rank. Secondly, the ED programmes are run by the full-time staff as normally duties. This is more expensive than part-time appointment or outside practice. Furthermore, most of the ED officers are not specialised in teacher training. They may be more familiar with government policies and regulations but not necessarily effective teacher trainers. Taking the cost and the effectiveness into consideration, it may be desirable for the ED to make tertiary education institutions responsible for CTE or to let schools run their own school-based programmes.

Hidden cost is another important aspect which requires careful consideration. Teachers attending UGC funded refresher programmes are on full-time basis. They have either day release or block release with full pay. According to the government regulation, teachers who attend training for three consecutive days or more are eligible to have substitution. Out of the 976 FTEs given to the HKIED's CTE programmes in 1996-97, 714 FTEs may involve supply teachers. If the salaries of teachers or supply teachers are taken into calculation, the costs of such programmes would be seen astronomical. This author would argue that it would be more accurate to incorporate the salaries of the original teacher rather than that of the supply teacher in the calculation of the cost of the programme, since the salaries of the supply teacher are to support teaching in the school whereas the salaries of the original teacher is to support his or her study in the programme. If the calculation is based on such a

consideration, the hidden cost involved is estimated to be 206 million¹². Obviously, this is an extremely expensive mode of CTE.

The ACTEQ and UGC have already expressed concern about the exceptionally expensive UGC-funded CTE programmes provided by the HKIED, and demanded an improvement of the unequal funding mechanisms (ACTEQ 1998, UGC 1998). Obviously, a more efficient funding mechanism may accelerate the expansion of CTE. Based on the unit cost of the programmes run by other tertiary education institutions (Table 2), the expenditure of the existing UGC-funded CTE programmes provision could support an additional 40,000 hours of CTE. This is equivalent to an average increase from 22 hours to a total of 50 hours of training per teacher per year. However, it is doubtful if the money saved under the new funding mechanism will still be earmarked for CTE especially when Hong Kong is now experiencing an economic down turn.

Not all ideas considered by the government aim at improving efficiency. It has been suggested that teachers be given sabbatical leaves to study courses (ACTEQ, 1998; UGC, 1998), with apparent disregard that such a mode of CTE is extremely expensive and arguably less cost-effective. The conflicting suggestions for enhancing and lowering the efficiency seems to reflect that the government has not yet formulated any coherent policy in this regard or perhaps there are other more important issues than efficiency on the agenda.

¹² Calculated based on the typical salaries of teachers in 1995-96 (UGC 1996:131) with 7.7% pay adjustment of 1996-97: (secondary) 214 fte @358,060 and (primary) 500 fte @ 258,350.

IV. Development, prospect and obstacles

Generally speaking, although there are some shortcomings of the CTE system in Hong Kong as identified previously, there have been signs that the government is gradually making progress in CTE. Although detailed figures concerning the CTE provision including the number of course hours and the annual expenditure have not been made available for the public since the figures were published in the ACTEQ report in 1996/97, data collected by the author suggests that there has been a steady increase in the amount of CTE in Hong Kong in the past few years. For example, the author has surveyed the programmes offered in June and October, 2002, as shown in the ED training schedule in the internet. It is found that the numbers of training hours for the sampled months are 3,977 and 3,084 respectively. The figures are higher than the monthly average of 2,583 in 1996-97. In terms of funding available for CTE, the amount has also increased. For example, in the written reply to the question raised by the Legislative Council on the refresher courses provided by the ED to serving teachers in 2001, the expenditure of training courses on English, Chinese and Putonghua languages and IT had been continuously increased from 77.19 million in 1996/97 to 155.05 million in 2000/01 (SEM 2001).

There is also some improvement in the quality of CTE including an increase in the variety in the modes of delivery. In addition to the conventional courses, workshops and talks, new modes of training such as action learning, overseas educational visits, 360-degree needs analysis, interflow, etc., are now adopted in some of the CTE programmes (Education Department 2002, Chin 2002, Ng 2002). The establishment of the District Teacher Network Scheme and several educational websites supported by the government also facilitate teacher development through sharing and networking. Furthermore, in response to the ACTEQ's and UGC's requests for better communication between the provider and the user with the aim of improving professional relevance (ACTEQ 1996, UGC 1998), tertiary education institutions have been adopting measures to build up links to schools. The Unified Professional Development Project set up by the University of Hong Kong is an example of such an initiative. In this partnership scheme, the participating schools provide mentorship for student teachers in their practicum while the University in return provides support for school-based teacher development. Similar establishments are also found in other tertiary education institutions, such as the HKIED's Centre for the Development of School Partnership and Field Experience and the CUHK's Center for University and School Partnership. The effectiveness of such initiatives is yet to be evaluated, but the move towards greater relevance is evident.

Despite the progress made in the past few years, there exist some uncertainties and adverse trends which overshadow the further development of CTE in the near future. The first problem concerns the capacity and eagerness of various CTE providers to run more training programmes. It is suggested that in the future expansion of CTE, the trainer role of the ED would be reduced and the more generous UGC funding mode would cease to exist (ACTEQ 1998). Most probably, the ED would ask tertiary education institutions to play a greater role in the provision of CTE. But will they be able to cope with the additional work? Are they eager to participate? At present, the provision of CTE by tertiary education institutions is mainly supported by full-time tutors providing such training as outside practice or by part-time tutors. If tertiary education institutions want to increase their involvement, what they can do is either to require their full-time staff to do more outside practice or to recruit additional staff. Inundated with demands for research output as well as other duties, staff in tertiary education institutions face extreme difficulty in increasing their outside practice. Taking into consideration that the revenues from CTE are significantly lower than that from the UGC for the same amount of teaching, tertiary education institutions may not be willing to let their own staff participate more fully in CTE. In fact, the more the level of involvement of their full-time staff, the more the amount of funding is taken from their UGC funded programmes to subsidize CTE programmes. The more 'sensible' way in which tertiary education institutions may address this situation, as indeed their extra-mural education centres are actually doing, is to secure the contract and subsequently to recruit part-time tutors to conduct the training. In doing so, the institutions may earn profits. However, the quality of the programme would likely be comprised. The root of this problem seems to be that tertiary education institutions cannot significantly increase CTE provision without the likelihood of diminishing quality of that provision at the present funding level. In order to realise significant expansion of CTE, long-term solutions to the problem need to be identified. An increase in the existing unit cost of CTE to a level comparable to the UGC funding level is inevitable. This requires much greater commitment of the government.

Another obstacle which has been noticed is an adverse trend in the approach to facilitate teacher participation in CTE. Traditionally, the government has adopted a laissez faire approach to CTE. There are signs that the government is now shifting to a

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more control-oriented approach, perhaps under the influence of the global tide of 'managerialism' (Chan 2002, Tse 2002). The first indication dates from 1992 when the requirement of a certain amount of training was imposed on teachers being promoted (Education Department 1991). The shift has quickly gained its momentum since the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997. For example, a consultation paper on leadership training for principals was published in 1999 proposing that all principals, newly appointed and serving, would be required to undergo training and assessment based on a School Leadership Competency Profile (Education Department 1999). The government also imposed language benchmarking for new teachers in 2000. Such a requirement will be extended to serving language teachers by 2005, and all serving teachers by 2008 (Tung 1997). Information technology benchmarking has also been introduced in a similar manner. Other measures such as requiring teachers to engage in CTE as one of the conditions of promotion and re-registration are also given serious consideration (ACTEQ 1998, UGC 1998, Education Department 1999). Apparently, the government expects that with the establishment of performance indicators and benchmarking teachers will be obliged to take part in CTE to meet the requirements. However, the imposition of such managerial control, as Tse (2002:163) argues, could 'result in dehumanization and alienation on the part of educational practitioners. With more weight given to quality measured by indicators, educational practitioners feel very much demoralized and substantially deprofessionalized'. For teachers as professionals who always make a claim for professional autonomy (Hughes 1985), this may contribute to an increasing straightjacketing of the profession and is obviously a setback in the development of CTE (Craft 1996, Helsby 2000). Furthermore, since it is basically piecemeal, competence-based and policy-oriented, it may not be compatible with the aim of achieving comprehensive and on-going professional development for teachers.

The last obstacle is with regard to the development of a blueprint for CTE. As suggested by the ACTEQ (1998), the future GTC would prescribe the kinds of training at different stages of teachers' careers in this blueprint and use it as part of the conditions of re-registration of its members. However, it is doubtful that the executive members of the GTC, mainly representing teaching professionals, will accept the imposition of control over themselves on the one hand, and that the government will be committed to support the comprehensive plan, financially or otherwise, which may

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not necessarily be in line with its policy on the other. The issue is further complicated by the concern of the HKSAR government about the composition of the future GTC. The future GTC might be dominated by the Professional Teachers' Union (PTU) as it is the largest teachers' union in Hong Kong. It is always been considered to be a stronghold of opposition the Beijing regime, especially on the Fourth of June Incident. This may possibly be one of the reasons why the establishment of the GTC in 1999 as announced by the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR Government in his policy address in 1997 has not been realized (Tung 1997). In short, it is doubtful whether a well-thought comprehensive plan of CTE, which simultaneously protects professional autonomy, nourishes professional development and gains support from the government, could be developed in the near future.

VI. Conclusion

The efforts made by the Hong Kong government in the last two decades towards upgrading the teaching profession are evident and commendable. However, CTE in Hong Kong still suffers from some systemic limitations. The government has overemphasised initial teacher education, leaving CTE with a second class status. The provision of CTE is generally haphazard and piecemeal without systematic planning. With the prime objective of facilitating the implementation of government policy instead of a genuine concern for on-going professional development of teachers, the programmes are predominantly knowledge and skill-based, neglecting other non-technical aspects of teacher growth. Furthermore, they are also provider-led without adequately addressing the needs of teachers and schools. The system is also lacking a coherent policy for guiding the development of CTE, for securing teacher participation at both the school and the system levels, and for ensuring high efficiency in the provision of CTE.

In order to improve the situation, government officials need to review their position on and policy governing CTE. Perhaps being affected by the nature of bureaucrats whose aim is to achieve organizational goals, they regard CTE simply as a means to an end of achieving the government's objectives by facilitating the implementation of government policies, rather than as an end in itself as it facilitates the development of the teaching profession. In an informal interview with a former Director of Education, the author asked the reason why the expenditure of CTE was so low. The response was that 'the government would support any projects with adequate funding if they can be proven to be worthwhile.' It implicitly reflects that the government neither has any overall planning on CTE nor considers that it has merits of its own. In the eyes of officials, what is worthwhile apparently is the kind of thing which helps implement policies. Such an observation is supported by the enormous amount of funding to be spent on the CTE in supporting the government policies on language benchmarking, IT in teaching and school-based management, as well as the high percentage of policy-oriented training in the existing provision.

In order to improve the system, financially, the lopsided funding practice needs to be adjusted and there should be a more balanced approach to both initial and continuous

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teacher education. Policy-wise, the government's commitment and the GTC's comprehensive plan are merely necessary conditions for effective CTE; a coherent policy with equal participation of various parties including schools, teachers, teacher educators, etc. needs to be developed to guide and unite discordant efforts, to balance conflicting interests and to fulfil diverse needs.

Under the guidance of such a policy, there should be closer links between providers and users so as to improve and ensure the adequacy and relevance of the provision. In the area of efficiency, it is necessary to develop a consistent, justified funding mechanism through which programmes can be financed in a more cost-effective manner. Furthermore, central provision of CTE and school-based teacher development should not be operated, as they presently are, in two independent systems. A closer connection must be developed so that they can become interactive and complementary.

Finally, it is necessary to stress here that the government is not solely responsible for the nature and character of CTE provision, though this has been the focus of this article. Teachers and schools should also play a very important role. In this regard, the government should help to establish a culture of learning and sharing among teachers and schools, which is conducive to their active and genuine participation. With a concerted effort from all the parties concerned, the CTE would have a great chance for success.

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