

For discussion on
2 July 2016

Legislative Council Panel on Education
Salary Structure of Teachers Under
the Free Quality Kindergarten Education Policy

Purpose

This paper sets out the implementation of the salary structure of kindergarten (KG) teachers under the free quality KG education policy.

Background

2. Kindergarten (KG) education is crucial in laying the foundation of children's balanced development and life-long learning. As all KGs in Hong Kong are privately run, the KG sector is characterized by a high level of flexibility in operation, diversity, vibrancy and responsiveness to changing needs of the society. Currently, KGs have full discretion in determining the salaries for teachers in consideration of their duties, experience, performance, etc. It is observed that KGs have different school-based arrangements for determining their teachers' salaries.

Arrangement under the Free Quality KG Education Policy

3. Starting from the 2017/18 school year, the Government will implement the free quality KG education policy. The policy objectives are to provide good quality and highly affordable KG education, and enhance the accessibility of students to different modes of services that suit their specific needs. Under the new policy, the Government will enhance the quality of KG education through various measures including, among others, retaining and attracting quality teachers as well as maintaining a stable teaching force in the KG sector. In this connection, KGs joining the new subsidy scheme under the new policy (broadly referred as "KGs" below) will be encouraged to establish a career ladder for teachers and required to offer competitive remuneration for teachers.

4. On the career ladder, a three-level teaching staff structure with principal, senior teachers and class teachers is considered appropriate for a KG. For some KGs, a vice-principal may be needed to assist the principal in overseeing the school administration, curriculum development and operation matters. For very small scale KGs, the rank of Principal will be comparable to Vice Principal. Given the diversity in the KG sector, KGs should take into account their specific needs to appoint teachers of different ranks commensurate with their scale of operation.

5. The approach of adopting a salary range, instead of a salary scale, allows more flexibility to cater for the diverse needs of individual KGs and due recognition of teachers' expertise in different areas, additional duties, outstanding performance, etc. To this end, the Education Bureau (EDB) will provide a salary range for each position. The recommended salary ranges for the teaching staff holding senior positions are as follows (when the new policy is rolled out, the salary range will be adjusted as appropriate to the price level of the 2017/18 school year):

Senior Teaching Staff	Recommended Salary Range (2013/14 price level)
Senior Teacher	\$24,000 – \$38,000
Vice Principal	\$30,000 – \$42,000
Principal II	\$34,000 – \$47,000
Principal I	\$40,000 – \$53,000

6. For long whole-day KGs that are given additional subsidies and are allowed to charge school fees, they can appoint additional number of teachers, thus with additional senior teachers, to meet the operating need for offering longer hours' service.

7. In the 2015/16 school year, under the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme (PEVS), the median monthly salary of teachers working full-time in KGs under is about \$19,700. Under the new policy, to ensure that KG teachers are remunerated reasonably, KGs are required to pay teaching staff salaries within the salary range. For those class teachers, the recommended salary range is set out as follows (when the new policy is rolled out, the salary range will be adjusted as appropriate to the price level of the 2017/18 school year):

Teaching Staff	Recommended Salary Range (2013/14 price level)
Class Teacher	\$18,000 – \$32,000

8. Besides, a specified portion of the basic unit subsidy will be regarded as the salary portion and must be used on teaching staff salaries. KGs may deploy any part of the remaining portion for teaching staff salaries, but not vice versa. To encourage schools' optimal use of the subsidy on teaching staff salary, EDB will claw back excessive surplus in the salary portion.

9. We will also promulgate in the guidelines various requirements and measures to ensure that KGs can suitably address the concerns of teachers such as giving due recognition of the experience of teachers. KGs are also required to use Government funding appropriately on staff remuneration. Specifically, KGs will be required to put in place a proper and well-defined school-based mechanism to determine remuneration packages and pay adjustment, of which their teachers should be well-informed to maintain good staff relations and morale. To consider the remuneration for individual teachers, KGs may take into account teachers' qualifications, experience (including experience in the serving KGs as well as in other KGs), performance and expertise, etc. For teachers having completed recognized professional training programmes that meet KGs' needs such as those in supporting non-Chinese speaking students or students with special needs or those at risk of developmental delay, and are involved in related additional duties, KGs may offer them higher salary.

10. We note some stakeholders' request for a mandatory salary scale for KGs' compliance, which will be similar to the current practice in aided primary and secondary schools. However, the salary-related practices under the funding mode for aided schools could not be applied to KGs in isolation. In the aided sector, the funding mode is tied with several inter-connected components such as EDB's annual approval for the number of operating classes which in turn determines the staff establishment, and is subject to a basket of control measures under the Government's prudent and balanced planning of school places operated through school place allocation systems. If the aided school funding mode is adopted in the KG sector, it may result in packing of classes and teacher redundancy in KGs in times of enrolment drop. Besides, KGs would become less flexible in operating half-day and whole-day classes to meet the needs of parents.

11. As compared to a mandatory salary scale in which teacher salary is determined solely in accordance with seniority, it is more appropriate and fit to provide KGs with salary range which could ensure competitiveness while at the same time allow flexibility for the KG management to decide on their staff remuneration, taking into account their qualifications, teaching experience,

performance, additional duties, training received and special skills possessed, etc.

12. In tandem, we note the KG sector's concern about the adequacy of the subsidy to pay teachers' salary for KGs with a large number of long-serving teachers as calculation of relevant portion of the basic unit subsidy is based on the mid-point salary of teachers and maximum salary of the principal. To address the concern, we will introduce a one-off time-limited tide-over grant (ToG) for eligible KGs for two years starting from the 2017/18 school year when the new policy is launched. The ToG aims to provide additional financial support for eligible KGs which have a large number of long-serving teachers who are receiving higher salaries, in defraying their expenses on such staff in the early period of introduction of free quality KG education. During the period covered by the ToG, KGs should formulate their school-specific financial and staffing policy as well as management systems/practices for migration to the new policy.

The Key to Quality KG Education

13. While competitive salary for teachers will help attract and retain talent in the profession, it is only one of the factors contributing to quality KG education, and we have put in place relevant measures to safeguard that teachers are reasonably remunerated as elaborated at paragraphs 4 to 9 above. The quality of KG education hinges on a wide range of factors including, among others, teachers' professional competence and capacity. Under the new policy, with the enhanced teacher-pupil ratio from the current 1:15 (including the principal) to 1:11 (excluding the principal), KG teachers could have more capacity for various professional activities (such as lesson preparation, development of school-based curriculum, professional collaboration and development, etc.) in particular professional collaboration with relevant experts in catering for the diverse needs of students including those at risk of developmental delay. Besides, as the principal will be excluded from the teacher-pupil ratio, they can devote their time fully to the administration and management as well as supervision of the day-to-day operation of the KG. In addition, we will provide extra resources for KGs to employ supply teachers and teaching assistants in order to create capacity for teachers' professional development as well as for school development. The funding is subsumed into the basic unit subsidy to be provided to KGs on a per student basis.

14. As the professional capability of KG teachers and effective leadership of KG principals are crucial to the provision of high-quality KG education, we will enhance the professional competence of KG principals and teachers through the following ways:

- (i) As a long term goal, the qualification requirement of KG teachers should be raised to degree level. While the minimum qualification for KG teachers should remain to be C(ECE) at the present stage, KG principals and the new posts of vice-principals should possess bachelor degree in ECE. For senior teachers, they should preferably possess a degree in ECE. We will keep in view the long-term goal of having an all-graduate KG teaching force after the implementation of the new KG education policy;
- (ii) EDB will continue to provide a wide variety of professional development programmes (PDPs) in different areas such as learning and teaching, catering for learner diversity, school leadership, etc. with a view to keeping KG teachers abreast of the current educational policies, the latest trends of ECE, etc.. School-based support services and “University-School Support Programmes” are also offered to provide intensive on-site support for KGs. Non-local PDPs will continue to be offered for KG principals and teachers to gain insight from non-local experiences and good practices; and
- (iii) EDB will develop a continuous professional development policy with appropriate targets for KG teachers and principals, and formulate a Teacher Competencies Framework and a Principal Competencies Framework to set forth the skills and knowledge specifically suggested for KG teachers and principals. Contents of the Certification Course for KG principals will also be refined to further enhance the effectiveness of school leadership in the KG sector.

15. Apart from the professional competence and capacity of KG teachers, there are many other factor contributing to the provision of quality KG education, such as the curriculum, quality assurance mechanism, government’s monitoring, support to KGs in catering for children’s diverse needs, support to needy families, engagement of parents, improving school premises and facilities, etc. Details of these key features and enhancements in these areas under the

free quality KG education policy have been deliberated in the meeting held on 1 February 2016¹.

16. The Government is committed to enhancing the quality of KG education in Hong Kong. We recognize the significance of having a quality and stable teaching force, the professional development of KG teachers as well as other factors contributing to quality KG education. We will keep in view the situation when the free quality KG education policy is implemented starting from the 2017/18 school year, and will continue to collect feedback from major stakeholders with a view to promoting the sustainable development of quality KG education.

Advice Sought

17. Members are requested to note the content of the paper.

Education Bureau
June 2016

¹ Details are in the LC Paper No. CB(4)542/15-16(01).