



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部教育局
Education Bureau

Government Secretariat, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

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18 June 2013

Clerk to Panel
Legislative Council Panel on Education
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central
Hong Kong
(Attn: Ms Polly YEUNG)

Dear Ms YEUNG,

**Legislative Council Panel on Education
Special Meeting to be held on 22 June 2013**

With regard to the two papers, LC Papers No. CB(4) 717/12-13(01) and (02) tabled by the Deputy Chairman of the Panel on Education and the request for additional information on 'the profile of the years of service of regular teachers employed on approved establishment at government and aided primary and secondary schools' in your letter dated 11 June 2013, please find enclosed our written responses at the **Annex**.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S H YU'.

(Miss S H YU)

for Secretary for Education

**Responses to Views Set out in
LC Paper No. CB(4)717/12-13(01) and (02), and
Information requested in Letter from Clerk to Panel dated 11 June 2013**

Views on Workload

1. The Education Bureau (EDB) is asked to address the issue of the excessive number of teaching periods (an average of 26 teaching periods per week which is far higher than that in other countries) which lead to heavy teaching load and work pressure on teachers. The EDB is urged to set a reasonable number of teaching periods for teachers.

EDB's Response:

- We note that the workload of 26 teaching periods per week for teachers in Hong Kong has been quoted in the above-said comparison. We would like to clarify that as set out in EDB's reply (Serial No.: EDB080) for the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee to examine the draft Estimates of Expenditure 2013-14 on the Education programme areas, the average numbers of teaching periods for government secondary and primary school teachers per cycle for the school year 2012/13 are 25 and 26 respectively, and those for aided secondary and primary school teachers are all 26. The figures are calculated by averaging the number of teaching periods as reported by individual teachers in schools. No adjustment has been made to cater for the variation in the duration of teaching periods, the number of teaching periods per cycle as well as the number of teaching days per cycle (which may range from 5 to 10 teaching days) that exist among schools.
- By nature, teachers' work in schools is diverse. It is over-simplified and injudicious to use the number of teaching periods as an indicator of teachers' workload as, setting aside other non-teaching duties, teaching load per se is affected by a host of factors, including the duration of teaching periods, the subject taught, the class level, actual class size, pedagogy adopted, the availability of ancillary staff and additional teachers employed with grants to support classroom teaching. Also,

teaching load varies in different periods of the school term, and in general varies inversely with the rank of the teachers to create space for the senior-rank teachers to undertake more school administration and management duties. In broad context, there exist great variations in economic and political structures, education policies and systems in allocating education resources in different regions/countries which lead to disparity in the number of teaching periods. Therefore, the number of teaching periods is not used as an indicator for international comparison.

- As the number of teaching periods does not truly reflect the workload of a teacher, and teachers are also assigned non-teaching tasks, it is not feasible to quantify teachers' work or standardize the numbers of teaching periods for all teachers.
- At present, the work situation of teachers in Hong Kong, as defined by the student-to-teacher ratio, is comparable to our neighbouring countries and other developed countries. Information about the student-to-teacher ratio is set below:

Country	Primary	Junior Secondary	Senior Secondary
China	17.2:1	15.0:1	18.4:1
Korea	21.1:1	19.7:1	16.5:1
Japan	18.4:1	14.4:1	12.2:1
United Kingdom	19.8:1	17.1:1	15.2:1
United States	14.5:1	14.0:1	15.0:1

* Source: 2010 data from *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing.

The student-to-teacher ratios for primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong are 14.4:1 and 14.5:1 respectively in the 2012/13 school year and are no inferior to the above countries.

Views on Teachers' Non-teaching Duties

2. The EDB is asked to address the issue of the various kinds of non-teaching duties undertaken by teachers in recent years.

EDB's Response:

- We all along attach great importance to alleviating teachers' workload and pressure. In this regard, the recommendations put forth by the Committee on Teachers' Work in 2006 about teachers' work and related issues have been accepted and implemented progressively. Since 2006, additional regular teaching posts have been created to support specialized teaching, curriculum leadership and student guidance in primary schools and to support the academic low achievers in secondary schools. Time-limited posts have also been created to support primary schools to prepare for the implementation of small class teaching.
- A number of support measures have also been put in place to reduce the administrative work of teachers. For instance, schools have been given additional grants (such as the Capacity Enhancement Grant) and greater flexibility in deploying their financial resources for employing additional staff or hiring services to provide teachers with appropriate support. The school accountability mechanism and administrative procedures have been streamlined. Schools are encouraged to make use of information technology in handling administrative work to relieve teachers of their administrative workload.
- To help schools enhance the efficiency of administrative work, a pilot project on Strengthening Schools' Administration Management (pilot project) are launched in two phases with 30 public sector schools in the 2011/12 school year and another 30 in mid-2013. Participating schools identify areas for improvement with a view to strengthening school administration, streamlining procedures and enhancing efficiency. We believe that the pilot project would provide an authentic and empirical basis for formulating further policy and measures to better support schools' administration and management work, and thereby reducing teachers' administrative work. The feedback so far is positive.

Meanwhile, good practices and useful information gathered from the two phases of the pilot project will be disseminated to other public sector schools.

Views on Disbursement of Various Grants

3. The EDB is asked to continue the disbursement of the cash grants such as the Liberal Studies Curriculum Support Grant (LSCSG), grants provided under the Enhanced English Scheme (EES) and Refined Enhanced English Scheme (REES), before any new policy comes out. Discontinuation of these three grants will result in an estimate of more than 800 contract teachers / teaching assistants losing their jobs next year and most of them are young teachers.

EDB's Response:

- Both the English Enhancement Scheme (EES) and Refined English Enhancement Scheme (REES) under the Language Fund are time-limited initiatives with designated objectives at the time of inception. This has been made clear at the launch of the schemes in 2006 and 2010 respectively. The EES aims to enhance students' English proficiency through facilitating strategic and holistic school-based plans on capacity building of English teachers within a time-frame as long as six years. The REES, on the other hand, was designed to give at most three years of support for the fine-tuned medium of instruction arrangements for secondary schools implemented from the 2010/11 school year.
- The additional staff, including teachers and teaching assistants, hence employed by the participant schools of the two schemes are temporary and time-limited in nature. Schools, upon completion of their approved projects, should have attained the target outcomes as pledged in their project proposals.
- The Liberal Studies Curriculum Support Grant (LSCSG) is a non-recurrent grant provided to schools to create, at the initial stage of implementing the new academic structure, favorable conditions for the introduction of Liberal Studies. Schools were informed of the nature and the time-limited duration of the grant when it was disbursed.
- Since the 2008/09 school year, schools have been and will continue to be

provided with the Senior Secondary Curriculum Support Grant (SSCSG), which can be deployed flexibly to support the on-going implementation of the NSS curriculum, including Liberal Studies. It is worth noting that the SSCSG was originally designated to support *specifically* the implementation of Liberal Studies but was later expanded to other aspects of the NSS curriculum at the suggestion of the school sector to give schools greater flexibility. As stipulated in the Education Bureau Circular Memorandum (EDBCM) No. 75/2008, *schools should first consult their teachers and then seek the approval of their School Management Committees or Incorporated Management Committees on the flexible use of the SSCSG.* In so doing, schools should bear in mind factors such as their specific situations, the learning needs of students as well as the challenges faced by the school in implementing the NSS curriculum, including Liberal Studies, such as the possible need to deploy additional manpower and resources to alleviate teachers' workload, handle the work relating to the Independent Enquiry Study and conduct group teaching.

- It was stated at the outset that the Enhanced SSCSG, comprising the equivalent of four years of 0.15 Graduate Master (GM) midpoint salary per each senior secondary class per annum between the 2008/09 – 2011/12 school years, would lapse and be clawed back at its expiry. As the tenure of the Enhanced SSCSG is about to expire and considering that a great majority of schools still have unspent balance (some quite sizeable too) in the said account, we will extend the tenure of the grant to cover the 2013/14 school year. In short, schools will be given one more year to deploy the remaining balance of the time-limited Enhanced SSCSG designated for supporting the implementation of the NSS in the initial years. We have informed schools of the arrangement on 6 June 2013 through the EDBCM No. 65/2013. Meanwhile, starting from 2012/13 school year, schools will receive annually at the rate of 0.1 GM per senior secondary class, amounting to about \$0.57 million for a school with 4 classes for each senior secondary form for the 2012/13 school year.

Views on the Work Pressure Relating to the NAS

4. The implementation of the New Academic Structure (NAS) has further aggravated the problem of work pressure on teachers. Teachers are required to conduct school-based assessments (SBA) for various New Senior Secondary (NSS) subjects and deal with the problem of learner diversity and cater for students' special education needs. The EDB should improve the class-to-teacher ratio to increase the teacher manpower of schools.

EDB's Response :

- A review of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum and assessment has been launched since mid-2012 . While the broad objectives of the review are to evaluate the achievement of policy intentions, strengths and challenges of NAS, as well as identify and share good practices, another focus of the review is to address the practical concerns of schools on issues such as teachers' workload. Short-term as well as medium- and long-term recommendations have been made based on the feedback collected. The details of measures regarding the NSS curriculum and the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination which have been adopted are listed in the **Appendix**.

With these measures, teachers will have a clearer understanding of the breadth and depth of the curriculum and assessment requirements; for some subjects, they teach less curriculum content and arrange less SBA tasks, without compromising our professional principles and standards. The total curriculum time is also moderated significantly from 2,700 hours to 2,400 ± 200 hours. All these measures upon implementation can help reduce the workload of and the pressure on both teachers and students to a certain extent.

- We must emphasize that class-to-teacher ratios only serve as a basis applicable to all schools for calculating regular posts on the staff establishment. The teaching staff resources available to a school should not be and are not measured solely by the ratios. Additional regular teaching posts for specific programmes and cash grants which can be used for employment of additional teachers/ teaching assistants to

support teaching and learning should be taken into consideration as well. Moreover, secondary schools concerned also benefited from a reduced student-to-class ratio commencing the 2013/14 school year brought about by various relief measures which are put in force to address the issue of Secondary One (S1) student population drop in recent years. For details about the EDB's response to the issue of class-to-teacher ratios in secondary schools and the aforementioned relief measures, please refer to the LC Paper No. CB(4)685/12-13(06).

- In fact, we have been providing various supporting measures to enhance learning and teaching efficacy and strengthen the curriculum leadership at schools for the effective implementation of the NSS curriculum. These support measures include conducting professional development programmes for school leaders and middle managers, and subject-based professional development programmes, providing learning and teaching resources, collecting and sharing of good practices, developing district networks, providing school-based support, etc. When schools gain more experience and teachers further enhance their capacity, the NSS curriculum will be carried out more smoothly and steadily.
- To further strengthen the support for schools having admitted a greater number of students with SEN, we will raise the ceiling of the Learning Support Grant from \$1 million to \$1.5 million per school per annum with effect from the 2013/14 school year. Schools may use the grant and pool other resources as well to employ additional teaching staff and/or assistants and procure professional services as appropriate to cater for the needs of their students. We will also continue to extend progressively the School-based Educational Psychology Service, with the target of covering all public sector primary and secondary schools by the 2016/17 school year. For public sector secondary schools, we also provide additional teachers to support schools which have enrolled Bottom 10 % students and other territory Band 3 students. These teachers together with the regular teachers provided through the class-to-teacher ratios help implement whole school approach to supporting academic low achievers and in arranging split-class or small group teaching for the core subjects to increase teacher-student interaction. In the 2012/13 school year, we have provided about 600 additional teachers to schools under this measure.

Views relating to Contract Teachers

5. The EDB is asked:

(A) to address the proliferation of contract teachers arising from the provision to schools of grants but not regular teaching posts. EDB's policy of providing teaching staff resources to schools has deprived young teachers of the opportunity to enter into the teaching profession and adversely affect the succession of teachers in schools in future; and

(B) to provide additional information on the profile of the years of service of regular teachers employed on approved establishment at government and aided primary and secondary schools (the letter from the Clerk to the Panel on Education dated 11 June 2013 is relevant).

EDB's Response to (A):

- The purpose of providing cash grants to schools is for meeting specific policy objectives. Each school is unique with its own vision and mission, student mix as well as school development needs and priorities. The provision of cash grants for schools to appoint teaching/ancillary staff and/or to procure professional/educational services on top of the provision of regular teachers allows schools enhanced flexibility in deploying their resources and to facilitate their implementation of educational initiatives and school-based development. In fact, the present situation is that a significantly high percentage (around 90%) of the serving teachers are regular teachers being employed within the establishment; the apportionment of regular teachers and contract teacher is considered appropriate in maintaining teacher stability on one hand and providing flexibility to schools on the other. For details about the EDB's response to the issue of teachers employed on contract terms in primary and secondary schools, please refer to LC Paper No. CB(4)756/12-13(04)
- The decline in S1 student population in the coming few years is a temporary phenomenon. To address this, we would launch a basket of targeted relief measures to help sustain the development of schools, stabilize the teaching force and maintain the quality of education.

These measures can greatly relieve the problem of redundant teachers as well as minimize the competition between the redundant teachers and new teachers for the teaching posts in the labour market. On the basis of the teacher turnover situation in the past, there are about 2 000 primary and secondary school teachers leaving the profession each year due to retirement and other reasons. Although the number of teaching posts in secondary schools will likely decrease, the teaching vacancies arising from natural turnover coupled with a higher demand for teachers arising from the gradual increase in primary student population can help to absorb the new teachers.

- Most of the cash grants, for example the Capacity Enhancement Grant (CEG), Learning Support Grant (LSG) and Senior Secondary Curriculum Support Grant (SSCSG) are provided on a recurrent basis. Schools are therefore able to plan and deploy the resources strategically to meet their schools' needs and to provide a more stable working environment for their contract teachers. We have been encouraging schools to remunerate contract teachers according to the salary scales of the regular teachers and to provide them with the same leave benefits. In the aspect of professional development, contract teachers, same as the regular teachers, are eligible to apply for the wide range of professional development programmes organized by the EDB. With the experience gained and professional capability enhanced, these contract teachers will become more competitive. When opportunities of regular teaching posts arise due to retirement of teachers etc., they will have greater opportunities of turning into regular teachers.

EDB's Response to (B):

- As we have not kept the teachers' full employment history in the teacher information system, we do not have readily available information on the years of service of regular teachers employed on the approved establishment of government and aided schools.
- As regards the employment prospect of the prospective teachers, we would like to point out that on the basis of the natural wastage of teachers in the past, there are about 2000 teacher vacancies arising from the retirement or resignation of teachers every year. Moreover, the

demand for primary teachers has been on a steady rise due to the rise in the student population of the primary sector in recent years. Thus, the overall employment situation of the graduates of local tertiary education institutions in Hong Kong in the past few years has been very satisfactory, with over 90% employment rates for the largest teacher education provider.

- Prospective teachers may be employed to fill the regular teacher posts within the approved establishment or teaching posts created by schools using the various types of cash grants provided by the EDB for meeting specific policy objectives. According to our understanding from schools, it is possible that prospective teachers would be employed on contract terms to fill teaching posts created by using cash grants at the initial years. When schools are more definite about their development plans, contract teachers with performance considered by the school management to be satisfactory would often be employed as regular teachers in their own schools. Some, after gaining a few years of experience, may also apply for regular teaching posts in other schools. According to our record, among the 6300 plus teachers employed to fill the regular posts on the establishment in the aided schools for 5 or less years, over 60% are employed at or before the age of 27. In view of the above, we do not expect there to be any succession problem of regular teachers in future.

Conclusion

We attach great importance to providing quality education for our young people and at the same time, we are concerned about the well-being of our teachers. We are always ready to respond to the needs of the school sector and implement measures to address their needs. For example, various measures have been and will be implemented to address the problem of temporary decline of S1 student population in the next few years in order to stabilize secondary schools and to retain teachers in the profession. Also, after the review of the NSS curriculum and assessment, we will update and refine the curriculum contents, streamline the SBA and significantly moderate the total curriculum time from 2,700 hours to 2,400 \pm 200 hours. It is anticipated that with the progressive implementation of all these measures, teachers' workload and students' pressure will be greatly relieved.

Over the years, resources put in education by the Government are not at all scarce despite the drop in student population. In the 2012-13 financial year, the unit costs for subsidized school places in aided primary and secondary schools increase from \$30,381 and \$39,485 in the 2008-09 financial year to \$44,590 and \$49,230 respectively. It represents an increase of about 47% and 25% for aided primary and secondary schools respectively. As public resources are not unlimited, we will continue to keep in view all relevant factors, including the prioritization of competing demands, the progress and effectiveness of relevant relief measures, etc., before a long-term commitment to increase the teacher manpower is made.

Appendix

Details of measures regarding the NSS curriculum and the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination which have been adopted are listed below:

On NSS curriculum¹:

- Clarify curriculum breadth and depth: provide supplementary notes for all subjects
- Streamline curriculum content (2 subjects): Math (M1/M2), BAFS (about 15%)
- Reduce number of elective modules to be taken by students (without cutting the number of choices) (3 subjects): Chin Lang, Chin Lit, Chin Hist
- Adopt a flexible range of total lesson time at 2,400±200 hours (existing total lesson time is 2,700 hours)
- Allocate a flexible 10-15% of total lesson time to Other Learning Experiences (OLE) (15% of total lesson time is currently allocated to OLE)

On School-based Assessment: streamlining arrangements for the 2014 HKDSE Examination and beyond

- Not implementing SBA (3 subjects): Math, BAFS, PE
- Defer SBA to 2019 HKDSE (9 subjects): Chin Lit, Lit in Eng, Econ, ERS, Geog, THS, HMSC, TL, Music
- Streamline SBA arrangements (5 subjects): Chin Lang, Eng Lang, LS, ICT, Music
- Clarify SBA requirement: e.g. LS (IES), Chin Lang (reading records)
- Replace SBA by public practical exam (1 subject): PE

¹ *Abbreviations of NSS subjects:*

Chin Lang: Chinese Language; *Chin Lit:* Chinese Literature; *Eng Lang:* English Language; *Lit in Eng:* Literature in English; *Math:* Mathematics; *LS:* Liberal Studies; *Chin Hist:* Chinese History; *Econ:* Economics; *ERS:* Ethics & Religious Studies; *Geog:* Geography; *Hist:* History; *THS:* Tourism and Hospitality Studies; *Bio:* Biology; *Chem:* Chemistry; *Phy:* Physics; *CS:* Combined Science; *IS:* Integrated Science; *BAFS:* Business, Accounting and Financial Studies; *DAT:* Design and Applied Technology; *HMSC:* Health Management and Social Care; *ICT:* Information and Communication Technology; *TL:* Technology and Living; *VA:* Visual Arts; *PE:* Physical Education