

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1173/01-02
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

LegCo Panel on Education

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 21 January 2002 at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

Members Present : Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung, BBS (Chairman)
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum (Deputy Chairman)
Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, JP
Hon LAU Kong-wah
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon SZETO Wah
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung
Dr Hon LO Wing-lok
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
Hon MA Fung-kwok

Member Absent : Hon Eric LI Ka-cheung, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP

Public Officers Attending : Item IV
Mr Matthew CHEUNG, JP
Director of Education

Dr K K CHAN
Chief Executive, Curriculum Development Institute
Education Department

Item V

Mr CHENG Yan-chee
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (3)

Mr John LEUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower (9)

Mr Matthew CHEUNG, JP
Director of Education

Mrs Betty IP
Assistant Director of Education (Education Services 2)

Item VI

Mr CHENG Yan-chee
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (3)

Mr Gordon LEUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower (6)

Mr Matthew CHEUNG, JP
Director of Education

Mr Andrew POON
Senior Assistant Director of Education (Support)

Clerk in Attendance : Miss Flora TAI
Chief Assistant Secretary (2)2

Staff in Attendance : Mr Stanley MA
Senior Assistant Secretary (2)6

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I. Confirmation of minutes

[LC Paper No. CB(2)907/01-02]

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2001 were confirmed.

II. Information paper issued since the last meeting

2. Members noted that no information paper had been issued since the last meeting.

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[Appendices I and II to LC Paper No. CB(2)901/01-02]

3. Members noted that the Chairman and Messers Tommy CHEUNG, David CHU and WONG Sing-chi would be joining the Legislative Council delegation to pay a nine-day visit to Toronto and Ottawa of Canada from 16 to 24 February 2002. Members agreed that the next regular meeting would be re-scheduled for 28 February 2002 at 10:45 am to discuss the following items -

- (a) Preliminary study on reviewing the progress and evaluating the Information Technology in Education Projects;
- (b) Regulation of tutorial schools; and
- (c) Issue of students with learning difficulties.

4. Members also agreed to hold a special meeting on 1 March 2002 at 4:30 pm to discuss issues relating to the operation of Quality Education Fund (QEF).

IV. Report of Curriculum Development Council entitled "Learning to learn - the way forward in curriculum development"

[LC Paper No. CB(2)901/01-02(01)]

5. At the invitation of the Chairman, Chief Executive, Curriculum Development Institute (CE/CDI) briefed members on the latest developments of implementing the curriculum reform in schools which were outlined in the Administration's paper on "Report on the progress of Curriculum Reform".

Provision of Primary School Master/Mistress (PSM) to schools

6. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that he supported the initiative that starting from the 2002-03 school year, the Education Department (ED) would provide each

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public sector school, by stages within three years, with an additional teacher to serve the role of a curriculum development leader at the rank of PSM for five years. He considered that successful implementation of curriculum reform should involve a complicated and time-consuming process that would take years to complete. Given that Hong Kong was in short of a professional force in curriculum design, he asked how the Administration would set the criteria for the selection of effective PSMs to enhance smooth implementation of curriculum reform in schools.

7. CE/CDI responded that PSMs would be appointed to assist public sector schools in coordinating curriculum planning and strategies, and promoting school-based curriculum development. They should be well trained and able to lead teachers to develop the necessary skills and knowledge for enhancing implementation of curriculum reform in schools. They should participate in action-research projects undertaken by CDI, QEF and tertiary institutions to verify the effectiveness of the learning and teaching strategies for curriculum reform. They should also be reflective in the evaluation of these strategies for improving implementation. These PSMs should be willing to attempt creative teaching approaches and develop new assessment modes in order to take the lead in promoting a new culture of assessment for learning in schools.

8. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong remarked that PSMs would play a vital role to successful implementation of the curriculum reform in the next five years. He considered that PSMs needed to have an all-round vision of the curriculum reform. They should be provided with sufficient room for performing their role and functions in the reform process. He therefore asked about the selection and training arrangements for PSMs, and the teaching workload of PSMs.

9. CE/CDI responded that the Administration acknowledged the importance of PSMs and would suggest schools to assign them with around 50% of the average teaching workload of a subject teacher. In April 2002, ED would invite schools to recommend suitable candidates for attending the first part of PSM training in May-June 2002, which would aim to equip participants with an all-round perspective on the curriculum reform. The training course should be completed within a year and exemptions on individual subjects would be considered for participants who had attended similar training or acquired equivalent qualifications. After completing the first part of the PSM training, the selected PSMs would be encouraged to plan their programmes of curriculum reform during the summer holidays for implementation in the 2002-03 school year. They would be arranged to attend the other parts of PSM training whilst the curriculum reform in their schools was in progress.

10. Director of Education (DE) supplemented that the Administration had initiated a number of supportive measures for schools and teachers including the development of collaborative research and development ("seed") projects since

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September 2001 for schools to work with CDI officers and experts from tertiary institutions in developing school-based curriculum. So far some 140 primary schools and 170 secondary schools had participated in these "seed" projects. Through these "seed" projects, a critical mass of proactive and enterprising "seed" teachers would be identified as pioneers and curriculum change agents. Furthermore, some 110 teachers were seconded to CDI to participate in the execution of these "seed" projects. In time, these teachers would be experienced change agents in their schools.

Assessment of the curriculum reform

11. Mr LAU Kwong-wah asked how the Administration would assess the results of curriculum reform insofar as developing students' generic skills including critical thinking, creativity and communication were concerned. He expressed concern about whether serving teachers would have the necessary skills to make the assessment.

12. CE/CDI responded that the new curriculum guides for basic education and the eight Key Learning Areas (KLAs) in basic education would be issued in 2002. The former would set out what students should know, value and be able to do at various stages of schooling and the standards to be achieved. The latter would provide details on the learning targets, the contents, the learning, teaching and assessment strategies with exemplars, etc. These new guides would incorporate the creative teaching approaches and new assessment modes identified from the "seed" projects. Schools should exercise discretion to use different teaching strategies and learning materials that were relevant to the daily experience and abilities of their students to help develop their generic skills. They should also adopt a diversity of formative and summative assessment modes to help students and teachers improve learning and adjust teaching on an on-going basis. Starting from the 2002-03 school year, ED would assess the reform progress of each school by way of feedback from teachers, students and parents at the end of a school year. The Administration would conduct an interim review of the 10-year plan in 2005-06 to take stock of the overall progress of the first phase and to consolidate successful experiences so as to improve plans and actions for implementing the medium phase of curriculum reform.

Response of teachers

13. Ms Emily LAU noted with concern that there were feelings of uneasiness and rejection towards the curriculum reform as it posed a challenge to the conventional teaching method. Mr SZETO Wah echoed that the Administration should look into the causes for teachers' feelings of uneasiness and rejection, and accordingly put forward appropriate and timely remedial measures to address the problem. He cautioned that some education reform measures, if not properly monitored, might become obstacles to curriculum reform. Mr SZETO urged the

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Administration to carefully examine the impact of education reform initiatives including the abolition of the Academic Aptitude Test and the adoption of a three-band system in Secondary School Places Allocation. He suggested that the Administration should proactively solicit feedback from front-line educators on the potential difficulties which might emerge in the course of implementing curriculum reform at the school level.

14. DE explained that it was understandable that some teachers might need time to get accustomed to curriculum reform during the early stage of the implementation. He stressed that the Administration would not underestimate the potential problems in implementing curriculum reform and had planned to introduce a series of supportive measures to cater for the varied contexts and different needs of schools. He added that the Administration had set aside an annual allocation of \$80 million for teacher's professional development in the next 10 years.

Role of parents

15. Mr WONG Sing-chi pointed out that parents played an important role in ensuring the success of curriculum reform. They should participate and be consulted at different stages of implementation. He urged the Administration not to overlook their role.

16. CE/CDI confirmed that the Administration appreciated the important role of parents in curriculum reform and would collaborate with parents in helping students cultivate positive values and attitudes. In this connection, ED would strengthen the role of the home-school cooperation committees in schools and schools would draw upon the support of parents in promoting a reading habit and culture among students. DE pointed out that related professional bodies, employers and parents were to work in partnership to build up the capacities for effective curriculum reform. He added that the supportive measures to parents would start from nurseries and health centres where parents would be provided with information on early childhood education. In schools, seminars and group discussions would be organised for parents to learn and understand the development and needs of their children.

Curriculum reform and university admission system

17. Ms Emily LAU expressed concern about the impact of university admission system on school curriculum and asked how curriculum reform would dovetail with the programme requirements of local universities. She cautioned that senior secondary curriculum and university admission system should be carefully designed to align with the new curriculum for basic education.

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18. CE/CDI responded that the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) had taken necessary actions to ensure that public examination assessment was consistent with the curriculum reform. Slight modifications to the curriculum for senior secondary classes had been made along the line of providing students with relevant, authentic and meaningful experience for whole-person development. In particular, CDC would develop evidence-based quality criteria in line with the curriculum framework to help teachers judge the performance and progress of students and work with the Hong Kong Examinations Authority (HKEA) to develop combined curriculum and assessment guides for various examination subjects. Depending on the pace of curriculum reform, HKEA would review the assessment mechanism with a view to incorporating internal assessments of students by schools into the system of public assessment.

19. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung echoed Ms Emily LAU's concern. He considered that the Administration should provide schools with an overall picture of the interface between senior secondary curriculum and university admission system to facilitate design of effective school-based curricula in schools. Mr LEUNG also queried whether students would be able to tackle public examination without a corresponding change to the public examination system.

20. DE responded that in line with the education reform proposals, the Education Commission had established a Working Group to examine issues relating to the implementation of a three-year senior secondary education and the four-year degree programmes and the interface between different stages of education. He added that some universities have already adopted a wider set of criteria and greater flexibility for first-year student enrolment. DE also pointed out that curriculum reform aimed at developing the generic skills including the language ability of students. They should be well-equipped to deal with different forms of examinations.

Adm 21. At Ms Emily LAU's request, DE undertook to revert to the Panel on the recommendations of the Working Group in May/June 2002.

V. Kindergarten Subsidy Scheme

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)901/01-02(02) and CB(2)936/01-02(01)]

22. Members noted the Administration's paper which proposed a set of revised terms for the new group grant system under the Kindergarten Subsidy Scheme (KSS).

Consultation on the revised proposals for KSS

23. Dr YEUNG Sum and Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed appreciation that the Administration had quickly put forward revised proposals to address the

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concerns of the kindergarten (KG) sector about the original proposals to enhance KSS.

24. Dr YEUNG Sum said that Panel members had endorsed the proposed disbursement mechanism hoping that it would ensure more cost-effective use of resources. He felt unease to learn subsequently that the proposal would have the effect of reducing the level of subsidy to KGs which operated relatively small classes at each level of study. Dr YEUNG requested that the Administration should provide comprehensive information, including the merits and demerits of its proposals, in the papers submitted to the Panel in the future.

25. Mr SZETO Wah suggested that the Administration should, in collaboration with the 25 organisations in the KG sector, review the operation of the enhanced KSS two years after its implementation. He considered that the Administration should provide appropriate assistance to KGs which would encounter financial difficulty under the three-year progressive phase-in arrangement. Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (3) (DS(EM)3) responded that at the meeting on 10 January 2002, the Administration had undertaken to discuss with representatives of the 25 organisations the effects of a decline in birth rate and shift in population on KG operation in the near future. Problems arising from implementation of the enhanced KSS would also be dealt with at a meeting which would be organised in a month or two.

26. Ms Emily LAU noted that while there were some 788 KGs in September 2001, only 320 KGs accommodating 66 328 students had joined KSS. She therefore enquired whether the 25 organisations could fairly represent the interests of the whole KG sector. DS(EM)3 explained that of the 788 KGs in operation in September 2001, 291 were private independent KGs and 497 were non-profit-making KGs. Among the latter group, 320 had joined KSS. Assistant Director of Education (Education Services 2) (AD of E(ES)2) supplemented that the 25 organisations could well represent the KG sector as they comprised organisations from both private independent and non-profit-making KGs, as well as tertiary and related institutions operating training programmes for pre-service and serving KG teachers.

Costs and effects of the enhanced KSS

27. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong noted that full implementation of the enhanced KSS would incur an additional cost of around \$158.41 million a year. He asked about the deployment of possible surplus funds as a result of a decline in KG students in the years to come. He pointed out that representatives of the 25 KG organisations had suggested that given the small share of KG sector in public resources for education, the surplus should be retained for use in the KG sector.

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28. DS(EM)3 responded that the additional budget for KSS should be used in line with its intended purposes. He pointed out that resources allocation for KG sector had been on the rise in recent years. The Administration would continue to review and improve funding support for early childhood education in the light of the community's expectation and implementation experience of KSS. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong remarked that the Administration should liaise with the 25 organisations on better utilisation of the funds if there was a surplus. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that any funding allocation should be used according to the purpose as approved. The Administration should revert to the Legislative Council (LegCo) if it intended to use the surplus for other purposes.

29. Ms Emily LAU said that she was reluctant to support the Administration on KSS. Given the importance of early childhood education, she had all along considered that full subsidy should be provided. She asked whether the Administration had set a timetable for all KGs to employ only qualified KG teachers. Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower (9) (PAS(EM)9) responded that all new teachers should be qualified KG teachers starting from 2003-04 and all serving teachers should have acquired the prescribed qualification before the 2004-05 school year. He anticipated that KGs should have no difficulty in meeting the requirement of employing 100% qualified teachers from the 2004-05 school year, having regard to the fact that there were sufficient training places for serving teachers who had not yet achieved the qualification. Responding to the Chairman, PAS(EM)9 said that around 70% of the current workforce were already qualified KG teachers.

30. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung asked whether financial assistance to needy parents in KG education would be affected when KGs were encouraged to use KSS funds to upgrade the quality of teachers. DS(EM)3 clarified that KSS was introduced in 1995 to provide incentives for KGs to enhance the quality of early childhood education. To promote KG education, the Administration operated a KG Fee Remission Scheme (KGFMS) to provide financial assistance to needy families. In fact, the Administration had recently proposed to introduce a further level of fee remission at 75%, on top of the 100% and 50% rates, to better assist KG pupils who were eligible for KGFMS. The proposal would incur an additional cost of \$145 million a year and was endorsed by the LegCo Finance Committee on 7 December 2001. Starting from the 2002-03 school year, over 40 000 students were expected to benefit from the scheme.

31. Dr LO Wing-lok noted that KGs which were under-enrolled would receive less subsidy under the enhanced KSS and KGs with serious problem of under-enrolment might become not financially viable. He asked how many KGs would close down in the 2005-06 school year as a result of the enhanced KSS. DS(EM)3 responded that the Administration did not have an estimate on the number of KGs which would close down in the 2005-06 school year, but acknowledged that an operator would have to consider closing down his KG if the number of pupils was

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very small. In the face of an overall decreasing birth rate, the closure of KGs in districts with an aging population was natural. DE supplemented that KGs facing under-enrolment but had a good track record of providing quality education would be given priority if they were to apply for new KG premises in developing new towns where the population was building up.

32. Mr Tommy CHEUNG sought clarification about the increase of the estimated cost from the original \$148.70 million to the current \$158.41 for implementation of the enhanced KSS. DS(EM)3 explained that the budget increase of \$9.71 million was due to the revised terms for calculation of group grant in response to the concerns of the KG sector.

Monitoring of KGs outside KSS

33. Ms Emily LAU asked how the Administration would monitor the quality of education in KGs which had not joined KSS. She suggested that the Administration should consider encouraging KGs to recruit teachers with sub-degree or higher academic qualifications. AD of E(ES)2 responded that KGs not under KSS should also follow the requirement of employing 100% qualified teachers in the 2004-05 school year. She pointed out that KGs under KSS were subject to certain eligibility criteria and operational requirements such as non-profit-making status and level of increase in KG fees. While KSS aimed to help non-profit-making KGs employ more qualified teachers without the need to substantially increase KG fees, the quality of education in private independent and other non-profit-making KGs not under KSS would not be inferior to those under KSS in any regard.

Class size in KGs

34. Ms Emily LAU and Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed concern about the large class size in some KGs. They considered that reducing class size was a critical factor of promoting the quality of early childhood education in the long term. DS(EM)3 agreed with their view. He said that the enhanced KSS based on a group grant instead of a class grant would help reduce the class size in KGs. DE supplemented that all KGs should meet the required teacher-pupil ratio of 1:15 for all levels of study by the 2003-04 school year and KG classes comprising 16-30 and 31-45 pupils must then be supervised by two and three teachers respectively. He explained that most kindergartens having very large classes were already doing so.

Visit to KGs

35. Ms Emily LAU suggested and members agreed that the Panel would visit different kinds of KGs, including those operating very large and very small classes, in order to have a better understanding of KG operation. DE undertook to

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make necessary arrangements and propose a programme of visit for members' consideration.

VI. Native-speaking English Teacher and English Language Teaching Assistants for primary schools

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)901/01-02(03) to (04)]

36. Members noted that the Administration had set out its proposal to implement a Native-speaking English Teacher (NET) and English Language Teaching Assistant (ELTA) Scheme in public-sector primary schools (including special schools) with effect from the 2002-03 school year [LC Paper No. CB(2)901/01-02(03)]. At members' request, the Administration had also provided a progress report of the NET Scheme in secondary schools [LC Paper No. CB(2)901/01-02 (04)].

NET Scheme

37. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong noted that ED aimed to recruit about 100 NETs to fill vacancies which might arise when the contracts of about 300 serving NETs expired in August 2002. He enquired about the reasons for such a high turnover forecast and urged the Administration to examine the problems encountered by NETs.

38. Senior Assistant Director of Education (Support) (SAD of E(S)) explained that individual NETs might encounter some cultural and accommodation problems in teaching at schools in Hong Kong. Some of them might leave the service for personal reasons such as eligibility for entitlement to retirement benefits in their native countries and the like. To help NETs adapt to the local environment, ED had organised induction courses for all new NETs and other related support services for NETs. Besides, ED had set up a steering committee chaired by the Deputy Director of Education to oversee the implementation and progress of NET Scheme. He added that the general problems of NET Scheme and the measures taken to resolve them were detailed in the Annex to the progress report on the NET Scheme in secondary school.

39. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong noted the four possible modes of providing English language teaching support to primary schools as set out in paragraph 7 of LC Paper No. CB(2)901/01-02(03). He estimated that providing one NET for two primary schools (Mode B) would require another 400 new NETs. Given the recruitment experience of NETs, it would be very difficult to recruit some 500 new NETs in one exercise. He suggested that the Administration should proactively approach NETs who had indicated no interest to renew contracts and explore whether they would be willing to stay if they could teach at another school.

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40. SAD of E(S) responded that ED maintained close communications with the Native English-speaking Teachers' Association (NESTA). NETs who had encountered personal problems had approached NESTA or ED for assistance. NESTA would refer NETs to ED for follow-up if considered appropriate. He acknowledged that some NETs might have changed their decision to leave and continue service when being offered with a transfer of working location.

[Note : As the Chairman had to leave the meeting for an urgent commitment, the Deputy Chairman took over the chair at this juncture.]

41. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that the Liberal Party supported extension of NET Scheme to public sector primary schools. He enquired about the role of NETs in primary schools.

42. SAD of E(S) responded that the aim of NET Scheme was to strengthen English language teaching and learning in school environment. The main roles of NETs were to enrich the language learning environment, act as a resource person to bring in effective teaching methods from overseas and assist in school-based teacher development. In a school environment, a NET should work with an experienced School English Teacher to facilitate institutionalisation of innovative and effective teaching methods and curriculum development. He added that the roles of NETs in primary schools were detailed in Annex 1 to LC Paper No.CB(2)901/01-02(03).

43. Mr Tommy CHEUNG asked whether each primary school would be provided with a NET regardless of its size if a school-based NET was provided for each school (Mode A). He also questioned how a NET could effectively enhance the language learning environment of two schools under Mode B. Ms Emily LAU and Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung expressed a similar concern. Ms LAU urged the Administration to seriously consider the feasibility and effectiveness of allocating one NET to serve two primary schools.

44. SAD of E(S) clarified that Modes A to D were proposed in the light of practical considerations such as the readiness of schools for implementing NET Scheme in public sector primary schools. Due to a world-wide shortage of native English-speaking language teachers, ED would have difficulties in recruiting sufficient number of NETs for full implementation of Mode A from the outset. However, the Administration aimed at providing each primary school with a NET in the long term. Under the proposal for implementation, a participating primary school with sufficient operational experience under Mode B could apply for operating the Scheme under Mode A.

45. Dr LO Wing-lok expressed support for introducing NET and ELTA Schemes in primary schools. However, he considered recruitment of sufficient NETs a very difficult task to achieve. Given their roles, NETs should possess a

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high level of native English-speaking competence with considerable experience in teaching English as a foreign or second language. He asked how many NETs would be required for the implementation of the Administration's proposal.

46. DE responded that the Administration would have to recruit 400 NETs to provide one NET for every two primary schools and another 20 NETs to provide peripatetic support to schools through a central Advisory Teaching Team. He acknowledged the difficulty in recruitment. However, ED would improve monitoring of the Scheme and provide better supportive services to serving NETs in anticipation of creating positive effects on recruitment of NETs in the future.

47. Ms Emily LAU expressed support for extending the NET Scheme to public sector primary schools. She considered that enhancing students' language ability was crucial to further development of Hong Kong into a world-class cosmopolitan city in the long run. She urged the Administration to review and work out effective strategies such as possible improvements to the remuneration package for competing with overseas countries in the recruitment of NETs.

48. SAD of E(S) responded that despite a global shortage of English teachers, the Administration would step up recruitment efforts by publicising the recruitment drive through different channels, such as the Internet, Consulates, overseas tertiary institutions and their teacher unions and federations. In addition, schools and sponsoring bodies were encouraged to recruit NETs direct. He pointed out that the current remuneration package for NETs comprised a basic salary equivalent to that of local graduate teachers and a number of other allowances including passage and baggage allowances. SAD of E(S) pointed out that apart from a competitive salary, a facilitative teaching environment was equally important to attract and retain NETs to work in Hong Kong.

49. Ms Audrey EU expressed appreciation of the quality of NETs and their contributions to the teaching and learning of English in local schools. She suggested that in the face of a global shortage of English teachers, the Administration should consider recruiting non-native-speaking persons who possessed English competence equivalent to that of a native-speaker to teach or assist in teaching English in schools. She pointed out that subject to appropriate training, many retired and unemployed persons as well as temporary residents and returnees from overseas countries would be capable of teaching English language or spoken English for non-native-speaking students. She urged the Administration to exercise flexibility in the recruitment of NETs and ELTAs.

50. DE responded that while NETs should be native English-speaking teachers of different nationalities with relevant teacher training qualifications, discretion could be exercised for individuals possessing native-speaker English competence and substantial experience in teaching English as a foreign or second language. Persons without a teacher qualification might apply to study the relevant training

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programmes such as those offered by the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He assured members that ED would review the recruitment progress and see if it was necessary to adjust the criteria for NETs in the light of actual experience.

51. Members noted that the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research had commissioned the Hong Kong Institute of Education to conduct a study - "Monitoring and Evaluation of the Native English Teacher Scheme" from October 1998 to June 2001. Mr MAK Kwok-fung asked and SAD of E(S) confirmed that a total of 77 secondary schools and 16 primary schools were covered and the questionnaire survey had included principals, NETs and local English teachers, parents and students as survey targets. Around 80% of NETs and local English teacher responding to the survey had given positive comments on the Scheme.

52. Mr MAK Kwok-fung considered that to reduce the turnover rate of NETs, the Administration should present an overall picture of the teaching and learning environment, as well as the role of NETs in Hong Kong before their appointment.

53. SADE(S) responded that apart from video presentation during the recruitment process, ED would conduct an induction course for new appointees in August/September each year before the commencement of a new school year.

54. Ms Emily LAU took the view that learning English should start at an early age and wondered whether the Administration had adopted the right strategy in prioritising the use of resources for the NET Scheme. She asked whether the education sector would consider that teaching and learning of a non-native language should be given more weight at primary schools and also whether the Administration should consider giving priority to primary schools in the allocation of NETs in case there was a shortage.

55. DE responded that it was the established policy to implement the NET Scheme in secondary schools starting from the 1998-99 school year. The study conducted by the Hong Kong Institute of Education had shown that NETs had enriched the language environment and brought in a wider variety of teaching methods in secondary schools. He agreed that the provision of good English teachers at the primary level could help students develop proficiency in English more effectively. The Administration had therefore proposed to implement the Scheme in primary schools from the 2002-03 school year.

ELTA Scheme

56. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung enquired about the role of ELTAs in enhancing the language learning environment in primary schools. He suggested that flexibility should be considered for schools to assign capable ELTAs to teach oral conversations in junior classes.

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57. DE responded that the Administration would provide a cash grant of \$150,000 to participating primary schools which were not provided with a NET, either wholly or on a sharing basis. These schools could use the special grant to hire full-time or part-time native-speaking ELTAs to organise English language activities and assist in the implementation and evaluation of English learning and teaching activities in primary schools. DE cited that the Chatteris Foundation had since 1994 assisted schools in recruitment of ELTAs who were mostly English native-speaking high school or above students (i.e. "gap students") who took time to travel overseas before pursuing further studies. These ELTAs could be deployed to assist in teaching English both inside and outside the classroom. He added that both primary and secondary schools had discretion to use the Capacity Enhancement Grant, currently at about \$500,000 a year, to recruit native-speaking English teachers to teach English language and spoken English on a needs basis.

Way forward

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58. The Deputy Chairman requested the Administration to report to the Panel on the results of the current round of NET recruitment at a future meeting, which should include an analysis on factors affecting the outcome of recruitment exercise. DE undertook to brief the Panel on the recruitment progress at a Panel meeting in June/July 2002. Ms Emily LAU suggested and members agreed that the Panel should invite NETs and local English teachers to express views on the NET Scheme at the meeting.

VII. Any other business

59. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 7:01 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
27 February 2002