

Mr. Tseung and ladies and gentlemen, I am here today to represent the Church of Christ in China's primary schools to speak to you about our ideas and opinions of the NET Scheme in terms of its current and future development. As an organisation, we feel that under the current NET scheme, whereby NET teachers are assigned to either one school (under the One-NET-One-School policy) or even two schools on a bi-weekly rota, the present number of NETs employed within each school is not adequate to meet the needs of our students. Each NET is already over extended working between many levels within one or two schools. We would like to see an extension in the programme with an extra NET teacher being supplied to each school, allowing two NETs to work within a single school would allow a much greater exposure and access to a native speaker of English thus better benefitting our pupils education needs.

Many newly minted NET teachers upon arriving in Hong Kong do not fully appreciate Hong Kong's diverse and colourful education system. This can lead to misunderstandings between local teachers and the native english teacher. So we propose that a concrete policy be undertaken to introduce new arrivals of the peculiarities of the Hong Kong education system, ideally within their induction week or some kind of immersion programme where NETs be allowed to shadow teachers and follow the inner workings of a Hong Kong school before beginning to teach.

The NET scheme, in recent years, has seen quite a large turnover in the number of first time contacting teachers leaving the territory. From listening to the experiences of fellow head teachers and NETs, it seems there is much confusion over how a NET should be deployed. Current policy is to leave the NET's deployment mainly up to the discretion of each individual school, with the EMB providing rough guidelines, this can lead to quite large disparities between the situations of some NETs and frustration on behalf of the school and the NET involved who may resent or refuse to follow a school's request. Newly contracted NETs arrive with a projected idea of being some form of 'an agent of change', but when taking up teaching duties within a school the reality of their situation is quite different to that which they envisaged or were prepared for. The EMB has promoted the NET teacher as a front line curriculum developer in an environment where curriculum development may not have been considered or at odds to expectations, development taking into account the needs of parents and students and not that necessarily encouraged by EMB mandate, this can also cause friction where lines of communication from the school and EMB become crossed at the NETs position in the chain.

In todays economic climate, inflation is currently rising and against a steadily declining US dollar, NET remuneration, in terms of salary and other allowances, is not keeping pace with the current trends, therefore we must ask whether the scheme is still as competitive and attractive to prospective NET teachers as it was in the past.

In summation, the Church of Christ in China, as an organisation, whole-heartedly supports and approves of the NET scheme in Hong Kong schools, but asks whether current policies go far enough to foster and sustain a human resource base of experienced and, above all, positively-minded/satisfied native-English teachers.