

For information

January 2005

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme in Primary Schools

Purpose

This paper updates Members on the implementation of the Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme in Primary Schools (PNET Scheme).

Background

2. Since 1987, expatriate English language teachers had been introduced on a small scale to local secondary schools to strengthen English learning and teaching. In 1997, the Legislative Council approved provision of one NET over and above the teacher establishment of each public sector secondary school. Built on the positive experience of the scheme, the NET scheme was formally introduced to public sector primary schools in 2002/03 school year after piloting for two years. Primary schools having six or more classes are eligible for the NET provision and every pair of eligible primary schools is allocated one NET. Currently, we have 313 NETs serving in primary schools. An Advisory Teaching Team (ATT) comprising NETs and local English teachers recruited or seconded to EMB has been established to provide centralised support to English teaching in primary schools provided with NETs, as well as to foster professional development of English teachers in primary schools with less than six classes.

English Language Support

3. The Primary NET (PNET) Scheme aims at (a) providing an authentic environment for students to learn English and develop their confidence in using English for communication; (b) facilitating local English teachers, through collaboration with PNET, to develop innovative learning and teaching methods and resources that best meet students' needs and (c) disseminating good practices through teacher development programmes. The PNET Scheme, however, will only have substantive impact when the Scheme is well integrated in schools with local English teachers, such that the language resources and expertise of NETs and local teachers

can reinforce each other for the benefit of English learning of students. The PNET Scheme is therefore positioned part and parcel of the overall English language support strategy the Administration is providing to schools.

4. The Administration provides a structured and also flexible English language curriculum for schools to develop a school-based English language teaching strategy that most suits the needs of schools and their students. Best practices and pedagogical insight are generated and disseminated through the collaborative research and development projects jointly carried out by the Administration and school teachers. The Administration has also, in accordance with the recommendation of the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research, established in 2004 a Task Force on Language Support. The Task Force consists of experienced language teachers and educators as advisors to provide support to primary schools (focusing more on Key Stage Two) and secondary schools (focusing on Key Stage Three) on Chinese and English. The Task Forces facilitates professional networking and exchange amongst schools through wider teacher development programmes targeting at language teachers including the NETs. The support will step up to benefit more schools as the work of the Task Force gradually phases in. The PNET Scheme is part of the coordinated English language support strategy and is complementing the curriculum development work and the professional support provided by the Task Force.

Enhanced Support Provided through PNET Scheme

5. The ATT acts as a bridge between the NETs and the school management to facilitate collaboration between the NETs and local English teachers through regular visits and professional development workshops organised for both NETs and local English teachers. The service was highly valued by schools, and on that basis, the Administration has launched a Primary Literacy Programme in the 2004/05 school year to provide schools with more focused support. The Primary Literacy Programme focuses on the literacy needs of Key Stage One students and concentrates on enhancing students learning to read and reading to learn with English. The programme is implemented through individualised school support jointly delivered by the ATT, the NET and local English teachers in schools, including on-site coaching service provided by ATT to the English Panel. In the 2004/05 school year, 105 primary schools are covered by the programme. The Administration plans to cover more primary schools in the next stage and evaluate the effectiveness of this particular professional deployment arrangement in the overall evaluation of the PNET Scheme.

6. To build on the critical mass of NETs engaged in primary schools in the first two years of the administration of the Scheme, the Administration is now expanding the provision of the PNET Scheme through recruiting more NETs on top of those provided to schools on a sharing basis, so that some pairs of schools will have an additional NET in this school year. Given the recruitment constraint as well as the need to guarantee quality of NETs, the expansion has to be on gradual. Not only do we require a large number of PNETs for the expansion, we also need to replenish the NETs who for professional or personal reasons do not wish to renew their contracts. The size of recruitment of the additional NETs is therefore substantive hence the recruitment effort has been stepped up to take in NETs in the middle of the school year if possible. Primary schools having more experience in deploying NETs and those with greater number of classes will benefit first as we expand, but eventually all eligible schools will get similar degree of support.

Evaluation

7. The PNET Scheme has been in place only for two years, however, at the outset the Administration has designed an evaluation study on the PNET Scheme. The evaluation study, commissioned to the Melbourne University in partnership with the Hong Kong Institute of Education, commenced in October 2003 and will take three years to complete. The evaluation study will study at the territory-wide level an in-depth longitudinal and cross-sectional evaluation with about 100 participating primary schools to assess to what extent the key objectives of the PNET Scheme are being achieved. The study has just gone through the first stage in establishing the baseline data for evaluation in subsequent stages. The evaluation is itself a professional exercise that will engage teachers and help foster collaboration in English teaching.

8. Besides the above territory-wide level evaluation study being in process, primary schools provided with PNETs are also requested to conduct self-evaluation to assess effectiveness of the PNET Scheme in their schools. The ATT has conducted workshops to provide schools with guidance and support for the self-evaluation, and is expecting results from schools for analysis. The ATT has however already observed that the NETs have greatly enhanced the English language learning and teaching environment. The presence of NETs in schools has helped create an authentic and print-rich English environment. More English is being used in school assemblies and meetings. NETs are organising and conducting extra-curricular

activities in English and help cultivating a reading culture, as well as assisting in the professional development of other teachers in the schools.

Way forward

9. The Administration shall inform Members development of the English language support strategy and the outcomes of the PNET evaluation when results are available.

Education and Manpower Bureau

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