

Legislative Council Panel on Education

**Native-speaking English Teacher and
English Language Teaching Assistant Scheme
in Public-sector Primary Schools**

PURPOSE

This paper seeks Members' views on the implementation of 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.

BACKGROUND

2. Since 1987, the Education Department (ED) has provided expatriate English language teachers in a small scale to secondary schools to strengthen English learning and teaching. From the 1998-99 school year, NETs are provided to all public-sector secondary schools to strengthen English learning and teaching. The NETs are to (a) enrich the language environment in schools; (b) act as a resource person to bring in effective teaching methods from overseas; and (c) assist in school-based teacher development.

3. Since 1997, pilot projects have also been conducted to introduce native English-speakers to primary schools to try out the various modes of operation with the support of the Language Fund and Quality Education Fund (QEF).

4. In addition, ELTAs have been provided to schools in a small scale by Chatteris Foundation (a non-profit making organisation) since 1994, with financial support from the Language Fund, The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust and the QEF. The ELTAs provided by Chatteris Foundation are mostly English native-speaking high school or above students who take some time off to travel overseas before further studies. They assist the school teachers both inside and outside the classroom in conducting English learning and teaching activities. ELTAs were initially provided mainly to secondary schools and, in recent years, increasingly to primary schools. Feedback from

both secondary and primary schools have been very positive, as evidenced by a strong and increasing demand for such a service.

5. An evaluation of the secondary NET scheme and some pilot primary NET schemes has recently been completed. The study 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 (both primary and secondary). Anecdotal evidence from the Primary Schools English Development (PSED) Project (a pilot primary NET project currently run by ED, with funding from QEF, to last until August 2002) also indicated that there have been positive impacts on students and local English teachers. The students are found to have more confidence in using English for communication and show an increasing interest in learning the language. The local English teachers also find the professional collaboration with the NETs a rewarding experience where they can learn from each other. The primary school sector has been asking for the extension of the NET Scheme to primary schools. Various school councils have also on different occasions enquired about the possibility.

PROPOSAL

Objectives

6. The proposed NET & ELTA Scheme aims to support and strengthen English language teaching and learning for all public sector primary schools in one form or another by -

- (a) providing an authentic environment for children to learn English;
- (b) developing children's interest in learning English, helping them build the confidence for near-native communication, cultivating a lasting interest in, and establishing the foundation for, life-long learning of the language;
- (c) helping local teachers develop innovative teaching and learning methods, materials, curricula and activities suited to the needs of local children; and
- (d) disseminating good practices in language teaching and learning developed within the scheme through Regional Education Office (REO) - based teacher development programmes such as experience-sharing seminars/workshops and networking activities.

Mode of operation

7. We have explored four possible modes of providing English language teaching support to primary schools –

- Mode A – To provide a school-based NET, one for each school;
- Mode B – To provide NETs to schools on a sharing basis, with one NET serving two schools;
- Mode C – To provide a cash grant of \$150,000 a year for schools to hire ELTA services;
- Mode D – To provide peripatetic support to schools through a central NET team.

8. While Mode A will provide each school with the dedicated service of a NET, our experience with the NET Scheme in secondary schools and the PSED project indicates that not all schools are ready to take on a full time NET to work independently with local teachers since there needs to be a cultural adjustment on the part of the schools as well as that of the NETs. Providing NETs to schools on a sharing basis, with central support in staff development and pastoral care, in the initial period at least, would allow individual schools time to try out how to effectively deploy the NET to collaborate with local English teachers. Moreover, in view of a world-wide shortage of native English-speaking language teachers, there would be practical difficulties in recruiting sufficient number of NETs to run the Scheme completely in Mode A from the outset. Therefore, we propose to implement the Scheme in Mode B by providing one NET for every two schools with six classes or more (see para. 11 below for arrangement for schools with less than six classes). When they have accumulated solid experience, schools may then try out Mode A on an application and merit basis. We also expect these more experienced schools to share their experience with other schools in the region through, e.g. lesson demonstrations and sharing sessions.

9. All public-sector primary schools will be invited to apply to participate in the Scheme. The applications need not be elaborate, but are only for the schools to set out how they would make the best use of the additional resources to ensure that they have carefully considered their needs and the commitment involved. The schools will be required to assign an experienced School English Teacher (SET) to work collaboratively with the NET. The SET will act as a bridge between the NET and the school management and will mentor other English teachers in the same school so as to facilitate institutionalization of innovative/effective teaching methods and curriculum resources developed collaboratively with the NET in the school. The roles of the primary school NETs are set out in Annex 1.

10. In the event that we are unable to recruit sufficient NETs to provide NETs on a sharing basis to all primary schools who have applied to join the Scheme, we will provide English language teaching support to some schools in Mode C. We will offer each of these schools a cash grant of \$150,000 (i.e. the cost of an ELTA provided by Chatteris Foundation) each year to hire full-time or part-time native-speaking ELTAs to run English language activities and to assist in the development, production, implementation and evaluation of learning/teaching/assessment activities and materials. Schools could also use the grant to hire similar services from agencies using native English speakers. We will conduct a tendering exercise to help schools identify providers of such services. Suggested ways to use the cash grant are listed in Annex 2.

11. For schools with less than six classes, we will provide the NET service more cost-effectively in Mode D whereby schools will receive NET support centrally from an Advisory Teaching Team (ATT) comprising NETs and seconded local English teachers (LETs).

Monitoring and support

12. ED will oversee the implementation and evaluation of the Scheme. Regular visits to schools will be made to monitor progress and evaluate effectiveness. Experience from both the secondary NET Scheme and the PSED Project shows that support in terms of staff development, development of effective methods in teaching/learning, dissemination of good teaching practices and subsequent evaluation is essential for achieving the objectives of the Scheme. Pastoral care and induction programmes are also important to assist the NETs in adapting to the local environment.

13. ED will provide central support by way of an ATT comprising 20 NETs and 20 LETs. The ATT will design and operate regular staff development programmes for the NETs and the SETs and conduct school development visits to monitor the deployment of NETs in individual schools. It will provide support for the development of innovative teaching methods and related curriculum resources and disseminate the outcome of the PSED Project and good teaching practices in primary schools. The ATT will also provide NET support in Mode D to schools with less than six classes (see para. 11 above).

14. In addition to setting up the ATT, ED will commission one or more agencies to form professional support team(s) (PSTs). While the ATT will support staff development in terms of pedagogy and the implementation of innovative methods and models, the PSTs will focus on the monitoring and evaluation of the Scheme as well as the provision of pastoral care.

Qualifications for appointment as primary school NET

15. NETs are required to possess native-speaker English competence, a recognised degree in English, and relevant teacher training qualifications. Preference will be given to those with experience and/or qualifications in teaching English as a foreign or second language. Discretion will be exercised on the merit of individual cases in appointing NETs who may not possess all these qualifications but have ample relevant experience.

16. The terms of appointment will be the same as for the NETs employed in secondary schools, i.e. basic salary plus passage, baggage allowance, special allowance, medical allowance and contract gratuity.

Recruitment efforts

17. We envisage recruitment difficulties, against the background that there is a global shortage of English teachers. We would step up recruitment efforts by publicising the recruitment drive through different channels, such as the Internet, overseas tertiary institutions and teacher unions/federations. Schools and school sponsoring bodies are also encouraged to recruit NETs directly.

ADVICE SOUGHT

18. Members are invited to give support to the proposal as set out in paragraphs 6 to 17 above. Subject to Members' support of the proposal, we will include the additional provision required for 2002-03 and thereafter in the annual draft Estimates.

Education Department
January 2002

Proposed Duties of NETs in Primary Schools

1. To undertake teaching duties and try out good teaching models/practices related to the learning, teaching and assessment of English;
2. To provide support for the English panel, including contributing to school-based curriculum development and professional development of fellow teachers as well as developing and preparing learning/teaching materials;
3. To organize and conduct extra-curricular activities related to English learning and teaching such as plays/skit performances, school-based English camps, English language games (day), story-telling activities, songs and dances, verse speaking, and extensive reading; and, if applicable, to contribute to other extra-curricular activities such as IT, art and craft activities and sports;
4. To act as an advisor on language teaching and learning for the principal and teachers in the school; and

(For NETs in Mode A schools)

5. To play an active role in REO-based teacher development programmes, including lesson demonstrations and leading experience-sharing with other teachers.

Use of Cash Grant

Schools can use the cash grant to hire outside services and/or personnel on a temporary basis outside the permanent staff establishment for enhancing pupils' English language proficiency according to their own circumstances. The personnel hired should be native-speakers of English and the hired services must be provided by people who possess native-speaker English competence. ED will conduct a tendering exercise to identify multiple suppliers for schools to hire their service.

2. The following are examples of how the grant may be used:
 - (a) To hire outside services to run English language activities in order to arouse pupils' interest in learning the language and to enhance their language skills;
 - (b) To employ part-time native-speaking teachers/teaching assistants to assist in the learning, teaching and assessment of English, including taking part in class teaching and conducting related extra-curricular activities;
 - (c) To employ native-speaking teaching assistants to assist the English panel in the development, production, implementation and evaluation of learning/teaching/assessment activities and materials; and
 - (d) To hire full-time ELTAs, either directly or through service providers, to perform the duties as outlined in (b) above.