

For discussion on 16.11.98(4:30 p.m.)

LEGCO PANEL ON EDUCATION

Teaching of English Language in Schools **Progress of Measures to Enhance** **the Teaching of English Language in Schools**

Introduction

This paper briefly describes the progress of the measures to enhance the teaching of English language in schools, in particular the measures referred to in the 1998 Policy Objective, such as the provision of Native-speaking English Teachers (NET), and the development of language benchmarks for teachers of English.

2. The Education Department (ED) takes a proactive approach in improving the English standards among students. The major measures include the provision of additional facilities or resources, the NET Scheme, teacher education programmes, language courses and student activities.

NET Scheme

3. The Enhanced Native-speaking English Teacher (NET) Scheme has been implemented starting from the 1998-99 school year, with the

aim of enhancing the learning and teaching of English language in secondary schools.

4. Under the scheme, each public-sector secondary school is provided with one NET over and above its teacher establishment. Schools adopting Chinese as a Medium of Instruction (CMI) are allowed to fill one of their additional English teacher posts with an NET. Besides classroom teaching, NETs also act as resource persons in the school and help foster a native-speaking environment for students in the improvement of their English as well as assist in school-based teacher development.

5. As at 23.10.98, 337 NETs are in place in Hong Kong secondary schools with NETs recruited from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Great Britain and also a small number from Hong Kong.

6. Due to recruitment difficulties, there is still a shortfall of 113 NETs. The Education Department and some schools which elect to recruit their own NETs have already launched a second recruitment exercise. So far over 600 applications have been received by ED and interviews are currently taking place with a view to making offers by early December.

7. An induction programme was arranged for the first batch of NETs in August and a tender for induction, training and support services for the next batch of NETs is being processed. These services will include an induction programme on arrival to familiarize NETs with Hong Kong and Hong Kong education system, training workshops and experience-

sharing seminars with school teachers and incumbent NETs to help new- arrivals with relocation and familiarisation.

8. A project to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the enhanced NET Scheme has been commissioned by the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR). There will be an interim report by 1999-2000 school year and a final report in 2000-2001 school year. A steering committee chaired by the Deputy Director of Education has been established to monitor the implementation and progress of the NET Scheme, to advise on induction and in-service and support services.

Progress of English Language Enhancement Measures for schools adopting Chinese Medium of Instruction (CMI)

9. To strengthen the teaching and learning of English in CMI schools, they are provided with additional recurrent English Language Grant per class for purchase of English learning materials and teaching aids from the 1998/1999 school year. Schools adopting CMI are also provided with additional English teachers.

10. With funding from the Language Fund, each CMI school may apply for \$30,000 to set up "an English Corner", and up to \$146,400 to organise additional school-based English language programmes. To date, 231 and 252 schools have obtained funding for the school-based Enhanced English Programme and the English Corner respectively.

Language Resource Centre (LRC) for Teachers

11. A multi-media learning centre to improve support services for language teaching, with particular reference to multi-media technology, was established in August 1998. The Centre is open to all language teachers, and staff from the ED are available for consultation and advice. The LRC aims to improve support services for language teaching and learning in schools with particular reference to the application of computer technology to develop links between teachers and various institutions, and to enhance the exchange of ideas and teaching materials. A lease line for connecting to the Internet and serving the Local Area Network (LAN) has also been set up.

English Language Projects under the Language Fund

12. Since 1994 the Language Fund, currently managed by SCOLAR, has been supporting English language education research and school based activities throughout Hong Kong. So far, 81 language enhancement projects in English have been funded to the amount of \$114.84M. English projects include extra curricular activities (such as those run by the Chatteris Foundation); English courses for students (such as Intensive English Language Programme for S6 students in CMI schools and the Intensive English Course for S7 students in English Medium of Instruction schools); development of multi-media language resources (such as CD-roms for primary English language learning); radio and television programmes (produced by RTHK); and teacher support (such as instruction materials, teachers' seminar, on-line network for English teachers and pilot NET Scheme in primary schools).

Language Benchmarks for Teachers

13. To enhance the language standards of teachers and promote effective teaching, ECR6 recommended the development of language benchmarks for all teachers. The Chief Executive announced in his Policy Address in October 1997 that all new teachers would be required to meet established language benchmarks by year 2000 and serving language teachers would be required to meet the benchmarks by 2005. All serving teachers would be required to meet the benchmarks by 2008.

14. Serving teachers have two avenues to reach the benchmarks. They may attend language courses provided by the Government. Teachers will be benchmarked upon satisfactory completion of the courses. Adequate training opportunities will be provided in the next ten years at an annual cost of \$65 million. Alternatively, teachers may opt for a benchmark assessment to be jointly administered by the Hong Kong Examinations Authority and the Education Department. Teachers who are not successful in the assessment will be given the opportunity to attend language courses provided by the Government and be subsequently benchmarked. New teachers will mainly be benchmarked through the teacher training courses they attend locally.

15. The Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications (ACTEQ), which is tasked to develop language benchmarks for teachers, has in the first instance developed tentative language benchmarks for teachers of English in lower secondary forms, primary school teachers of Putonghua and primary teachers using Chinese as the medium of

instruction. Plans are being made to develop language benchmarks for other school levels.

16. To ensure that the benchmarks developed will fully meet the needs of the profession and schools, ACTEQ is conducting a pilot exercise involving a small sample of around 800 serving teachers. Four briefing sessions were held in October to enable teachers to learn more about the arrangements for the pilot, and future implementation of the benchmark policy. Over 3,500 teachers attended the briefings. The enthusiastic response is highly encouraging. The pilot assessment involves two main parts : classroom observation conducted by assessors of the Education Department, and a written and oral test administered by the Hong Kong Examinations Authority. The classroom observation has just begun and will last until February 1999. The written/oral test will take place in January/February 1999.

Others

17. Apart from the above, there are other language enhancement measures in the area of curriculum renewal, in-service teacher education, as well as reading and writing schemes -

- The Curriculum Development Council has revised the English Language Syllabus for P1 - 6 (1997) with clearly defined learning targets, objectives and teaching strategies to enable teachers to better plan their lessons. The English Language Syllabus for S1 - 5 and the Use of English

Syllabus are being revised along the same lines to provide clearer guidelines on the teaching and learning of English.

- In-service teacher education courses which focus on programmes for newly appointed teachers of English and for panel chairpersons are organised on top of other short thematic courses for the same target group.
- Specialist refresher courses for teachers of English have been provided since 1982. Extension courses and UK immersion courses for secondary English teachers were introduced in 1987 and UK Immersion programmes for English language student teachers were begun in 1992.
- To help students develop a good habit of reading in English and to improve their English proficiency, an English Extensive Reading Scheme has been implemented in upper primary and lower secondary schools. Schools participating in the scheme are provided with graded readers and reading support packages. In the 1998-99 academic year, 164 primary schools and 199 secondary schools are participating in the scheme. Reading awards are offered to encourage students to read more.
- In the 1997-98 school year, a new extensive reading in (English) project was launched to provide extensive reading to all levels of primary and secondary schooling over a period of four years. Each school is provided with a book

grant for the purchase of reading materials. The Grant amounts to \$13,500 for secondary schools, \$6,500 for primary schools and \$3,250 for primary schools with 12 classes or less. Recommended booklists for the reference of schools are also provided.

- English Extensive Writing Packages are provided to enhance students' writing skills for purposeful communication. Curriculum support packages to cover Key Stages 1 to 4 will be produced. These packages contain user guides, teaching hints, and materials to cater for learner differences.

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