

For discussion on  
13 July 2018

## **Legislative Council Panel on Education**

### **Current Situation of Contract Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools**

#### **Purpose**

This paper briefs Members on the arrangements of teaching manpower resources in schools and the current situation of contract teachers in public sector primary and secondary schools.

#### **Background**

##### *Teaching Manpower Resources in Schools*

2. Under the existing policy and measures, teaching manpower resources in public sector (government, aided and caput) primary and secondary schools are provided through the following three major means:

- (a) regular teaching staff establishment computed according to the number of classes approved and the teacher-to-class (T/C) ratio;
- (b) additional regular teachers provided under various initiatives; and
- (c) cash grants with deployment flexibility in employing teaching staff for meeting specific policy objectives.

3. Employment of regular teachers provided in aided schools according to the T/C ratio or additional regular teachers provided are subject to the terms and conditions of employment set out in the relevant *Codes of Aid* or *Code of Aid for Aided Schools*. The teaching staff establishment in Caput schools is computed with reference to the T/C ratio and applicable initiatives for provision of additional regular teachers in aided schools, and teachers are appointed based on the conditions of service offered by individual Caput schools. Those regular teachers in

government schools are appointed according to the established recruitment procedures and terms of employment of the Civil Service. Regarding teachers employed by cash grants for meeting specific policy objectives, they are employed on contract terms by respective schools and are required to contribute to mandatory provident fund schemes.

4. To cater for schools' daily operational needs for provision of quality education services, schools are given greater autonomy and flexibility in the deployment of cash grants for meeting specific policy objectives according to their individual needs. They can use these cash grants to employ additional teaching and ancillary staff outside the approved establishment or hire services to cater for the diverse educational needs and their specific circumstances. At present, about 90 percent of teachers in public sector schools are regular teachers within the teaching staff establishment while about 10 percent are appointed on contract terms with cash grants and other funding.

#### Measures to Increase Regular Teaching Posts

5. The Education Bureau (EDB) has been reviewing various policies relevant to the provision of teaching manpower resources to enhance the arrangements on manpower resources and facilitate schools to establish a more stable teaching force to sustain the stable development of schools.

#### Turning Senior Secondary Curriculum Support Grant and Career and Life Planning Grant into Regular Teaching Posts

6. To enhance the implementation of senior secondary curriculum and strengthen life planning education as well as related guidance services, public sector secondary schools may choose to turn the Senior Secondary Curriculum Support Grant and the Career and Life Planning Grant into regular teaching posts from the 2016/17 school year. This provides schools with stable teaching manpower to implement the respective policies. At present, about 560 additional regular teaching posts were provided to schools under this measure.

#### Increasing the T/C Ratio by 0.1 Across-the-board

7. To provide additional teaching staff for schools to take forward

various education initiatives and enhance the quality of education, the T/C ratio for public sector primary and secondary schools (including special schools) has been increased by 0.1 across-the-board starting from the 2017/18 school year, creating about 2 200 additional regular teaching posts.

### *Other New Measures*

8. Starting from the 2017/18 school year, the Government has regularised the pilot project on Special Educational Needs Coordinator under the Community Care Fund, and will, by phases in three years, provide each public sector ordinary primary and secondary school with an additional graduate post within the teaching staff establishment to facilitate the assignment of a designated teacher to take up the role of Special Educational Needs Coordinator to support integrated education. It is estimated that this would bring an increase of about 840 regular teaching posts in public sector ordinary schools.

9. To provide special schools operating a smaller number of primary classes with a more stable manpower to discharge the required curriculum leadership duties, a regular post of Assistant Primary School Master/Mistress (Curriculum Development) has been provided to special schools that operate one to five classes to replace the provision of the Curriculum Leadership Grant starting from the 2017/18 school year. A total of 28 regular teaching posts were created under this initiative in the 2017/18 school year.

## **Current Situation**

### *Employment of Contract Teachers*

10. Apart from the additional regular teaching posts created under various measures mentioned above, we learn from experience that on average about 2 000 primary and secondary school teachers leave the profession each school year on retirement or personal grounds. In other words, there are about 2 000 teaching posts vacated through natural wastage each year. These newly available regular teaching posts and vacancies can absorb serving contract teachers and provide employment opportunities for fresh graduated pre-service teachers. The EDB

understands that a number of objective factors are in play when considering whether serving contract teachers can be appointed to fill vacant regular teaching posts. For example, vacant regular teaching posts in government schools should be filled by open recruitment following civil service recruitment procedures. Serving contract teachers in government schools should follow the same recruitment procedures as the other applicants. Moreover, in general, schools should give priority to their own surplus teachers in filling regular teaching posts within the establishment and suitable contract teachers would be considered for filling the remaining vacancies. The above factors aside, schools are required to select the most suitable candidates for vacant regular teaching posts through an open, fair, evidence-based and transparent school-based mechanism following objective criteria. If serving contract teachers do not fully possess the relevant qualifications and fulfill the related criteria required for holding regular posts, they will not be able to be appointed as regular teachers. Therefore, schools may not be able to fully utilise the vacant regular teaching posts to absorb all serving contract teachers.

### *Optimising the Use of Teaching Manpower Resources*

11. The EDB has been encouraging schools to fulfil their obligations as good employers. After listening to the views of the sector and communicating with stakeholders, the EDB formulated the guidelines on optimising the use of teaching manpower resources (the Guidelines) and issued vide a circular in 2016 to appeal for making good use of resources in accordance with the principles in the Guidelines. To dovetail with the implementation of the new measures to increase regular teaching posts, the EDB updated the circular and guidelines on 20 July 2017, appealing to schools for optimising the use of additional regular teaching posts and providing a suitable and stable working environment for contract teachers. The salient points of the circular and guidelines include:

- (a) Optimising the use of additional regular teaching posts within the establishment created under the enhanced T/C ratio and other initiatives in the 2017/18 school year to absorb surplus teachers, and filling vacant regular teaching posts, including the provision of opportunities for suitable contract teachers to be appointed as regular teachers in an orderly manner, following objective criteria as well as sound and proper selection procedures in order

to maintain a stable teaching force;

- (b) Offering reasonable salaries to contract teachers if their arrangements on, amongst others, teaching load are comparable to those of regular teachers at corresponding ranks. Schools should also provide contract teachers with opportunities for appropriate training and professional development;
- (c) Employing contract teachers with recurrent grants or grants for specific project/initiative for the entire school year as far as possible, and endeavouring to offer contracts for a longer term according to the schools' human resource planning; and
- (d) Adopting appropriate post titles to clearly reflect the job nature of the teachers or ancillary staff appointed, and refraining from appointing ancillary staff (including teaching assistants) to take up teaching duties.

The above circular also reminds schools that unless there is a genuine need, schools should not opt for a cash grant by freezing their teaching posts. For delivery of quality education, schools are reminded to provide a suitable and stable working environment to enhance the professional standard of teachers.

12. The EDB attaches great importance to the provision of reasonable conditions of service and work arrangements of contract teachers by schools. We have issued the above-mentioned circular appealing to schools to give full consideration to the pay level and work conditions applicable to comparable posts when determining the remunerations of contract teachers to ensure that the remunerations of contract teachers are commensurate with their duties. We understand that schools would make reasonable work and remuneration arrangements appropriate to the calibre of contract teachers and operational needs of schools. Some schools have indicated that they will adjust the remunerations and workload of contract teachers if they are new and inexperienced (including not required to be class teachers, etc.).

13. In terms of career prospects, schools retain contract teachers with good performance and dedication. Quite a number of contract teachers with good teaching performance have been recognised and offered regular teaching posts by the schools they served. This has enabled them to continue to work and prosper in the same school. Offering

continuous employment to contract teachers can sustain the development of schools and boost teachers' morale. Furthermore, the vast majority of schools have set up a school-based mechanism to provide opportunities for suitable contract teachers to be appointed as regular teachers in an orderly manner for their continuous development in the sector. Our records show that about 1 700 contract teachers in the 2016/17 school year were employed as regular teachers within the establishment in the 2017/18 school year.

## **Conclusion**

14. Cash grants are provided to meet specific policy objectives and give schools flexibility in resource deployment, financial planning and budgeting for employing additional teachers or ancillary staff to retain talent and sustain the development of schools according to their specific circumstances. We fully recognise the contributions of contract teachers who play an important role in helping schools cope with changes and challenges and facilitate the sustainable development of schools. We will continue to encourage and support schools to fulfil their obligations as good employers and observe the EDB's principles in respect of the employment of contract teachers, such as providing reasonable conditions of service and work arrangements to contract teachers upon their appointment, for optimising the use of manpower resources. In addition, we will continue to keep in view the use of teaching manpower resources by schools and explore options to further stabilise the teaching force, including the feasibility of converting appropriate cash grants into regular teaching posts.

15. Members are invited to note the arrangements of teaching manpower resources and the latest development of contract teachers.

Education Bureau  
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