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TECHNICAL R E P O R T

Perceptions audit for the General Teaching Council for England

Ruth Levitt, Lila Rabinovich, Lidia Villalba van Dijk

Sponsored by the General Teaching Council for England

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Preface

The General Teaching Council for England commissioned RAND Europe in 2008 to undertake a perceptions audit to inform its communications strategy and plans. This was one element in its ongoing programme of engagement with its stakeholders and partners.

This report contains four chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the context and objectives of the study. Chapter 2 describes the perceptions of the GTC that interviewees provided. Chapter 3 contains a synthesis of the interview material and presents the emerging issues. Chapter 4 outlines some next steps that the GTC could consider.

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Executive summary

The General Teaching Council for England (GTC) commissioned RAND Europe in 2008 to undertake a perceptions audit, to take the temperature on its current status and to inform its future work with teachers, organisational partners and the wider public. A perceptions audit is a method for gathering opinions and views of selected informants about how they see the topic in question, and analysing the range and aggregation of those views to present a snapshot at a moment in time. This report presents the findings of that perceptions audit.

The GTC is a statutory body set up in 2000; it is responsible for maintaining a register of qualified teachers in England, regulating registered teachers and advising government and others on issues affecting standards of teaching and the quality of learning. The GTC's intention is to enable the confidence, capability and standing of the teaching profession to be strengthened, by raising standards and improving the profession's accountability in the public interest.

The perceptions audit is based on 15 interviews selected by the GTC among the GTC's key organisational partners (see Appendix 2). In spite of the differences in knowledge and expertise among interviewees, there was significant consensus about three key messages:

- the GTC has failed to engage with the teaching community; the GTC is not yet seen as relevant to teachers' needs, concerns or aspirations
- Keith Bartley is providing a very positive and welcome lead, driving the organisation "in the right direction"
- the role and remit of the GTC are seen as problematic.

While there was a significant degree of convergence on these points, there was greater variability among interviewees regarding the specific reasons for these views. Membership of the Council did not appear to be a differentiating factor between the views of those interviewees who were or were not members. This suggests that there may be scope for the GTC to clarify how Council members can best accommodate the interests they hold as stakeholders in the issues that GTC deals with, as partners of the GTC and, in some cases, as competitors of the GTC.

This report analyses the messages about the GTC's current status and future focus, and makes some suggestions for addressing the challenges that the audit has raised. Below we present the key findings from the interviews.

The remit of the GTC is seen as problematic

The difficulties are thought to originate in the scope and mix of roles and responsibilities that were established for the GTC at its inception in 2000. This is seen as the source of many of the GTC's current and persistent difficulties. The GTC is not yet seen to be activating equally all aspects of its remit. In particular, it is not seen to be operating as a convincing professional body for teachers. Problems include possible overlaps with the remits of some other bodies, such as the teachers' unions, the Training and Development Agency and other organisations delivering continuing professional development. Though the GTC was seen as having carried out the registration function reasonably well, it was regarded as "not tough enough" as a regulator, and insufficiently rigorous or timely. This left room for doubt in interviewees' minds about whether the GTC is adequately mindful of the interests of the people that the profession serves.

The Chief Executive of the GTC is widely perceived as very positive, but the Council is seen as unwieldy

There is a widespread perception that Keith Bartley is providing a very positive and welcome lead as Chief Executive of the GTC, driving the organisation "in the right direction". Interviewees see significant progress over the last 12 months in the performance of the organisation. On the other hand, the GTC itself is seen by some as too large and unwieldy an entity to provide the strategic focus and clarity that interviewees think is required. Some interviewees advised that its membership and ways of working need to be rethought. Some doubted whether, even if the Council were reformed and the Chief Executive continued to drive performance positively, it would really be possible to turn the organisation round. The GTC told us that, in recognition of these concerns, some changes to the Council's ways of working are already agreed and in place. The GTC is also seriously considering what would be involved in proposing further changes that would need alterations to the primary legislation establishing the GTC (which lays down the size and constituencies of the Council and other aspects of the Council's working).

Interviewees believe that the GTC has not won teachers' hearts and minds

Overall, there was a widely held perception among the interviewees that the GTC has not won teachers' hearts and minds by focusing sufficiently on teachers' professional concerns, needs and aspirations. The interviewees all think it has failed to engage with the teaching community, that it is not yet seen as relevant to teachers' needs, concerns or aspirations and that it lacks grassroots engagement in teachers' professional lives. Several interviewees referred to the GTC's troubled relationship with teachers during its first years of operation, and the legacy of mistrust to which they think this has contributed. Some interviewees regard the GTC as being too close to government, funded via government, not independent of it and therefore not committed to teachers' professional agenda as a matter of priority.

The GTC is perceived as limited in its ability to influence policy development

The GTC is seen as demonstrating limited effectiveness in influencing policymakers. It is not seen as being vociferous enough in its pronouncements. However, there are sensitivities about its relationships with various other organisations, particularly where there may be an overlap and an element of competition, for example, concerning

continuing professional development. The GTC is also seen as not yet sufficiently proactive and open in its dealings with its organisational partners.

The GTC's Vision Statement is seen as innocuous

Interviewees tended to agree that the Vision Statement is like “motherhood and apple pie”. They feel it is too broad and should be more detailed and clearer about what it means in practice. To them it seems not to provide a clear definition of the role teachers will play in 2012 and beyond. The statement would need to be sharpened up for the interviewees to see how they could contribute to its achievement.

Interpreting these findings

While some of the views and perceptions reported here may be interpreted as misunderstandings or misrepresentations of the GTC's role and remit, the findings from this perception audit merit careful consideration by the GTC as they provide indications of the ways in which stakeholders perceive and relate to the organisation. The GTC may want to consider whether any useful signals can be derived from interviewees' views and, if so, where and how the signals could usefully inform and guide the GTC in taking wise next steps. The GTC is a young organisation, still actively developing its strategy and priorities. This gives the GTC further opportunities to adjust the balance and emphasis across all of its areas of responsibility. We explore this further in Chapters 3 and 4.

In addition, some of the reported views do not match the generally more positive response the GTC tends to hear from the same organisations when dealing with them directly. This might be a reflection of the fact that the research presented in this report was conducted by independent researchers, to whom interviewees might be more prepared to express critical views. Furthermore, while some of the interviewees are from organisations that the GTC regards as its stakeholders, it is also possible that the organisations in question view themselves in some respects as competitors of the GTC, which may colour some of their views.

Next steps

The findings from this perceptions audit provide “signals” to the GTC about how stakeholders view and represent them. These findings can therefore inform the development or strengthening of an engagement and/or communication strategy with GTC stakeholders. Some options in this direction are provided in this section, as an aid to thinking about the choices that face the GTC in its future work. In addition, a number of options for future action for the GTC to consider are included, which derive from challenges that the interviewees identified as facing the GTC. The options are some possible ways to consider what the interviewees' signals to the GTC imply for more structural or organisational changes, such as to the Council's constitution or for altering the GTC's role in specific areas. In terms of continuing to build relationships with the stakeholders, a crucial point for the GTC is that even if some of these stakeholders' views do not coincide with the GTC's own sense of its priorities or of its role and remit, the GTC has this basis for deciding how it wants to engage with those organisations from now on.

- The options might extend from *No change* to *Reconsider the whole remit of the GTC*. In between could be a range of other possible measures, such as *Intensified collaboration with stakeholders*.
- Revise 2012 Vision Statement involving teachers and other stakeholders.
- Develop awareness campaign about the role and remit of the GTC.
- Improve communication with teachers.
- Emphasise independence from government.
- Make clearer, louder statements on issues affecting teachers' professional lives.
- Make changes in GTC governance processes and structures.
- Reconsider GTC's role in specific areas.

These options are not exclusive; they could be combined and modified depending on priorities, the resources available and other factors. It helps to think of them as choices for change, which might contain other options not even mentioned here.

1.1 **Background**

The teaching profession has been working in a difficult environment for some time, at least since the 1980s. Successive governments had expressed concerns about the effectiveness of schools and teaching, given emerging evidence of uneven and declining levels of attainment by many pupils. Ministers responded by specifying a detailed national curriculum, prescribed teaching methods and lesson structures, accompanied by tougher performance management and inspection of schools, and a regime of national tests and published league tables. All these measures were intended to drive up standards of teaching and learning across different ages and abilities.

Governments also introduced a series of changes to the organisation, governance and funding of schools, to encourage a wider range of configurations and reformulated priorities. Increased remuneration for teachers was implemented, as well as higher levels of recruitment, also introducing teaching assistants to allow qualified teachers to undertake planning and their own professional development. The hope was that this basket of reforms, plus a political focus on public services more aligned with the priorities of consumers, might ensure that head teachers, teachers and school authorities would drive up sustainable educational outcomes for children of different backgrounds and abilities and with different potentials.

Many in the profession had tended to perceive the performance regime and structural changes as being largely negative, and read these as an expression of low trust in and regard for teachers (Hargreaves et al., 2007). This profoundly affected the confidence and standing of the profession overall. The establishment of the General Teaching Council for England in 2000 was seen by some teachers and observers of the educational scene in England as symbolising a welcome (and perhaps overdue) turning point, potentially heralding the possibility of a more respectful, positive atmosphere (Whitty, 2006). The GTC told us it is also aware that some other observers of the scene saw it as “yet another top-down initiative”.

1.2 **Context and objectives of the study**

The General Teaching Council for England (GTC) is charged with contributing to improving standards of teaching and the quality of learning, and with maintaining and improving standards of professional conduct among teachers, in the public interest. In order to address its aims, the GTC’s main functions are to maintain a register of qualified teachers in England, to regulate registered teachers, and to advise government and others on issues affecting standards of teaching and the quality of learning.

As part of its statutory remit to enable the confidence, capability and standing of the teaching profession to be strengthened, the GTC has embarked on a major programme of engagement

with teachers, organisational partners and the wider public. Through this programme, provisionally entitled *Teaching in 2012*, the GTC is seeking to raise the standards of the profession further and to enhance the substance of what it means to be a “registered, qualified teacher”.

In this context, the GTC commissioned RAND Europe to conduct a perceptions audit. A perceptions audit is a method for gathering opinions and views of selected informants about how they see the topic in question, and analysing the range and aggregation of those views to present a snapshot at a moment in time. The GTC sought to achieve two purposes through the perceptions audit:

- to indicate the GTC’s current status
- to aid the GTC in setting future priorities for the organisation and for teaching.

The GTC already collects information about the perceptions teachers have of educational issues and of the GTC itself through the market research it uses, together with the annual Ipsos Mori Teachers’ Omnibus survey.¹ The focus of this perceptions audit was the partners and stakeholder with whom the GTC already works. These partners and stakeholders were interviewed for this perceptions audit with the aim of answering the following points of interest to the GTC:

- the regard with which the GTC is held by those key partners and stakeholders
- the range of views and the conviction with which they are held, and any discernible patterns
- the views of these partners on how well the GTC discharges its remit and where it should be focusing its improvement efforts (including view on the GTC’s 2012 Vision Statement)
- the factors, influences and experiences that contribute to the views and opinions held.

The present study is a timely initiative, coming at a point when the GTC has had time to make a significant start on delivering its remit and has plans for important next steps (mentioned above). Against the backdrop of overall (if still patchy) improvement in pupils’ attainment levels, but continued challenges posed by the political environment, the GTC thought it should now be possible to gauge progress thus far in delivering its remit.

1.3 Structure of this report

This report consists of three further chapters. In Chapter 2, we report on the views, opinions and perception of the interviewees consulted for this perceptions audit. In Chapter 3 we discuss the implications and questions raised by these views, opinions and perceptions. In Chapter 4 we indicate possible options for action for the GTC. The appendices give details of the methodology, the organisations interviewed and the interview questions. We also include in the appendix the GTC’s Vision Statement *Teaching in 2012*.

¹ The headline findings of the survey were made available to RAND Europe. The report shows that in response to the question “How favourable or unfavourable is your opinion of the GTC?” 30% of replies were favourable, 35% were unfavourable and 35% were neither. (*Final Topline Results, Q2, 7 December 2007*)

This chapter presents the main findings from the interviews with 15 organisational partners of the GTC (see Appendix 2 for a list of organisations included in this study). The chapter begins by summarising the interviewees' overall perception of the GTC, focusing on the points that are most widely shared among them. It then presents the views, opinions and concerns of the interviewees in more detail. We have grouped these into the following four broad themes (some of which include sub-themes):

- GTC's remit: scope, overlap, feasibility
- GTC's leadership and governance
- GTC's communications with teachers
- GTC's engagement with stakeholders.

Finally we report interviewees' comments on the GTC's 2012 Vision Statement.

2.1 **Overall perception of the GTC**

The 15 people interviewed for this perceptions audit came from diverse organisations and had specific knowledge and a range of experience of the GTC and its activities. In spite of these differences, there was significant consensus about three key messages.

First, there is a widely held perception among interviewees that the GTC has failed to engage with the teaching community. Interviewees observed that the GTC is not yet seen as being relevant to teachers' needs, concerns or aspirations. Second, interviewees agreed that Keith Bartley is providing a very positive and welcome lead, driving the organisation "in the right direction". Interviewees stated that under his leadership the GTC has made significant progress over the last 12 months, particularly in terms of defining its direction of travel and communicating more effectively with partners and stakeholders.

The third message is possibly the most challenging finding, as it points to significant variance in interpretations of the role and remit of the GTC. Interviewees saw the remit of the GTC as problematic; in their view the organisation is not yet operating as a convincing professional body for teachers and has failed to "win the hearts and minds of teachers". As we discuss below, this raises important questions for the GTC regarding its role, its relationships with partners and stakeholders, and the future of the *Teaching in 2012* programme.

2.2 GTC's remit: scope, overlap, feasibility

There was widespread concern among the interviewees that the GTC is not effectively undertaking the whole suite of activities interviewees think are required to fulfil the organisation's remit as they see it. This finding is possibly at the crux of many of the criticisms and concerns of interviewees regarding the GTC's place within the teaching profession. It reveals interviewees' perceptions of the activities the GTC should, or should not, be undertaking.

Most of the interviewees acknowledged that registration and regulation were two of the key tasks with which the GTC is charged (more on this in section 2.2.1). Beyond that, there was more divergence in what else interviewees felt the GTC should be focusing its efforts on; or, for that matter, what it should not be involved in.

Some interviewees agreed that the GTC could and should play an important part in redefining professionalism in teaching, and instilling pride in teachers being part of the profession.

Many interviewees provided a more detailed account of what they saw as the key challenges in relation to the GTC's remit. In particular, interviewees discussed the GTC's role in professional development (section 2.2.2 below) and in lobbying and advocacy (section 2.2.3).

There were concerns shown by some interviewees regarding the extent to which the GTC's broad remit overlaps with those of other organisations.

2.2.1 The GTC's regulatory function

The regulatory role of the GTC received mixed feedback from interviewees, in spite of some signs of progress. Specifically, some interviewees felt that the process does not move fast enough. One interviewee, for example, explained that hearings can often take well over a year, and said that in his view this does not inspire sufficient confidence, thereby affecting the frequency with which people decide to go through the GTC to solve potential disputes. Another interviewee was also critical of the process, emphasising the very small number of cases that the GTC addresses every year. These interviewees argued that measures need to be taken to get regulatory work to happen at optimal speed. It was suggested, for instance, that more resources should be invested to speed up processes and address the backlog of disciplinary cases. Part of the problem, it was suggested, could lie in the fact that the threshold for hearings is too low. Another suggestion was that the GTC should focus on cases concerning a teacher's fitness to practise.

While some interviewees were concerned with operational and procedural weaknesses of the GTC's regulatory function, others emphasised the significance of this function for the GTC's standing in the teaching profession. Some interviewees thought that the GTC should have a stronger message about its regulatory function. Similarly, interviewees believed that one of the key weaknesses of the GTC is that its broad remit prevents it from focusing sufficiently on the regulatory function, which was seen by some as the main element of the organisation's remit.

Interviewees believed that the regulatory function was potentially one of the main strengths of the GTC and that the organisation should optimise this opportunity to have a stronger impact on the teaching profession.

2.2.2 The GTC's role in professional development

The GTC's role in the professional development of teachers was discussed by a number of interviewees. There did not appear to be agreement regarding the effectiveness or significance of the GTC's contribution in this field. For example, while the Teacher Learning Academy (TLA) was heralded by some as a positive development, others felt that it is progressing slowly and in an unclear direction, in competition rather than in cooperation with other schemes.

Other interviewees described the professional development work of the GTC as disconnected from other continuing professional development (CPD) initiatives. They perceived that the GTC has not only worked too independently in this area, but also that it has been stepping on the territory of others by stretching its remit too far, thus raising concerns about overlapping responsibilities. Interviewees observed that the combination of a possibly too broad remit and the perceived failure to work jointly has had some negative consequences. For example, working in isolation has reduced the level of influence and power vis-à-vis government.

2.2.3 Lobbying, advocacy and influence

As mentioned in previous sections, many interviewees believed the GTC could, and should, be more actively involved in lobbying and advocacy in the interest of teachers. This was seen to be part of the GTC's remit, and one of the areas that it had not yet fully activated. At present, the GTC is seen by interviewees as not vociferous enough in its pronouncements about teachers' professional lives and working conditions. According to interviewees, this is partly a result of its lack of independence from government (see section 2.4.1).

Linked to the question about the GTC's role in lobbying and advocacy is the issue of its influence on policymakers. Many interviewees believed that the GTC has limited influence on government, and argued that this undermines its credibility within the teaching profession.

2.3 GTC's leadership and governance

Most interviewees regarded Keith Bartley's appointment as Chief Executive of the GTC as a positive development, and observed that much progress had taken place. Nevertheless, some interviewees raised concerns about other aspects of the GTC's leadership structure. In particular, they believed the Council is not fulfilling its role effectively.

2.4 GTC's communications with teachers

There was widespread agreement that the GTC has not "won teachers' hearts and minds", and that it has failed to impress on teachers its value to the teaching profession. There were

views about the ways in which the GTC could overcome this “image problem” with teachers. Some said that the GTC needs to be more closely attuned to the issues teachers are concerned with.

According to most of the interviewees, the “image problem” was directly linked to the lack of clarity over the GTC’s remit and role. Some interviewees felt the problem was that the GTC is not explicitly aligning itself with issues of concern to teachers (which relates to the perceived role of the GTC as advocate), while others view the image problem as deriving primarily from the GTC’s inability clearly to communicate its role, function and value to teachers.

2.4.1 Independence from government

A number of interviewees perceived the GTC to be over-influenced by government, which was seen to be a barrier to teachers’ support for the organisation. According to the interviewees, the question about the degree to which the GTC is independent from government is probably one of the reasons for its image problem with teachers. This is linked to the view that the GTC could and should be a stronger advocate for teachers’ interests (see section 2.2.3 on lobbying and advocacy). Stakeholders feel that for the GTC to win the teachers’ hearts and minds, it needs to demonstrate clearly that it is not “an arm of government”, and that it is not afraid to speak out in defence of teachers’ interests.

2.5 GTC’s engagement with stakeholders

A number of interviewees raised questions about the GTC’s relationship with other organisational stakeholders. In particular, interviewees felt that the GTC is failing to work collaboratively and in partnership with other organisations in a number of different areas.

In some cases, interviewees questioned whether communications between the GTC and the different stakeholders have been regular and open enough. Interviewees thought that stakeholders should be regarded as strategic partners, who could potentially contribute to disseminating positive messages about the GTC’s purposes and objectives. For example, they could ensure that the GTC’s work is more often mentioned and cited in meetings, working papers, and conferences.

2.5.1 Lessons from other professional bodies

The GTCs in Scotland, and to a lesser extent in Wales, were frequently mentioned as bodies from which lessons could be learned. Interviewees thought the GTC in England could gain valuable insights, particularly about how similar bodies have been able to instil credibility among the teaching community, and gain influence on the profession as well as on government.

The other professional body mentioned by interviewees was the General Medical Council (GMC). Some interviewees said the GTC could learn from the GMC about its processes and how it regulates the profession. Interviewees felt that the GMC is effective in raising the status and standing of the medical profession. Many interviewees, however, recognised that such comparisons were based on little experience or knowledge about the role, remit or track record of the GMC.

In addition to references to the GMC and the GTCS, the Law Society was also mentioned, where the professional development and regulatory remits are held in separate bodies rather than combined. This was thought to enable greater dedication to each area, and might also avoid confusing the public. This echoed some interviewees' questions about whether having a body that encompasses the regulatory and the professional side at the same time contributes to a confusing image for the GTC.

Finally, some interviewees thought that comparisons with other professional bodies are not particularly useful as each professional body is different, with its own strengths and weaknesses and ways to adapt to existing and changing circumstances.

2.6 The 2012 Vision Statement

Most of the interviewees were critical of the 2012 Vision Statement on a number of different counts. The most widespread view was that the Statement was vague, and that it failed to articulate clearly, in practical terms, how the GTC would move forward. Interviewees were concerned about the lack of specificity, and thought the language and tone of the Statement could further alienate teachers and other stakeholders. Other interviewees, however, felt that the Vision Statement is innocuous; one interviewee, for example, called it "motherhood and apple pie".

We reported in the previous chapter on the answers and explanations the interviewees gave to the questions put to them. These reveal a broadly consistent picture of perceptions about (a) what they think the GTC actually does, (b) how well they think it is performing and (c) what they would want the GTC to do. There is some variance in the detailed views within those clusters. Membership of the Council did not appear to be a differentiating factor between the views of those interviewees who were or were not members.

We now discuss the implications and questions arising from the interviewees' perceptions.² The same four broad headings employed in the previous chapter are used for the discussion that follows.

3.1 **Remit**

The remit issue for the GTC is this:

- What are the profile, identity and standing of a statutory body dedicated to improving teaching standards in the public interest, and which members of the teaching profession also trust and hold in high regard?
- Are these two elements compatible and simultaneously achievable within one statutory organisation?
- How vocal or assertive should the GTC be in its articulation of the interests of teachers?
- If the GTC's principal focus is on improving standards of teaching and the quality of learning in the public interest, and this means being judgemental about the work of individual teachers and teaching practices in general, where necessary, will members of the profession trust it confidently and cooperate with it?

Most of the interviewees were critical of the GTC for not undertaking more effectively the whole suite of activities they thought it should be doing. These interviewees reckon that the GTC is charged with being both a statutory regulator and a professional development agency. The functions they identified included registration and regulation, advocacy and lobbying on teachers' needs and working conditions, intensive engagement in teachers'

² This takes into account initial discussions of the study findings with the GTC on 29 May and 25 June 2008.

professional development, and a clearer identity as the single voice for the profession. Apart from the registration function, interviewees thought the GTC had not been active enough or had achieved enough to be convincingly engaged with its full remit, as they understood it.

However, several interviewees observed that the GTC's remit as they understood it seems to overlap with those of certain other organisations, in particular teachers' trade unions (as regards advocacy and lobbying and being a single voice for the profession), and the Training and Development Agency (as regards professional development). They found that the patchy implementation of the GTC's current remit added to the confusion about expectation for the GTC. Some thought the GTC could possibly be a threat to other organisations if it had been intentionally set up to compete with them.

The GTC's remit involves it in several areas of the teaching landscape simultaneously (registration, regulation, continuing professional development, advice and lobbying on policy and practice). The GTC may read some of the interviewees' criticisms more as symptoms of difficulties elsewhere, within and among other organisations in the teaching landscape (such as the presence of six teacher unions in England) rather than indicating faults with its own remit or performance. Furthermore, the GTC may be inclined to dismiss a few of the views reported here as being based on too little first-hand knowledge of, or contact with, the GTC.

Some of the reported views do not match the generally more positive response the GTC tends to hear from the same organisations when dealing with them directly. This might be a reflection of the fact that the research presented in this report was conducted by independent researchers; this might contribute to interviewees' greater readiness to express critical views. Furthermore, while some of the interviewees are from organisations that the GTC regards as its stakeholders, it is also possible that the organisations in question view themselves in some respects as competitors of the GTC, which may colour some of their views.

Nevertheless, these views merit careful consideration as they provide indications of the way in which stakeholders perceive and relate to the GTC. The GTC may want to consider whether any useful signals can be derived from interviewees' views and, if so, where and how the signals could usefully inform and guide the GTC in taking wise next steps. In addition, the GTC might choose to probe the views of stakeholders further in order to gain additional insights, for example regarding the question of whether stakeholders' perceptions are the result of misinterpretation of the GTC's role, or of the expectation that the GTC should be active in areas currently outside its remit.

We heard several important messages:

- The GTC's remit includes a large range of important functions.
- The GTC is not yet seen to be handling all of those functions equally well.
- The advisability and feasibility of the scope of the GTC's overall remit are questioned by some.
- There are enough indications to prompt the GTC to review the scope and feasibility of its remit.

- Whatever the outcome of that review, the GTC is likely to need to adopt firmer priorities and communicate these priorities very effectively to all its stakeholders.

3.2 Leadership and governance

The leadership and governance issues are about the sense of direction and purpose that the GTC derives from its Council and Chief Executive, who have a crucial influence on the GTC's performance. Performance depends significantly on the lead, drive and outlook that they give the organisation. Many of the interviewees expressed concerns about the GTC's performance. Some connected this to the previous point about remit, where they thought the remit could be the underlying problem rather than simply the GTC's efforts to fulfil that remit. Others were critical of the GTC's achievements anyway, even in the areas where they thought it had put more effort, particularly on registration.

On the other hand, every interviewee commented positively about the current Chief Executive and admired his efforts to lead the GTC. As reported in Chapter 2, they said that he is creating a very positive impression and they approved of his appointment. Nevertheless, several interviewees were not convinced that this strengthened leadership would be sufficient to "turn the whole organisation round". Three reasons were given. One was the GTC's "impossible" remit: in other words, no matter how impressive the Chief Executive, the organisation would be bound to struggle. The second was the legacy of the GTC's difficult start and first few years, which had combined to undermine its capacity to succeed in winning over the profession – an essential feature for the future. The third was the view that the Council of the GTC as currently constituted does not help the GTC to achieve improved performance. Interviewees said that it is too large and unwieldy, and that its remit and membership need to be rethought.

The important messages we hear on this are that:

- the current terms of reference and constitution of the Council may have become obstacles hampering the organisation as a whole as it seeks to work more efficiently and effectively towards achieving its priorities
- this is sufficient indication that interim and longer-term changes to the Council are worth considering.

3.3 Communications with teachers

The communications issue is that the GTC has an "image" problem, which is colouring its relationship with teachers (and with many of its partner organisations). The interviewees were clear that the GTC had not yet "won the teachers' hearts and minds". The interviewees were uncertain and sometimes suspicious about the role and remit of the GTC. They were unanimous in perceiving the GTC to be out of touch with teachers and largely invisible to them.

The dissonance between the role that the GTC wishes to communicate and the role that teachers perceive to be the GTC's may not be explained solely by inadequate communications on the GTC's part. It may be that teachers have particular expectations of

what the GTC should do because of their dissatisfaction with the unions or some other bodies. This connects again to the above points about remit and performance. The image that the GTC has among interviewees is affected by such important factors as the GTC's perceived relationship with government and its independence, the value of registration to individual teachers and the role of registration in teachers' professional development.

The important messages we hear on this are that:

- there is a prominent desire for a single strong voice for teachers to exist
- it is not clear whether that desire is realistic, or whether the GTC could or should be that voice
- either way, the GTC needs to clarify its stance on the above "single clear voice" questions
- the GTC needs to communicate its stance both internally and to its external stakeholders
- the expectations that teachers can reasonably have of the GTC need to be unambiguous and realisable.

3.4 Engagement with stakeholders

The engagement issue is what relationships the GTC is seeking with its partners and stakeholders. The previous chapter reported that while a number of interviewees stated that their relationship with the GTC was positive, others said the GTC had failed to engage them effectively. Several of the interviewees were willing to engage more and contribute to a shared vision for teaching. But, as with communication with teachers, the issue of engagement with other stakeholders raises important questions for the GTC about the purposes and expected outcomes of such engagement. What constitutes effective, mutually worthwhile engagement? What overall impacts could be achieved with more effective engagement with stakeholders, for example in terms of its standing within the profession, its ability to make a significant contribution to teaching, and so forth?

The important messages we hear on this are that:

- the GTC's partners and stakeholders are a potential source of strength and support for it
- the GTC could identify further opportunities to develop and improve the goodwill that partners and stakeholders provide to it.

In this chapter we focus on the GTC's second reason for commissioning this perceptions audit, namely to aid them in setting future priorities for the organisation and for teaching. The chapter contributes to this by providing suggestions for future action. These could act as a springboard for discussion and planning by the GTC and its partners.

This study has highlighted some of the challenges facing the GTC in its future programme of work. The challenges raise a number of questions that merit further consideration, both within the GTC and between the GTC and its partners and stakeholders. In particular, the findings from this perceptions audit provide signals to the GTC about how stakeholders view and represent it. These findings can therefore inform the development or strengthening of an engagement and/or communication strategy with GTC stakeholders which effectively achieves the aims of the GTC in its relationship with partner organisations. Some options for this are provided in this section, which aim to stimulate thinking about the choices that face the GTC in its future work.

In addition, a number of options for future action for the GTC to consider are included that derive from what the interviewees identified as challenges facing the GTC. The options give the GTC a range of possibilities for considering what the interviewees' signals to the GTC imply about more structural or organisational changes, such as to the Council's constitution, or by altering the GTC's role in specific areas. In terms of continuing to build relationships with the stakeholders, a crucial point for the GTC is that even if some of these stakeholders' views do not coincide with the GTC's own sense of its priorities or with its role and remit, the GTC has a basis for deciding how it wants to engage with those organisations from now on.

4.1 **Possible options for action**

One way to think about the challenges is to consider an array of possible options for action that the GTC could pursue. The options might extend from *No change* to *Reconsider the whole remit of the GTC*. In between could be a range of other possible measures, such as:

- intensified collaboration with stakeholders
- revision of the 2012 Vision Statement involving teachers and other stakeholders
- awareness campaign about the role and remit of the GTC
- improved communication with teachers

- emphasis on independence from government
- clearer, “louder” statements on issues affecting teachers’ professional lives
- changes in GTC governance processes and structures
- reconsideration of the GTC’s role in specific areas.

These options are not exclusive; they could be combined and modified depending on priorities, the resources available and other factors. It helps to think of them as choices for change, which might contain other options that are not listed here.

The change options are intended to be “an aid to the GTC in setting future priorities for the GTC and teaching”. Clearly, none of the options is necessarily simple to act upon. Each one potentially raises controversial matters within the GTC and between it and its external stakeholders and partners. The options, and others not yet mentioned here, but which the GTC itself may already have in mind, or had previously shelved, or now wishes to add, will repay detailed developmental work.

In addition, and as mentioned in the previous chapter, the GTC might want to probe the views of stakeholders further. The aim of this would be to gain further insights into the causes and roots of the stakeholders’ views, for example regarding the question of whether these perceptions are the result of misinterpretation of the GTC’s role, or of the expectation that the GTC should be active in areas currently outside its remit.

4.2 Developing the options

In order for the GTC to develop the options into well-informed choices that it can make in a timely manner about its practical next steps, the options need to be examined, articulated and developed into fuller propositions, which can be costed, evaluated and prioritised, based on sound evidence and transparent reasoning. The propositions then need to be tested out and improved (or modified or rejected) through rigorous discussion and analysis. This could also prove to be a very fruitful exercise in communications, both across the GTC and externally.

There are several simple but powerful techniques (including, for example, brainstorming, Delphi processes, future scenario building, and logic modelling) to assist the GTC to develop its options. One or more of these approaches could help the GTC to act upon the findings of this perceptions audit.

Reference list

Hargreaves, Linda, Mark Cunningham, Anders Hansen, Donald McIntyre, Caroline Oliver and Tony Pell, *The Status of Teachers and the Teaching Profession in England: Views from Inside and Outside the Profession. Final Report of the Teacher Status Project*. DfES Research Report RR831A, Cambridge, UK: University of Cambridge, 2007, p. 29.

Whitty, Geoff "The professionals", *Teaching*, Autumn 2006, p. 17.

Appendix 1 Methodology

The study methods were initially specified by the GTC in the project *Research Brief*, then further developed and agreed between GTC and RAND Europe. The following steps were undertaken:

1. A face-to-face kick-off meeting between the RAND Europe team and GTC commissioners on 15 April 2008, to agree: the long list of organisations and the individuals within them to be interviewed, the interview protocol and timetable, responsibilities for contacting interviewees and arranging interviews, timelines for analysis and reporting, and to establish lines of communication during the project.
2. GTC identified a longlist of about 25 potential interviewees and a shortlist of 18. The shortlisted individuals were first contacted via an email letter from the Chief Executive of the GTC, explaining the purpose, arrangements and timescale of the project, requesting the person to agree to an interview, indicating that RAND Europe would contact them to fix the time, and attaching a copy of the Vision Statement *Teaching in 2012*. RAND then followed up by telephone to book the appointments, and sent the questions to the interviewees in advance.
3. The interviews were semi-structured, conducted face to face where feasible, otherwise by telephone in late April and May 2008, and recorded and transcribed (in a few cases notes were taken and written up). Interviewees were informed at the start that any quotes would only be used on an attributable basis to inform the GTC internally, otherwise quotes used in any other reporting would be non-attributable.
4. RAND Europe analysed the findings of the interviews and presented a summary using PowerPoint slides to a small workshop with GTC on 29 May 2008, to develop a common understanding of the key messages emerging from the analysis.
5. RAND Europe drafted a full text report taking account of the workshop discussion, and presented it as a draft to the GTC Senior Management Team on 25 June 2008.
6. The report was revised in the light of GTC's comments, and submitted in July. The report was quality assured according to RAND Europe's procedures.

Appendix 2 Organisations interviewed

1	Association of Teachers and Lecturers
2	Children's Workforce Network
3	Church of England
4	General Teaching Council for Scotland
5	Innovation Unit
6	Institute of Education
7	National Association of Head Teachers
8	National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers
9	National College for School Leadership
10	National Employers' Organisation for School Teachers
11	National Governors' Association
12	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
13	Specialist Schools and Academies Trust
14	Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers
15	Training and Development Agency for Schools
DECLINED TO BE INTERVIEWED:	
16	Department for Children, Families and Schools
17	Institute of Education
NO RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR INTERVIEW:	
18	Ofsted

Appendix 3 Interview questions

1. What is your overall opinion about the effectiveness of the GTC?
2. What would you say about the strengths and weaknesses of the GTC?
3. In your opinion, what single aspect of its work does the GTC need to improve most?
4. On what basis do you hold your views of the GTC's performance?
5. Is there another professional body or regulator whom you think the GTC could learn from?
6. What are your three main ideas or suggestions regarding where the GTC should focus its efforts?
7. What do you think are the most important barriers and drivers to the development of the 'Teaching in 2012' vision statement?
8. What contribution would you or your organisation expect to make in the development of the '2012' vision statement?

Appendix 4 GTC Vision Statement

Teaching in 2012

The text below has been drawn up as part of an initiative that I have taken since joining the General Teaching Council for England (GTC) earlier this year. It builds upon a wide range of introductory meetings that I held with education partners and stakeholders and with staff and managers internally. One of the most consistent messages that I received was to make clear what the GTC is and what value it adds. In setting out what the GTC will do to meet the terms of its remit³, as set in statute, it became apparent that it would be helpful to have a debate with all who have an interest in improving teaching and learning in England about a set of aspirations for the teaching profession that could be used as a goal to inform our medium term planning.

The vision statement is built around the thesis that, by the time of the GTC teacher member elections in 2012, we will have helped to raise the standing of the teaching profession through the integrated development of our regulatory, registration, research and policy functions.

Running alongside our discussions with partners and stakeholders, including teachers, parents, governors and pupils, we will be building the 2008–2012 GTC Corporate Plan to guide our priorities, objectives and resource allocation. As a consensus forms, as I hope it does, around the teaching profession's aspirations for its future, so the contribution that the GTC can make during the next four years will be more precisely defined. The GTC will be successful if, by 2012, it has made a discernible contribution to improving teacher professionalism and the standing of the teaching profession.

The draft vision that follows is one that has been drawn up for discussion, initially with members of staff and with General Teaching Council members and subsequently with stakeholders and partner organisations. It is proposed that the GTC Executive Committee holds the strategic overview of a programme of consultation and development activity that will enable the January 2008 Council to engage in an initial, scoping, discussion about its

³ Through the 1998 Teaching and Higher Education Act, the General Teaching Council for England is charged with improving standards of teaching and the quality of learning and with maintaining and improving standards of professional conduct in the public interest. The law gives us three principal functions:

- To maintain a register of qualified teachers in England.
- To enable the teacher profession to regulate itself in the public interest.
- To provide advice to government and other agencies on key issues affecting teaching and learning.

aspirations for teaching, with a view to the Council meeting in October 2008 agreeing the key objectives and priorities that will become the 2008–2012 Corporate Plan.

I look forward to receiving your comments on this working draft of a vision, and to your involvement in its development.

Keith Bartley

December 2007

Teaching in 2012 – A working vision

Being a registered teacher in 2012 should mean being a member of a profession:

- whose members take responsibility for their standards of practice through their commitment to the interests of learners
- who understand and contribute to the concept of professionalism through their daily work
- whose commitment to high standards is shown through participation in the development activities which underpin their registered status.

Teachers will be identified as being part of a profession that reaches for ever higher levels of effectiveness and professionalism. Teachers will actively develop their practice, drawing on enquiry and innovation in their classrooms as well as from an authoritative body of national and international research.

Being a registered teacher will be valued. It will mean that only those who are suitable to teach well will be able to train as teachers. Teachers who are registered will have had to demonstrate that they have the skills and knowledge to be able to teach. Their conduct and competence will have met the demanding standards set by the profession.

By 2012:

- *Teachers themselves will be proud to be part of a highly qualified, well-trained profession that motivates and engages them to achieve progressively higher levels of professional practice.*
- *Parents and pupils will respect teachers for their knowledge and expertise. The trust that the public in general currently has in teachers will still be present but public opinion will be moving towards a growing respect for the high quality of the teaching profession.*
- *The government will, increasingly, show that it has confidence in the profession to raise pupil attainment, to employ the most effective teaching methods and to manage learning environments with skill and expertise.*

The GTC, along with all stakeholders who share an interest in, and a passion for, improving the life chances of children and young people, will have contributed to this higher confidence, capability and standing for the profession. The GTC will be recognised for its collaborative work with partner organisations and for the quality and authority of its advice to education and social policymakers, which draws upon the GTC's extensive research and well-considered policy work. The public perception of teacher professionalism will, in part, be founded in a confidence that the public interest is served well by having an authoritative professional body for teaching that contributes to educational policy but is independent of government.