

**Legislative Council Panel on Education**

**Progress Report on  
the Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme  
in Secondary Schools**

**BACKGROUND**

The Chief Executive announced in his 1997 Policy Address the introduction of the Enhanced Native-speaking English Teacher (NET) Scheme starting from the 1998/99 school year. The aim of the Scheme is to enhance the teaching and learning of the English language in secondary schools.

**THE SCHEME**

*Number of NETs*

2. Each public-sector secondary school (including special school) is provided with one NET over and above its teacher establishment. Schools adopting Chinese as the Medium of Instruction (CMI) are allowed to fill one of the additional English teacher posts with a second NET.

*Duties of NETs*

3. NETs are responsible for classroom teaching and student assessment. They help foster an enabling environment for students to speak English and practise their oral skills. Apart from assisting in school-based English teacher development programmes, they also act as English language resource teachers in the schools.

*Remuneration package*

4. The package includes basic salary (same as local graduate teachers), passage, baggage allowance, a special allowance, medical allowance and a 15% end-of-contract gratuity.

*Qualifications for appointment*

5. NETs are required to possess native-speaker English competence. They should have a recognized degree in English, a Diploma in Teaching English

as a Foreign or Second Language and/or Post-graduate Certificate in Education, and at least 2 years' post-graduate experience in teaching English.

## **SUPPORT FOR NETs**

### ***Induction***

6. To help NETs adapt to the local school environment, an induction course, usually conducted in the last week of August and on two Saturday mornings in September, is provided for the new appointees every year.

### ***Professional Support and Pastoral Care***

7. Experience-sharing workshops are conducted and newsletters are produced for both the NETs and local English teacher's during the school year for sharing teaching ideas and materials. Regional seminars on effective deployment of NETs are also conducted for school heads and English panel chairpersons to disseminate good practices within the Scheme.

8. The NETs have formed among themselves an association and elected a liaison person to liaise with the Education Department (ED) on matters of common concern. Individual cases where NETs have personnel problems at school are referred to ED's Regional Education Offices (REOs) for follow up.

## **PRESENT POSITION**

9. In the 2001/02 school year, there are 460 NETs employed in 420 schools. Forty of them are the second NETs in CMI schools. The contracts with about 300 serving NETs will expire in August 2002. ED has started a recruitment drive aiming to recruit about 100 NETs for replacement. The exact number of new recruits required is subject to a survey to be conducted in February 2002.

## **EVALUATION AND MONITORING**

10. ED has set up a steering committee, chaired by the Deputy Director of Education, to monitor the implementation and progress of the Scheme, and make recommendations on the way forward. The committee takes the view that the NET Scheme is beneficial to the students in terms of the authentic language environment the NETs create for learning English and the different teaching approaches they bring into the schools.

11. The Standing Committee on Language Education & Research (SCOLAR) has commissioned the Hong Kong Institute of Education to conduct a

study - “Monitoring and Evaluation of the Native English Teacher Scheme (MENET)” from October 1998 to June 2001.

12. The study assesses achievement of the NET Scheme in meeting the following objectives –

- (1) Acting as English language resource persons in the schools;
- (2) Assisting in school-based teacher development; and
- (3) Helping to foster an enabling environment for students to speak English and practise their oral skills.

The research methodologies included case studies, questionnaire surveys and language proficiency assessments administered on a representative sample of schools involved in the Scheme. The questionnaire surveys covered students, school personnel and parents.

13. The MENET study has recently been completed. The study showed that all stakeholders - NETs, local English teachers, school management, students and parents - found that the NETs have achieved a positive impact in enriching the school language environment and bringing in a wider variety of teaching methods in the schools studied. The key findings of the study are summarized in the following paragraphs.

*Objective (1) : Acting as English language resource persons in the schools*

14. The questionnaire surveys for school personnel and parents as well as the case study provided strong evidence that this objective had been achieved within the first two years of the implementation of the Scheme. The perceptions recorded in questionnaire responses and case study interviews as well as direct observations reflected that the NETs had successfully operated as resource persons in the following aspects :

- Creating resources for language learning and development;
- Giving students greater confidence in using English;
- Instructional materials design;
- Introducing teaching innovations such as drama & creative writing;
- Running the English Corner and coaching students for competitions;
- Focusing on communicative task-based activities including free writing, newspaper reading and text-based exercises;
- Using an informal, more liberal approach, emphasizing positive and effective communication, using humour and a variety of interesting tasks and activities;

- Modelling appropriate language and coaching students in culturally appropriate behaviour; and
- Increasing staff and student opportunities to use English for socialisation purposes.

*Objective (2) : Assisting in school-based teacher development*

15. Evidence from the questionnaire survey results and the case study indicated some but not extensive achievement of this objective. The researcher opined that this may be due to a lack of peer sharing culture in Hong Kong schools which makes it difficult for NETs to take on the staff development function envisaged for them.

*Objective (3) : Helping to foster an enabling environment for students to speak English and practise their oral skills*

16. There are clear indications in the findings of the school personnel and parents' questionnaire of the extent to which NETs have helped to foster an enabling environment for students to speak and practise their oral skills. Respondents agreed that students have become better in speaking, listening and pronunciation, and have more confidence in using English to communicate as a result of exposure to NETs.

17. The results of the case study indicated relative success in the achievement of this objective. The work of the NETs is particularly appreciated in their provision of extra-curricular activities which involve modeling appropriate language and coaching students in culturally appropriate behaviour. The report noted an increase in both staff and student opportunities to use English for socialization purposes.

## **WAY FORWARD**

18. While the NET Scheme for secondary schools has by and large been running smoothly and brought about positive impact, there have been some problems encountered. A summary of the general problems and the measures which have been taken to resolve them is at Annex. ED will continue to work closely with the NETs to improve the teaching and learning of English in schools.

**Education Department**  
**January 2002**



<i>Problems</i>	<i>Remedial Measures</i>
<p><u>Student Discipline</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NETs, particularly those in ‘Band 5’ schools, have difficulties in classroom management.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ED has encouraged schools to arrange team teaching or split class teaching as necessary.</li> <li>ED will continue to include classroom management as one of the discussion topics for the experience sharing sessions for NETs and local English teachers.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Teaching &amp; Learning</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some NETs are assigned to teach oral classes only, making it difficult for them to know the students well enough to cater for their learning needs.</li> <li>There has been little professional exchange/ collaboration in the school and NETs are often forced to adopt the traditional teaching methods.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A survey on NET deployment conducted in 2000 showed that the majority (86.1%) of the NETs were assigned to teach full English language classes while 13.9% taught oral lessons only.</li> <li>The issue has also been discussed in the NET Scheme Steering Committee meetings. In general, representatives of various schools councils opined that some schools and their NETs have found the NETs’ expertise best used for improving the students’ English speaking and listening skills and that deployment of NETs should be school-based.</li> <li>ED will continue to run REO-based seminars for school heads and English panel chairpersons to disseminate good practices in NET deployment.</li> <li>ED’s Quality Assurance Inspectors and School Development Officers will enhance the school-based and district-based support in respect of teaching and learning.</li> <li>ED will continue to promote peer observation and professional collaboration.</li> </ul>