

ITEM FOR FINANCE COMMITTEE

**HEAD 40 – EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Subhead 700 General other non-recurrent
New Item “One-off book grant for school teachers”**

Members are invited to approve the creation of a new commitment of \$23 million for providing a one-off grant to public sector schools and local schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme for purchase of professional publications for their teachers.

PROBLEM

We need to support teachers’ professional development and foster among them a culture of continuing professional advancement.

PROPOSAL

2. With the support of the Secretary for Education and Manpower, the Director of Education proposes to provide a one-off grant to existing government, aided, and caput schools, and local schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS), at a rate of \$500 per teacher, for purchasing professional publications aimed at enhancing teachers’ professional development.

JUSTIFICATION

3. Like other professionals, teachers need to update their professional knowledge and skills through life-long learning, such as participating in regular refresher courses and reading professional publications.

4. There is a wide range of professional publications for teachers, including those on generic education theory and specific academic disciplines, as well as teaching materials. While some of the more general publications may be available from public libraries, most of the more education-specific collections are only available at the local higher education institutions providing teacher education programmes, the Teachers' Centre and the Education Department. Although teachers have access to these collections, the travelling involved is inconvenient to some teachers, given their busy work schedule.

5. Government and aided schools at present receive a number of recurrent grants for maintaining library facilities. These include the Library Grant and Grant for the Chinese and English Extensive Reading Schemes which are subsumed under the Operating Expenses Block Grant for aided schools, or under the Subject and Curriculum Block Grant for government schools. The provision to aided schools is also reflected in subsidies to caput schools and schools under the DSS according to the approved formulae. However, these grants are mainly for the purpose of providing reading materials for students and promoting teaching and learning in schools, rather than for promoting the professional development of teachers.

6. In view of the above, we propose to disburse a one-off grant to schools, at the rate of \$500 per teacher, to support the purchase of professional publications, including on-line subscription of electronic publications. The grant will complement the collections held by public libraries, higher education institutions and the Education Department in encouraging school teachers' professional advancement and developing among them a general reading and learning culture. Schools may also make use of the grant to strengthen its professional resources in specific education areas to support the formulation of school-based teaching and learning strategies. We consider that a one-off grant will provide the right impetus to the above in the first instance. The schools' actual experience in utilising this grant will help us formulate a longer-term strategy in support of teachers' professional development in due course.

Implementation plan

7. To assist schools in making procurement decisions we will issue guidelines on the selection of publications and on accounting procedures, and book lists for the schools' reference. Schools are required to consult all teaching staff before making the purchase, to ensure that the specific needs and interests of individual teachers are taken care of, and that various key learning areas are

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covered. To optimise the use of resources, we will also encourage schools, in particular those in the same district or under the same sponsoring body, to coordinate in the procurement and sharing of books. Where necessary, the Education Department will assist schools to set up book-sharing networks.

8. The grant will be disbursed in May 2001. To allow sufficient time for schools and teachers to decide on and procure the publications, we will allow schools to use the grant between May 2001 and the end of the 2003/04 school year. We will review the effectiveness of the grant, and the implementation arrangements.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9. We propose to use the number of teaching posts (determined in accordance with the approved manning scale under the relevant Codes of Aid in the case of aided schools, and pro-rata for caput and DSS schools) as at 1 April 2001 as the basis for calculating the grant for each school. We estimate that about 45 000 teachers will benefit from the grant.

10. On the basis of a \$500 grant per teacher, we estimate that the proposal will incur a total non-recurrent expenditure of \$23 million, as calculated below -

Types of school	Estimated number of teaching posts as at 1 April 2001	Estimated cost \$ million
Aided, caput and DSS schools	41 847	20.9
Government schools	3 521	1.8
Total	45 368	22.7
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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

11. In the Policy Objective Booklet on Quality Education published in October 2000, the Administration committed to making available a one-off grant of \$23 million in 2001 for public sector schools to purchase professional publications aimed at enhancing teachers' professional development.

12. We have consulted the major teacher associations and school councils. They all welcomed additional teaching resources for teachers. The Panel on Education was consulted on 15 January 2001. Members supported the proposal.

Education and Manpower Bureau
February 2001