

For discussion
on 12 January 2015

Legislative Council Panel on Education
Employment Opportunities for Young Teachers

PURPOSE

This paper gives a brief account on the employment opportunities for young teachers.

BACKGROUND

Provision of teaching posts in schools

2. Under the existing policy and practices, public sector (government, aided and caput) primary and secondary schools can appoint teachers to fill the posts on the approved teaching establishment or posts outside the establishment by using various cash grants and other funding.
3. Regular teachers employed within the approved establishment are subject to the terms and conditions as set out in the relevant Codes of Aid applicable to secondary schools, primary schools and special schools or the Civil Service Regulations for government schools. Teachers employed by cash grants that are provided for meeting specific policy objectives are under contract terms of respective schools and are required to contribute to mandatory provident fund schemes.
4. The current practice of providing cash grants in addition to the regular teacher establishment is to allow schools with flexibility in deploying their resources to cope with their demands in a timely manner under the school-based management policy. For instance, Incorporated Management Committee (IMC) schools have been allowed to freeze a maximum of 10% of the teaching establishment for converting to a cash grant under the Teacher Relief Grant since the 2005/06 school year. In addition, various cash grants have been provided to schools for the appointment of teaching staff and acquisition of services for meeting specific policy objectives. These measures are to create

more room for schools to develop quality education and provide schools with the flexibility in the use of public funds. In general, the schools are happy to enjoy the flexibility given by the Education Bureau (EDB).

Initial teacher education

5. There are five local teacher education institutions (TEIs) providing initial teacher education programmes at graduate level, namely Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU), The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), The Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd), The Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) and The University of Hong Kong (HKU). While HKBU, CUHK, HKIEd and HKU are funded by the University Grants Committee, OUHK is self-funded.

6. The EDB adjusts the number of government-funded teacher education places regularly for monitoring the supply and demand of teachers through the Triennium Planning Exercise. It should be noted that teacher education is one of the very few disciplines requiring specific manpower advice under the Triennium Planning Exercise for the University Grants Committee-funded institutions. The other disciplines include medical doctors, nurses, clinical psychologists, etc.

7. The number of prospective teachers completing full-time Bachelor of Education and Postgraduate Diploma in Education programmes is about 1 000 per year in the recent years.

CURRENT SITUATION

Teachers' employment situation

8. Based on the information provided by schools on the appointment of teachers, in the 2013/14 school year, there are around 42 000 teachers in public sector primary and secondary schools (18 000 and 24 000 for primary and secondary schools respectively). Among them, some 3 000 teachers are employed by using cash grants (1 000 and 2 000 for primary and secondary schools respectively). In other words, around 7% of the total number of teachers is employed by schools using cash grants.

9. According to the latest available statistics as kept by the EDB, in the

2013/14 school year, the number of teachers who newly joined the teaching profession in public sector schools is around 1 000. It is expected that most of them are TEI graduates. As a matter of fact, the number of newly joined teachers are maintained in a stable condition of around 1 000 in the past 5 years, except the proliferation in the 2011/12 school year (the double-cohort year).

Career prospect of young teachers

10. As mentioned above, there are around 1 000 TEI graduates per year. On the basis of the teacher turnover situation in the past, there are about 2 000 primary and secondary school teachers in public sector schools leaving the profession each year due to retirement or other reasons. The teaching posts vacated were filled by newly-joined teachers or teachers rejoining the profession. Although the number of teaching posts in secondary schools will likely decrease in the next few years, the teaching vacancies arising from natural turnover can help to absorb the TEI graduates.

11. It is worth noting that not all the TEI graduates will seek teaching posts in public sector schools. In the recent years, quite a number of them were employed as teachers by Direct Subsidy Scheme schools or private schools. Moreover, some chose to join other education-related professions, such as serving as tutors in education institutions, or even taking up jobs in other professions. And some others chose to further their studies.

12. In addition, to facilitate the stable development of public sector secondary schools and stabilise the teaching force, the EDB has launched the Voluntary Optimization of Class Structure Scheme in 2010, under which participating schools are given quota of teaching posts for absorbing surplus teachers as well as an additional grant for appointing teachers during the transitional period. As from the 2013/14 school year, a series of targeted relief measures, including among others, the extension of the retention period for surplus teachers, if any, from one year to three years, have also been put in place to help address the concern of public sector secondary schools during the period of temporary decline in S1 population. These measures have facilitated schools to maintain stability in the class structure and retain teachers, while enabled prospective teachers to take teaching opportunities with less competition.

13. Furthermore, as announced in the Policy Address 2014, additional

recurrent resources are provided by the Government starting from the 2014/15 school year to strengthen the support for non-Chinese speaking students and enhance the life planning education and career guidance services for students. Schools can deploy the resources to improve and empower their teaching staff capacity and employ additional teachers which would result in an increase in the overall number of teaching posts in secondary schools.

14. Besides, the EDB has all along been requesting schools to accord priority to employing teachers with teacher training. According to the information revealed by the TEIs, the employment situation of their graduates has been satisfactory in recent years. For instance, the employment rate of the graduates of the Hong Kong Institute of Education (the largest local TEI) was over 90% in the past few years.

CONCLUSION

15. Overall speaking, there are adequate teaching posts to absorb the fresh TEI graduates each year and there have been a steady number of young people joining the teaching profession. Notwithstanding that some young teachers may be employed as contract teachers initially, they will be appointed as regular teachers within the approved teaching establishment when they acquire more experience.

WAY FORWARD

16. The EDB will continue to monitor the supply and demand of teachers. We will take into account the changes in student population in the coming ten years and adjust the number of government-funded teacher education places, so as to maintain a balanced and stable supply and demand of teachers.