

For discussion on 16 December 2002

Legislative Council Panel on Education
Information Paper
on Recruitment of Native-speaking English Teachers

Purpose

This paper informs members of

- (i) the results of the recruitment of Native-speaking English Teachers (NET) under the Enhanced Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme for secondary schools and the Native-speaking English Teacher and English Language Teaching Assistant (ELTA) Scheme for primary schools for 2002/03 school year; and
- (ii) new measures to ensure recruitment targets are met for 2003/04 school year.

Background

2. In the meeting on 21 January 2002, members were briefed on the implementation of the NET and ELTA Scheme in primary schools, including the appointment requirements and the terms and conditions of service for NETs, with effect from September 2002 and also the progress of the Enhanced NET Scheme in secondary schools. Members requested the Administration to report to the Panel on the results of the current round of NET recruitment.

Results of Recruitment

Enhanced NET Scheme in secondary schools

3. Eighty-four (84) new secondary NETs were required for 2002/03. The Education Department was entrusted by schools to recruit 62 NETs, the rest to be recruited directly by schools. Turnover rates for the secondary NETs have been about 25% for the past three years.

4. A total of 1 353 applications were received. Five interview boards (four overseas and one local) were convened to interview candidates. After the initial screening, 617 applicants were considered to have met the minimum requirements for appointment and invited for an interview. A total of 398 candidates actually turned up for the interviews and, after a vigorous selection process, 250 candidates were recommended by the boards for appointment. At the end of the process, we were able to meet the target of recruiting 62 NETs on behalf of schools. We had a waiting list of 44 candidates. For those waitlisted candidates who possessed primary education training/experience, an option was provided for them to switch to the primary sector. Consequently, 5 of these candidates were appointed as NET in primary schools. The remaining candidates would be recommended to secondary schools for appointment in the next school year when vacancies arise. The total recruitment cost incurred by ED was about \$2m, which means approximately \$20,000 per NET recruited (including those put on the waiting list).

5. The supply of secondary NETs has been more than sufficient to meet the needs of Hong Kong.

NET and ELTA Scheme in primary schools

6. Three hundred and fifty (350) school-based primary NETs were targeted for recruitment to meet the needs of the new scheme to start up September 2002. At the outset, members discussed in January 21 the need of a cash grant to buy in part-time NET and ELTA services as a contingency arrangement to schools in face of difficulties which might be encountered in meeting the target for 2002/03 school year. To support

the school-based primary NETs, an Advisory Teaching Team (20 NETs and 20 Local English Teachers [LETs]) was to be established.

7. A total of 1 825 applications for the school-based NET post were received. Eight interview boards (six overseas and two local) were set up. About 60% of the candidates were found having met the basic requirements for appointment. Among the 1 070 shortlisted candidates, 518 actually turned up for the interviews; 264 candidates were recommended by the boards for appointment. At the end of the process, we were able to recruit 130 NETs. Including 39 NETs recruited directly by schools/school sponsoring bodies, there are a total of 169 NETs in the 2002/03 school year (approximately 50% of the NETs required).

8. A total of 495 applications for the NET posts of the Advisory Teaching Team (ATT) were also received. There were 215 candidates shortlisted for interview, some of whom applied for both the ATT and the NET posts. The interview boards recommended 72 candidates for appointment, of whom 25 were found also suitable for the school-based NET posts. We were able to meet the target of recruiting 20 NETs for the ATT. Of the excess recommended candidates, 19 were appointed as primary NETs and 28 remain on the waiting list for ATT.

9. The total recruitment cost incurred by ED was around \$2.5m, which means about \$16,000 per NET recruited. The NET recruitment situation as at December 2002 is at Appendix.

Shortfall under the NET and ELTA Scheme in Primary Schools

10. The high attrition rate from application to final appointment is due to the following:

- (a) some candidates failed to provide the required documents/information for qualifications assessment.
- (b) applicants were not considered suitable by the panels according to the selection criteria.
- (c) candidates decided on balance not to take up the offer to relocate to another country.
- (d) some candidates had got other job commitments before

being notified of the selection results.

11. Against the background of a global demand for native English-speaking teachers and the high number of NETs targeted for the start up of the primary NET scheme in the 2002/03 school year, members endorsed the release of a cash grant of \$150,000 to schools not provided with a NET to enable them to obtain part-time NET and ELTA service. About 50% of the primary schools are currently provided with the cash grant. The schools could make use of the grant to employ part-time NET or ELTA or hire NET/ELTA services. A list of service providers and a set of guidelines on the use of the cash grant have been provided for these schools. Schools are expected to ensure they receive the most effective services for English language support available within the resources provided.

12. It is anticipated all schools will be provided with NET for the 2003/04 school year so that the contingency cash grant arrangement will not be required.

Way Forward

13. The recruitment of secondary and primary NETs for the 2003/04 school year is underway, some 3 months in advance of last year. Several new measures are being introduced to improve our processes to ensure the target for 2003/04 is met and that only high quality NETs are recruited. These measures include:

(a) Contract the service of recruitment to agency from overseas

We have commissioned an overseas agency to recruit primary NETs from Australia and New Zealand for the 2003/04 school year. Fifty-five percent (55%) of current NETs in Hong Kong come from this region. The agency specialising in educational recruitment will have a wider network to “capture” more potential candidates from the locality where it is stationed. The agency will take care of the tasks of inviting applications, short-listing, qualification checking, experience and reference checking, as well as initial interview. The cost per teacher recruitment will be approximately \$15,000 representing a more cost-effective process. However, the greatest anticipated gain is to have a continuous process at the local level to

establish a supply queue of quality candidates.

(b) Use of Information Technology

It is considered important that our school principals, English panel heads and subject inspectors are involved in the final selection interview. In order to save traveling time, we would make use of video/tele-conferencing in the final interview for those recommended candidates from Australia and New Zealand. The agency will send us the list of recommended candidates and relevant information in batches so that video/tele-conferencing interviews can be conducted in HK by stages and offers of appointment made earlier.

(c) Further streamlining of the recruitment process

The recruitment process will be further streamlined by:

- making full use of the recruitment agency, who has ample local experience, in the qualification and reference check for the Australian and New Zealand candidates and thereby shortening the qualification assessment process;
- making conditional offers of appointment to the “low-risk” candidates before the qualification assessments are completed to allow more time for them to arrange for relocation; quality assurance of qualifications and experience is an essential task, however for the great majority of candidates, the formal process can operate along side, rather than before, the offer and relocation arrangements; and
- contracting out the recruitment services to other countries (such as UK and Canada) based on the experience of the coming exercise.

Education Department
December 2002

Appendix

NET Recruitment Situation as at December 2002

	Secondary NET	Primary NET	ATT NET
No. required	84	350	20
No. of applications received	1353	1825	495
No. shortlisted	617	1070	215
No. attended interview	398	518	147
No. recommended	250	264	72
No. having completed Qualification Assessment & referred to schools for consideration	148	200	26
No. accepted by schools / ATT	67	155	25
No. having accepted offer	62	130	20
No. directly recruited by school	22	39	Not applicable
Total newly recruited	84	169	20
Total in post in 2002/03	471	169*	20

* Ten of these NETs will assume duty in Jan/Feb. 2003.