

**For discussion on
10 July 2017**

Legislative Council Panel on Education

**PRIORITY MEASURES TO
SUPPORT QUALITY EDUCATION**

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on a package of priority measures to address pressing problems at various levels in the education system with an aim of attaining quality education.

JUSTIFICATIONS

The Chief Executive's Election Manifesto

2. The Chief Executive believes that talent is the most important element in Hong Kong's continued development, and education is the key to nurturing talent. Government expenditure on education is therefore the most significant investment for our future. It is also the Chief Executive's vision that the goal of our education policy is to nurture future generations to become citizens who are socially responsible and equipped with a sense of national identity, a love for Hong Kong and an international perspective. The Government should create a stable, caring, inspiring and satisfying teaching and learning environment for students, teachers, principals and parents. She believes that the success in education requires the collaborative efforts of all who care about our next generation.

Immediate Action to Increase Recurrent Education Expenditure

3. In her election manifesto, noting some of the resource issues in the education sector, the Chief Executive proposed to immediately increase recurrent expenditure on education by \$5 billion a year. Having listened directly to views from stakeholders in the education sector¹ in the three months before

¹ Including representatives from the University Grants Committee-funded universities, self-financing post-secondary institutions, public sector primary and secondary schools, schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme, kindergartens, school sponsoring bodies, government advisory boards and committees, and teachers' unions/associations.

she took office, the Chief Executive has proposed to seek funding approval from the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council to implement the following package of priority initiatives in the 2017/18 academic/school year –

Post-secondary education (Annex A)

- (a) provide a non-means-tested annual subsidy of \$30,000 for eligible students pursuing full-time locally-accredited local and non-local self-financing undergraduate (including top-up degree) programmes in Hong Kong (save for those enrolled in places already supported under the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors) offered by eligible institutions;
- (b) provide a non-means-tested annual subsidy of \$5,000 for eligible students pursuing eligible undergraduate (including top-up degree) programmes in the Mainland;

Primary and secondary education

- (c) increase the Teacher-to-Class (T/C) ratio for public sector primary and secondary schools (including special schools) by 0.1 across-the-board to provide additional teaching staff to schools to take forward various education initiatives and enhance the quality of education for the benefit of our students. The teaching posts to be created under this initiative will all be graduate posts but will not be counted towards the calculation of promotion post entitlement, pending the review to establish a professional ladder for primary and secondary school teachers (Annex B);
- (d) provide a recurrent cash grant to strengthen the staffing support in information technology (IT) for all public sector primary and secondary schools (including special schools) to practise e-learning and take forward various IT-related education initiatives (Annex C);
- (e) regularise the relevant pilot project under the Community Care Fund by providing each public sector ordinary primary and secondary school with an additional teaching post to facilitate the assignment of a designated teacher to take up the role of special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) by phases in three years to support integrated education (Annex D);

- (f) provide additional teaching staff, allied health staff and resources to enhance support for students in special schools (Annex D);

Kindergarten education (Annex E)

- (g) provide for annual adjustment of the portion on teachers' salary in the subsidies under the Free Quality Kindergarten Education Policy in line with the annual civil service pay adjustment; and
- (h) extend the two-year tide-over grant (2017/18-2018/19) for three more years till the 2021/22 school year to ensure that the relevant kindergartens may retain their long serving teachers with higher salaries within the reference salary range promulgated under the Free Quality Kindergarten Education Policy, pending the review of salary arrangements for KG teachers to ascertain the feasibility of putting in place a salary scale for kindergarten teachers.

Details of the above initiatives and their justifications are set out in Annexes A to E.

4. We aim to implement the above initiatives in the 2017/18 academic/school year, meaning that funding will need to be deployed starting from September 2017². This will require allocation of additional funding to the education policy area in the 2017-18 financial year. Approval from the Finance Committee before the close of the 2016-17 Legislative Council session is thus required. While the education sector has made various requests and suggestions on how the additional \$5 billion recurrent funding should be spent, the above initiatives generally represent consensus among stakeholders as priority areas and could be implemented immediately in the 2017/18 academic/school year.

Further Initiatives

5. The immediate actions to increase recurrent expenditure in education set out in paragraph 3 above represent only the first step of the Fifth Term Government in improving education for our next generation, and restoring some much needed stability and harmony in the education sector before the Government engages the sector on other measures. In order to nurture the younger generation to meet changing needs and enable them to pursue their

² Except for initiatives relating to kindergarten education which will require additional funding starting from 2018-19.

respective talents, the Chief Executive has identified the following areas for further review and actions (deploying additional resources as needed) –

- (a) enhance the professional development of teachers, which includes establishing a professional ladder for teachers, recognising teachers with expertise in certain subjects and encouraging teachers to acquire specialised skills in teaching Chinese as a second language and students with special educational needs (SEN), and exploring the policy on all-graduate teaching force;
- (b) review existing curriculums, develop in students a stronger sense of national identity and an international perspective, provide opportunities for students' all-round development, such as culture, arts, sports and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), and inspire their innovative thinking;
- (c) review the Territory-wide System Assessment and school-based assessment to seek enhancements in teaching and learning;
- (d) promote vocational education to cater for students' diverse abilities and interests, and foster closer business-school collaboration to meet the manpower needs of Hong Kong;
- (e) revisit the role and positioning of self-financing post-secondary institutions;
- (f) clarify the Education Bureau's (EDB) relationship with school sponsoring bodies and schools, forge ahead with school-based management, and remove encumbrances for the education sector to provide more room for studies and exchanges on education policies;
- (g) emphasise parent education and strengthen home-school cooperation to discourage the culture of excessive competition so that children can grow up happily and healthily; and
- (h) strengthen funding support for research and hostel development in the University Grants Committee-funded sector.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE INITIATIVES

Manpower/Staffing Implications

6. The increase in T/C ratio, provision of SENCO for ordinary schools and additional staffing for special schools would bring about an increase in over 3 200 permanent teacher posts and 87 allied health jobs in the education sector which will help address the surplus teacher issue and create job opportunities for young graduates. The enhancement in IT support in schools by the provision of recurrent funding to schools will create job opportunities for about 1 000 IT personnel in the market and facilitate the healthy growth and development of the IT industry.

7. In relation to the civil service, there will be an increase in 235 civil service teaching posts in government schools. For the implementation of the non-means-tested subsidy for post-secondary students and SENCO, an additional 22 civil service posts will be required for EDB.

Family Implications

8. The provision of a non-means-tested subsidy for post-secondary students pursuing degree study in self-financing institutions will make higher education more affordable and help relieve the burden of families in supporting their children in pursuing further studies. The provision of annual adjustment of the portion of teachers' salary in the subsidies for kindergartens in line with the annual civil service pay adjustment and extension of the tide-over grant would enable more kindergartens to provide free half-day service or maintain school fees for whole-day service at a low level, benefiting families with kindergarten children.

Implications on Equal Opportunities

9. The increase in teaching staff, allied health staff and grant for special schools would enhance the support for children studying in special schools and their families. The provision of a SENCO for all ordinary schools will also strengthen the schools' capacity in supporting students with SEN.

Sustainability Implications

10. The initiatives are in line with the sustainability principle of enabling individuals to fulfil their potential by providing access to adequate and appropriate education. The initiatives will help improve the quality of education

and encourage more students to attain higher education. This will contribute positively to the personal development of students, promote upward social mobility, encourage active citizenship and help maintain Hong Kong's economic competitiveness, contributing to a sustainable growth of the community.

Financial Implications

11. The package of initiatives in paragraph 3 above would involve an additional recurrent funding of about **\$3.6 billion** in a full year, as well as an additional time-limited funding of \$714 million for extending the tide-over grant for kindergartens for an extra three school years. A breakdown of the additional recurrent funding required is as follows –

	2017-18 \$m	Full Year Effect \$m
1. Introduce a non-means-tested subsidy scheme for post-secondary education - <i>Civil service posts for EDB</i> - <i>Subsidies and administrative costs</i>	6	12
	1,089	1,175
	1,095	1,187
2. Increase T/C ratio by 0.1 for all primary and secondary schools - <i>Teaching posts for government schools</i> - <i>Subvention to schools</i>	52	90
	801	1,401
	853	1,491
3. Strengthen IT staffing support for schools - <i>Grant to government schools</i> - <i>Subvention to schools</i>	9	21
	162	307
	171	328
4. Provide SENCO for all ordinary schools by phases and additional staff/grant for special schools - <i>Civil service posts for EDB</i> - <i>Teaching posts for government schools</i> - <i>Subvention to schools and training cost</i>	1	2
	2	34
	131	567
	134	603
Total recurrent expenditure	2,253	3,609
		Say \$3.6 billion

12. As to the provision of annual adjustment of the portion of teachers' salary in the subsidies for kindergartens in line with the annual civil service pay adjustment, it is in line with government subvention arrangement to adopt this approach instead of using inflation index. The recurrent funding required for this initiative will not be counted towards the \$5 billion increase in recurrent education expenditure committed by the Chief Executive in her election manifesto. Neither will the extension of the tide-over grant which is non-recurrent in nature.

13. Subject to approval by the Legislative Council Finance Committee, supplementary provision will be provided in 2017-18 to meet the cashflow requirements while provision for future years will be included in the annual Estimates.

Economic Implications

14. With an increase in recurrent funding of about \$3.6 billion for the education policy area, it will bring the share of recurrent education spending over total recurrent government spending from 21.2% in 2017-18 to 22.0%. It will also raise our total education spending in terms of Gross Domestic Product from 3.4% to 3.5%, signifying the Government's commitment in investing in our youngsters.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

15. The Chief Executive met with the education sector on several occasions in her capacity as Chief Executive-elect to listen to their views and consult them on the specific measures. The Office of the Chief Executive-elect followed up actively after their meetings and adjustments have been made in light of their feedback. There is general consensus among the stakeholders on the priority areas where the new education funding should be spent. The Chief Executive announced the package of initiatives in the Legislative Council when she attended her first Q&A session on 5 July 2017. Thereafter, the Secretary for Education has met with stakeholders of the education sector to explain the new initiatives. The Legislative Council Panel on Education will be consulted at its meeting on 10 July 2017.

WAY FORWARD

16. Subject to this Panel's support, we will schedule the item for approval by the Finance Committee at an early opportunity to allow their timely implementation in the 2017/18 academic/school year.

Education Bureau
July 2017

Non-means-Tested Subsidy Scheme for Self-financing Undergraduate Studies in Hong Kong and the Mainland

New Initiative

Starting from the 2017/18 academic year (AY), the Government will provide a non-means-tested annual subsidy of \$30,000 for eligible students pursuing full-time locally-accredited local and non-local self-financing undergraduate (including top-up degree) programmes in Hong Kong (save for those enrolled in places already supported under the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors (SSSDP)) offered by eligible institutions. Besides, a non-means-tested annual subsidy of HK\$5,000 will be provided for eligible students pursuing eligible undergraduate (including top-up degree) programmes in the Mainland.

Details and Justifications

The Proposal

2. Starting from the 2017/18 AY, the Government will provide a non-means-tested annual subsidy of **\$30,000**¹ for eligible students pursuing full-time locally-accredited local and non-local self-financing undergraduate (including top-up degree) programmes in Hong Kong (save for those enrolled in places already supported under SSSDP) offered by the following institutions –

- (a) the Open University of Hong Kong;
- (b) the Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong and the School for Higher and Professional Education under the Vocational Training Council;
- (c) Hong Kong Art School;
- (d) approved post-secondary colleges under the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap. 320)²;

¹ The amount of subsidy will be subject to annual adjustment according to the Composite Consumer Price Index (CCPI) for subsequent cohorts.

² As at April 2017, there are nine approved post-secondary colleges, including Caritas Institute of Higher Education, Centennial College, Chu Hai College of Higher Education, Gratia Christian College, Hang Seng Management College, HKCT Institute of Higher Education, Hong Kong Nang Yan College of Higher Education, Hong Kong Shue Yan University and Tung Wah College.

- (e) post-secondary institutions registered under the Education Ordinance (Cap. 279)³; and
 - (f) overseas post-secondary institutions' subsidiaries in Hong Kong⁴.
3. A non-means-tested annual subsidy of **HK\$5,000**⁵ will be provided for eligible students pursuing eligible undergraduate (including top-up degree) programmes in the Mainland.
4. The non-means-tested annual subsidy scheme may benefit about 39 000 students per year, comprising -
- (a) about **23 000** new and continuing students pursuing undergraduate (excluding top-up degree) programmes in Hong Kong (excluding those benefitted from the pilot SSSDP);
 - (b) some **12 000** new and continuing students pursuing top-up degree programmes in Hong Kong; and
 - (c) some **4 000** new and continuing students pursuing undergraduate (including top-up) programmes in the Mainland.
5. The number of beneficiaries under this scheme will drop to about 30 000 per year with the expansion and regularisation of SSSDP in the 2018/19 AY, and reduce further with shrinking student population, but rise again when student population picks up after 2022/23 AY.

Student Eligibility

6. The non-means-tested annual subsidy for studies in Hong Kong and the Mainland is only applicable to students –

³ As at April 2017, there is only one such institution, i.e. Hong Kong Institute of Technology, providing locally-accredited non-local undergraduate programmes.

⁴ As at April 2017, there is only one such institution, i.e. Savannah College of Art and Design (Hong Kong), providing locally-accredited non-local undergraduate programmes.

⁵ The annual tuition fee for Hong Kong students to study undergraduate programme in Mainland universities varies depending on the institutions and programmes, ranges from RMB 5,000 to 10,000. It is proposed that the annual subsidy be set at HKD 5,000, taking into account the tuition fee level in the Mainland as well as the need for maintaining a relativity between the Government's subsidy for Hong Kong students to pursue post secondary education in Hong Kong and that in the Mainland.

- (a) attaining “3322” in the Hong Kong Diploma for Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE) when they are enrolled in eligible self-financing undergraduate programmes; or
- (b) with sub-degree qualifications (i.e. after completing the relevant sub-degree programmes) when they are enrolled in eligible self-financing top-up degree programmes.

Amount of subsidy

7. The proposed amount of subsidy under the non-means-tested annual subsidy scheme is lower than the unit subsidy for students under SSSDP. Our policy is that the programmes selected for SSSDP are nurturing talent for specific industries with keen manpower demand, hence warrant higher subsidy.

8. The non-means-tested annual subsidy will be tenable for the normal duration of the relevant programmes (i.e. four to five years for undergraduate programmes and one to three years for top-up degree programmes). For the subsidy for studies in Hong Kong, we shall consider annual adjustment of the subsidy according to the Composite Consumer Price Index (CCPI) in Hong Kong. For the subsidy for studies in the Mainland, we shall review the amount from time to time in accordance with the mechanism under the Mainland University Study Subsidy Scheme (MUSSS).

Tuition Fee

9. Similar to the implementation of SSSDP, a mechanism has to be put in place to monitor the annual increase in tuition fees of eligible programmes operated in Hong Kong (e.g. allowing any increase of tuition fee up to the rate of CCPI), taking into account flexibility in allowing for cases justified with necessary improvements in teaching and learning. Prior approval by the Education Bureau would be required for any exceptional cases.

Justifications

10. At present, the provision of subsidised degree programmes is not sufficient to meet the needs of eligible secondary school graduates who have attained the threshold of “3322” for subsidised university education.

Specifically, despite the implementation of SSSDP⁶, there will still be a portion of eligible secondary school graduates who have attained at least “3322” in HKDSE but failed to obtain a UGC-funded first-year-first-degree or SSSDP subsidised place. It is estimated that there will be around **6 600** such turned-away graduates (out of some 52 000 Secondary 6 graduates) proceeding to post-secondary education in Hong Kong in the 2017/18 AY⁷. The number of such turned-away graduates may reduce to about **4 500** in the 2018/19 AY with the expansion and regularisation of SSSDP. Due to student population decline, the number will further drop until the 2022/23 AY before picking up. These graduates may have to pursue non-subsidised self-financing undergraduate or sub-degree places at relatively higher tuition fees.

11. On the other hand, many **sub-degree students** have worked very hard and strived to obtain good scores with the hope of articulating to UGC-funded senior year places (to be increased to 5 000 in the 2018/19 AY). However, the number of such subsidised articulation places is inadequate. Sub-degree graduates may again have to shoulder heavy financial burden if they choose to pursue self-financing top-up degree programmes. We therefore see a need to provide better support to this group of students as well.

12. Supplementing the current MUSSS⁸, the non-means-tested annual subsidy would be provided to those who aspire to pursue undergraduate studies in the Mainland.

Education Bureau

July 2017

⁶ SSSDP will subsidise around 1 000 students to pursue selected self-financing undergraduate programmes in the 2017/18 cohort with either \$40,000 or \$70,000 annual subsidy depending on whether a selected programme is laboratory-based or not. The subsidised quota will increase to about 3 000 in the 2018/19 cohort when the scheme is regularised, as announced in the 2017 Policy Address.

⁷ The estimation has already taken into account the number of graduates who will pursue further studies outside Hong Kong with reference to the past trend.

⁸ MUSSS was launched by the Government in 2014 to support Hong Kong students in financial need to pursue undergraduate studies in the Mainland under the Scheme for Admission of Hong Kong Students to Mainland Higher Education Institutions. To support more financially needy Hong Kong students for pursuing undergraduate studies in the Mainland, the funding scope of MUSSS has, starting from the 2016/17 academic year, been expanded to cover all financially needy Hong Kong students pursuing undergraduate studies in designated Mainland institutions, irrespective of the channels of their admission to the institutions. Under MUSSS, students who pass a means test will receive either a full-rate subsidy of HK\$15,000 or half-rate subsidy of HK\$7,500 per student per year, depending on their needs.

**Increasing Teacher-to-Class (T/C) Ratio by 0.1 in
Public Sector Primary and Secondary Schools**

New Initiative

To provide additional teaching staff for schools to take forward various education initiatives and enhance the quality of education for the benefit of our students, the current T/C ratio for public sector primary and secondary schools (including special schools) will be increased by 0.1 across the board starting from the 2017/18 school year. The additional teaching posts so generated from the increase in T/C ratio will all be graduate posts but will not be counted towards the calculation of promotion post entitlement, pending the review to establish a professional ladder for primary and secondary school teachers.

Details and Justifications

The Proposal

2. We recommend an increase in the T/C ratio by 0.1 for primary and secondary schools (including special schools) for the following reasons -

- (a) Work of teachers has become more complicated and diversified due to the widening range of student diversity, rising expectation of different stakeholders together with the implementation of various education initiatives such as integrated education, Information Technology in education, gifted education, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education, values education, etc. Injection of more resources to the education sector to improve education quality is considered necessary.
- (b) In view of the increasing complexity of student problems, it is essential to increase the T/C ratio so as to facilitate early identification of at-risk students and timely intervention by teachers. With additional teaching posts created by the enhanced T/C ratio, there will be more space for teachers to strengthen the teacher-pupil relationships for better emotional support and guidance at the school level. Teachers will be able to play better roles in imparting positive values to students and providing students with guidance support to

help them plan their life. With enhanced capacity, class teachers could devote more time to building supportive in-class relationship and class spirit, which is beneficial to students' healthy growth and development. They could also offer individual/group support to students with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

3. The proposed initiative helps to address the sector's concern about the inadequate provision of teaching staff resources and teachers' heavy workload arising from the implementation of various initiatives. Besides, it will create better opportunities for serving contract teachers to be employed as regular teachers. The initiative will also facilitate the implementation of various education initiatives in public sector schools. To ensure that the various initiatives can be implemented in a coordinated and orderly manner to benefit students, we recommend that the increase in T/C ratio should be implemented as soon as practicable, starting from the 2017/18 school year. To provide a stable teaching force, schools will be required to fill the newly created teaching posts substantively by surplus teachers, existing contract teachers or other suitable candidates subject to consideration of their merit and suitability for the posts. Schools are not expected to freeze these posts to obtain a cash grant.

4. An increase in T/C ratio by 0.1 in public sector schools (including special schools) will bring about the creation of about 2 350 teaching posts.

Graduate Posts and Promotion Posts

5. For the posts to be created under the 0.1 increase in T/C ratio, we suggest that all should be graduate posts so as to facilitate deployment of schools' staff for implementing various education initiatives. Besides, we also suggest that the additional teaching posts so generated from the increase in T/C ratio not be counted towards the calculation of the promotion post entitlement in this exercise so as to allow time and space for conducting a review on the professional development of teachers, including the establishment of a professional ladder for teachers, to make the teaching profession attractive to young talent and ultimately to enhance the quality of our education.

Background

6. Under the existing policy and practices, public sector schools are provided with teaching staff resources through the following three major means -

- (a) regular teacher establishment computed according to the number of classes approved and the corresponding T/C ratio;
- (b) additional regular teaching posts provided under various initiatives; and
- (c) cash grants featured by their deployment flexibility for meeting specific policy objectives.

7. Among the above means for providing teaching manpower, T/C ratio is the basic provision of teaching staff resources of a school. Prior to the 2007/08 school year, the T/C ratio in public sector primary schools was 1.3 and 1.4 teachers per bi-sessional and whole-day class respectively. The T/C ratio was enhanced by 0.1 upon the complete phasing-in of the additional provision to support specialised teaching in the 2007/08 school year. No further enhancement was made since then. As for public sector secondary schools, prior to the 2009/10 school year, the T/C ratio was 1.3 teachers per class for S1 to S5 and 2 teachers per class for S6 and S7, with additional teaching staff provided under various purposes and initiatives. With the implementation of the New Academic Structure in the 2009/10 school year, there was a need to integrate the teaching staff resources for public sector secondary schools and rationalize the basic T/C ratio. After extensive consultations with the school sector, the T/C ratio was revised to 1.7 teachers per junior secondary class (S1 to S3) and 1.9 teachers per senior secondary class (S4 to S6). The T/C ratio for S4 to S6 has been improved from 1.9 to 2 teachers per class with effect from the 2012/13 school year.

Education Bureau
July 2017

Enhancement of Support in Information Technology at Schools

New Initiative

Starting from the 2017/18 school year, the Government will provide recurrent funding in the form of cash grant to strengthen the information technology (IT) staffing support to all public sector primary and secondary schools (including special schools).

Details and Justifications

The Proposal

2. It is recommended that an additional recurrent cash grant be provided to strengthen the IT staffing support to all public sector primary schools and secondary schools (including special schools) to practise e-learning and take forward various education initiatives which will harness IT starting from 2017/18 school year. The funding amount will be \$25,000 per month, taking into account the comparable duties of Technical Support Staff (TSS) now at schools, as well as other support services being procured by schools, such as data migration and cloud management, from IT services providers in the market.

3. Schools will have the flexibility to determine the actual remuneration package for the extra TSS. This grant will be adjusted annually in accordance with the movement of CCPI to allow schools to flexibly provide a remuneration package, including pay adjustment, in order to retain experienced TSS.

4. To address immediately schools' needs, it is proposed that the additional funding be disbursed to schools in the 2017/18 school year. It is expected that the proposal will generate about 1 000 TSS job opportunities in the market. Making reference to the minimum qualification being benchmarked with Computer Operator II (COpII), which is Level 2 or equivalent or above in five subjects in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination, or equivalent; plus 1 year of relevant working experience, there will be a ready supply of qualified IT graduates in the market to fill the vacancies.

Justifications

5. The Government has been providing all public sector schools with an annual recurrent Composite Information Technology Grant (CITG) at amounts ranging from \$194,238 to \$668,055 for each year, depending on the school type and the number of classes. Under the principle of school-based management, schools can flexibly deploy their resources as appropriate to meet their operational needs for IT in education in the following areas -

- (a) purchase of IT-related consumables;
- (b) purchase of digital resource materials for learning and teachings;
- (c) Internet connection and Internet security services fee;
- (d) employment of technical support personnel/hire of TSS from service provider;
- (e) extension of opening hours for school's IT facilities;
- (f) hire of maintenance services for school's IT facilities procured by government funds; and
- (g) upgrading and replacement of school's IT facilities.

6. Many schools have indicated that the level of CITG is insufficient to meet their e-learning needs. In particular, they have used a large proportion of CITG on the engagement of TSS. Schools in general have engaged one or more TSS either through hire of services or on contract terms to provide technical support to teachers on e-learning. The duties of TSS, though vary across schools, are in general comparable to that of COpII in the civil service¹. Government schools either employ an NCSC computer technician or hire services of Information Technology Assistant from T-24 contracts administered centrally by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO). Aided schools and schools under Direct Subsidy Scheme likewise recruit their TSS either on contract terms or through hire of services.

7. That said, turnover problem for TSS is serious. Many schools

¹ A COpII is mainly deployed on : (a) operating and monitoring computer equipment, network and data centre/server room facilities; (b) performing user IT support, help desk, and assisting in incident management; (c) assisting in management of computer job processing, system and security monitoring of IT services; (d) assisting in procurement of IT equipment and services, contract administration, site preparation, and management of IT asset and external suppliers; and (e) assisting in maintenance of records and documentation, and compilation of management statistics and reports.

attribute the problem to the comparatively less attractive salaries and the unsecure nature of the TSS posts.

8. The proposal will address the long-term demand of schools. The amount of cash grant at \$25,000 per month is in general favourably compared with the monthly salary being offered by many schools for their TSS. Since this is a dedicated fund for enhancing technical support for schools, schools should keep a separate account and could not use the surplus fund for other e-learning purposes, such as procurement of e-learning resources. A more stable and secure work environment would thus be provided for the TSS engaged.

9. Under the Fourth Strategy on Information Technology in Education (ITE4), we have been advocating the adoption of subscription mode by schools in building up their WiFi infrastructure. A majority of schools have enhanced their WiFi infrastructure through service subscription and many of them on top procure professional technical support services from service providers. The service providers, apart from the support services, also provide training as well as career development path for TSS, and ensure service continuity. The extra cash grant will provide a stable stream of funding for schools to engage TSS and enable schools to redeploy the CITG to procure other IT-related services, harnessing technological development. This will also open up more business opportunities for the IT industry.

Background

10. The Government has invested over \$11 billion since 1998 in IT in Education (ITE). Building on the success and achievements of past three ITE strategies and other e-learning initiatives, the Education Bureau launched ITE4 from 2015/16 school year. The goal of ITE4 is to strengthen students' self-directed learning, problem-solving, collaboration and computational thinking competency, enhance their creativity and innovation, and even entrepreneurship, as well as to nurture students to become ethical users of IT for pursuing life-long learning and whole-person development through leveraging technology and the capacity of IT.

11. We adopt a holistic approach under which six actions are being implemented to achieve the learning goals of ITE4. One of the major measures is to establish WiFi campus for some 1,000 public sector schools all over Hong Kong in order to facilitate the use of mobile computing devices for

e-learning in classes. Among the \$105 million non-recurrent funding for ITE4, around \$90 million was reserved as one-off grant to be disbursed to schools by phases for acquisition of mobile computing devices to facilitate the use of e-textbooks or other e-learning resources in class under a WiFi school environment. We have also disbursed an extra one-off IT grant of \$200,000 on average per school to enhance support on the practice of e-learning, as well as an extra recurrent grant of \$70,000 on average per school for continuous subscription of WiFi services.

12. Apart from the additional non-recurrent funding under ITE4, we have been providing all public sector schools with an annual recurrent CITG. Under the principle of school-based management, schools can flexibly deploy their resources as appropriate to meet their operational needs for IT in education. The amount of CITG for 2016-17 was \$361 million.

Education Bureau
July 2017

Integrated Education and Special Education

New Initiative

(I) Integrated Education (IE)

Starting from the 2017/18 school year, the Government will regularise the relevant pilot project under the Community Care Fund by providing to each public sector ordinary primary and secondary school with an additional teaching post (i.e. an Assistant Primary School Master/Mistress (APSM) in primary schools and a Graduate Master/Mistress (GM) in secondary schools) to facilitate the assignment of a designated teacher by schools to take up the role of special educational needs coordinator (SENCO). The additional teaching post will be included in the teaching staff establishment but will not be counted towards the calculation of promotion posts. Training will also be provided to the new-to-role SENCOs.

(II) Special Education (SE)

2. Starting from the 2017/18 school year, the Government will provide additional teaching staff, allied health staff and resources to improve the special education services in special schools. Details are as follows -

- (a) Provision of an Assistant Primary School Master/Mistress (Curriculum Development) [APSM(CD)] to special schools that operate less than 6 approved primary classes;
- (b) Provision of an Occupational Therapist (OT) and an Occupational Therapist Assistant (OTA) to special schools for children with mild intellectual disability (MiID), moderate intellectual disability (MoID), visual impairment (VI) and hearing impairment (HI);
- (c) Provision of a speech therapist (ST) to the special school for children with VI and schools for social development (SSDs) which serve children with moderate to severe emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD); and
- (d) Extension of “Additional Support Grant for Enhancing the Support for

Boarders with Medical Complexity in Aided Special Schools” (MC Grant) to day students and day students cum boarders with medical complexity (MC) in special schools.

Details and Justifications

(I) IE

The Proposal

3. This initiative will be implemented by phases in three years starting from the 2017/18 school year. In the 2019/20 school year, all public sector ordinary schools would be given the SENCO provision. Priority would be given to schools with more students with SEN requiring tier-2/3 support under the 3-Tier Intervention Model and having the teacher designated to be SENCO trained in special education. The 124 schools participating in the Pilot Project on SENCOs would be among the first batch of schools eligible for the SENCO provision in the 2017/18 school year. The initiative will bring about an increase in some 840 teaching posts in schools.

4. The initiative is so implemented as schools are at different stages in the implementation of IE and differ in readiness to assign a dedicated teacher trained in special education to take up the challenging role of SENCO as well as allowing time of local tertiary institutions to develop local training for SENCOs.

Justifications for the provision of SENCOs

5. Under the prevailing IE policy, public sector ordinary schools are provided with additional resources, professional support and teacher training to adopt the Whole School Approach (WSA) to implement IE and incorporate support for student diversity in the overall school policy, culture and practices. Ordinary schools have generally set up student support teams, and assigned vice principals or senior teachers to lead and coordinate various support measures. Nevertheless, due to competing demands, they have found it difficult to spare sufficient time to take the lead, oversee and coordinate special educational needs (SEN)-related matters. It is still very challenging for schools, in particular those with relatively more students with SEN, to implement IE effectively.

6. In response to the recommendation of the Subcommittee on IE under the LegCo Panel on Education, the Education Bureau (EDB) has implemented the three-year Pilot Project on SENCOs with funding from the Community Care Fund starting from the 2015/16 school year to assess the impact of the SENCO post on the effective implementation of WSA to IE. A cash grant, which is equivalent to the mid-point salary of APSM and GM, is provided to public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools with relatively more students with SEN and financial needs respectively to strengthen the teaching team of the schools so that a designated teacher can be deployed to coordinate SEN-related matters. A total of 124 schools (59 primary and 65 secondary) have participated in this pilot project. Overseas consultants have been appointed to evaluate the pilot project and to provide training for SENCOs.

7. Based on the interim report of the consultant of the evaluation strand of the pilot project, positive changes have been noted in the first and second years of implementation. These include increased number of teachers participating in SEN support, more strategic planning in higher order tasks by SENCOs, increased awareness of senior leaders about SEN-related matters, increased number of members of the student support team, SENCOs' planning and provision of school-based SEN training for other teachers and establishment of a platform for collaboration between SENCOs and curriculum leaders. SENCOs are also implementing strategies such as person-centred approach, lesson studies, provision mapping introduced by the overseas SENCO training expert with positive outcomes. This reflects the importance of training to new-to-role SENCOs. We are confident that positive changes will continue to emerge and be consolidated.

8. In view of the aforesaid positive outcomes on IE and having regard that the Learning Support Grant for IE support will cover students with mental illness from the 2017/18 school year, we recommend that all schools should be provided with an additional teaching post each to facilitate the assignment of a designated teacher to be SENCO to enhance the SEN support and to collaborate with the guidance team to formulate and implement education programmes on mental well-being of students.

9. Training, comparable to the Advanced Course of the current teacher professional development framework on IE, will be provided to new-to-role SENCOs.

(II) SE

The Proposal

10. The four initiatives as listed in paragraph 2(a) to (d) above for special schools will start to be implemented with effect from the 2017/18 school year. All eligible special schools would be provided with APSM(CD), OT and OTA, ST and received additional MC Grant, as appropriate. It is anticipated that 29 special schools will be benefited from the provision of APSM(CD), 34 special schools with a total of 39 OT and 39 OTA will be provided (the 34 schools including five combined grade schools operating both MiID and MoID sections for which both sections will be provided with OT and OTA), nine special schools will be provided with a ST and 39 schools will receive additional MC grant.

Justifications for the additional manpower provision and grant to special schools

11. Under the existing arrangements, a special school with less than six approved primary classes is entitled to the Curriculum Leadership Grant; while a special school with six to 11 approved primary classes and a special school with 12 approved primary classes or above are entitled to an APSM(CD) and a Primary School Master/Mistress (Curriculum Development) respectively. Even though some special schools are operating smaller number of primary classes and thus not eligible for the APSM post for the time being, the required curriculum leadership roles have to be discharged. We consider it justifiable to provide a designated teacher at the rank of APSM(CD) to take charge of curriculum planning, implementation and evaluation in a comprehensive manner in the special schools with less than six primary classes so that a coherence and continuity of the school curriculum for the primary and secondary students could be maintained. This initiative will bring about the creation of 29 teaching posts.

12. At present, schools for children with physical disability (PD) and schools for children with severe intellectual disability (SID) are provided with OT and related posts. It is noted that other special schools have also admitted students with multiple disabilities. These students often display weaknesses in their fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination. The provision of OT and OTA would support students through direct (such as

individual/group operational therapy sessions) and indirect (such as in-class support) intervention. The said intervention services will enable students to develop and improve their fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination through well-designed daily learning and teaching activities in the school environment. With an increased expectation and demand for improving the quality of professional support for the students, we consider it justifiable to provide an OT and an OTA for the special schools for children with MiID, MoID, VI and HI.

13. School-based speech therapy services (SBSTS) are provided by school-based speech therapists (SBSTs) for special schools for children with ID, PD and HI as well as the special school for children with VI cum ID. However, the school for children with VI and the SSDs do not have such provision. SBSTS is a proven effective mode of support which enables schools to develop and implement their own comprehensive and tailored support scheme which includes the prevention of the speech and language impairment (SLI) of students from developing into a learning disability, remediation of the existing SLI of students and enhancement of the speech, language and communication development of students. Speech and language delay and pragmatic-language problems are common among students with VI whereas students with EBD might also demonstrate SLI owing to the underlying inadequate social-emotional competence and cognitive development which affect their mental health and school success. With the support of SBSTS, both teachers and parents would also be able to better understand the communication needs of students with VI and students with EBD in order to provide a communicative environment and devise effective intervention strategies together. The provision of a ST to the school for children with VI and the SSDs is considered justifiable.

14. Special schools have difficulties in providing adequate support for their students with MC who suffer from severe, functionally limiting, complicated, and life-threatening health problems. Although the MC Grant has been disbursed to eligible boarders in special schools, at present, the schools have to deploy their existing manpower to carry out various support tasks for those students with MC in school time, which inevitably affect the support and caring for other students. It is proposed to provide the MC Grant for special schools whenever a day student or a day student cum boarder with MC is admitted. It is anticipated that schools for children with MoID, SID, PD, HI and VI would benefit from such extension.

Background

15. Types of special schools include schools for different levels of intellectual disability, i.e. severe, moderate and mild; schools for physical disability; schools for social development for children with moderate to severe emotional and behavioural difficulties; schools for hearing impairment; schools for visual impairment; and the Hospital School.

Education Bureau

July 2017

Enhanced Salary Arrangements for Kindergarten Teachers

New Initiative

Starting from the 2018/19 school year, the Government will provide for annual adjustment of the portion on teachers' salary in the subsidies under the Free Quality Kindergarten (KG) Education Policy in line with the annual civil service pay adjustment. Besides, the two-year tide-over grant (ToG) (2017/18 and 2018/19 school years) will be extended for three more years till the 2021/22 school year to ensure that the relevant KGs may retain their long serving teachers with higher salaries within the reference salary range promulgated under the Free Quality KG Education Policy, pending the review of salary arrangements for KG teachers to ascertain the feasibility of putting in place a salary scale for KG teachers.

Details and Justifications

The Proposal

2. It is recommended that the annual price adjustment of teaching staff salary-related subsidies be based on civil service pay adjustment as from the 2018/19 school year, and the ToG be extended for three more school years to the 2021/22 school year. Details of the recommendations are set out below -

- (a) Annual adjustment of teaching staff salary-related subsidies as from the 2018/19 school year
 - (i) The teaching staff salary-related subsidies (and the associated salary ranges for teaching staff) will be adjusted based on the annual civil service pay adjustment. These include the teaching staff salary portion of the basic half-day (HD) unit subsidy and grant for non-Chinese speaking students.
 - (ii) Consequentially, the additional subsidy for a whole-day place and a long whole-day place will be 30% and 60% respectively of the basic HD unit subsidy after adjusted by the above proposed mechanism. The ToG will be adjusted accordingly.

(b) Extension of the ToG

It will be extended for three years (i.e. from the 2019/20 to 2021/22 school years) to cover a total period of 5 years.

Justifications

Adjustment of subsidy rates

3. The Education Bureau (EDB) announced in a circular (EDB Circular No. 7/2016) to KGs in July 2016 the subsidy rates of various grants as well as salary ranges for teaching and supporting staff for the 2017/18 school year, and that the subsequent annual adjustment of subsidies and salary ranges would be based on the movements of Composite Consumer Price Index (CCPI). Despite the fact that EDB has put in place a series of measures, including, among others, a salary range for each teaching position to ensure that KG teachers are remunerated reasonably, the KG sector has expressed grave concern that KGs will not have adequate subsidies to provide teachers with competitive salaries a few years after implementation of the new policy. There have been calls for setting up a salary scale for KG teachers.

4. EDB considers that the flexibilities of KG operation will be affected if a salary scale modelling on the practice in the aided school sector is to replace the salary range, which will inevitably affect the quality of the KGs and undermine the responsiveness of KGs to the needs of parents. 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 HD and whole-day classes to meet the needs of parents and deploying their resources to employ different teaching staff to better cater for students' diverse needs.

5. Nonetheless, to address the concerns of the KG sector, we consider that there is room for improving the existing funding mode. Specifically, we assess that the CCPI adjustment may not be able to adequately meet the needs of some of the KGs. It is envisaged that the differences in pay increase under the recommended salary ranges and the subsidies to be disbursed to KGs by adopting CCPI movement and civil service pay adjustment would become more significant over time, and thus pay level surveys would need to be conducted frequently (say, every 3 years) to ensure that the recommended salary ranges for teachers are comparable to those in the private sector. The setting of salary ranges is a very controversial issue, and would cause unrest in the KG sector. It would also adversely affect the long-term planning of KGs in terms of resources deployment and formulation of remuneration policy.

6. In connection with teaching staff salaries, we have analysed the trend of fee increase in the past years and collected views from major stakeholders including LegCo Members, school sponsoring bodies, KG principals and teachers, educational organisations, academics, etc. In the past years, it was not uncommon for some KGs to make reference to the salary increase in the civil service in considering their teaching staff salary. In other words, the element of annual salary adjustment of the civil service has been embedded in the school-based policy on teaching staff salary of some of the KGs. It is thus advisable to adjust teaching staff salary-related subsidies based on civil service pay adjustment to ensure the smooth implementation of the policy.

7. On the timing of the enhancement, given that the unit subsidy rate for the 2017/18 school year has been announced and KGs joining the new KG scheme have already compiled their projected incomes and expenditures based on the announced unit subsidy rate, it is not advisable to revise the unit subsidy rate for the 2017/18 school year according to the enhanced annual salary adjustment mechanism. It is more sensible to adopt the enhanced annual adjustment mechanism for salary-related subsidies as from the 2018/19 school year.

Extension of the ToG

8. We consider that the 2-year ToG may not be able to adequately meet the needs of some of the KGs. Given the wide range of measures in enhancing the quality of KG education under the new KG policy, KGs have a

genuine need to retain their experienced teachers to plan and administer the school-based measures under the new policy such as holistic planning to better cater for students' diverse needs, professional development for teachers, development of school-based curriculum to tie in with the revised "Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide", enhancement in school governance and transparency, etc.. For school sponsoring bodies that operate more than one KG, specific staff policy such as "posting" of teachers among different KGs can only be considered after individual KGs have settled down on their school-based measures. The provision of a longer transition period will ensure KGs' better manpower planning that can strike a good balance between the need to provide quality education with a stable and competent workforce and to meet the requirement of providing free half-day service.

9. Specifically, during the consultation of the new KG policy in 2016, major stakeholders, including LegCo Members and KG operators, expressed strong needs to retain the experienced teachers as afore-mentioned. To facilitate KGs' smooth implementation of the new policy, it is hence necessary to disburse the ToG to eligible KGs for three more school years (i.e. 2019/20 to 2021/22). Otherwise, more KGs would have to charge school fees to defray the expenditure on teachers' salary after the 2018/19 school year, and the objectives of the free quality KG education policy could not be sustained. To address KGs' concerns, EDB has undertaken to review the utilisation of the ToG in the 2018/19 school year and take follow-up action as appropriate. Nevertheless, given that KGs are highly concerned about whether ToG would continue to be available after the 2018/19 school year for planning purposes, they have strong demands for EDB to give an early response in this regard.

Review of Salary Arrangements

10. To ensure continued smooth implementation as well as achievement of the objectives of the new KG policy, we will, in consultation with the KG sector and stakeholders, review the salary arrangements for KG teachers to explore the feasibility of putting in place a salary scale for KG teachers.

Background

11. In the 2016 Policy Address, the Chief Executive announced the

implementation of the free quality KG education policy starting from the 2017/18 school year. Direct subsidies will be provided to eligible local non-profit-making KGs under the new policy. Funding will be provided basically on a per student basis for supporting students' HD schooling in the form of a basic HD unit subsidy, which will cover teaching staff salary, supporting staff salary and other operating expenses. It is estimated that about 70% to 80% of HD KG places will be free in the 2017/18 school year. An additional grant, respectively set at 30% and 60% of the basic HD unit subsidy, will be provided for eligible KGs offering whole-day and long whole-day places. Besides, some grants on a school-specific basis will be provided to cater for the special circumstances of the KGs or the students. To address the KG sector's concern that KGs with a large number of long-serving teachers might not be able to meet the high expenditure on staff salaries as the provision of subsidies is based on the mid-point salary, a one-off time-limited ToG is introduced for eligible KGs for two years from the 2017/18 school year.

12. EDB issued a circular to KGs in July 2016, setting out the details of the free quality KG education scheme, and invited application from eligible KGs to join the scheme in the 2017/18 school year. The issues of adjustment mechanism for the salary-related portion of the subsidies and the short duration of the ToG remain grave concerns of major stakeholders.

Education Bureau
July 2017